

The Puritan Illusion - Part Two

by Charles Alexander

The sermon argues that the Puritan Illusion, which sees a future Jewish kingdom, is a misinterpretation of Old Testament prophecy and that the New Testament rule of interpretation must be applied to understand the true meaning of the prophecies.

Scripture: Isaiah 40:9, Isaiah 52:7, Isaiah 54:13, Isaiah 55:1, Isaiah 59:20, Isaiah 60:1, Romans 11:26, Ephesians 2:15

Topics: "New Covenant", "Church Unity"

Description

Paul the Apostle preaches about the rejection of the Jewish people due to their sins and the coming of the Redeemer to Zion, symbolizing the establishment of the New Covenant Israel, composed of both Jew and gentile believers. The prophecy in Isaiah emphasizes the spiritual sense of Zion, Jerusalem, and Israel, representing the Church of Christ, where all distinctions of nationhood are erased. The sermon highlights the need for repentance, faith, and the acceptance of the gospel for salvation, extending to all nations and peoples, as foretold in the Old Testament prophecies.

Transcript

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer; and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

--Paul the Apostle

And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord....

--Isaiah the Prophet

To which Israel do these words belong, and what and where is the Zion referred to? Upon the answer to this question hangs the interpretation of all prophecy, the nature of the Kingdom of God, and the present standing of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. By consequence, there depends upon the answer the establishment, or the re-establishment, of the full preaching of the Word of God and the setting up again of the fallen tabernacle of the evangelical faith.

It will be our purpose in this paper to assert, and (God helping us) to prove, that the Israel referred to is the New Covenant Israel, that community of faith, the heir to the promises made to the fathers, composed of Jew and gentile, in which the lines of nationhood are forever obliterated, nor can be redrawn without

altering the constitution of the Church herself and abolishing the true Kingdom of Christ.

We shall endeavor to show that the "Zion" referred to in the prophecy above can mean only the New Testament Zion, the mystic New Jerusalem, the Church of our Savior Jesus Christ, the whole company of the redeemed. Jerusalem in Palestine was abolished forever as to its spiritual significance, by the words of Christ, "Neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem shall men worship the Father..." (John 4:21). Therefore, the prophecy quoted at the head of this paper cannot have any relevance to the question of a restoration of the Jewish people as a nation to the favor of God.

It must be obvious that if Zion is taken here in a spiritual sense then Israel and Jacob are to be understood in the spiritual sense likewise, and that the covenant referred to in the prophecy is the new or everlasting covenant of the divine mercy made in Christ and sealed with His blood at Calvary on behalf of the election of grace, the true Israel of God. According to the clear and unchallengeable Pauline doctrine, all distinction between Jew and gentile has been abolished forever (Ephesians 2:15 and 3:6).

This being the case; all cognate prophecies in the Old Testament belonging to the same category as that quoted above must obviously be interpreted by the same rule and in the same manner.

The author of *The Puritan Hope* (Mr. Iain Murray) agrees that Paul's interpretation of Isaiah 59:20-21 must not rest with that prediction alone: it is but a sample of a whole family of predictions. Thus he writes, "By referring to Isaiah 59:20...he teaches us that we are to look for a larger fulfillment in history of some of the grandest Old Testament predictions" (Introduction, p. xxi). Again, "...a key is given to us for the interpretation of a number of Old Testament prophecies which are similar to the two particular texts which Paul quotes" (p. 74).

Our author proceeds to tell us that the Puritans (he omits to say in this place NOT all of them) "saw this clearly and used the key to good effect in their expositions of the Old Testament." So much the worse for the Puritans who so wrote, if their expositions had no more substance in them than is displayed in the book, *The Puritan Hope*. For of serious exegetical work on the text in Isaiah we can find no trace in Mr. Murray's book. There are quotations from Robert Leighton (17th century) and George Hutcheson, but no exegesis.

Leighton is quoted from a sermon on Isaiah 60:1 (a chapter to which we shall have good cause to refer) entitled, "Christ the Light and Lustre of the Church," in which the preacher on the one hand applies the words to the whole church, and on the other says that the invitation to "arise and shine" has a peculiar application to the "literal Jerusalem" when the "return of the Jews shall be the riches of the gentiles" -- which our author omits to tell us is the very opposite of what Paul wrote. Romans 11:12 - speaks of "the fall of them" and "the diminishing of them" being the riches of the gentiles, not their return.

George Hutcheson is likewise quoted as allowing Hosea 2:23 to be applicable to both Jew and gentile, "but the full accomplishment is reserved for Israel at their conversion as a nation."

BEGGING THE QUESTION

Readers of *The Puritan Hope* should be clear that although its author apparently repudiates the idea of a future "Jewish kingdom whose capital; Jerusalem, will hold sway over the earth," his eschatology is nonetheless in disarray regarding the true doctrine of the Church. He claims that there is "no conflict between Paul's gospel and the belief that in 'the latter day glory' vast numbers of the natural descendants

of Abraham will own and serve their Redeemer and that Israel will then show forth the glory of that gospel as, to a lesser extent, the English-speaking nations visited with revival have done in the past" (p. 78).

But Mr. Murray begs the question. That question is not whether more or less Jews will be converted in the future, but whether the prophecies of the Kingdom of Christ were uttered and written for the Jew as such, or for the Church of Jew and gentile in which all distinction of nation and privilege is obliterated forever. This and this only is the question, and the whole future of Biblical exposition depends upon the answer. The suggestion by Mr. Murray that the prophecies belong to both, with the gentile a sort of junior partner in the benefits, will not bear exegetical examination; and it is highly significant that neither our author nor the considerable class of expositors past or present, with which he is associated in greater or less degree, make any serious attempt at exegetical proof. The meteoric rise of Dispensationalism (which our author deplors, of course) which now dominates by far the largest area of evangelicaldom is a logical outcome of the so-called "Puritan Hope." Mr. Murray denies the parentage and would cast off the orphan, but he is less logical (because more prudent) than his fellow chiliasts.

The whole object of Mr. Murray's book is to prove, or attempt to prove, that a key prediction in Isaiah requires a Jewish interpretation. The consequences of this claim that Bible eschatology requires a Jewish restoration on a scale so grand as to eclipse all former glories of the Church (or Kingdom of Christ) during the past two thousand years, are very far reaching. The claim imposes a Jewish solution to history and requires a radical adjustment of the entire prophetic record in the Old Testament.

Mr. Murray cannot escape this conclusion because he declares quite plainly that Paul's quotation (in Romans 11) of Isaiah 59:20 and Jeremiah 31:34 "corroborates what Paul has already affirmed respecting Israel. The way he (Paul) employs these texts is proof that the full scope of Old Testament prophecy has not yet been realised in history" (p.74).

He goes on to say, "This is of major significance." (Indeed it is!) "We have already noted," our author proceeds, "that predictions of Christ's kingdom in Isaiah and Jeremiah were considered applicable by the New Testament writers, to the Church in the apostolic age. Paul's use of the same prophets in Romans 11:26-27 now shows that the fulfillment was only initial and by no means exhaustive. A larger fulfillment still awaits the Church" -- and he goes on to state that this larger fulfillment will come about through "the removal of Israel's sins."

Mr. Murray further proceeds to diminish the gentile interest in the greatest "new covenant" passage in the Old Testament -- Jeremiah 31:31-34. This passage, twice quoted by Paul in Hebrews, has (says our author) "both been fulfilled and is yet to be fulfilled in a day of greater gospel blessing (Romans 11:27)."

This only confirms our warning that the surrender of one such text to the Jew entails the surrender of the entire prophetic field and that those who embark upon this course will find that they cannot hold their horses.

If Mr. Murray were even more explicit and gave a list of those texts from the Old Testament which (he believes) require for their fulfillment a major Jewish interest in the "Latter Day Glory," we should then see the extent to which the axis of prophecy leans heavily on the side of the rabbis. It is our contention that the so-called "Puritan Hope" cleared the ground for modern millennial Dispensationalism. Irving, Darby, and Scofield are the logical outcome of that illusory "hope," and the inundation of the evangelical world with these errors was to be expected once the Jewish nation was conceded to have a primary interest as a nation in the Old Testament predictions of the Kingdom of Christ.

Again Mr. Murray underwrites this inevitable outcome in his quotation of the two writers from earlier times, already referred to -- Robert Leighton and George Hutcheson (pp. 74-76). These quotations show that there is no limit to the subversion of Old Testament prophecy to make it conformable to Jewish interpretation, once the special, national interest of Jewry has been conceded in any one text. It is useless for cautious authors like Mr. Murray to deny the essential connection between these ambiguous interpretations and the extreme errors of millennialism and Dispensationalism. The men quoted by our author were good men, but they lived in days before eschatology became a close study. The Puritans did not perceive the logical end of their theories, but had they lived at the latter end of the 20th century they would (we are sure) have retreated in dismay from their false position and condemned with all the means at their disposal that ambiguous treatment of vital texts which has led to the subversion of the true doctrine of the Church in Old Testament prophecy and has marched on from that point to destroy the evangelical pulpit.

THE ONLY RULE OF INTERPRETATION

That the Old Testament prophecies must be understood only in terms of New Testament usage is axiomatic and is accepted as THE principle of prophetic interpretation by all reasonable men of whatever party.

But the Puritan Hope writers depart notably from this principle in order to establish their theory. In the face of all the New Testament examples which insist on the Church of the Redeemed as being the fulfillment of the promises of the Kingdom, they select and isolate one, used by Paul in Romans 11:26-27, and without any attempt at exegetical proof, assert that it foretells a time of Jewish national privilege.

From that point they proceed to demolish the true gentile interest in every other Old Testament prediction of the Kingdom of Christ by insinuating that Romans 11:26-27 provides a key by which a much wider field of prediction must be understood.

We remind our readers, however, that the New Testament teaches the exact contrary. It insists on the abolition of all national interest in the Kingdom of Christ. Paul's dictum in Galatians 3:28-29 states that a basic fact of Christ's kingdom is that in it no question of race or nationhood can possibly enter. Thus:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then ARE YE ABRAHAM'S SEED AND HEIRS ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE.

Who are the Jews? Who are the Israelites? Who are Abraham's descendants? Paul answers, "All--and only those--who are Christ's, be they Jew or gentile."

To make Paul say that in Romans 11 the "Zion" and "Jacob" to whom the promises belong and to whom the Redeemer is sent are in fact the earthly nation of Israel is to overturn the New Testament and set Paul against Paul. National interest and genealogical descent once more become paramount--and they do not come alone, for as we shall see, The Puritan Hope goes on to erect again the Jewish temple and set up the sacrifices of the Jewish altar. This they cannot avoid because they include in their Jewish scheme the whole of Isaiah 60 in addition to Isaiah 59. (see The Puritan Hope, pp. 74-75)

For our friends to attempt to set a double value on the predictions, a lesser for the gentiles and a greater for the Jew, is the very nadir of exegesis and is far more dangerous than the Dispensationalism which

makes the whole over to the Jew without a blush. The latter error is so patent that reasonable men will not entertain it for a moment. The "double-value" interpretation, on the contrary, is highly commendable to those who desire the convenience of riding in two directions at the same time. The unwary are likely to be deceived by its very plausibility, as it reassures the gentile, on the one hand, and rehabilitates the Jewish nation, on the other, and relieves one of the burden of serious thought.

There can be no escape, however, from the fact that this method of handling the prophecies completely destroys the relevance of the Epistle to the Galatians; because the Jewish prerogative against which Paul so vehemently contended is preserved and held in a state of abeyance only until a Jewish day of glory shall come.

Jewish national restoration to the divine favor is, of course, essential to the theory. The increase of Jewish conversions to the level postulated by The Puritan Hope would not be perceptible without such a restoration to favored nationhood. A mere increase in the number of Jewish baptisms would not be a proof of anything. The theory requires a positive Jewish take-over of the Christian Church, if not a complete supplanting of the same. The parable of the laborers in the vineyard presents a wry appearance in the light of this theory. Those laborers who were first hired in the morning time are the Jewish laborers. Those who came in, even at the eleventh hour, and worked for the same wage are the gentiles. But the Jewish objection to the equal reward is wonderfully turned upside down by The Puritan Hope, which in fact asserts that the gentile is first in the Kingdom of Grace and the Jew comes last, receiving in the last span of time a reward for 2,000 years of unbelief transcending all that might be expected by the gentile for an equivalent period in which martyrdom, persecution, and bearing of the cross have proved his faithfulness to Christ.

It is not enough to make a selection of Puritan authors to buttress the opinion. The Puritans were fallible guides on these matters. Godly men they were indeed, but prophetic exegesis was not their strong point. They were new to it, and they displayed in their handling of it a naivety not to be surprised at, considering, the recent emergence of the study in their time.

THE PURITAN AGE

Contrary to popular ideas induced by modern publishing enterprises, the Puritan Age was NOT a great theological age: it was a great preaching age. Most of its great men were parish ministers of deep piety and faithfulness, and roundly orthodox, but their works are largely books of their preaching and not of theological erudition. Owens on Hebrews, it has been said, was the only considerable contribution to Biblical science made by the Puritan Age. This is not to belittle those great and good men, but to put them into the perspective to which they belong. Their books were well adapted to the needs of common Christians then and now, but without any special theological intent. Freedom of conscience and other cognate matters of church politics were the issues then, not exegesis as such.

The present saturation of the market with so vast a range of their writings might await an assessment as to whether the effort is having a commensurate effect on the quality of the "Reformed" pulpit, and we suspect that the motives for this prolific enterprise are not unconnected with the commercial requirements of an industry hungry for pabulum.

At any rate, where others who have written on prophetic matters have been notably neglectful in the exegetical field, we would venture to make a modest attempt to repair that deficiency and at the same time raise the vision of our younger pulpit men to perceive some of the glorious dimensions of prophetic

exposition and (to borrow a phrase from Paul) "to provoke to emulation" those which are of our flesh, and so improve some of them.

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AN EXPOSITORY SKETCH OF ISAIAH

The majestic book of Isaiah the Prophet is a marvel of inspired construction. It consists of two principal parts clearly separated from each other by an historical interlude of four chapters (Isaiah 36-39), in themselves prophetic, which supply a most valuable key to the vast prophecy as a whole. That interlude, which recounts the deliverance from the Assyrian invasion, the recovery of King Hezekiah from his fatal illness, and his weakness in the affair of the ambassadors from Babylon, marks the division between the two covenants and the transition from one to the other.

The first, or Jewish covenant (that of Moses and the Law), runs its course from Isaiah 1-35. It is a record of failure, guilt, and condemnation. The nation of Israel fails under trial, and in the divine remonstrance becomes (but for the remnant of the faithful) as Sodom and Gomorrah (Isaiah 1:9). God has nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Him. Why will they be smitten more and more? "Come, let us reason together." Forgiveness is extended to the penitent. All in vain. From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is "nothing but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores."

The Assyrian woe carries away the Northern Kingdom of Israel; but God will break Assyria to show His sovereignty over the nations. Yet the fall of Assyria will be followed by the rise of a new and more terrible agent of the divine providence--Babylon. This new power will sweep away entirely the remaining nation of Judah, whose monarchy will be brought to an end and will not reappear until God Himself, in the Person of Emmanuel, the Son of God, appears to set up a kingdom of redemption which will never fail, and establish a throne which is eternal and which will rule over all.

This "new thing," this new and glorious kingdom of grace, is otherwise known as the New Covenant, in contrast with the Old Covenant of which Moses was the agent or mediator. The new order is eternal and can never fail; because it is founded on the righteousness and obedience of One who is both man and God.

The new kingdom is destined in the prophecy to exceed the old as heaven exceeds the earth. It is considered a light thing that so great a benefit should be confined to the dimensions of the old nation with its tiny geographical boundaries. The boundaries of the new will be set in the ends of the earth and all the tribes of the gentiles, even to the land of Sinim (TSI-NIM) or China, considered as the most remote and inaccessible of all, will contribute its quota of citizens to the new Kingdom of Emmanuel (Isaiah 49:6, 12).

In the nature of things, this new order is eternal and cannot be subject to alteration, interruption, or modification of any kind. Any radical change in its constitution would throw over it the same aspect of failure as characterized that, which it superseded.

This is the theme of Isaiah's prophecy, and its two great sections or covenants are clearly defined and separated by that historical interlude which strangely and wonderfully recapitulates the old and introduces the new.

There are important features to be noted in the contrast between the two fundamental sections of the prophecy. The failure under the Old Covenant is shot through and through with the promise of the new.

The second chapter of Isaiah opens with the anticipation of the new Kingdom of Grace under the figure of Zion exalted above the hills (a Bible figure for kingdoms and powers) to which all nations flow. Within the boundaries of that kingdom, war ceases forever. Righteousness and peace kiss each other.

The Emmanuel child appears in Isaiah 7, born of a virgin, at a time when the house of David has long since forgotten what it is to enjoy the kingly dignity.

Chapter 9 introduces the preaching of the gospel, not after all beginning in Jerusalem but in "Galilee of the nations," which typifies the nations of the gentile world walking in darkness and now beholding a "great light." The Emmanuel child is born (verse 6). He is none other than the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. Zion, behold thy God!

Chapter 11 pictures again the coming Messiah (Christ) anointed by the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord to govern and deliver His people. His new covenant or gospel reign is appropriately pictured in terms of Edenic perfection, because His redemptive work reverses the verdict of the Fall of Man and removes the curse. The restoration of the original creation is not literal, but figurative of the peace and prosperity which reign in that new creation of the Spirit brought with Him through death and the grave. Under this happy figure, the ferocity of the wolf, the leopard, the lion, and the bear disappears and babes play with serpents. The earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord--for the spark of light hitherto confined to an insignificant people in a tiny kingdom becomes the blazing light of the gospel day illuminating all peoples and tribes to the ends of the earth. In this manner, the earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, through the preaching of the gospel, "as the waters cover the sea."

The banishment of the ferocious instincts of the wild beasts portrays the effect of the gospel on the ferocity and hatred of those whose depraved and fallen nature has been transformed by the regenerating power of the Spirit of God. Highlighted in this, as in all prophecies of Messiah's reign, is the prominent place accorded to the gentiles (verses 10-11).

It is highly significant that Chapter 13 introduces the empire and the fate of Babylon, then only a satrapy of Assyria, but destined to be the destroyer of David's kingdom and the oppressor of the people of God. Its doom is written before its reign begins.

Chapters following describe the divine judgments on the nations which surrounded Israel and were involved in her history. Jerusalem herself is overtaken by the universal judgment (Isaiah 29-33). Chapter 34 is a scene of universal desolation, prophetic of the judgments of God universally visited upon the wicked; and Chapter 35, which closes the first division of Isaiah's prophetic book, fittingly describes the coming gospel blessing, of which the second part of Isaiah treats at large.

Gloriously, therefore, the first section, so denunciatory of the failure of the covenant people under the old order, looks out over the gap of history (destined to last for nearly eight centuries) to that glorious time when Emmanuel appears, and by His personal triumph over sin and death at the cross, brings in a new Israel, a new kingdom, of which the first was only the shadow. In this kingdom, the ransomed (the redeemed) of the Lord "come to Zion" with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads (Isaiah 35).

THE RANSOMED COME TO ZION

That Chapter 35 depicts a spiritual scene, not an earthly, a gospel or "heavenly" condition, not a geographical and "national" state, is clear from the exalted and poetic rhapsody of the prophet in his

description of the glories and delights of Emmanuel's reign. This is indisputably the case if we are correctly to understand the words:

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert (verses 5-6).

The picture closes with the words: "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

But what and where is the Zion to which the redeemed of the Lord come? Jerusalem in Palestine? Or the heavenly Jerusalem? Paul declares elsewhere "But ye are come to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12:22).

And when do they come to Zion? Two thousand years after the gospel covenant has been introduced by the death and resurrection and exaltation of Christ? A future day of Jewish rehabilitation? The entire fate of the Puritan Hope and of millennialism and Scofield Dispensationalism depends upon the answer, for it is plain:

(1) Either the Zion of Isaiah 35 is the whole body of the redeemed throughout the entire gospel era to the end of the world, with all distinction of Jew and gentile obliterated forever,

(2) Or it is the exclusive purlieu of a generation of Jews still waiting in the wings of history after 2,000 years of the gospel.

If "Zion" in this place is the "Jerusalem which is above" (Galatians 4:26) and the "great city, the holy Jerusalem which descends out of heaven from God" (Revelation 21:10), then by what rule of interpretation do our friends assert that "ZION" in Romans 11:26 is the Jewish nation if not also the Jewish city in Palestine? And how can they consistently claim that though the Zion of Isaiah 35:10 is the Church of the Redeemed of all nations indifferent as to national origin or privilege, the Zion of Isaiah 59:20 (Romans 11:26) is another Zion, the subject of a special prophecy belonging to the Jew.

"And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). Against this fatal error, the whole might of Paul's pen in Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Hebrews is directed--and more besides.

If, on the other hand, the Zion referred to is to be spiritually understood of the heavenly mystery of the Church of our Savior Jesus Christ, we suggest (in all love and sincerity) that our friends will need to withdraw their books and offer their apology to the Church of the Redeemer for having unchurched them.

There can be no way out from this dilemma, because in claiming the Zion of Isaiah 59:20 for the Jew they have settled for the conclusion that all cognate prophecies belong to the same person.

THE SECOND SECTION OF ISAIAH

We now proceed to the second part of Isaiah's prophecy (Chapters 40-66), with some comments on the historical interlude of Chapters 36-39.

Most resolutely must the error be repudiated which would defer in whole or in part the second section of Isaiah to any remote period of history, because the prophetic time element in the historic chapters (36-39) requires that the setting up of the kingdom in its new covenant and eternal phase, described from Isaiah 40 to Isaiah 60, should begin where the old ceases--and that is at the cross and at the empty tomb. The New Covenant (which lay hidden in the old must follow the old without a break as the man follows his own shadow.

The repulse of the Assyrian invasion, the illness and miraculous recovery of King Hezekiah, and the episode of the Babylonian ambassadors provide the ground of all the prophecies preceding and succeeding that crisis. To perceive this historical unity is to perceive the great error of disrupting the prophecy to make way for the critical theory of a plurality of Isaiahs, an error which we repudiate with all our soul.

The historical interlude of Chapters 36-39 marks the passing of the Old Covenant and the introduction of the New--the transition from law to gospel, from earthly nation to spiritual, from earthly monarchy to the monarchy of Him who reigns from an eternal throne.

A hint of this is found in the words of Isaiah to Hezekiah (Isaiah 37: 30-32), where the devastation wrought by the Assyrian invasion is compensated by a divine providence concerning the ruined land and the ruined harvests:

This shall be a sign unto thee. Ye shall eat this year such as groweth of itself; and the second year that which springeth of the same: and in the third year, sow ye and reap... And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of Mount Zion. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall do this.

"The remnant of the house of Judah" is the elect in whom the nation is planted again and flourishes into a great tree. Jerusalem and Zion here are the representative term of the covenant church of the Old Testament from which the Lord of Hosts takes this escaping remnant and carries them over to new covenant ground through the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

The sickness of Hezekiah was prophetic. It was the sickness unto death of the Davidic monarchy. The lengthening of the king's life by 15 years denoted the interlude exactly measured in Jewish jubilees, from Hezekiah to the coming of great David's greater Son to set up a kingdom of grace which should never pass away.

The healing of the king by a poultice of figs was also a prophetic action. It denoted that there was virtue still remaining in that nation which so often is associated in figure with the fig tree. The Old Covenant had not yet run its course.

But those 15 years of added life? Here is a great wonder. Those fifteen years are fifteen jubilee years; and a jubilee (when all debts were liquidated and servitude ended) occurred every 50 years. Fifteen jubilees equal 750 years, and that was the period of time from Hezekiah to the great gospel jubilee proclaimed by Christ in the synagogue of Nazareth in the very words of Isaiah 61:1-2 (Luke 4:16-21).

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord....

Here is a fixing of prophetic time as clear as the 70 weeks of Daniel 9. The Lord God proclaims His jubilee, not in Jerusalem but in Galilee of the gentiles, for this is a jubilee not merely for the elect remnant of Israel but for the redeemed of all nations to the utmost limits of time. The whole of the second section of Isaiah is taken up with the description of this new covenant jubilee, and everything in those last 27 chapters must be understood in terms of it. Readers are reminded that the jubilee chapter occurs only two chapters from the text (Isaiah 59:20) which we are engaged to explain in supra-national terms for the spiritual Israel of God. Let those who will give the Jew an exclusive or privileged place in Isaiah 59 do the same for him in Isaiah 61. Let them limit the "Zion" and "Jacob" of the former text to Jewry, by consistently limiting the jubilee of Emmanuel to Jewry. Indeed, some of them actually do this, and against this outrage every right-minded Christian must protest with the utmost vigor. The only way by which a special national interest for Jewry can be established in Christ must be at the expense of gentile interest, for the Old Testament prophecies--which are held to sanctify that Jewish interest--are the only prophecies to which the gentile can look as the ground of his hope.

Hezekiah's weakness in the showing of the treasures of his royal house to the ambassadors of the King of Babylon is not recorded in Isaiah 39 merely to expose the frailty of a good man, but positively as a prophetic foreshadowing of the end of that royal house of David. For it was Babylon that destroyed the monarchy of Judah in the days of Nebuchadnezzar; and the next king thereafter was Emmanuel--who was crowned and enthroned upon a cross.

JERUSALEM COMFORTED

Isaiah 40 commences the grandest description in the entire range of Holy Scripture of the wonders and glories of the Kingdom of Christ. The 27 chapters to the end of the book comprise one entire prophetic sermon without a break, in contrast with the earlier chapters (Isaiah 1-35) which consist of a number of separate visions distributed among the successive reigns of Judah's kings.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double (a true recompense leading to complete justifying grace) for her sins.

The time of this "comfort" is fixed. The man follows his shadow. The New Covenant follows on the Old without a break. The gospel comfort arrives with Christ at His first advent. Chapter 40 belongs to the new covenant which is as much for gentile as for Jew. Jerusalem which has been recompensed, forgiven, justified, her long warfare accomplished, is the mystic Jerusalem hidden in the earthly for the duration of the Old Covenant, but now issuing forth from the grave with Christ as His bride, in whom all the promises under the Old Covenant are fulfilled.

Jerusalem, Zion, Jacob, Israel--these terms must always be distinguished as to their prophetic significance. The old Jerusalem is succeeded by the new Jerusalem, all of whose citizens are pardoned, redeemed, justified. Their peace (in a world of tribulation) flows down like a river, in spite of trials, persecutions, afflictions, and crosses. It does not and cannot mean the earthly Jerusalem; Israel according to the flesh. The true Israel was always an elect minority within the unbelieving nation grown old in its apostasy. It is now expanded into a new "nation" of Jew and gentile. Here are the promises to Abraham fulfilled, as Paul tells us in his epistles--fulfilled in gentile as well as Jew, Christ having made out of twain, one new man, so making peace, reconciling both unto God in one body by the cross. Gentiles are here with equal rights in Abraham as any Jew. Wherefore, they are no more "strangers and foreigners" but

fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God. Here is the new and heavenly temple, not made with stone and lime but with the souls of the redeemed, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. (see Ephesians 2:11-22)

That this is the identity of the Jerusalem which is "comforted" in Isaiah 40 is proved by the following words of verse 3: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness." This is John the Baptist introducing the Mediator of the New Covenant. The time of the fulfillment is therefore from Calvary onwards without a break, as no true expositor has ever denied. The Jerusalem of this chapter is the heavenly Jerusalem, the Church, in which national identity does not count and never can be restored without disturbing fundamentally the foundations of the Church.

The Zion and Jacob of Isaiah 59:20 must be the same as the Jerusalem of Isaiah 40, and the "all Israel" which is saved according to Paul in Romans 11 is likewise that Israel of which these texts treat--or there is no such thing as a rule or principle of prophetic interpretation.

John the Baptist prepares in the desert a highway for our God, every valley being exalted and every mountain and hill made low, the crooked made straight and the rough places plain. This is spiritual geography, though all the World says otherwise, for the time has passed, and the geography of the earthly Palestine remains the same 2,000 years after John proclaimed all must be leveled so that the kingdom of God might come.

Already the gentile is in view, "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isaiah 40:5).

The eye travels down the chapter and sees the words:

O Zion that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain: O Jerusalem that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength.... Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God (Isaiah 40:9).

The cities of Judah are the vast expanse of the church in her individual daughters throughout all time and all nations, as the "daughters of Jerusalem" in the Song of Solomon denote the same, and as Christ on the way to the cross warned the earthly daughters of Jerusalem that their day was about to close in judgment (Luke 23:27-31). If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? The green tree was the Old Covenant which still stood, having life remaining in it. What would happen to the earthly city and nation when the tree became dead and dry and ready to fall, as fall it did in A. D. 70 when the nation's probation (to the Jew first) ended in their complete rejection of the gospel kingdom and covenant of Christ?

It is of this heavenly Zion--and none other--that David wrote in Psalm 110:2:

"The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion."

And again in Psalm 2:6:

"Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."

Both these Davidic prophecies have been fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul fixes the timing in Acts 13:33-34. Christ now reigns from Zion (and has reigned ever since His ascension to the right hand of the Father). And veritably He does not reign in or from that city in Palestine but in heaven itself

from His covenant throne.

The deity of Christ is declared in Isaiah 40:9, "Behold your God." He is pictured coming forth as the shepherd of His people, feeding His flock and gathering the lambs to His bosom (40:11). Yet this compassionate Savior and God abates nothing of His omnipotence. He weighs the mountains in His scales and spans the compass of the heavens (40:12). He asks counsel of none and always acts according to His own sovereign wisdom (40:13). The nations are as a drop in the bucket to Him (40:15). The frivolous conceptions of God now reigning in modern evangelicaldom are severely rebuked in these descriptions of the sovereign Redeemer.

The old covenant sacrifices are as nothing. He will abolish them. What altar will be built to Him? Let them set fire to Lebanon and heap on that stupendous conflagration all the beasts that roam its forests, and it will be a holocaust altogether insufficient to satisfy Jehovah (40:16). Only the sacrifice of Himself will suffice for the sin of the world.

So the chapters of Isaiah roll on without a break; describing in language the most exalted and incomparable in human speech, that one thing which Isaiah away back in Uzziah's reign was commissioned to preach (Isaiah 6)--namely, the end of the Old Covenant and the setting up in Christ of the New.

CHRIST BAPTIZED -- ISAIAH 42

Chapter 42 presents the Lord Christ at His inaugural baptism in the Jordan--that baptism which He needed not for Himself but as the representative of His elect people for whom He was fulfilling all righteousness. Verse 1 of Chapter 42 is the Hebrew of which Matthew 3:17 is the Greek---"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Compare Matthew 12:18, where the Greek word for "servant" is the very remarkable word for "child" already used in the Septuagint version of Isaiah 42:1 and carried through in Acts 4:30 ("Thy holy child Jesus") and elsewhere.

Isaiah continues on new covenant ground throughout, and the gentiles as the true children of the kingdom are always in view:

I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house (Isaiah 42:6-7).

It is impossible to understand the subsequent chapters except by recognizing that there are two covenants, two Israels, two Jerusalem's (see Galatians 4:22-31). The first Israel fails and is rejected. The second cannot fail because it is united in covenant decree and by the Spirit of Adoption to its Head, the Eternal Son.

The first Israel is given over for a spoil and to the robbers because of willful rejection of God. The judgments poured upon this "Jacob and Israel" leave the nation in blind unbelief and incorrigible ignorance.

But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore, Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken and hear for the time to come? Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? For they would not walk in his ways,

neither were they obedient unto his law. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about; yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart (Isaiah 42:22-25).

CHAPTER 43

Chapter 43 again introduces the new "Jacob" and "Israel". These are the redeemed (43:1). The power of God calls them from the four corners of the earth (43:5-6). "Keep not back," cries Omnipotence. These are the elect (43:7) created for the glory of God.

It is objected that we have no right to differentiate between the Israel which is rejected and the Israel which is subsequently saved. But the problem is not ours. It is theirs who by refusing to recognize the two Israels set themselves in conflict with the Apostle Paul, who in Romans 4, Galatians 4, and Ephesians 2 (and elsewhere) sees the seed of Abraham as one elect body of Jew and gentile indifferent as to racial origin.

If the Church of our Savior Christ is the legitimate successor in unbroken continuity with the Old Testament Church and the lawful heir of the promises made to the Fathers, if Christ has reconciled Jew and gentile in one body by the cross and made of twain one new man (Ephesians 2), if that one body of Christ is the object upon which (all the time) the eye of prophecy rested, then there can be no lawful objection to recognizing that earthly "Jacob" and "Jerusalem" were all along designed to be only the preparatory phase of the true kingdom of Christ, in which "Jacob," "Jerusalem," and "Zion" would denote the new covenant Church of Jew and gentile.

Therefore, we are required to recognize and accept that Jerusalem redeemed and restored is the Jerusalem which is from above, the mother of us all (Galatians 4); and Jerusalem in Palestine, which is "in bondage with her children," has been succeeded in divine history by that glorious city which the earthly only dimly foreshadowed. The heavenly bride has followed her own shadow (to repeat again our figure).

When the Lord says,

But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine (Isaiah 43:1);

He is addressing the "Jacob" and "Israel" of redemption, the whole election of grace, one body with Christ their mystic Head, who in these vital chapters is announced by John the Baptist, acknowledge by the Father in Baptism on behalf of His members, and later on in Isaiah's great sermon is seen in His sufferings and rejection and all-atoning death and glorious resurrection, by which a new Israel is born and carried through the grave to rise with Him and dwell with Him in heavenly state (Ephesians 2:6).

Is it an offence against the earthly Israel and Jerusalem to declare that the rejected and despised Redeemer should triumph gloriously in a resurrected and spiritual Israel which; because of new covenant grace, can never fail? Whose glory is it that we seek? the glory of an earthly nation grown old in its wickedness and pride, or the glory of a Redeemer to whom is given as a reward of His merits and obedience a world-wide dominion, a new Israel gathered from all quarters of the earth and from the utmost limits of time?

Does this impoverish an "Israel" already disinherited and rejected, or does it not rather establish a greater "Israel" to which all have access whether they be of the natural seed of Abraham or the long lost children of Japheth? (See Genesis 9:27, which foretells that Japheth will dwell in the tents of Shem.)

If The Puritan Hope does not recognize that there is a new Israel of Jew and gentile in which all the promises and purposes of God are realized and that henceforth this is the only Israel of the prophecies; then it must interpret all those prophecies in favor of Jewry and stand together with the rabbis and their Talmudical theologies in declaring that earthly Israel always was and is and ever will be the exclusive object of Old Testament prophecy.

If, on the other hand, The Puritan Hope accepts the doctrine of the new Israel, it must do so on the ground of all those scriptures which describe the New Testament order in terms of "Israel," "Jerusalem," "Zion," and "Jacob". They may admit no exceptions and therefore their reliance on Isaiah 59:20-21 is false and untenable, and they must surrender to the Church the quotation by Paul in Romans 11 and acknowledge that the "all Israel" which is to be saved is the new Israel of the prophecies, where all national distinctions and promises and privileges are of necessity obliterated.

We cannot too often repeat that our objection to The Puritan Hope is not as to the access of Jews in greater or lesser numbers to the Kingdom of Christ, but as to whether that access is graced by special prophecies which, as our author's book indicates, open the door to vast consequences diminishing all the past glories and achievements of the Christian church.

There is a valid question here: Why should the Lord choose language so ambiguous in relation to the great end of all prophecy? Why make it so easy to come to wrong conclusions regarding "Israel" and "Jerusalem"?

The answer is that God never intended prophecy to transgress the rule of faith. This is made clear by Christ when asked by His disciples why He spoke to the Jews in parables. His reply (Matthew 13) was to quote Isaiah 6:

Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

If the Old Testament prophets had declared plainly that when Christ came the Jewish State would be abolished and a new, spiritual, mystic nation and kingdom and city would take its place, where would be repentance and faith? The evangelical graces would be unnecessary to the reception of truth. Conflict, search for truth, scanning of conscience, trial, would be unnecessary.

Christ always observes this principle: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." He made no attempt to enlighten the Jews as to the true meaning of His words, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." It was left to John, many years later, to tell us, "He spake of the temple of His body." Meanwhile, the misunderstood words formed the ground of one of the chief accusations against Christ at His trial (compare John 2:18-21 and Matthew 26:61).

I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes (Matthew 11:25).

The principle is always the same--prophetic truth is presented as a mystery and is revealed only to faith. The kingdom of heaven is a mystery to the Jew--as it is also to many evangelical teachers and expositors including, sad to say, many who are now enthusiastic for the "Puritan Hope." That "hope" is illusory because it is founded upon the same Jewish boasting which Christ condemned. Our exponents of this illusory "hope" do not, of course, fall into so terrible a category as the Jewish expositors, but they have committed the same Jewish error which refuses to recognize that the Israel of prophecy is a mystery, that the restored country of Israel is a heavenly country not located on earth and that the "restoration" of Israel is realized in a kingdom of elect believers in which no national boundaries are drawn and no national privileges or "hopes" are preserved.

This is the New Testament, and to this all our true expositors must come if the Church of the New Testament is to return to her strength. Yet who does not see (except the willfully blind) that a spiritual interpretation of prophecy is essential if consistency is to be preserved?

Isaiah's description of the glory of Christ's kingdom excels in figures describing its peace and tranquility and the overthrow of all its enemies. Infant children play with the harmless serpent, the wolf and the lion and the ox and the lamb feed together in the same pasture. Swords are beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks. The arts of war are learned no more.

Yet this delightful scene is changed in a moment to one of danger, trial, and oppression, the conflict of the children of Zion with the children of this world in terms which have brought comfort in century after century to the tried and the troubled:

When thou passest through the Waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee (Isaiah 43:2-3).

Let the true believer beware of any interpretations which foretell that there ever will be or could be in this world a time when it will be otherwise than hard to be a Christian and when the cross and suffering and trial and tears are not the common companions of faith.

The teachings, of "Latter Day Glory" and "Puritan Hope" and other millennial or half-millennial interpretations are always distinguished by hints or declarations of an altered state of affairs when it will be easy to be a Christian and hard to be otherwise. The frightful "millennial" plagues visited upon unbelievers in that supposedly golden day of Latter Day Glory are only too vividly portrayed in that favorite playground of the millennialist--ZECHARIAH 14 (see our commentary, in this series, on Zechariah).

[Serial Number 042]

Another great prophetic principle which is to be observed in Isaiah is found in the recovery of the nation from its Babylonian exile as a foreshadowing of the great gospel deliverance wrought by Christ.

This principle flows directly from that historical interlude which we have noted as being the hinge upon which the Book of Isaiah turns. Isaiah 39 concludes with a prediction that the Chaldeans (then only a minor element in the Assyrian empire) would be the oppressors of Judah and would destroy the Judaic monarchy. A century was to elapse before this was fulfilled, but in anticipation of it, Babylon enters prominently into Isaiah's vision.

God was already preparing His instrument to destroy the Chaldean oppressor. Even his name was given in advance--CYRUS the Persian (Isaiah 44:28, 30; 45:1-5). It is Cyrus also who is referred to in Isaiah 41:2 and 25, though the name of Cyrus is not mentioned. This prophecy was duly fulfilled some 200 years after Isaiah uttered it, and the historical record is in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

This remarkable deliverance of Israel from the great exile was in itself prophetic of the Messianic deliverance, as is plain from the hyperbolic references to Cyrus. Things are said of the Persian monarch which can be true only of Christ (see Isaiah 41:2, margin).

Of Cyrus, God says, "He is my shepherd and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid." Again, "I will break in pieces the gates of brass and cut in sunder the bars of iron. And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places" (Isaiah 44:28; 45:2-3).

Chapters 46 and 47 describe the sovereignty of God in the overthrow of Babylon and again that overthrow contains features which reappear in the 17th and 18th chapters of the Book of Revelation.

Chapter 48 continues the theme of the Babylonian deliverance but also contains priceless elements descriptive of the coming of Christ. Christ declares in His earthly ministry that the words are descriptive of Himself in His divine unity with the Father (compare Isaiah 48:16 and John 8:25).

We are now drawing near to that great Section which prepares for the atoning death of Christ and the glorious worldwide extension of His kingdom: prophecies which culminate in the text toward which we have been working (Isaiah 59:20-21).

In Isaiah 49, Christ is speaking directly in the first person through His prophet. In verse 1 is the Annunciation of His Birth. The entire object of that birth is displayed--that He should redeem His people. The worldwide gathering of the true Israel follows. The gentiles become the children of Zion. The Church is one in Old Testament and New Testament, and the loss of the earthly children is compensated (see verses 20-21) by a new generation of children from all the nations of the world, of which the farthest removed, China (SINIM), is specifically mentioned (49:12).

Verse 8 fixes the time of the fulfillment of this prophecy:

Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 6:2 that NOW is the accepted time and NOW is the day of salvation spoken of by Isaiah--and he was writing to gentile Corinthians!

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

The sufferings of Christ in His rejection and repudiation begin in Isaiah 50, where He gives His back to the smiters and His cheeks to those who pluck out the hair and hides not His face from shame and spitting (50:6). Shining through the dark cloud of Israel's crime, however, is the serene promise of the comfort which will arise for "Zion" whose situation will be restored to the perfection of Eden

(Isaiah 51:3).

Embedded in this chapter is the remarkable miracle of the raising from the dead of the damsel of Mark 5:41. Compare verses 17-18 of Isaiah 51. That damsel prophetically is Israel or Zion. She dies under the old covenant and is raised from the dead by the word and the hand of Christ. She becomes the new Israel, the gospel church and Kingdom. Christ's miracles follow a strict prophetic pattern.

REGENERATED CHURCH

Isaiah 52 introduces a regenerated Church composed only of those who are born again. The Zion so described cannot by any interpretation mean other than the church of the redeemed:

Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments,

O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean (Isaiah 52:1).

The chapter proceeds to describe the introduction of the preaching of the gospel:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God (Isaiah 52:7-10).

Again we ask, "Which Zion?" Do our friends of The Puritan Hope agree that the Zion which puts on her beautiful garments is the gospel Zion, the Church of the New Testament? Do they accept that the preachers of verse 7 are the apostles and their successors? To what Zion do they declare, "Thy God reigneth"? What are the waste places of Jerusalem that rejoice? The rubble which the Roman legions left in the Valley of Jehoshaphat? Or does it not rather bespeak the renewal of the Church by the preaching of the Word, as the old Jerusalem gives place to the new and heavenly Zion?

Paul in Romans 10:15 gives us the answer. He associates the prophecy with the preaching of the gospel. "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

The great chapter closes with the incredible humiliation of the Son of Man as the prelude to His blessed work of "sprinkling many nations" and subduing all earthly powers before the spreading gospel

(52:14-15).

Again Paul tells us (Romans 15:21) where we should look for the fulfillment of these solemn revelations. The fulfillment began at the Cross. The age is that of the gospel. "But as it is written: To whom he was not spoken of, they shall hear: and they that have not heard shall understand." (See Isaiah 52:15.)

Isaiah 53 is an integral part of the entire sermon, and no one would dare to say that it applies to anything but the gospel--the new covenant of redemption.

Isaiah 54--"Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear" -looks back to the mystic Sarah, wife of Abraham and type of the Church--not the earthly Israel. For Paul tells us in Galatians 4:27 that the prophecy is of the heavenly Jerusalem, that Sarah does not stand for the Jewish order but for the Church of Jew and gentile.

It is Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid, who stands prophetically for the Jewish people, not Sarah.

If our friends will carefully examine Isaiah 54, they will find that this Sarah is in truth the New Testament. Israel's unfruitfulness in the days of the Old Covenant is now matched by worldwide fruitfulness in the New. The covenant of peace is made with the heavenly Sarah--never to be removed from her, and all her children will be taught of God (54:13)--a statement which Christ in John 6:45 claims for all the elect, taking it out of the mouth of unbelieving Israel. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

Chapter 55 continues the gospel theme; "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters...." Paul in Acts 13:34 claims Isaiah 55:3, "the sure mercies of David," for the gospel and preaches it in Antioch in Pisidia.

In Chapter 56 we see the strangers (gentiles) flooding into the Kingdom of God, here described as "my holy mountain," and once more we see how the geographical feature elsewhere known as Mount Zion is only the symbol of Christ's invisible kingdom.

Chapters 57 and 58 continue to press the disobedient nation with calls to repentance, assuring its people that there is no salvation and no promise for them except that which comes by way of renewal of life. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

The Sabbath, which is the token of the covenant relationship with God under the Old Testament as it is the symbol of the "rest" of the saint in Christ in the New Testament (Hebrews 4), is enjoined upon the people of earthly Israel who had despised the Sabbath and spurned the covenant. The promise of God still stood, of blessing upon the nation if they would only repent and return to the Lord, and this introduces Isaiah 59.

CHAPTER 59

Therein we find the Jewish people rejected as they spurn the latest call to repentance. They are left to the just consequences of their sins. It is not that the Lord is not able to deliver or that He cannot hear the prayer of the truly awakened, "but your iniquities have separated between you and your God." He hides His face from them (59:2).

This terrible chapter of Israel's incurable sin is quoted extensively by Paul (verses 7-8) in Romans 3. "Whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God" (Romans 3:19).

That is the end of the road in the Pauline doctrine. The apostasy of Israel under the highest advantages and the most brilliant display of the divine Being and character, is fully described here. Where has their covenant led them? "We grope for the wall like the blind and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night: we are in desolate places as dead men" (Isaiah 59:10).

"And he saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor, therefore his arm brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness it sustained him" (Isaiah 59:16). God must gird Himself to the task since man has utterly failed. Clad in all the garments of war against sin, armed with helmet and breastplate, robed in the red garments of vengeance (59:17), He comes forth in the Person of Christ, the Eternal Son, to win the crown and wrest the dominion from the tyrant of Hell.

But not alone for the remnant of Israel does He make war. For the lost tribes of the children of men, wandering in darkness since history dawned, now at length He appears to bring salvation to the ends of the earth: "So they shall fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19).

The salvation therefore is worldwide. The all-embracing covenant of divine mercy is equally a covenant for all who are called, be they Jew or gentile. From west to east, says the Word, they shall fear the Lord.

Then follow our great verses:

And the Redeemer shall come to Zion and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever (Isaiah 59:20-21).

As the entire flow of the prophet's sermon up to this very point has been to bring in the new covenant of grace not for the Jew only but also for the gentile, it is not possible for interpreters to assert that at this juncture the prophecy fractures and becomes exclusively or primarily concerned in the national interest of the unbelieving nation.

It is idle to assert that this is what Paul does, for this is the very point which has to be proved. We have shown that wherever the kingdom of Christ and the divine deliverance from sin is in view in Isaiah's sermon, Zion means the Church and the Church is Jacob and Israel mysteriously adopted to sonship and inheritance on equal terms with those Jews who believe. This is the only possible sense in which Paul can have said, "And so all Israel shall be saved."

To isolate this prophecy in Isaiah 59 and place it in a category of its own in which its significance is limited to one small nation on earth is the teaching of the TALMUD, not of Paul and the New Testament. The prophecy does not end with verse 20, but continues in verse 21 to enshrine the promise of the Spirit to the end of time, and veritably the promise of the Spirit was never a Jewish privilege but was in fact the seal of the new covenant upon the souls of all believers.

(Ephesians 1:13-14)

THE ZION OF CHAPTER 60

To prove that this is the case and that the Zion to which the Redeemer comes is the heavenly Zion, the New Jerusalem, the Church in which all identity of Jew and gentile is lost for ever, we proceed to the first verse of the following chapter (no chapter divisions, of course, when Isaiah wrote).

It is manifest that the Zion of Chapter 60 is the same Zion as that of Chapter 59. To this Zion the glorious words are directed: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee"

(Isaiah 60:1).

The author of The Puritan Hope cries, "No!" He calls in aid, from the year 1642, the pious Robert Leighton, one time Bishop of Dunblane and Archbishop of Glasgow, a grave and godly divine indeed. Dr. Leighton is quoted by our author with approval as declaring, "Undoubtedly that people of the Jews shall once more be

commanded to arise and shine and their

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