

Prophecy Spiritually Understood - Pt 2

'Zechariah and the Mystery of the Nt Church'

by Charles Alexander

The Church is the true subject of Old Testament prophecy and is the heavenly constitution of the Church, not a literal earthly kingdom.

Scripture: Ephesians 3:10

Topics: "Biblical Prophecy", "Church Theology"

Description

Zechariah, in his prophetic discourse, exemplifies the inspired use of Abraham's two sons by the apostle Paul, symbolizing the two covenants of the Law and the Gospel. Paul's allegory in Galatians 4 reveals the spiritual significance of Ishmael and Isaac, representing earthly Israel under the Law and the true seed of Abraham under the Gospel. The preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding the spiritual nature of Scripture, particularly in relation to the Church as the true subject of Old Testament prophecy, as revealed by Paul in Ephesians. The sermon delves into the significance of Christ's Kingdom, the rejection of earthly Israel, and the exaltation of the Church as the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose.

Transcript

ABRAHAM HAD TWO SONS

The prophetic nature of Holy Scripture even in its personal and national histories is exemplified in the inspired use which the apostle Paul makes of the great domestic dilemma in the life of Abraham.

In his remarkable allegory in Galatians 4, Paul presents the two sons of Abraham, the one by the bondmaid Hagar and the other by the true wife, Sarah, as the two covenants of the Law and the Gospel. It is clear that in a natural sense the son of the Egyptian bondwoman became the progenitor of the Arabian tribes, but Paul says that in the allegorical (that is, the spiritual) sense, Ishmael was the father of the Israelites tribes under the Law. The true seed of Abraham was the gospel seed of Jew and gentile and these, according to the allegory were the children of Sarah.

Our friends who cleave to a literal interpretation of prophecy have never yet done justice to this Pauline allegory. Their refusal to face up to the implications of the epistle to the Galatians lies at the root of their fallacy in regarding earthly Israel as the inheritor of the promises made to Abraham.

"This Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and answereth to Jerusalem which now is and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Galatians 4:25-26).

Yet those who follow the Scofield Dispensationalism (probably the majority of evangelical Christians in the world today) accept the dispensational dictum that the Church is not the subject of Old Testament prophecy, but is a mystery not introduced or disclosed until the days of Paul.

But it is Paul who introduces the Church as the true subject of Old Testament prophecy, and embellishes His allegory on the two sons of Abraham with a quotation from Isaiah (Isaiah 34:1) to show that the N.T. Church is very much a part of O.T. prophecy.

Is it not significant that Dr. Scofield passes by the allegory of Galatians 4 with stony silence?

The Church is not only very much a part of O.T. prophecy, be we intend to show that it is the ultimate subject of all O.T. prophecy of the Kingdom of God which Christ came to establish. We intend to go further and show that this being the case, there remains no longer any prophecy exclusive to the earthly Israel, and that those prophecies cited by Mr. Hulse (who, by the way, does not accept the dispensational view), Mr. Wilbur Smith and others as indicating a special future for the Jew, do in fact describe the gospel glory of the N.T. church in which the identity of Jew and Gentile is obliterated and can in no manner be restored.

"So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwomen but of the free," concludes Paul - and mark this, all ye would be prophetic interpreters, that he is writing to the most gentile of all the churches, a people so thoroughly gentile that as their name indicated (Gaul) were a part of that great Gaullist-Celtic race whose blood runs freely to this day in the veins of the British people. To these thoroughly gentile tribes does Paul write to tell us that the Jew is an Arab and the believing gentile is a Jew, a child of Abraham! Brethren, many of us have not even begun yet to understand the special nature of prophecy and the prophetic nature of all the Scriptures.

THE MYSTERY NOT THE CHURCH

Here is the great error of our dispensational brethren. It is a corner stone of their system that the Church is the mystery of Ephesians 3, something not before heard of, a feature of God's providence which came into the world like a bolt from the blue, unheralded and unforeseen.

Now, brethren, in the providence of God the epistle to Ephesus follows that to Galatia. The first proves the Scriptural origin of the Church to be deeply imbedded in the O.T. writings. To say that the second - that to Ephesus - by the same hand declares that the Church has no part or place in the O.T. prophecies, is to announce a mystery of such an order that sensible men will call it a mirage.

Paul clearly tells us in Ephesians 3 what the mystery is: it is not the Church, but THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH. The mystery hid from ages and from generation and not hitherto made plain was not that there was to be a Church, but that the Church which always was from the beginning of the history of man, should in the New Testament stand revealed in its full splendor as the eternal purpose of God, the mystic seed of Abraham, Jew and gentile combined in one body, reconciled to God by Christ on the Cross.

Paul declares that God never had any other purpose but this New Testament Church. The Church is the exhibition of the manifold wisdom of God (Eph 3:10), displayed for the admiration of all the heavenly powers. The Church is the eternal purpose of God in Christ. Therefore this gospel age, brethren, is the fulfillment of redemption will be the completion of that Church with the effectual calling of the last one of

the election of grace given to Christ before the foundation of the world.

And if the Church is the eternal purpose of God (verse 11) then there can be nothing after the Church and nothing other than the Church for which eternal wisdom is planning. The Church is the last phase of the divine planning, as John the apostle declares, "Little children, it is the last time..." Paul described the gospel age of the full revealing of the counsel of God as "these last days" (Hebrews 1:2). There is no age beyond this age, and nothing further to be revealed.

There can therefore be no separate future for Israel to disturb that full revealing of the counsel of God that "the gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:6).

The O.T. phase of the Church's history was filled largely with the theocratic kingdom of Israel, as the preparatory phase to the full revelation that was kept in store. That the Church is one and the same in O.T. and N.T. is clearly taught by Paul in our great Epistle to the Galatians where he teaches us that the O.T. phase was the law-time of the Church's minority (the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ - Galatians 3:24). The Jewish dispensation therefore was preparatory to Christ, to preserve a seed and to keep faith alive in the world till Christ should come.

With the coming of Christ the Church passed from its servitude under the tutors and governors of the Law into the full status of sonship. The Holy Spirit was bestowed as a Spirit of Adoption whereby we cry "Abba, Father", and in this sense the words of Christ are to be understood, "He that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist" - greater because the Church has passed from the servitude of the Old Covenant into the liberty and full blessedness of the New. (See Matthew 11, verse 11, and compare Galatians 3:19 to 4:7).

The Church of the N.T. therefore is the lawful successor to the Church of the O.T. Our privileges are not by courtesy of the Jew, or by temporary expedient to fill in the time till more glorious days dawn in some future golden millennium with an earthly kingdom restored and centered on an earthly Jerusalem. The Church is the Israel of God. There is no other Israel, and Mr. Hulse and his friends must look elsewhere for their proofs of a Jewish revival than in those scriptures which foretell the days of the mystic and glorious gospel Kingdom of Christ.

For the Church as the body of Christ was not only foretold in the Old Testament, but was the burden of entire O.T. prophecy: what was never fully understood before the gospel came in, was that the Church was to be composed of gentiles as well as Jews, with equal rights to all, that the Jew as a nation would lose his special rights as the natural child of Abraham and the gentile would stand equally with all believing Jews, as much a child of Abraham as they, and a valid heir of all the promises of God made to the Patriarch.

Paul had already told us in Ephesians 2:14-16 that the middle wall of partition between Jew and gentile is broken down in Christ and that the cross has abolished all distinctions of race and descent, making of twain (Jew and gentile) ONE NEW MAN.

A formidable part of Paul's ministry as the specially appointed apostle of the gentiles was taken up in proving and defending the right of gentile believers to all promises of God in the O.T. made through Abraham, so that "all the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

It is for this reason that Paul wrote to the Galatians. Their faith was being subverted by Judaizing teachers who were persuading the foolish and bewitched Gauls that they could not be considered heirs and children of Abraham, with a valid salvation and access to God, unless they consented to circumcision and became Jewish proselytes.

The same error is present with the evangelical church today, as reflected in recent prophetic writings. There is the same leaning to Jewish interpretations; the same expectation that some day the Jew will come into this own again as a nation, and AS A NATION inherit the Kingdom of God.

It is a curious reflection upon this error that in the year 1856 the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and other States recorded a resolution rejecting as unbiblical the doctrine based on Romans 11:25-26, and other passages, that a universal, or even such a specially numerous, conversion of the Jews as has never before been witnesses, must be expected before the last judgment. In support of that resolution the following remark was made, among others: "If it really is so that all Jews are to be saved, on might well desire rather to be a Jew than a Christian; and in fact some of the Lutherans of New York, feeling this, HAVE BEEN INDUCED TO BECOME JEWS AND SUBMIT THEMSELVES TO CIRCUMCISION, IN THE AWFULLY BLIND HOPE THAT AS ABRAHAM'S SEED THEY SHOULD BE COUNTED WORTHY OF GREATER GLORY AT THE REAPPEARANCE OF CHRIST."

We recall this, not as proof or disproof of anything, but as a commentary on certain views which in one strength or another have always troubled the evangelical church.

It is the teaching of the New Testament that the Christian Church is the legitimate continuance of Israel. We have shown this to be the case from Paul's argument in Galatians and Ephesians and we add the comment of Dr. E.W. Hengstenberg (all the more cogent because Hengstenberg actually was favorable to the view that the Jew will some day be "restored") "Nothing is more confusing than without further inquiry to refer everything to the Jew which the Scriptures say regarding Israel. The Scriptural conception of Israel is a very subtle one, and requires for its understanding properly exercised spiritual faculties."

Writing in the middle of last century, Dr. Hengstenberg makes the following observation regarding those enthusiastic interpretations of prophecy which since his day have matured into a system completely subversive of prophetic research and spirituality:

"The hope of the future salvation of Israel, cherished in all ages by the Church, has taken in the present century (i.e. the 19th) a peculiar form amongst a not unimportant section of the believing Christians of England and Scotland, which since then has found many adherents in Germany and especially in Wurttemberg. They.... went so far as to constitute the converted Jews almost the sole agents in effecting the redemption of the Church of the future, thus doing dishonor to Christ. THE PAST AND PRESENT OF THE CHURCH WERE ALMOST CAST INTO THE SHADE IN COMPARISON OF THIS FUTURE. In consequence of a slavish adherence to the latter they worked themselves into enthusiasm for the return of the Jews to Palestine; they dreamed of the extension of the Holy Land, of the rebuilding of the Temple of Jerusalem, and of the re-establishment of the Levitical cultus. The details of these hopes were carried out in the most insipid and prosaic manner, to such a point indeed as sometimes to surpass even the Rabbins, to the disgust of all who have but sipped of a deeper understanding of prophecy."

Alas, what would the great Doctor have said today if he were standing amongst us with some of the recent prophetic books in his hands - hot from the press? We would earnestly plead with our friend Mr. Hulse, for example, to reconsider that passage in his book which foresees a Jewish regathering bringing in a

"period richer and fuller in scope than that of Pentecost" (Page 90).

Dr. Hengstenberg elsewhere says, "There is but one Church of God, one Israel, one house under two administrations, from the days of Abraham till the end of the world."

Again Hengstenberg says, "Even in His choice of the apostles, our Lord was influenced by this idea of the identity of Israel and the Church. There can be no doubt that in choosing exactly twelve apostles Christ had in view the number of the tribes of Israel, and that He meant the apostles, in virtue of their being twelve, to represent Israel. And as we know certainly that the mission of the apostles was quite as much to the heathen as to the Jews, it is evident that in the eyes of the Lord, THE CHURCH OF THE NEW COVENANT WAS ISRAEL."

THE SPIRITUAL VIEW OF ZECHARIAH

With all this in mind let us now turn to Zechariah the prophet and see what results may accrue.

Zechariah is one of the greatest of the prophets, even though he be numbered for convenience amongst those known as "minor". He writes one of the most notable sections of the Old Testament, and in his day, when the prophetic office was about to expire in Israel (not to be revived for another five centuries till John the Baptist), God was pleased to show that the spirit of revelation was still being exerted in full vigor, as in those great days when Isaiah occupied the scene.

In Zechariah God was preparing for the unfolding of the mystery of Israel in the Church by clothing the Church that was to be in the familiar dress of the earthly Israel - whose heir the Church became when the Kingdom of Christ was fully revealed.

The description of the N.T. Kingdom of Christ in Zechariah is borrowed from the history and even from the geographical elements of the earthly nation, so that Jerusalem on earth becomes a picture of the heavenly Jerusalem, and the topographical details of the Palestinian scene are woven into the tapestry of the heavenly. The restoration of the people to their old limits and the rebuilding of city and Temple were pictures, and intended so to be, of the heavenly constitution of the Church, which has its existence not in visible form on earth, but in spiritual dimensions and privileges "in heavenly places in Christ".

Hence when place names and geographical circumstances are mentioned by the prophet, it is an error to suppose that this can only be taken literally, for there is more than a hint in many parts of the prophecy that we are to look beyond the drapery to the inward spiritual reality.

In no prophecy is it more plain than in Zechariah that that principle of interpretation is operating which was laid down by the apostles, "All the prophets from Samuel, as many have spoken, have foretold of those days" (Acts 3:24), and, "Unto us the prophets did minister the things which are now reported unto you..." (1 Peter 1:12).

In Zechariah Jerusalem becomes a city without bounds, to which God is a wall of fire round about (how literal is that?). The Temple is a living thing and not a thing of holy stone and lime. Living waters go out from Jerusalem. King David reigns again (and even our literalizing friends find they have to spiritualize there).

Even the literal hints of Christ's rejection and crucifixion are clothed with powerful elements which may not be interpreted according to the letter but according to the Spirit. What happened to the thirty pieces of

silver for instance (11:13)? And of what nature is that fountain which is opened for sin and for uncleanness (13:1)? Literal water?

To our task therefore.

ZECHARIAH AND HIS PROPHETICAL NAME

Like Ezekiel who preceded him, Zechariah was priest as well as prophet, and returned from the Captivity to succeed his grandfather Iddo in office. He was contemporary with Haggai whose chief ministry was the stirring up of the people to rebuild the temple. Zechariah's burden was the building of the mystic inner temple of the Spirit - the inward reality of what the temple stood for.

He is further identified as "Zechariah the son of Berechiah" - not he whom they slew between the temple and the altar (Matt. 23:35) but bearing the same name, so that the post-exilic nation might be warned of the judgment that awaited the earthly people, infinitely greater than what they had already endured - as the Saviour indicated in the passage in Matthew already quoted. It is thus that the whole Scripture hangs together and divine predestination is shown in every minute and unseen part. "God foreknows because He predestinates," thunders Luther.

Students of the prophetic Word will take all this to heart and search deep for the full significance of Zechariah's ministry. The very names of the prophets are part of their prophecy. Here was a young man strangely and prophetically born and named, prepared by divine providence even in his family and parentage, to give the Word he ministered a hidden significance which mocks at the surface theories of the literalists.

The distant rumblings of that national apostasy, which finally hurled the nation from its privileges in the time of the Saviour, are already heard in the opening verses of Zechariah. "Turn you now from your evil way," he cries (verses 3-4) as he shows the people that the blessings promised under Haggai and himself would only be enjoyed by the repentant and the converted. The whole book is evangelical.

Let this be remembered by all those who see in this great prophecy only national promises to an earthly Israel. Zechariah sees far beyond the figures of land and people, and describes that Kingdom of Christ which comes not with observation, neither shall they say, Lo, it is here! Or, Lo, it is there! For this Kingdom is within and not without. It is the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world for our glory, which none of the princes of Israel or any other of this world knew, for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Cor. 2).

THE BIRTH OF THE PHARISEE

Already, in Zechariah's day, the Pharisee and the Sadducee were being born with their carnal notions of Abrahamic inheritance, Jewish privilege, and most-favored nation theories - those same fatal notions which were denounced by John the Baptist, then by Christ Himself, and thereafter by the apostles, until the Kingdom of God was taken up from them and given unto a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof.

Yet many of our expositors nowadays borrow the same fatal and life-less doctrines from the scribes and Pharisees and assure the earthly Jew of a bright future in a time of Latter Day Glory - a kingdom of the same order as that which their false guides, blind leaders of the blind, taught, until they and their dupes both fell into the ditch as Christ had foretold.

In Zechariah's day the people were already learning, and learning fast, to walk along that road of self-righteousness and mere outward religion which so quickly wrought the ruin of the nation.

But we must run rapidly through the earlier visions of Zechariah. What a tremendous night was that 24th of Sebat in the second year of Darius! Wave upon wave, a holy octave of visions burst upon the astonished view of the young prophet - visions the glory and wonder of which remain to astonish all who inquire and search.

THE MAN AMONST THE MYRTLE TREES (chapter 1:7-11)

This man is Christ, leading the cavalry of heaven in divine judgment against the enemies of His people. The myrtle trees "in the bottom" are the elect, the covenant people whom the Lord comes to redeem, and their situation shows their inconspicuous and humble position in worldly eyes. The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

THE FOUR CARPENTERS AND THE FOUR HORNS (1:18-21)

The four horns are the four monarchies of Daniel's vision which were to oppress the earthly people till the Kingdom of God should come. The Carpenters are the successive judgment of God by which each in turn was frayed and scattered, opening up a pathway through history for the coming of the Redeemer.

THE MAN WITH THE MEASURING LINE (Chapter 2)

The dimensions of Christ's kingdom were to exceed by far, the limits of the prophet's day. So vast is the city that it is not possible to enclose it within walls. God Himself is the wall - a wall of fire round about. Here is no literalism but a glorious figure of the divine protection of the elect. The gentile nations flow in and become one people with the inhabitants of Zion. This began to be fulfilled when the great apostle of the gentiles was called and sent forth to lay the foundations of the Lord's kingdom in those parts where the name of God had not been known, that there they might be called the children of the living God (see Romans 9:23-26). We prefer Paul's commentary on the prophets to that of our excellent but very much mistaken friends who transfer everything to a time yet future, and deprive the Church of the New Testament of her prophetic promises and privileges.

Who else is the apple of His eye (Zech. 2:8), but His elect whom He has redeemed by His blood - not of the Jews only but also of the gentiles? We refuse to be deprived of these consolations by a theory of prophecy which was denounced in the New Testament 2,000 years ago.

JOSHUA AND HIS GARMENTS (Chapter 3)

Literalism has played havoc with this prophecy and it is small wonder that though many sermons are preached upon it few if any perceive the simple and the obvious, though grand and elevated meaning. We have been maintaining that the prevailing prophetic theories have led to the impoverishment of the ministry of the Word, and this is our excuse, if we needed any, for risking our popularity by venturing into this most prejudiced field.

Joshua in this chapter stands not for himself, nor yet, as many have fondly taught, for the sinner needing conversion. He stands for the priesthood of the Old and New Covenants, and his change of garments, from the filth of unremoved sin under the Old dispensation to the beauty of gospel righteousness in the New, shows the change of priesthood from the temporal to the eternal. The priesthood of Aaron has failed,

and the great Melchizedek, the Lord our Righteousness, assumes the office of the eternal priesthood. The very name of Joshua is significant of this. Joshua is the Hebrew of what in the Greek is Jesus. He is the son of Josedech, which means THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD. Behold, here, standing before us in Zechariah's vision, Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6, and margin).

The priests of the Old Covenant were sinful men, and their sacrifices of bulls and goats could not take away sin. Satan stands invisibly in the court to challenge the legality of the proceedings. The Lord our Righteousness, our heavenly archangel Michael (for so He is) durst not bring against Satan a railing accusation, for the process is a legal one, and the believer's title to forgiveness is the matter in dispute; therefore the Lord says, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is this not a brand plucked out of the fire?" (Compare Zech. 3:2 with Jude 9, and learn that 'the body of Moses' there in dispute is not a question of sepulture, but the body of the Law of which Moses was the mediator and which Satan makes the ground of his accusation against the people of the Lord who are saved without Law by One who acted for them by suffering the penalty of the Law).

Compare this with those impoverished sermons which aim to show that Joshua is the sinner in process of conversion.

We are reluctant to leave this chapter without a reference to the glory of its closing verses. Verse 8 displays the heavenly Joshua among His redeemed companions - men wondered at indeed, for his elect are the wonder, the treasure, and the riches of all Creation. "My servant the Branch" is the coming Redeemer, the root and the offspring of David. The stone with seven eyes (verse 9) is the foundation stone of the New Testament Temple, Christ, exhibiting the fullness of that sevenfold, omniscient Spirit of grace and adoption, who could not be given till the Redeemer was gloried in resurrection and exaltation to the Throne of All-power (John 7:39; Matthew 28:18).

The vision closes with a scene of the redeemed people, dwelling in peace and prosperity under the hand of Him who has made peace by the blood of His cross.

THE TWO OLIVE TREES (Chapter 4)

From the Priesthood of the New Covenant we move into the sanctuary itself, but not, NOT, the early sanctuary with its golden candlesticks and daily replenishment of sanctuary oil. Here is a living Temple to defy all literalizers. Here is what the Jerusalem temple only represented in shadow - the unceasing intercession of Christ for His people. The mystic candlestick which the prophet sees is fed directly from the two olive trees growing beside it - an impossible figure to be literalized. Here we are obviously in the region of the mind and the spirit. Golden pipes communicate between the trees and lampholders. Zechariah is bewildered and cries out for an explanation. The answer is wonderful:

THIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD TO ZERUBBABEL SAYING, NOT BY MIGHT NOR BY POWER BUT BY MY SPIRIT SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS.

How many sermons have been preached - and preached in vain - on this text! The verse applies exclusively to the work of Christ bringing in the gospel. It comes not with ostentation. Soft as the fall of the morning dew the Kingdom of God comes in. No exhibition of worldly might or power heralds its appearing. It is a thing of the Spirit, blowing as the wind - where He listeth.

Let the Word be used for the purpose for which it was given and let the people hear from this text the nature of the kingdom of God in contrast with the earthly kingdom of national glory dreamed of by the Pharisees, slavishly followed by expositors of today who are unable to shake themselves free from naturalistic and carnal theories.

To the name of Joshua is now added that of Zerubbabel, the dynastic successor of David and the progenitor of Christ. These two, Joshua and Zerubbabel, priest and lawful king (who never came to the throne himself) are the two olive trees of Zechariah's sanctuary, and they represent Christ in His two fold office of Priest - King after the pattern of Melchizedek.

Here also is the key to the understanding of the identity of the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3-4. "These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." The vision of Zechariah and John is one. The two witnesses of Revelation 11 are not Moses and Elijah, or Enoch and Elijah as the Futurist dreams, but none other than Christ in His sending forth of His Spirit of truth as a spirit of testimony in His Church to the confusion of all enemies to the end of time. The two witnesses of Revelation therefore represent the Church of Christ animated by the Spirit of Christ to bear witness as his body in the world, to be slain and overcome (in the flesh) as He was, but through death to overcome death, to pass through it unscathed, and to be exalted over it by the atonement and resurrected of Christ.

We leave the bones of Futurism, with their attached fables of resurrected saints brought down from Paradise to live on the earth again. We leave these bones to those who have the wish to break their teeth upon them.

THE FLYING ROLL

The purpose of this and the following vision is to show to the people of the land their sin and their entire disqualification for being worshippers in the new and heavenly Temple. All would be in vain without the gift of a new heart for no other should ever see the Kingdom of God (John 3:3).

The dimensions of the Flying Roll are the dimensions of the porch of Solomon's temple, indicating there can be no access there for the sinner. The writing on the Roll selects two commandments, one from each table of the Decalogue - impiety and theft - to show how the earthly nation of Israel had failed utterly to keep either table and was thus given up to the curse.

In his later chapters Zechariah shows the remedy for sin, in the fountain opened for sin, and the gift of the regenerating Spirit - not for the Jews only, but also for the gentiles.

THE EPHAH THE WOMAN AND THE WEIGHT (Chapter 5)

This shows the final removal of the earthly people from their place of privilege amongst the nations. The ephah is a large measure of capacity representing the law. The woman is the wicked and apostate people of Israel, once a pure virgin but now a raddled harlot. She is cast into the ephah and a great leaden weight, the heavy load of God's judgment, is clamped down upon her. Winged figures carry her away to the land of Shinar. The ancient name of Babylonia is thus introduced again from the early chapters of Genesis to show the removal of the nation to that region which Shinar represents: it is to Shinar that his latest descendants are banished, as way is made for the incoming of that new, elect nation of Jew and Gentile which is the true seed of Abraham to whom the promises were made.

The banishment to Babylon in the days of Jeremiah was short in duration. The banishment to Shinar is perpetual. From it there can be no return as a nation.

THE FOUR CHARIOTS AND THE MOUNTAIN OF BRASS (Chapter 6)

The brazen mountains are the Lord's impregnable defense of His redeemed people. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem so the Lord is round about His people (Psalm 125:2). The chariots issuing forth are the successive judgments by which the enemies of the Lord are swept away - as in the case of the Four Monarchies of Daniel. "The north country" is not Russia, but Babylonia (our modern commentators make an elementary error there). The Assyrian and Babylonia armies always came upon Palestine from the north: there was no other possible route they could take. The South country is Egypt, the first oppressor of the people of God. Egypt and Babylon are representative here of all the oppressors of Christ's Kingdom in all ages and places.

The remainder of chapter 6 is an acted prophecy. Certain men had arrived from the captivity right at the close of Zechariah's series of visions. They were representative of the great inflow of the nations of mankind into the Kingdom of Christ. Christ appears again in the person of Joshua the High Priest who is crowned in the midst of his brethren. He builds the Temple of the Lord (verse 12) and establishes the Counsel of Peace (the New Covenant) between God and His elect people whom Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah represent. The names of the men are significant and prophetic of the Church of the Redeemed - the Strength, Grace, Knowledge and Preserving Power of God, and His concealed wisdom (Zephaniah) given to them in the Gospel. The last two verses of the chapter show clearly that the men who that day returned from the Captivity were representative of the incoming of the gentiles of the Kingdom of Christ.

It is important to remember this when we come to the later chapters of Zechariah which so many of our friends reserve exclusively for the Jew. On the contrary, Zechariah was the peculiar prophet of the mystical Kingdom of Christ, who foresaw the rejection of the people of the Old Covenant, that way might be made for the full flowering of the Kingdom of Christ in the gospel - the divine goal of all the ages past.

WARNINGS AND PROMISES (Chapters 7 and 8)

The prophetic ecstasy of Zechariah's night of visions is now ended. Two years have elapsed. It is now the 4th of Darius and the 9th month. The temple is built, and the Jewish colony is firmly established. Delegates arrive to inquire whether the people should continue to observe the fast of the fifth month which was originally established to commemorate the day when the temple was destroyed by the Chaldeans. Zechariah's spirit is stirred within him at this pharisaic preoccupation with outward observance instead of inward piety. No lesson was ever learned by these people. The weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, compassion, were neglected, and piety consisted only in outward observances. As their fathers before them they 'refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears' (7:11).

We can do no better than quote Dr. Hengstenberg here:

"In the second part of his address (chapter 8) the prophet proceeds to meet the question with a direct reply, the substance of which could no longer confirm the hypocrites in their carnal security, but might serve to comfort and strengthen such as were weak in faith, both in his own and subsequent times, until the appearance of Christ Himself. Such abundant deliverance was in reserve for the covenant nation that not only on the day on which Jerusalem was destroyed, but the other days also which had been set apart as fast days (as for instance the capture of Jerusalem in the 4th month, and the commencement of the

siege in the 10th) would all be altered into days of rejoicing; for the blessing they were about to receive would be far greater than those which they had lost on the days referred to. In this reply the prophet embraced the whole of the blessings of salvation intended for the covenant nation, and full meaning of his declaration was first realized in Christ. The conclusion (20-23) relates exclusively to the manner in which the kingdom of God would be glorified by Him and, as a still further expansion of Micah 4:2, Isaiah 2:3, it contains a description of the eagerness with which heathen nations would strive for admission into the kingdom of God."

Thus far, Hengstenberg (who, as we have already pointed out, is favorable to a future restoration of the Jewish people, a point which we do not share with him).

TAKING HOLD OF THE SKIRT OF THE JEW

We add a brief comment of our own. The last six verse of Zechariah 8 are descriptive of a regenerate people who 'love the truth and peace'. The world-wide pilgrimage of the nations to Jerusalem is an evangelical picture of the spread of the gospel, in accord with the Savior's dictum, "Neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem shall men worship the Father..." (John 4:21). The last verse signifies, by 'ten men of all nations taking hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew', not the embarrassing literal spectacle, but the accession of the gentile to Jewish privilege and to the promises made to Abraham, in accord with Paul in Galatians 3:29 and Ephesians 3:6.

Noah had long before prophesied of these days: "God shall enlarge Japheth and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem", that is, "Japheth shall inherit Shem's rights and privileges - the gentiles will enter into the promises made to Shem's great descendent Abraham, see Genesis 9:27.

CHAPTER NINE

THE MANNER OF THE KING AND THE KINGDOM

This chapter pronounces the doom of Persia, the oppressing power at the time of the prophecy, the Conquest of Alexander the Great, and the manner of Christ's appearing thereafter.

Under the name of Hedrach (vs. 1), Persia is represented. This name gave great trouble to the commentators till Hengstenberg elucidated it last century. It is a name which denotes in the Hebrew the strong becoming weak, and was used prophetically concealing the identity of Persia to avoid unnecessary offence to the ruling power under which the Jews were being permitted to re-establish themselves in Palestine. Till verse 8, the historic and swift campaign of Alexander is described as he swept along the coast of Asia Minor destroyed Tyre, reducing Philistia, yet respecting the State of Israel, to which he reverently did no harm, but passed it by in peace. Alexander's great campaign which resulted in the complete and rapid subjugation of the Persian Empire, was in itself prophetic in so far as Israel was concerned - again showing the omnipotent, sovereign and predestinating hand of God in history. The covenant people were spared in the Conqueror's great march through Asia, as a token of the protecting decree of God concerning His Church. There follows (9-17) by contrast, the conquering career of Christ, but oh! so different in its character from all worldly expeditions.

Zion's King comes, righteous and having salvation, riding upon an ass. He speaks in peace and not in war to the great heathen nations and without perceptible power establishes His dominion from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth.

The literal fulfillment of Christ's humble entry into Jerusalem on the borrowed colt, with the poor garments of His disciples as the trappings on which He rides, with the plaudits of the poor and not of the great acclaiming Him as the King of Israel, is itself prophetic of the nature of His Kingdom and the manner of its establishment. It comes not with observation. The literal becomes the clothing of the spiritual. It is not enough to say that the prophecy was literally fulfilled with Christ's entry into Jerusalem. It was; but that was only the beginning of the fulfillment of that spiritual kingdom which for 2,000 years has grown from imperceptible origins into a kingdom which fills the whole earth.

The Jews beheld with trembling and wonder at the passage of Alexander's army, the incredible fall of Tyre and Sidon, and with that fall, the certain doom of Persia. They knew from Zechariah's prophecy that it was God who gave the dominion to the Greek conqueror; but was there nothing for them? The answer from Zechariah was that God Himself would appear. Yet His coming would be in complete contrast with the noise, tumult and energy of the Greek campaign. The march of the Greek regiments, and their iron discipline, shook the very earth around them. Here in contrast is Messiah's campaign for the establishment of a dominion which should outlast all time and never pass away, yet should come in with quietness, meekness, peace and humility. God could not appear in any other way, because our need was spiritual and not carnal, and that must ever be the manner of Christ's kingdom to the end of time. Those who dream of battlements and towers on earth, and pomp and glory for Israel after the flesh, had better take another look at the gospels and the epistles - and another look at themselves.

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

There is that in the corrupt human heart which always yearns after the outward and the visible. The imposing view which many have of the Church as of a great institution which impresses the world with its majesty and influence; its reproduction of the kingdoms of this world in outward pomp and splendor and show, is not the view of the prophets. There are mighty ecclesiastical institutions which involve themselves in intrigues, diplomacies, and worldly politics, which issue impressive encyclicals and bulls, fiats and declarations, which influence governments, and which send out ambassadors and delegations and legates to court and conference, but in none of these things do we perceive the Kingdom of Christ. The wearing of royal purples and the building up of hierarchies, nobilities, aristocracies and principalities, is not the Church, but the world. The Church is that spiritual remnant, that elect company of the redeemed who do not number in their ranks many mighty or noble, who consist rather of the weak things of the earth and things which are despised and nothing in the eyes of contemporary society, but who march to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They are a people apart, who cannot mingle or coalesce with the world in its ways and fashions, for they are separated as holy unto Christ, and carry the cross He gives them to bear.

Nor will the scene change, brethren. This is the manner of the Kingdom until the end of time. This is our Millennium. This is the Kingdom desired by prophets and kings and righteous men of old, to whom it was revealed that not unto themselves but unto us did they minister the things which are now reported unto us through them that preached the gospel unto us with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (1 Peter 1:12).

It is thus the apostles taught us to regard the O.T. prophecies, for search through the entire New Testament and there is not a word spoken there of future national glory. Nor is there any other Kingdom of Christ and of God spoken about in the New Testament but the Kingdom of Grace of which we believers are a part. And this is the Kingdom which was prophesied by the Zechariah's and the Isaiah's of old time, and anticipated by David and Solomon. If the Church is not the Kingdom, then the Church is not the

subject of ANY prophecy. But Paul has told us that we are the Israel of God, that the children of Abraham are the election of grace, and that the Church is the eternal purpose of God from before the foundation of the world.

What misconception exists amongst us of the sublime teachings of Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians! The Jewish theory of prophecy has not only severed the Church's roots in the Old Testament, but has plundered and misrepresented her inheritance in the New.

When Paul speaks of 'the heavenly places' or as some will have it 'the heavenlies' in his great epistle to Ephesus, he is speaking of the spiritual nature of salvation and of the kingdom of Christ as distinct from the Jewish conceptions of earthly visibility of that Kingdom.

PAUL'S "HEAVENLY PLACES"

Our Conference and Convention speakers love to talk in mystical fashion of Paul's "heavenlies" as of some sublime region of higher Christian life not attained to usually by the rank and file of Christian people. Alas! They cannot see the obvious; that Paul is telling all true believers that they are already "raised up together with Christ to sit with Him in heavenly places" (Ephesian 2:6). The heavenly places denote the spiritual state of the Church, completely divorced now from the earthly and visible state of the Church in O.T. times, when she was in servitude and bondage to the weak and beggarly elements of this world (Galatians 4:9).

Yet there are people who write to us to tell us of their amazement that we should not believe it to be the purpose of God to restore in the world those same weak and beggarly and pauperizing elements as the token of His majestic favor to Israel in some future age.

And even as we write these words, we are aware that some of our readers will toss this page aside for explaining that Paul's heavenly places are the ordinary privileges of the Christian and do not denote a superior experience of "victorious living" which we greatly fear only exists in the imagination of those who teach it and those who make profession of it.

The true Church of Christ is always in conflict with the world and Satan, and this is why we must take issue with those who imagine a millennium in which the saints visibly reign over the wicked.

Our dominion is NOW, brethren, and this is our millennium, with Christ reigning at the right hand of Power, till all His enemies are made His footstool. We wage a constant warfare with spiritual foes for as Paul reminds us, "We war not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies" (Ephesians 6:12). So the devil too is in our heavenlies, and away goes the Convention sermon of "no defeat, no conflict".

The true believer exercises royal power in this world by his prayer and testimony. He sways empires and rules over kingdoms. He binds the kings of the earth in chains and their nobles with fetters of iron.

(Psalm 149)

So we triumph over the world even in weakness and affliction, and what greater thing can some dreamy early millennium do for us than this? The Book of Revelation, which is the inner history of the Church in 'the heavenlies' shows that she is never a kingdom of this world, but an afflicted, despised people who follow the Lamb whithersoever He leadeth.

The Hadrachs - the oppressing powers of this world - crumble into dust while the Kingdom of God remaineth. Their crowns and their pride are cast into the moles and bats while our heavenly Conqueror moves silently and majestically from triumph to triumph.

This is what is spiritually reflected behind Christ's prophetic ride into Jerusalem. Riding upon the lowliest and most despised of beasts, without pomp or circumstances, he comes to reign who next shall come in the clouds of heaven and all the holy angels with Him, to summon the world to judgment.

"Just, and saving Himself." Yes, dear reader, that is the meaning of Zechariah's words (see margin). He saves His people by saving Himself - that is, by His own righteousness, merit and obedience to the Law, and by the prerogative of His own rank and title as the Son of God, He comes back from the dead to reign. "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:18). Because He lives, we shall live also.

Verse 10 of our chapter (Zech. 9) refers to the military eclipse of Israel, which finally took place under the Roman invasion. But this circumstance would not affect the Kingdom of Christ, but by the proclamation of the gospel of peace Christ would extend His dominion to all the earth. Zechariah, as we have been trying to say, is an evangelical prophet. This is confirmed in verse 11, which is meaningless except in terms of the New Testament revelation of the gospel.

The remainder of the chapter (verses 12-17) is historic, but like all prophetic history, it teaches spiritual reality. The verses describe the Maccabean conflict with the Greeks (the successors of Alexander) as verse 13 determines, but this is only the drapery. The Lord is with His little flock, and makes them as the crown jewels of heaven upon His eternal brows (verse 16). How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! (verse 17).

CHAPTER TEN

THE LATTER RAIN

How our commentators spring to conclusions suited to the theories they already have in mind! Here they profess to see a promise of Jewish revival at the end of the gospel era. But if any historical period is in view it is at the beginning, not the end, of the gospel era. This is Pentecost. The latter rain in Palestine was the last rain before harvest and if it failed there would be famine. Pentecost, as its name and circumstance indicate, was the essential preliminary to God's harvest time in the world when Christ from the throne above sent down His Spirit in gracious showers to sprinkle many nations and extend His reign over all the earth.

Verses 2 and 3 describes the dilemma of the people of God, the little flock, under the Old Covenant, whose shepherds taught them falsely (that is, false prophets and teachers and rulers arose to teach them the doctrines of the Pharisees which denied the grace of God and fed the goats instead of the sheep).

The true people of God appear at the end of verse 3 - 'his flock, the house of Judah'. These are the redeemed of all ages. The remainder of the chapter shows the Lord fighting for and with His people. Judah and Ephraim, the two divisions of Israel so long separated, are seen as one people. They return from Egypt and Assyria to Gilead and Lebanon. The sea is smitten to make way for their deliverance - a figure based on the crossing of the Red Sea in the time of Moses, and denoting the judgments of God upon the

wicked world which oppresses the elect people of God.

Our friends will not be too pleased with a spiritual interpretation here, but we act on the principle that the New Testament always interprets the prophecies of Christ's Kingdom spiritually as we have endeavoured to show. On what principle do our friends interpret otherwise? And when was it that the pride of Assyria was brought down and the scepter of Egypt taken away? (verse 11). Let that be the answer to those who look for a fulfillment yet future, for there is no Assyria existing today, and Egypt has long ago ceased to count among the nations.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE FLOCK OF SLAUGHTER AND THE POOR OF THE FLOCK

Zechariah 11 is one of the most remarkable of all prophetic portraits of Christ, and one of the greatest of all demonstrations of the divine inspiration of Holy Scriptures. Here is named in the very price which the Jews paid for the betrayal of Christ, and the ultimate use to which the money was put. Yet even here literalism is mingled with spiritual prophetic elements as we should expect in such a prophet as Zechariah, so that when we come to the place we shall see more of the marvels and mysteries of inspiration unfolded.

The chapter opens with a prediction of the final judgment of God upon the sinful nation of Israel because of their rejection of Christ. The reference to Lebanon, and the firs and the cedars, is poetic of the Temple, while the Temple itself is representative of the earthly people. Cedars and firs were significant to the construction of the Temple by Solomon (1 King 5:8. See also Song of Sol. 1:17, where the bridal home of Christ and the Church is so described.)

Verses 3-9 depict the last state of the nation at the time of Christ's appearing amongst them. They are 'the flock of slaughter' - because that was the end to which they were hastening. But in the flock there is an elect core - "Even you, O poor of the flock" (verse 7). So there remaineth at this time also a remnant according to the election of grace (Romans 11:5).

Zechariah, clothed with the prophetic spirit, comes forward in the person of Christ, as though the Spirit of Christ conveyed to his spirit all that would befall the Saviour five centuries hence. In response to the Lord's command to feed the flock, he responds, "I will feed them".

In the vision he takes to himself two staves named Beauty and Bands which in N.T. language might be rendered "Grace and Peace" for these are the instruments by which Christ saves and sanctified His people, even the poor of the flock of slaughter.

But all to no avail so far as the nation is concerned. The gracious rule of Christ is rejected by the sinful nation, and the dread words are uttered, "I will not feed you".

The picture is further amplified in verse 8 by the cutting off (in one month) of three shepherds. These shepherds are emblematic of those means by which God had hitherto ruled His people - Prince, Prophet and Priest. The threefold office was to be abolished 'in one month' - a short prophetic period. From that day this Jewry has had neither priest, prophet, nor prince, since they rejected all three when they rejected Christ. The true Shepherd who declared in the hearing of the people, "I am the good shepherd and know my sheep and am known of mine" (John 10) united in Himself the threefold office of prophet, priest and king and there can be no other after Him.

What an awful significance in the words of Christ to the sinful people, "Ye believe not because YE ARE NOT OF MY SHEEP". (John 10:26). Let us always distinguish between the two Israel's - the flock of slaughter and the poor of the flock.

THE SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL BREAKS THE COVENANT AND

ASKS FOR HIS WAGES----- (Zechariah 11:10-14)

Verse 10 describes how the Shepherd of Israel, rejected by His own, breaks the staff, Beauty, as a token that His office so far as the nation is concerned, is at an end. "And I took my Staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, and I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people". Those who hold to a future restoration of Israel have never faced up to the implications of this statement in Zechariah.

We ask our friends to give heed to this most serious statement. Christ has broken the covenant with the earthly people and it will never be restored. Zechariah is the last of all the prophets except Malachi, and Malachi only underlines what Zechariah prophesies here. The last word of the O.T. is 'curse'.

The covenant with the earthly people was broken 'in that day' - that is, the day when they crucified Him. But it was only the end of Israel after the flesh. Israel after the spirit remained, and still remains, and these are they who in verse 11 are referred to, "And so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the Word of the Lord".

The Good Shepherd proceeds (in the person of Zechariah) to ask for His wages, as the sign that His office has been terminated, and the earthly nation is no longer His flock.

The ensuing words are remarkable for the prophetic intermingling of the literal elements with the spiritual, as though the literal fulfillment were only a parable of much wider significance. Very little justice has ever been done to verses 12 and 13 by any of the schools of interpretation. We shall attempt to repair this defect.

The Word of God has been withdrawn from the sinful nation ("I will not feed you" - verse 9). The covenant which made them the privileged and chosen repository of that Word, is broken for ever (verse 10). There remains only the formal winding up of the contract. The Shepherd asks of His wages in full discharge of the contract broken. He receives His price - thirty pieces of silver.

Here the literal ends and the prophetic begins - a factor overlooked by so many. For it is evident that the Shepherd never received his wages and never saw them - Judas Iscariot had them in his pocket. Here the literal fades out, and the prophetic parable begins.

In the next verse, in obedience to the Word of Jehovah, the Shepherd gives the money to the Temple potter. Now the potter never handled the money in the gospel account, nor did the Shepherd. The money went back to the priests after Judas had cast it down in the Temple. The priest could not put it back in the treasury because it was blood money so they purchased with it the potter's field at the entrance to the valley of Hinnom outside the city walls, and dedicated it to the unworthy purpose of burying strangers - gentiles - whose bodies would have defiled any Jewish cemetery.

JEREMIAH EXPLAINS ZECHARIAH

But why should the potter be mentioned? Because the roots of Zechariah's post exilic prophecy are sunk deep in Jeremiah's pre-exilic prophecy, and to obtain the meaning we must go back to Jeremiah, to the familiar but much misused passage, Jeremiah, chapters 18-19.

Jeremiah is instructed by the Lord to go down to the potter's house - the house of the craftsman who was employed to care for the Temple pottery. There he sees the Master - Potter (who represents the Lord Himself) at work upon the wheels. The vessel being turned is marred and the potter crushes the clay, and makes another vessel. The action is explained to Jeremiah. The vessel is Israel after the flesh. The nation has failed and is rejected and is appointed for destruction. Another vessel - the mystic N.T. Church - is raised out of the ruin of the first.

The action is extended to chapter 19 where in obedience to the Word of the Lord, Jeremiah takes an earthen vessel and proceeds to the valley of the son of Hinnom which is by the east gate of Jerusalem - the gate which looks out the gentile world. There, in the presence of the priests and elders of Jerusalem he smashes the earthen jar and declares,

"Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury them in Tophet till there be no place to bury".

This is the irrevocable doom of the nation of Israel. The vessel can never be put together again, and whatever ideas of Latter Day Glory may be entertained by some of our friends, they had better reckon with Jeremiah and Zechariah before they come to a ready conclusion. They may find that with all their skill they cannot put together again the broken vessel.

That Zechariah was the inspired successor of Jeremiah in his prophecy is clear from Jeremiah 19:6, where the valley of Hinnom, or Tophet, is re-named, "The Valley of Slaughter". From this source Zechariah derives the description, "The flock of slaughter" in the very chapter we are dealing with (chapter 11).

PAYING FOR THEIR OWN FUNERAL

The two prophecies hang together. The priests of the Temple in Christ's day got their money back and purchased the potter's field to bury strangers therein, but they did not know they were paying for their own funeral as a nation, with the betrayal money. They were the real strangers and gentiles, though they boasted of being the children of Abraham; the believing gentiles were the true Israel, the true children of Abraham (as Paul and John the Baptist tell us). On their way into Zion, as the ransomed of the Lord (Isaiah 35:10), these children of the East pass the burying ground of the Jewish nation, purchased with the reward of wickedness and betrayal - and that burial ground is hell; for the Valley of the son of Hinnom was the rubbish dump of the city, where all the foulness and filth drained, where the perpetual fires burned, and became a symbol of the eternal fires of hell. For Hinnom in the Hebrew becomes in Greek, Gehenna, one of the most powerful New Testament words for hell.

Nor is the prophecy yet exhausted, for it should be pointed out that at the entrance of the valley of Gehenna the purest white clay was found which the Temple potters used for their finest work, and hence the field became known as the potter's field where their clay and their kilns were located. And from the mouth of hell the Lord quarries His clay, to take the place of the Israelitish clay and to save those of all the nations of mankind who were appointed to die, who were without God and without hope and without promise, but who, as the election of grace, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, are brought

by effectual calling from despair and darkness and curse into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Now let our literalizers get to work, and we shall be pleased beyond measure if they, with their theories, can do better than this.

While they are considering the matter we shall add a note to clear up one of the minor mysteries of prophetic quotation in the New Testament. Matthew quotes in his gospel, verses 12 and 13 of our chapter (see Matthew 27:9-10). Matthew says, "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet..." But it was not Jeremiah but Zechariah who used the words referred to by Matthew. Why should Matthew attribute to Jeremiah what belonged to Zechariah? A mistake! Shout the critics. But our readers by now will know there was no mistake. The roots of Zechariah's prophecy, as we have plainly shown, were in Jeremiah, and Matthew, under unerring inspiration, knowingly and deliberately refers his readers to Jeremiah as the primary source of the prophecy, and at the same time the Holy Spirit warns us thereby that we must not interpret Zechariah's word without recourse to Jeremiah: and when we do so, we discover the spiritual nature of the prophecy altogether overshadowing the literal elements. And that is the rule of prophecy.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE THIRTY PIECES

Hide thy face, O believer, as thou seest why thy Lord could be sold for no other price than thirty pieces of silver.

Exodus 21, verse 32, is the key. Thirty silver shekels is the amount of compensation paid to a master for the loss of a servant gored by someone else's ox.

They gave for thy Lord the contemptuous price of a menial.

A servant's form He wore

And in His body bore

Our dreadful curse on Calvary.

The remainder of the chapter speaks clearly. The staff known as Bands is broken to denote the dispersion of the nation under the figure of the separation again of the former two kingdoms of Judah of Israel - reunited for the short time by the captivity of both in Chaldea and Persia (for all the twelve tribes are literally in Jewry today, and have been ever since the captivity) - now dispersed through the world and doomed to remain so, whatever may be happening or fated to happen in Palestine.

Israel after the flesh is handed over to the idol shepherd (verse 15-17). Not that they ever went back to idols in a literal sense, but the powerful expression is used to denote that there is a spiritual idolatry which creates false and delusive representations of God, and woe to that people who are handed over to those delusions, for they will believe a lie. "This is the true God and eternal life", writes John at the end of his first Epistle,

"little children KEEP YOURSELF FROM IDOLS".

In short, those closing verses describe the fate of the nation after they had rejected Christ and refer to the blind rabbinicalism under which they continue to suffer, for having left the word of God and turned unto fables.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST EXALTED

Zechariah's fourth and last discourse commences with the opening verse of chapter 12 - THE BURDEN OF THE WORD OF THE LORD FOR ISRAEL.

In these concluding three chapters are described the first coming of Christ, the setting up of His gospel Kingdom, and the privileges and glories of that Kingdom.

The opening verse introduces the Lord as the sovereign Creator, Almighty in power, who knows all that is in man seeing He is the Creator of the spirit of man within him. This reassuring word - and how necessary in such a time as this? - is designed to strengthen the people of God for their age long conflict with the world.

Jerusalem is the preoccupation of the Holy God - the center of all His purposes on earth; not the city in Palestine of that name, but that which the earthly city represents - the true Church of Christ, the new and heavenly Jerusalem, that Zion to which the tribes of the gentiles come that might be taught the Word of the Lord.

This gospel Zion becomes a burdensome stone to all who oppose it, for so has been the true Church of Christ through all the ages. Those who oppose God only injure themselves.

The governors of Judah who becomes like a fire among wood or a torch in a dry sheaf (verse 6) are the apostles of the Lamb. The Word is God's Word and acts like a fire among the nations and must prevail. Futuristic views of prophecy can make nothing of this verse without denying their own millennium, for if the apostles are reigning again on the earth, then Satan is bound, and who are they to whom they will act as a fire in a sheaf?

THE FEEBLE AS DAVID AND DAVID AS GOD

But the literal view fails completely when we come to verse 8:

"In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David as God, as the angel of the Lord before them".

Here if anywhere, we are on gospel ground. Here is a view of the gospel which transcends all the glory of the Old Covenant. The great deliverer in the Old Testament was David. He was the pattern of Kingship, the shepherd of his people. The Kingdom really began with him. But in the Kingdom of Christ, the meanest believer will be as the royal house of David, while the House of David itself will appear as God - for in Christ's Kingdom, deity is enthroned. Nothing but the gospel can explain this verse. The Saviour Himself, in His earthly ministry, plainly had this verse in mind when He said:

"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11).

In what respect is the least believer in the gospel Kingdom of Christ greater than the greatest of Old Testament times? Not in regeneration, for O.T. believers were born again of the Spirit just as we. Not in faith, for they are still our examples in faith. Not in prayer and devotion, for the psalms are still our

handbook of prayer and praise, and no man-made Christian hymnbook contains words which compare in seraphic fire with the 45th psalm, the 72nd psalm, the 24th psalm, or the Song of Solomon.

What then? We are superior in status and privilege. When Christ told the disciples that the day was about the dawn when He would 'show them plainly of the Father,' (John 16:25) He was disclosing an epoch in the affairs of mankind.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit were not fully revealed till Christ had ascended

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