

# BIBLE STUDIES

"Now **these** were more noble **than** those **in** Thessalonica, **in** that they **received** the **word** with all **readiness** of **mind**, **examining** the **Scriptures** daily, whether these things were **so**" (Acts 17. 11)

STUDIES IN **THE** MINOR **PROPHETS**

VOLUME 41

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# BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'

VOLUME 41

JANUARY 1973

## MR. L. BURROWS

Editors wish to place on record their warm appreciation of the services of Mr. L. Burrows since he became an editor of *Bible Studies* in 1963. All interested in the magazine owe a great debt to him for his consistent hard work over many years. As editors we pay tribute to his knowledge of the Word and acquaintance with appropriate reference works which so greatly help in balanced study. With this was combined valuable administrative efficiency. So we shall feel keenly the loss of his services but wish him the Lord's blessing on his new responsibilities as an editor of *Needed Truth*.

## EDITORIAL

Our study in 1973 of the so-called "post-exilic" prophets is one whose immediate relevance will readily appeal to all. As is clearly brought out by contributing study groups this month from the first prophecy of Haggai, a remnant of people today, dedicated to the concept of the divine dwelling place, is appealed to with an unmistakable directness and urgency. Further on, in later months of our study, the urgent issues of the personal return of the Lord to this earth will be prominent in our thoughts. One of the significant features of the three prophets and their ministry is their very historical separation from the great pre-exilic prophets of Israel. God's people had received the divine oracles of the law and had been brought into their territorial inheritance in the land. Voices of great prophetic authority had rebuked them and pleaded with them as the national behaviour deteriorated towards the inevitable judgement of exile. Further mighty men brought them God's word during that tragic period and in due course they were brought back in sufficiently strong numbers to re-establish the Temple service and restore the walls.

Now there had long been in Israel schools of prophets (1 Sam. 10. 10; 2 Kings 2. 7) and clearly not all were wholly reputable. By the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, however, a thoroughly sorry state prevailed. In Neh. 6. 10-14 we find that noble man the victim of prophets and prophetesses who were in the enemy camp, and utterly false. Indeed, with friends like that, what need had he of enemies! It is in this depressing setting that voices are raised which are unmistakably authoritative, and Haggai's was the first. This is surely some measure of their stature. Doubtless part of Haggai's immediate success can be traced to the startling frankness of such a very clear word from God. He was direct, unadorned, arresting; the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message. The thought of the messenger is prominent too in Malachi's prophecy, and all three of these powerful men of God of remnant days had a ring of authority which readily commanded their recognition as authentic. Further centuries had to pass before the majestic sweep of Old Testament revelation was linked to the long awaited messianic forerunner, for "the law and the prophets were until John" (Luke 16. 16).

This month's study subject, Haggai 1, in the very nature of the writing, produces fewer topics for comment or question and answer than we have become used to in some recent studies. However, there will be many interesting issues raised, without doubt, in subsequent months in connection with the visions and prophetic utterances of the closing writings of the Old Testament Scriptures. *J. D. T.*

### *CHRONOLOGY OF THE TIMES OF HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH*

It is possible to be specific about the chronology of Haggai and Zechariah, in contrast to most of the minor prophets' writings. The general framework into which this chronology fits is given below, in which and throughout this article, the years are Jewish years, commencing in March/April, but corresponding to the pattern of Ptolemy's canon, which has been shown to be essentially correct both by archaeological and astronomical evidence.

536	1st of Cyrus as sole King	Decree to build Jerusalem <i>Temple</i> Zerubbabel's return	Ezra 1. 1 Ezra 2. 2
535	2nd of Cyrus		
534	3rd of Cyrus	Foundation of <i>Temple laid</i>	Ezra 3. 8
529	1st of Cambyses		
522	1st of Pseudo-Smerdis		
521	1st of Darius I	Work on <i>Temple</i> suspended	Ezra 4. 6
520	2nd of Darius I	<b>Haggai and Zechariah</b> prophesied	Ezra 5. 1-2
518	4th of Darius I	<i>Temple</i> work recommenced	<b>Haggai 1. 14-15</b>
516	6th of Darius I	Zechariah's prophecy continued	Zech. 7. 1
485	1st of Xerxes	<i>Temple</i> completed	Ezra 6. 15
465	1st of Artaxerxes	the "Ahasuerus" of Esther	
458	7th of Artaxerxes	Decree to beautify <i>Temple</i> :	
445	20th of Artaxerxes	Ezra's return Decree to <b>build City</b> Nehemiah's return	Ezra 7 Nehemiah 2. 1-9

(See Editorial note at the end of this article)

Soon after the laying of the foundation of the Temple in B. C. 535, building ceased because of the opposition of the people of the land in the days of Cyrus, Cambyses and Pseudo-Smerdis (who reigned only seven months). Not until fifteen years later, in B. C. 520, was the work recommenced, and that through the inspiration of Haggai and Zechariah. Such was their impact that twenty-four days of ministry overcame fifteen years of self-interest... (Hag. 1. 1, 15).

Hag. 2. 10-19 is interesting. The prophet appeals to his compatriots to think back over these fifteen years from the date on which he was speaking (24-9-B. C. 520) and to recall that the harvest had been scanty and the crops mildewed consequent upon their indolence in the Lord's work. However, because the building had restarted, God could say, "from this day will I bless you" (Hag. 2. 19). With such impetus, no wonder the temple was completed in four years and dedicated in the new year of B. C. 515

In connection with Haggai 2. 19 a word of warning is given against Anderson's claim in "The Coming Prince" (pages 70-71) that the date 24-9-B. C. 520 was the termination of a period of seventy "prophetic years". This concept appears only to apply to the "heptads" or "weeks" of the prophecy of Daniel 9 and related passages, in which the word "year" does not appear. In Scripture, the years are solar years. Anderson makes the error of ascribing the date 24-9-B. C. 520 to the time of the laying of the Temple founda-

tion, which actually occurred in B. C. 535. Further, no scriptural statement relative to a seventy year period is associated with this date.

There are, however, two seventy year periods referred to in Zechariah's prophecy, which merit further study. One is in Zech. 1. 12 relating to "indignation" falling on Jerusalem, and goes back to 10-10-B. C. 589, the ninth year of Zedekiah, when Nebuchadnezzar besieged the city (2 Kings 25. 1). Thus on 10-10-B. C. 520 sixty nine years had been completed, and the seventieth year was running its course on 24-11-B. C. 520 when Zechariah was speaking. The second seventy year period occurs in Zech. 7. 5 in respect of the regular fasts which had been kept in the fifth and seventh months, commemorating respectively the burning of the city in the fifth month of B. C. 587, the eleventh of Zedekiah (2 Kings 25. S), and the death of Gedaliah in the seventh month of B. C. 587 (2 Kings 25. 25). A full sixty-nine years had been completed in respect of each of these events and the seventieth year was running its course as Zechariah was speaking on 4-9-B. C. 518. Note that neither was a fully completed seventy years at the time it was referred to. These two seventy year periods must be distinguished from the seventy years of Daniel's captivity, rightly termed "The Captivity". This was a full seventy years commencing in B. C. 606 when Nebuchadnezzar took many captives, including Daniel, to Babylon and terminating in B. C. 536 when Zerubbabel led the return after the decree of Cyrus in his first year as sole king. The Captivity was unique in that it not only applied to Israel, but to *all nations*. All nations were prophesied by Jeremiah in 25. 11, 12 to come under Babylonian domination for this same seventy years (Jer. 29. 10). Thus the coincidence of the transfer of domination to Persia and the return of Israel's captives to Jerusalem is important to notice (2 Chron. 36. 20-21; Dan. 9. 2). Neither could take place until the seventy years had elapsed. By contrast, there was no sense in which the two seventy year periods of Zechariah had to be fulfilled before the work of the Temple could be resumed. Zechariah used only the seventy year concept as emphasis on his general encouragement to rebuild. Anstey in his "Romance of Bible Chronology" (see *Bible Studies* Vol. 2 No. 16, April, 1934, pages 55-58) unwarrantably appears to put all three seventy year periods on an equal footing and adds a fourth commencing on the 8th of Zedekiah, equally unwarrantably.

Further, Anstey's concept that Darius, Xerxes and Artaxerxes are one and the same person is not substantiated by recent research (nor, in passing, is his claim that there is a fifty-one year gap in Assyrian chronology between B. C. 834-783. See Thiele, "The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings", which also proves untenable Anstey's interregnal periods of the monarchy in his lists of the Kings of Judah and Israel). One of Anstey's reasons for wishing to compress these three Persian reigns into two centres on the two lists of returning captives given in Ezra 2. 1-70 and Neh. 7. 6-75. He claims that the former lists those that went up from Babylon with Zerubbabel and the latter with Nehemiah. The chronology of the table above separates these events by ninety-one years, which Anstey considered impossible on the grounds that since the vast majority of the names in the two lists agree, all those people could not be alive ninety-one years later. However, the argument is false, because *both* lists state that the names apply to those that returned with Zerubbabel *and* Nehemiah (Ezra 2. 2; Neh. 7. 7). Hence, since also the totals are the same (Ezra 2. 64; Neh. 7. 66) it is more likely that each list contains the sum total of both returns.

Now Joshua was the high priest associated with Zerubbabel's return (Ezra 3. 2) and Eliashib with Nehemiah's (Neh. 3. 1). According to Josephus, the spans of service of the High Priests in their succession are as follows (Aaron being No. 1):

<i>No.</i>	<i>High Priest</i>	<i>Years in Office</i>
24	Joshua	53
25	Joiakim	30
26	Eliashib	40

These years are completely in harmony with a ninety-one year span between the returns of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah. Thus Anstey, who is so helpful up to the time of the commencement of the Monarchy, is badly astray in his later concepts. Since his day (1913) the archaeological progress, which has completely demolished the Higher Critics' case, has equally established Bible chronology as harmonious with history, as far back as history can be certain. This, however, more than covers the times of Haggai and Zechariah.

*C. L. Prasher*

*Editors' Note*

**We appreciate the thoughtful research involved in this article. It raises several matters of far-reaching importance in connection with Bible chronology, including criticism of such well-known works as Sir Robert Anderson's "Coming Prince" and Anstey's "Romance of Bible Chronology". Discussion of such points by fellow-students who are interested in this line of things will be welcomed.**

**For instance, attention is drawn to the fact that in the list of Persian kings given after the opening paragraph of the article, we find that Cyrus was followed by Cambyses in 529 B. C. How does this sequence fit in with Ezra 4. 7, 8, 23, where Artaxerxes is named as the Persian ruler to whom the enemies of Israel appealed, and from whom they received authority to stop the rebuilding of the Temple "by force and by power"?**

**One explanation suggested is that Artaxerxes was a title applicable to the supreme Persian ruler, much as Pharaoh or Caesar could be applied to the supreme rulers of Egypt and Rome respectively. Therefore in Ezra 4 it was really Cambyses who was appealed to, but only his title of Artaxerxes is mentioned.**

**But in that case the appeal could not have been made until 529 B. C., if as the table states this was the first year of Cambyses' reign. Yet the writer of the article agrees with other contributors that the work was suspended for about 15 years and recommenced in 520 B. C. That would necessitate initial suspension of the work about 535 or 534 B. C., shortly after its commencement, and the account in Ezra certainly seems to read in this sense.**

**Yet if the work was suspended within a year or so of its commencement, it would seem incongruous that Cyrus should have given such full-hearted support to the building of the Jewish Temple, and then within a matter of months he should have reversed his decision. Authorities confirm that Cambyses ruled jointly with his father for a period, and then assumed full power in 529 B. C. Does this give the clue to the problem? Was it Cambyses who dealt with the decision of Ezra 4. 17-22 in his capacity as joint-ruler with Cyrus? Or are better explanations forthcoming? If any readers have views on the subject, please write promptly to Dr. J. D. Terrell.**

## STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS

## HAGGAI 1

*THE LORD'S MESSENGER IN THE LORD'S MESSAGE*

*From Denmark Hill.* —Two qualities stand out in the book of Haggai:

(1) Precision—Haggai's exhortations still are among the most precisely dated in Scripture. Chapter 1 records words which can be dated to August 520 B. C. [Comment 1]. This was a crucial time for the returned remnant, for by this time their initial enthusiasm and exhilaration had waned. Haggai addresses himself especially to Zerubbabel (of the royal Davidic line) and Joshua (a priest) because they were the leaders of the people, having apparently returned with the first wave of exiles from Babylon in 536 (Ezra 1. 1, 2; Neh. 1. 6).

(2) Authority—Haggai was particularly conscious of his role as a messenger of God. He makes his message plain and emphasizes its divine authorship (1. 2, 3, 13). He represented a God of power and authority, whose commands even the weather obeyed (1. 11). Certainly no prophet ever had a more ready response to his exhortations. He begins by challenging the priorities of the returned exiles in a particularly vivid and heart-searching manner. We may note firstly the expression "This people say" (1. 2)—in itself an expression of divine rebuke to a people which was accustomed to the divine appellation of "My people". The force of the challenge comes in the repetition of the word "time" in verses 2, 4. The people had constantly postponed the rebuilding of the temple, and had consequently neglected the things of God, but had found time to attend to their own comforts; their own houses were complete while the house of God remained an empty shell. We are reminded of the contrast with the state of affairs four centuries earlier, and the zeal of king David to provide a fitting building for the dwelling place of the Lord: "See now, I dwell in an house of cedar but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains" (2 Sam. 7. 2). Now this contrasts with the startling statement of v. 9, which constitutes a warning to the house of God in this present dispensation. Haggai's next challenge points out that the efforts of the people to improve themselves and to carve out a reasonable livelihood amongst

the ruins of Jerusalem had so far been largely in vain. This piercing and startling analysis must have struck Haggai's contemporaries extremely forcibly. They had probably long been deluding themselves that their years of hard work had been productive of beneficial results. Haggai's challenge shows that no real prosperity or comfort can result from an apathetic attitude to the things of God; the Lord must be given the highest place, and His influence must be allowed to permeate even the most mundane aspects of daily life. Otherwise the Lord will confuse and confound all mankind's attempts to achieve lasting satisfaction by his own efforts (verses 9-11). We are reminded of the lasting principle enshrined in Matt. 6. 33: "Seek ye first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you". Haggai's challenges thus far have struck a mood of pessimism and failure. He has demonstrated the lack of wisdom shown by the people's priorities. His answer is a further challenge—"Consider your ways" (vv. 5, 7). He calls on the people to reflect in the light of their past history of a close relationship with God, and the great benefits which that relationship had produced. A moment's remembrance of the past goodness of God is always sufficient to dispel any present lingering doubts. Haggai's next challenge is therefore a very positive step of returning wholeheartedly to the performance of God's service, symbolized by the rebuilding of the Temple. This action will inaugurate a new period of prosperity and godly contentment, because the Lord will take pleasure in the work and will be glorified by it (v. 8).

The people's response to Haggai's inspired message was prompt. Work quickly recommenced on the shell of the temple, Zerubbabel and Joshua taking the lead (vv. 12, 13; Ezra 5. 2). It is notable that the decision to do so was taken unanimously (verses 12, 14) because the entire people turned round on their former apathy and "did fear before the LORD" (v. 12) in response to Haggai's soul-searching challenge. Once again they had registered their new resolve to turn to God, they received the encouraging promise of v. 13: "I am with you, saith the LORD".

*D. B. Viles*

*From Liverpool.* —We need to look at the history of this people first in order to grasp the position now before us in the book of Haggai. The two tribes because of their backslidings and sins were carried away into Babylon in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, the ten

tribes having before this been carried into Assyria (2 Kin. 17. 2). Then after the 70 years decreed upon them by the Lord (see Jer. 29) they were given the opportunity to return to the land of their fathers and to the city of Jerusalem to rebuild the house of God (Ezra 1). Ezra 4 and 5 highlight the position they were in when God raised up His prophets Haggai and Zechariah to stimulate them to further effort in this great project. They had enemies in the land who were not keen on the people building. Their hands weakened (see Ezra 5. 1) and for about 15 years the work ceased. Over this period apathy had set in and the cry was, "It is not the time for us to come, the time for the LORD's house to be built" (Hag. 1. 2). No reason is given why it was not the right time.

Haggai's message met with a dramatic response. Within 23 days the people had responded and were again hard at work on the rebuilding of God's house. The prophets not only gave the message but they themselves joined in the work. This gesture of theirs may throw light on the words "The LORD's messenger in the LORD's message" (1. 13).

Principles and points of interest:

- (1) God's house can be built although the majority of the children of God are not interested [Comment 2].
- (2) The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah encouraged our spiritual forefathers in re-building God's spiritual house.
- (3) Some of the discouragement could have come from the old men who had remembered the greatness of Solomon's temple.
- (4) Zerubbabel, as his name implies, was born in Babylon and knew nothing of the former house, and yet was exercised to go up from Babylon to build for God.
- (5) Our spiritual forebears, despite the turning back of some who were leaders in the present movement, went forward to rebuild on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.
- (6) There is an ever present need to encourage one another in the face of so many adversaries.
- (7) The smallness of the movement is of no consequence in the light of the Lords' words, "I will take pleasure in it".
- (8) Happy thought, "Know ye not that ye are temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3. 16 R. V. M.).

*D. H., G. S. W.*

*From Victoria, B. C.* —More than 500 years before the birth of Messiah, a man was raised up by God to preach a penetrating, potent message to a people who were selfishly leading their own lives and ignoring the ways of God completely. That man was Haggai, a prophet who was not afraid to speak plainly and directly, under God, when the occasion demanded. For some fifteen years the remnant had neglected the work of the Lord, the building of His house, even though God had played His part by stirring up the Gentile king Cyrus of Persia and charged him to build the house at Jerusalem (Ezra 1. 2). The people had previously been stopped from building by king Artaxerxes (Ezra 4. 23), but God, in His longsuffering, raised up Haggai to preach a brief but dynamic message so that their spirits might be revived.

Haggai was used of God to convey His anxiety and concern, and he did this in a faithful and courageous way, as God's channel. He rebuked the people saying, "Consider your ways". Virtually he was asking them to examine their hearts and lives before the Lord so that they might see for themselves how far away they were from His purpose. No longer should they be building their own houses for their delight and comfort, but they should be building for God. How could they possibly be happy and contented to see God's house lying waste and unfinished? It was obvious that the people were discouraged and disinterested, and they even attempted to rationalize their apathy. However, it was still necessary for them to be awakened to God's disapproval of their ways, and this was the purpose of Haggai's message. In grace and judgement the Lord dealt with them by blight and famine, yet persevering with them. It was true then as it is now, "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth".

When God gives a message it is often short and to the point. The facts are stated plainly and directly. This is what Haggai conveyed. The Lord had promised that He would take pleasure in the house if the people would make the effort and build it; if they would go to the mountain forest and cut down the wood and prepare it. Anything worthwhile for God must come from effort and a willing spirit. This is what pleases and glorifies Him. He gave the assurance that He would be with His people and encourage them (Hag. 1. 13). Haggai's message was to the heart showing them where they were wrong, but revealing too, the right way. The message was balanced, not watered down to please some. He felt the weight of the word,

as all God's servants should, and his desire was to stir up the people and motivate **them** to build for God. The people responded **with** a great zeal to build (Hag. 1. 14), and there was not only joy **and** prosperity amongst the builders, but the heart of God rejoiced also. Indolence was changed into activity, selfishness to willingness; and when God is placed first in any dispensation blessing must assuredly follow. A greater than Haggai urged those in His days to seek first the kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus was the Lord's messenger in that message, too, and it comes afresh to our hearts in these days when the remnant is still seeking to build for Him. *M. Cockett*

*From Melbourne*, —From time to time the Lord has found it needful to raise up men to whom he reveals His thoughts regarding His people; and to commit to such men a message to be spoken unto them. Sometimes, as in the case of Jeremiah and others, His people were not prepared to listen and obey; but that which He spake through Haggai brought the desired result.

The background to the Lord's message is found in Ezra 1-4. There we find the record of the coming up from Babylon of about 52, 000 persons [Comment 3]. They were only a very small proportion of those who were found in Babylon, but they had before them the objective of rebuilding the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. About 50 years earlier it had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. The Babylonian Empire had now come to an end, having been overthrown by Cyrus the Persian. Attention has frequently been drawn to the fact that the Lord, speaking through Isaiah the prophet over one and a half centuries before the fall of Babylon, speaks of Cyrus as "My Shepherd", and declares "shall perform all My pleasure: even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" (Isa. 44. 28). Although Cyrus was not yet born when Isaiah wrote, we see God's foreknowledge of a Gentile king whom He was to raise up for the accomplishing of His purposes.

As recorded in Ezra 1, the stirring up of the spirit of Cyrus was seen as divine movement through a chosen vessel. His proclamation was used by God to stir up the spirits of responsible men of Judah and Benjamin, with priests and Levites. The vessels of the house of God had been cared for in Babylon, even though in the house of their gods. These were brought forth and delivered into the care of

**Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah (Sheshbazzar is possibly a Babylonian name for Zerubbabel, the grandson of Jehoiachin). Between chapters four and five of the Book of Ezra, lies a period of about 15 years. Were it not for the Lord's message through Haggai we would have little knowledge of the activities or condition of the remnant during this time. They had returned to build the house of the Lord, but the work had ceased, and He was grieved. They had not sought His face for the help which they needed against their adversaries. Yet they had not been idle; they had been very industrious in building their own houses, and tilling and sowing their land with the necessary seed. But they had sown much and brought in little. His appeal to them through the prophet was "Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD". The underlying cause of all their futile labour is given, "Why? saith the LORD of Hosts. Because of Mine house that lieth waste, while ye run every man to his own house". Therefore a drought and a blight had fallen on the land and upon all the works of their hands. The word of the Lord fell upon hearing ears and receptive hearts. His promise through Haggai His servant was "I am with you". Falling upon the spirits of both leaders and people, the assurance of His presence causes these persons, who for fifteen years had been discouraged, to be up and doing, disregarding the possible opposition from adversaries, which now faded into insignificance. No longer were they prepared to make the plea, "It is not the time for us to come, the time for the LORD's house to be built".**

*P. W. A., T. W. F.*

*From Crowborough.* —Haggai, the Lord's messenger, had a message for Zerubbabel the Governor, for Joshua the high priest and for all the people. There was responsibility upon all of them. His message was a direct announcement from the Lord. To Zerubbabel and Joshua first of all is the word "This people say... " To all he says, "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your cieled houses... " There was time for one thing and not another. The neglect of the house of God was inexcusable. Their enemies and the adverse decree of king Artaxerxes had not prevented them from finishing their own dwellings and making them comfortable. Because of the message of Haggai it seems that it was a state of apathy

and not want of time or an unsuitable time that brought about this state of the Lord's house lying waste. A contrast is brought before us in "your cieled houses" and "this house lieth waste". "Consider your ways", is a pointed message to the hearts of the people. The results of their conduct are seen in verse 6. They had sought to be prosperous but had failed. They had eaten but it was not to satisfaction, they had drunk but instead of a fullness there was a lack. They had clothed themselves yet did not feel the benefit of the clothes. All this seems to imply that in spite of all their labours there was not enough to satisfy, and what they earned in wages gave no security; it was like putting it into a bag with holes. They might as well not have had any.

Then again there is the heart-searching word, "Go up to the mountain". "Do something for Me" says the Lord. The words of the Lord Jesus are relevant here, "Seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness..." "Go bring, and build... and I will take pleasure in it". He reminds them of His displeasure when they had laboured for themselves. "Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little... I did blow upon it". We might ask, how could such a nation forget that their God was One to be reckoned with in all things? But a nation can forget; so can we, and God's hand can be opposed to us. It is for us now to set our hearts on our ways; to give first place to His house and not to our own houses. The Lord's messenger brought the Lord's message unto the people. "I am with you, saith the Lord. " Nothing can compare with the Divine presence. "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the consummation of the age" (Matt. 28. 20 R. V. M. ). Both promises came from the same source and are for His people. Haggai saw results very quickly; in twenty-four days the Lord had stirred up the spirits of Zerubbabel and of Joshua and of all the remnant of the people and they came and did the work.

We learn from this chapter that to the Lord's people who are desirous of His glory there is no unsuitable time to be engaged in His things. The word stands for all time, "Your labour is not vain in the Lord".

*J. H. B.*

### **IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS**

Papers were also received from Atherton and Leigh, Birkenhead, Birmingham, Derby, Methil and Nottingham, from which the following impressions were gathered.

**In Jeremiah 1. 1-3 the date of the commencement of the captivity of the people was given [Comment 4]; its duration was to be seventy years (Jer. 25. 8-11) and Isaiah indicated that by a decree of Cyrus the opportunity to return to Jerusalem would be given (Isa. 44. 28 - 45. 2). This duly took place in B. C. 536, when according to Ezra 1, Cyrus afforded every facility to the people to return, and under the leadership of Zerubbabel about fifty thousand people made the journey [See Comment 3]. The enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard of the work that was going on, and firstly by endeavouring to join the work, and secondly by opposing it, succeeded in bringing it to a standstill (Ezra 4. 23, 24). Fifteen years passed by before Haggai and Zechariah came and prophesied in the name of the God of Israel.**

The prophecy of Haggai fits in between Ezra 5. 1 and 6. 14, The precise dating can be ascertained from Hag. 1. 1, 2. 1, 10, 20. The second year of Darius is generally thought to be 520 B. C. Haggai is mentioned with Zechariah (Ezra 5. 2), both of whom stirred the remnant who had lost some of their early zeal to rebuild the house of God. Haggai, whose name means "festival of Jehovah", has no recorded genealogy or tribe, but is described as the Lord's messenger. Hag. 1. 14 shows the effectiveness of the message. The servant had the mind of the Lord and was telling it forth. Let us not underestimate the power of God's word! The effectiveness of the message shows the faith which Haggai had in the God of the message, and also the energy which he put into declaring it. With 1. 13 compare Rom. 1. 9: "Whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son".

The remnant had experienced persecution as soon as they restored some of the services of God's house. Yet the decree of Artaxerxes for the cessation of work (Ezra 4. 23) could be questioned on the accession of Darius the Mede. And in fact the decree had affected the material building rather than the service of song or thanksgiving. Meanwhile the spiritual condition of the people had deteriorated so

much that they were openly expressing doubt as to whether the time was right for rebuilding. It was not a case of laziness, but of self-orientation, their priorities were wrong (See Phil. 2. 20). They were like the saints in Laodicea (Rev. 3) in being neither cold nor hot. Therefore they were rebuked for allowing the rebuilding to lapse, and the dearth in the land was shown to be the punishment for their neglect. The altar had been previously set up and the foundations laid (Ezra 3. 2, 11), but the temple was still in ruins. God was withholding the blessing (cf. Deut. 7. 13). He is Lord of Hosts as ruler of creation, as well as being Lord of the heavenly host (see Josh. 5. 14, Jude 14). It was made clear by Haggai to the remnant that much of their labour could be avoided if they considered their ways.

The restoration led by Zerubbabel and Joshua brought the assurance of God's blessing in 1. 13 (cf. Matt. 28. 19, 20). The timing of the message in each instance can be seen to be important. It took only twenty-three days to return to building, and the house was finished on the third day of the twelfth month (Ezra 6. 15) in the sixth year of Darius. The encouragement of God's presence came as a result of the obedience of faith.

The house was important because it was a testimony to the only true God (Deut. 6. 4), the place expressing God's Name and His dwelling among His people. It was for the sake of the house that they had come out of Babylon (Ezra 1. 5), and only there could the priesthood function. It required faith to build the house of God.

*Eds.*

## COMMENTS

1. (*Denmark Hill*): One of the very interesting features of the book of Haggai, a point brought out in several papers, is the wide agreement as to the key dates involved, notably 536 and 520; and also, as indicated here, the pin-pointing of certain days of specific months. Attention is drawn in this connection to Mr. C. L. Prasher's closely researched article in this issue on "The Chronology of the Time of Haggai and Zechariah". Many reproductions of the Jewish calendar, incidentally, suggest that the "sixth month" corresponds to our September.

2. (*Liverpool*): How very true this statement is! No doubt the group would agree too that in the context we are studying at the

moment the prophetic message was to people who were already committed to, and identified with, God's house, although neglectful of its claims. Thus the more immediate parallel is with the people of God today committed doctrinally to the house of God.

3. (*Melbourne*): Contributors will wish to consider the suggestion made in the special article on chronology in this issue, that the total of 42, 360 stated in both Ezra 2. 2 and Nehemiah 7. 7 represents the overall total of those who returned from Babylon, first under Zerubbabel and later under Nehemiah. If this suggestion can be sustained, it would follow that the number going back to Jerusalem at the first return (with Zerubbabel) was rather less than 50, 000.

4. (*Impressions*): Please refer to special article on chronology in this issue, where reasons are advanced in support of the view that the seventy years' captivity were reckoned from 606 B. C. (the third year of Jehoiakim) and not from 587 B. C. (the eleventh year of Zedekiah).  
J. D. T.

#### PSALM 71 (*continued*)

Yea, even when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not;

Until I have declared Thy strength to the next generation,  
Thy might to every one that is to come.

Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high;

Thou who hast done great things,

O God, who is like unto Thee? (verses 18, 19).

In verse 17 David says to God that He had taught him from his youth, and he had declared God's wondrous works. Now, when he is old and grayheaded, he asks God not to forsake him until he had declared His strength (Hebrew, thine arm, A. V. and R. V. margins), to the next generation, His might to every one that was to come. David's estimate of God's righteousness as being very high, that is practical righteousness, doing what is right, is appreciated by all who have tried to fulfil the conditions of the law, which is love to God and to men. How sadly we all fail in this! It is by the law that the knowledge of sin comes.

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# BIBLE STUDIES

*'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'*

VOLUME 41

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## EDITORIAL

Certain broad features of God's dealings with His people in the days of Haggai are especially relevant to present-day experience in giving effect to the truth of God's spiritual House. Among these is the absence of any supernatural manifestations of divine glory or power in connection with the return from Babylon and the rebuilding of the Temple.

God worked for the release of His people from Babylon by moving Cyrus to sponsor the Jewish return. There was nothing answering to the miraculous plagues of Egypt or the Red Sea crossing. Nor was there any parallel with the awesome manifestation of divine majesty at Sinai. When the rebuilt Temple was dedicated in the sixth year of Darius there is no record of the glory of the Lord filling the House, as had been the case in Ex. 40. 34 and 2 Chron. 7. 1.

The implication seems clear from Haggai's message (2. 1-6) that there had been a current of critical discouragement among the people regarding this very thing. Why had God not shown in visible form some tokens of His presence and glory? How could they know that He was really with them? The word of the Lord through Haggai specifically reassured them on this point (v. 5).

For ourselves, in studying the ways of God, we learn that His general rule is to expect His people to walk with Him by faith, which is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things *not seen*. Visible manifestations have been limited to relatively short periods and then for particular purposes, such as confirmation of newly revealed truth (Heb. 2. 3, 4). Zerubbabel and his associates had to learn that God's great purpose regarding His House in their time was valid despite the absence of Shekinah glory or other features known by earlier generations. In parallel with this lesson those in God's House today should appreciate that the absence of "signs

and wonders" known in the apostolic age does not invalidate the fact of a movement of the Holy Spirit which has led to the re-establishment of a spiritual House according to the pattern of New Covenant revelation.

*G. P. Jr.*

## THE TEMPLE OF GOD IN SCRIPTURAL HISTORY

"Master, behold, what manner of stones and what manner of buildings!" said one of the disciples, overawed by the grandeur of Herod's temple (Mark 13. 1). His preoccupation with material things was gently rebuked by the Lord, who foretold the Temple's imminent destruction and disclosed a picture of darker days to follow later, when Israel would undergo tribulation and be purged of its materialism prior to millennial blessing. The attitude of the unnamed disciple was typical of many Israelites throughout their history. Time and again God had to rebuke His people for pursuing earthly things and neglecting the heavenly. This will be evident as we look briefly at the various phases of Temple history.

The first mention of the Temple of God in Scripture is in 1 Samuel 1. 9 in the context of the high priesthood of Eli. Its location at that time was Shiloh, where Joshua had pitched the tent of meeting (Josh. 18. i), but in Eli's day some permanent structure seems to have been added to, or substituted for, the Tabernacle. The need for it to be portable had then ceased, so that it would be natural to make the structure more permanent, if only for the comfort of the priests and Levites who served there. But the priests of those days were wicked men. After Eli died little more was heard of the Temple of Shiloh, for judgement intervened on account of the sin of his sons (Psa. 78. 60; Jer. 7. 12; 26. 6). Thereafter the ark of the covenant was separated from the Tabernacle until Solomon's Temple was completed.

It was left to David, about 70 years after the tragedy of Shiloh, to seek the restoration of the services of God's House. He broached the matter to Nathan (2 Sam. 7. 2) and the project to build a House for God then gradually took shape. The site of the Temple, the threshing-floor of Oman the Jebusite, was revealed to the king by God (1 Chron. 21. 15; 22. 1). The design also was divinely given (1 Chron. 28. 11). Skilled craftsmen were brought together and materials began to flow in. Solomon, heir to the throne, was

**charged with the immense task of completing what his father had begun. The final result must be "exceeding magnificent" (1 Chron. 22. 5). David's fine example in contributing enormous riches from his personal fortune was followed by the princes, the captains, the rulers and finally the people, who "offered willingly, because with a perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD" (1 Chron. 29. 9). So, inspired by David, the whole nation was united in its purpose to build a House for God to dwell in. After his death Solomon assumed the solemn responsibility with zeal, and under his wise guidance the work proceeded apace, being completed in seven years. At the ceremony of dedication Solomon said, "Will God in very deed dwell on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kin. 8. 27). Solomon was humble enough to realize that the building itself was nothing in God's sight. But because God's people desired to serve Him according to the divine pattern the reply came: "I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put My name there for ever; and Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually" (1 Kin. 9. 5). Would that Solomon's example had been followed by his descendants and by others of subsequent ages!**

**After the early days of Solomon, Israel's zeal for God's House slowly declined. There were indeed times of revival for Judah under such kings as Hezekiah and Josiah, but generally speaking departure from God persisted until the Chaldeans took the people away captive to Babylon and left the Temple a blackened ruin. "The Lord hath cast off His altar, He hath abhorred His sanctuary" (Lam. 2. 7). Seventy years later a faithful remnant returned to Jerusalem with a decree signed by the emperor Cyrus to rebuild the Temple. But the conditions were fundamentally different from those of Solomon's day. The Jews were now a subject people paying tribute to the kings of Persia; they were few in number and lived in relative poverty. But to the discerning these adverse circumstances were of minor importance. What really mattered was that the work was of God. When completed it did not outwardly bear comparison with the former structure. There was little pomp either when the foundation was laid or when the building was finished (Ezra 3. 8-13; 6. 14-18). The scale of the sacrifices offered gives some indication of the change from Solomon's day (1 Kin. 8. 63; Ezra 6. 17).**

Those **who were unduly concerned with outward appearances wept when they saw the new foundations**. This **caused much discouragement and was in large measure responsible for the serious delay in completing the Temple**. It was **not until God had impressed upon His people that He would endow the house with His own glory that the work was resumed** (Hag. 2. 7). It was clearly **not in the divine purpose at that time for Israel to have another Temple like Solomon's**. The **emphasis from now on would be spiritual rather than material**. There was **no miraculous fire to consume the sacrifices** (2 Chron. 7. 1), **but God's promise was of far greater moment: "I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified" (Hag. 1. 8)**. The people **must serve the Lord with simple faith in His word: "I am with you" (1. 13)**. Men's hearts were **being prepared for the day of clearer vision when they would be taught that God is Spirit and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth** (John 4. 24).

It would **have been well if Zerubbabel's Temple had indeed endured until the building of God's spiritual House, but the zeal of Haggai's day faded, and material ostentation replaced divine glory**. Herod **the Great, wishing to curry favour with the Jews, spent vast sums in building on the sacred mount Moriah site a splendid edifice intended to rival Solomon's Temple**. The result was certainly **magnificent, and many Jews, like the disciple already mentioned, were proud of it, but spiritually it was poverty-stricken**. Although God graciously recognized it **for a time as His House (John 2. 16)**, **formality, greed and hypocrisy brought divine judgement**. "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Luke 13. 55).

The Temple **which followed Herod's is in existence today. It is a spiritual one composed of saints dwelling together in obedience to the New Testament pattern, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets**. The Lord **Jesus Himself is the Chief Corner Stone** (Eph. 2. 19-22). This is **far more glorious than anything which preceded it, as the letter to the Hebrews amply demonstrates**. The **perfect priestly service of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Son over God's House, is accompanied by the many better things mentioned in that letter, not the least of which is the ability of every saint in the House of God to enter in spirit into the holy place in heaven itself, the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, into which Christ has already entered with His own blood (Heb. 9. 11; 10. 19-22)**. **Such is the unprecedented divine glory bestowed**

upon the House of God in this dispensation. It is surely unthinkable that any should desert it for earthly gain.

The history of God's dwelling-place on earth makes sad reading in the main, but God will not be frustrated in his intense desire to have a material Temple here where His people Israel may worship Him according to the instructions originally given to Moses. The details of this millennial Temple were revealed to the prophet Ezekiel (chapters 40-44). The day is not now far distant when the Lord Jesus Himself will suddenly come to His Temple (Mai. 3. 1): Israel's apostasy will then be over for ever and God's faithful people will delight in the long-awaited consummation. The name of the city will be "Jehovah-Shammah"—the Lord is there (Ezek. 48. 35).

L. Burrows

## STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS

### HAGGAI 2

#### *THE GLORY OF GOD'S HOUSE*

*From Southport.* —As recorded in chapter 1, the people, under their leaders, responded so rapidly to Haggai's message that after sixteen years' neglect the work was organised and recommenced within twenty-four days of the giving of the message. After a month's work, the first flush of enthusiasm had subsided, and the oldest men were comparing the new structure unfavourably with their memories of Solomon's Temple. Since this had been destroyed some sixty-seven years before, perhaps their childhood memories exaggerated the difference in size. To encourage the people, the Lord's message reminds them that the chief glory of the House of God lies in the Lord's presence in the midst of His people. The Lord's covenant had provided that if His voice was obeyed, and His covenant kept (Ex. 19. 5) then He would be with the people and dwell among them (Ex. 29. 45).

It is not clear to What events v. 6 refers. It appears that vv. 6-9 refer to a time still in the future, when the millennial kingdom of Christ is established, since no events up to the present time correspond fully to this description [Comment 1]. It is attractive to us to regard the "desire of all nations" (v. 7, A. V. ) as a direct reference to the Messiah (as in Handel's *Messiah*), but the grammatical con-

struction **makes such an** interpretation unlikely. Although the **noun** is singular, the **verb** is in the **plural**, and the correct reading seems to be "desirable things" as in the R. V. **When the Lord shakes the nations, they will bring their wealth** (silver and gold—v. 8) **to the Prince of Peace** reigning from the Temple in Jerusalem. "This house" (v. 9) refers generally to the Place of the Name in Jerusalem, not solely to the particular edifice which they were erecting at that time (cf. "Impressions", para. 3).

In vv. 10-19 the Lord uses the provisions of the ceremonial law to show the people that while the touch of the clean cannot purify the defiled, the touch of the unclean can defile the pure. Everything the people had offered to the Lord had been unclean, because it was defiled by their attitude to His House and their disobedience to His law. Because of this the Lord had refused to give them prosperity in their secular work. When the people changed their attitude towards the Lord, He changed His dispensation towards them, and this change is to be dated from the day when the fresh foundation was laid, and the work recommenced. Even though the seed was still in the barn, and no natural signs of the promised fruitful harvest could possibly be discerned, God assured the people that the blessing would date from this day. This exposition of vv. 10-19 requires that v. 18 should be regarded as referring to the events of 1. 14, 15. It is suggested that a copying error may have corrupted the text in v. 18, putting "ninth" instead of "sixth". It is difficult otherwise to give any meaning to v. 18 [Comment 2].

*P. L. Hickling*

*From Derby.* —The seventy years captivity may be viewed in two ways, the Godward and the manward:

(1) From the destruction of the Solomonic Temple in 587 to the completion of Zerubbabel's in 517 is 70 years.

(2) From the first deportation in 606 to the first return under Cyrus in 536 is 70 years. These dates almost agree with both Hale's and Usher's dates. Some of the older men may have spent only 50 years in Babylon and have seen the former Temple (which seems clear from Ezra 3. 13 and Hag. 2. 3) [Comment 3].

As the word "covenanted" (v. 5) suggests, God's dwelling in the midst of His people in tabernacle days was conditional, for he required strict adherence to the divine pattern. He also says, "and My Spirit abode among you"; this required a right condition of heart.

We concluded that 2. 6-9 looked forward to the time of the end. The phrase "a little while" (v. 6; cf. Heb. 12. 26) is used in a sense peculiar to the Eternal One. Scholars differ in their understanding of v. 7 regarding "the desirable things of all nations". One scholar made the following comment about 1870 before the appearance of the R. V.: "The translation of the Hebrew is plural: 'things'... 'The desirable things of the nations shall come' or the objects of their desire". Some regard this passage as referring to the coming of the Messiah, but it would seem that the Hebrew forbids such an interpretation. The meaning could be "the wealth which the nations delight in shall come as an offering to Jehovah" (cf. Isa. 60. 5, 6, 11; 61. 6); or "blessings which they desire shall come to them". The first of these suggestions finds some support, we thought, in v. 8: "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith the LORD of Hosts". David the king collected very much wealth by means of his conquest of nations that had been enemies of Israel, and reserved it for the embellishing of the Solomonic Temple, and he said to the LORD in his prayer, "Of Thine own have we given Thee", (1 Chron. 29. 14). We remembered that the Tabernacle was constructed with "the treasures of Egypt" (Ex. 12. 36; 36. 3-7). Also the Temple of our study, that of Zerubbabel, was built with the gold that had been preserved by God in Babylon (see Ezra 1. 7-11) [Comment 4].

We touched upon the important words in v. 9: "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former"; the former (the Solomonic Temple) had the ark of the covenant, a symbol of divine Presence, but the latter had the very personal presence of the Lord. We remember that both the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple had the ark in the Most Holy Place, but there is no mention of this in Zerubbabel's Temple; and it is not said that the glory of the LORD filled the Temple. Nevertheless God did say, "I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified" (Hag. 1. 8). It was remarked that the Temple of the gospel narratives was graced by the personal presence of the Lord—as a Babe, at the age of twelve (and no doubt every year thereafter) and during the years of His ministry [see Comment 1].

Verses 10-19 contain valuable hortatory teaching for us today; we may handle holy things also, but we are not thereby made holy:

it is written, "Ye shall **therefore be holy**, for I am holy" (Lev. 11. 45; 1 Pet. 1. 16).

Again in verses 20-23 the end-time seems to be touched upon. In that day, Zerubbabel will not be forgotten of the Lord. But perhaps also a nearer view of events is to be seen, in that Darius and his successors were to engage in disastrous wars which would have brought sore trouble upon the royal prince Zerubbabel had he not been favoured with divine protection [Comment 5].

*A. Smith, G. Conway, S. R. W.*

*From Atherton and Leigh.* —A period of three months covers the book of Haggai. Chapter 2 brings us to the second of four messages God gave to His remnant people. The older generation, recalling the glory of Solomon's Temple, were evidently saddened by the lack of splendour in the second structure. At the foundation-laying ceremony (Ezra 3. 12) the contrasting views of the younger and older generations showed up. The former were jubilant but the older generation wept openly. It was to this latter group that Haggai's message of encouragement was directed, the point being that God had but one place in Jerusalem for His House Whether built by Solomon or Zerubbabel or someone else in the future.

In considering what we thought to be the essential features of God's material house in Old Testament times we were struck by the fact that there is no reference to the ark of the covenant in Zerubbabel's Temple. According to the historian Josephus the holy of holies was empty. Evidently the ark was destroyed at the same time as Solomon's Temple in 587 B. C. It is said that a slab of stone marked its place in the inner sanctuary [Comment 6].

We thought that 2. 6-9 referred to the future, as follows: v. 6—the judgement of Daniel's seventieth week; v. 7—the coming of the Messiah; v. 9—the glory of the millennial Temple.

In v. 7 we followed the R. V. marginal reading: "The desire of all nations shall come" [see Comment 4]. In v. 9 we took "the latter glory of this house" to refer to Ezekiel's millennial Temple, which will be a building of splendour and magnificence far outstripping in glory even Solomon's Temple. It will be from this millennial Temple that the Lord will "give peace" (v. 9).

The final message (vv. 20-23) was specially for Zerubbabel, taking us to the future, as the predicted events do not seem to have

happened during his lifetime. We noted that Zerubbabel belonged to the royal line (Matt. 1. 12, 13); to this faithful servant of God a future role related to God's house is predicted. *R. A. Jones*

*From Nottingham.* —Haggai 2 seems to divide into four portions: vv. 1-9, 10-14, 15-19 and 20-23. The burden of the message in the first portion had a different emphasis from that in chapter 1, which was the exhortation to give the first and proper place to the building of the House of God. That exhortation was heeded, and in chapter 2 we have the appraisal of the work by the workers.

The message particularly concerned those who had seen the Solomonic Temple in all its glory. What a contrast! Verse 3 describes what must have been the feelings of some: "Is it not in your eyes as nothing?" Yet the vital test was how it appeared in the eyes of God. The message was not one of rebuke but of encouragement, a thrice repeated "be strong" (v. 4). God found pleasure in the building however comparatively inferior its glory to that of the earlier one, and if God found pleasure, so should the builders.

The word came first to the leaders that they might be strengthened. There must be leaders with the right motive of heart and strong in the Lord and His work. Then the message came to the people too (v. 2), that they might have their zeal enlivened. It was the word of God that came to them through His messenger and thus it found a response in their hearts.

When our spiritual fathers separated themselves from what did not comply with the Scriptures there were those who remained behind. Some were indifferent to the exercise of others, some said the position which was being taken was untenable, but as in the days of Haggai, God gave His servants encouragement and the work went on. As the years have passed there is the danger that we might lose this early love and zeal for His House. Comparing it with apostolic days, we may be so discouraged by the decline as to think that further labour is useless. While certainly we must never be complacent and ever strive for the highest standards in God's things, we must not let any deficiencies lessen our desire to build and maintain the House of God in this era.

God's encouraging words "I am with you" (v. 4) remind us of the promises of Israel's early experiences. In this way they would fall with power and meaning on the ears of the leaders and the

people. We are reminded of the Lord's words to that little band spoken just before He was taken from them, "... lo, I am with you always..." (Matt. 28. 20).

Verses 7, 8 refer back, no doubt, to the thunderings at Sinai [Comment 7], but also look ahead to the earth-shaking events of the time of the end, and to the days when the glory of God's material House will reach its zenith by the personal presence of the Lord Himself.

The questions asked and answered in vv. 11-13 present a most instructive principle which is applicable to us in our attitude to unclean associations today, whether they be of the flesh, the world or religious systems. But to which nation do the words of v. 14 refer? In view of the repeated word "consider" in vv. 15-18 (twice) and the general tenor of the passage it seems the application is to Judah. On the other hand it seems the reference could have been to the Samaritans and to their desire to participate in the rebuilding of the Temple as described in Ezra 4. 1-3. It seems probable that the contact with the Samaritans continued for some time. The words "every work of their hands" (Hag. 2. 14) seem to relate to "that which they offer there is unclean" in the same verse. This poses the question: "Were the remnant, with all their kindled zeal, offering unclean sacrifices? Or is this a reference to those who wished to join them in the building of the Temple and its service of worship? [Comment 8].

*R. Hickling*

*From Birmingham.* —The chapter opens with the question, "Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory?" Some of the older men could remember the foundation and glory of the former House, its vessels, and particularly its service. When they saw the House in ruins they wept, but they would not have to weep for long because the Lord promised that the latter glory would be greater than the former.

God's House had been neglected and now was the time for them to rebuild, but though they had started, they were continuing in their sins and therefore their work for the Lord was not acceptable. The commencement of building in itself would not make them clean; they needed to cease from their sins. Therefore the Lord had smitten their crops, etc., and their yield was disappointing. The Lord said

**He would bless the people because He knew their sins would cease; so the building would go on, the service of the house would recommence and the crops would be abundant.**

*D. P. Brown*

*From Birkenhead.* —The number of those in Jerusalem who remembered the glory of Solomon's Temple must have been small. By 520 B. C. many of the men involved in the emotional scenes described in Ezra 3. 10-13 would have died. It appears that disillusionment had set in over the delays in building and through Haggai further incentive was given to the builders in the form of God's assured presence among them. They are reminded of the covenant made when the people came out of Egypt—presumably that recorded in Ex. 19. 5 and 33. 14.

The language of vv. 6-9 seems to point forward to a day yet future and puts the then present crisis in its true perspective as but a small part of God's dealings with the nation of Israel.

The first of Haggai's messages on the 24th day of the ninth month caused us to wonder as to its purpose. It is a question put to the priests regarding the contagion of holiness and uncleanness through contact with a corpse. A suggestion put forward was that possibly it was an illustration to bring home to the people the fact that through their neglect of the ruined Temple it was like a dead thing in their midst which had brought upon them the difficulties mentioned in vv. 16-19 [Comment 9]. However with the renewed desires of the people to build, better days had arrived, and the prophet was able to assure them that the Lord had promised "from this day will I bless you".

The concluding word from Haggai is a personal one to Zerubbabel in which he is addressed as God's servant, His chosen one, and His personal representative (signet). There seems to be a link with Jer. 22. 24 where Jehoiachin had sentence of rejection passed upon him. Here there is a promise to his grandson that he would have a part in days of triumph and prosperity, though these days may still be future.

*R. D. Williams, A. E. Sands*

#### **IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS**

Further thoughts were gleaned as follows from the remaining papers received from Crowborough, Denmark Hill, Hayes, Liverpool, Melbourne and Victoria.

God's message of encouragement through Haggai (2. 1-9) came about a month after the Temple building was resumed. A further two months elapsed before the message of rebuke for spiritual failure came. The order and timing of these two messages tell us a great deal about our God.

The first message was given on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, which was the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Num. 29. 12, 32; *cf.* John 7. 2, 37). This feast involved, besides dwelling in booths, festivities to celebrate the gathering in of crops (Lev. 23. 40-43), and if the people of Judah kept this feast (as is probable; see Ezra 3. 4), they must have had the recent poor harvest very much in their thoughts.

Another source of discouragement to the people was the mournful attitude of the old men who had seen the Temple in its former splendour. Such attitudes are contagious and lead quickly to apathy. So the Lord's encouragement was timely. It is striking that the Lord refers to the Solomonic Temple as "this house" (2. 3), so linking the temple now in building with the former structure; and also in v. 9 with its millennial counterpart—not three houses but one house, *this* house. So the Lord wonderfully indicates that their work, though apparently so inferior, is as much part of His grand design as was Solomon's Temple or that still to come.

Verses 6-9 were mostly applied to the future, but some contributors saw dual applications to some of the expressions used. For instance, the words "I will fill this house with glory", which have a clear millennial application, were also applied to Zerubbabel's temple [see Comment 1]. The Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple were filled at their respective dedications with the Lord's visible glory centred on the ark of the covenant (Ex. 40. 34, 2. Chron. 1. 1). This Temple however, had no ark [see Comment 6] and we do not read of the Lord's visible glory at its dedication (Ezra 6. 15-18), but the Lord is here promising that His invisible glory will nevertheless pervade this House also. One paper suggested that we have here, not so much two distinct applications of the Lord's words to past and future, but a "dovetailing" of the work of the remnant into that which is still future. God sees the work as one, though ages intervene.

The message of rebuke was given at the time of ploughing and seed-sowing. But before the hopes of the sower can be realized by

the Lord granting a rich harvest, there is still need for things to be put right which originally caused his disapproval. The Lord's method of bringing home to the priests how the people were failing in divine services is worthy of consideration and imitation. He uses their own expert advice to condemn them with irrefutable logic. One paper suggested that the people had become defiled by contact with other nations during their exile in Babylon. Building the temple would not make them holy.

The book of Haggai closes with a personal message to Zerubbabel, Judah's governor (vv. 20-23). It is undoubtedly millennial. Some wondered if v. 23 refers to Zerubbabel himself, raised from the dead to have a near place to the Lord in the millennial kingdom, in keeping with New Testament teaching about rewards for faithfulness. Others thought Zerubbabel stands in v. 23 for the Lord Himself, Zerubbabel's great Descendant, who will be honoured at the end-time with the signet, the mark of supreme authority (see Jer. 22. 24; Gen. 41. 42) [Comment 10].

*Eds.*

## COMMENTS

1. (*Southport*): There is an interesting miscellany of suggestive thought put forward by various contributors on verses 6-9. It does seem clear that this section primarily points forward to the time of the end and the establishment of the millennial Temple. The supernatural convulsions described in v. 6 and the shaking of the nations (v. 7) will be the prelude to the establishment of God's House in Jerusalem with a glory greater than that of Solomon's Temple. Peace will be granted in association with the House (cf. Isa. 2. 2-4). As so often in other contexts God encourages His struggling people with the thought of an ultimate glorious development of the divine purpose in which they are called to serve. This futuristic interpretation would seem to cover all aspects of the passage more comprehensively than the application of certain points either to the Temple of Zerubbabel<sup>^</sup> day or to the Lord's presence in Herod's Temple. For instance, if we take the point that "the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former" and apply this to the Lord Jesus Christ's personal presence in the Temple, we find difficulty with the phrase immediately following, "and in this place will I give peace". The Lord's association with the Temple was frequently far from peaceful because of the sinful hypocrisy of those who controlled it!

2. (*Southport*): Please see para. 3 of the special article on Chronology in January issue which offers what seems a logical explanation of the passage, including v. 18. In this submission the reference in v. 18 to the foundation of the Lord's House looks back over 15 years to the time of Ezra 3. 12. Haggai is exhorting them to consider all those years during which the yield from agricultural toil had been so disappointing. Now, he adds in effect, notice the change from this 24th day of the ninth month. It was their winter season. But they would see dramatic change from the beginning of the next season's growth. This exposition seems feasible, and obviates the need to postulate a copying error. There is no suggestion of any textual uncertainty in the Revisers' footnotes, which weighs against the likelihood of a copying error. Moreover the idea of a fresh foundation lacks support from the Ezra narrative, where the impression is given that they proceeded to build on the foundation which had already been laid 15 years earlier.

3. (*Derby*): This is an interesting suggestion, but attention is drawn to a point made in paragraph five of the article on Chronology in January issue—that "the captivity" applied not only to Israel but to other nations of the Middle East. Does this not rather weight the argument in favour of the period 606-536 B. C. ?

4. (*Derby*): It does seem more consistent with the general context of the passage to regard v. 7 as applying to the millennial period. Several contributors point out the grammatical difficulties involved in applying "the desire of the nations" (A. V. ) to the Person of Messiah. The scriptures quoted from Isaiah add weight to the suggestion that material wealth is in view, to be brought for the enrichment and adornment of the great millennial House.

5. (*Derby*): The "nearer" view suggested does not commend itself so clearly as the association with the time of the end and Zerubbabel's ultimate reward.

6. (*Atherton and Leigh*): We cannot deduce from Scripture that there was no ark in the Temple built by the remnant. For no details of the structure or furnishings are given. In the absence of very definite evidence to the contrary we should be justified in thinking that the general design and furnishings would be on the lines of the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple (i. e. as to arrangement of copper altar, laver, holy place and holy of holies). It is difficult

to understand how the requirements of the Day of Atonement could be fulfilled if there was no ark in the most holy place. Josephus in his "Antiquities" makes certain references to the temple of this period, and mentions the lampstand and the altar of incense as part of the furnishings of the holy place. In Book XIV, ch. 4, sec. 4 he writes; "Enormities were committed about the Temple itself, which in former ages had been inaccessible, and seen by none; for Pompey went into it... and saw all that which was unlawful for any other men to see, but only the high priests". We are left wondering what there was to see in the most holy place if an ark was not there! Again there is evidence from the relief on the Arch of Titus in Rome that the Romans carried away from the Temple of Herod the Great the seven-branched lampstand, the ark and silver trumpets (according to illustrations of this on page 528 of the Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands). Herod's temple was built in substitution for that of Zerubbabel's era; why an ark in one and not in the other? We shall welcome any further contributions on this point, but suggest that on the scant evidence apparently available we should be very cautious in assuming that there was no ark in the holy of holies of Zerubbabel's temple.

7. (*Nottingham*): There is an association in v. 5 with the experiences of the Exodus, and therefore v. 6 may perhaps be regarded as a similar type of manifestation to that at Sinai, though far greater in scope. Heb. 12. 25, 26 links the two manifestations in this sense. But we suggest that vv. 6, 7 directly refer to divine intervention in judgements yet future.

8. (*Nottingham*): It is clear that most contributors regard the words of v. 14 as applicable to the Lord's people at that time, and editors share this view. As Liverpool's paper expressed it, "Their sacrifices were unclean because of their disobedience in looking after their own affairs and neglecting the building of God's house".

9. (*Birkenhead*): This suggestion is open to question. Is not the import of the passage rather the reverse?—that their association with secular defilements made even their service in holy things associated with God's House unacceptable.

10. ("*Impressions*"): The direct application of vv. 20-23 to Zerubbabel as a sharer in millennial blessing and authority is clear. That the Lord will delegate authority to those who have been faithful

in spiritual responsibility is confirmed by such scriptures as Matt. 19. 28; 2 Tim. 2. 12; Rev. 2. 26. There is difficulty in applying v. 23 to the Lord Jesus Christ when the person to be honoured is so clearly named as Zerubbabel the son of Shelatiel; and the signet need not necessarily be the "mark of supreme authority", it could be the token of delegated authority. *G. P. Jr.*

### *QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS*

*From Birmingham:* We could understand how the nations could be shaken (2. 7), but how would the heavens, earth, sea and dry land be shaken (v. 6) ?

Regarding the heavens, there are comparative statements in Isa. 13. 13; Joel 3. 16; Matt. 24. 29, etc. Like Hag. 2. 6, 21 these scriptures all refer to the great and terrible day of the Lord when there will be major disturbances among the heavenly bodies (Isa. 13. 10). The expression "shaking" of the heavens fittingly describes disturbances of such magnitude. Similarly the language is appropriate to convey the effect of earthquakes and other great disturbances of land and sea such as are alluded to in Zech. 14. 5, Rev. 16. 18.

*From Victoria:* What is the significance of the omissions of furniture and Shekinah glory in Zerubbabel's temple which were associated with the previous dwelling?

In selection of material for the inspired writings relating to this period the Holy Spirit has chosen not to include details of the design and furnishings of the Temple built under Zerubbabel's leadership. But there are indications from secular writings that such features as the altar of burnt offering, the lampstand, the altar of incense and the table of Shewbread were provided. Indeed it is difficult to imagine the functioning of the Temple without them. Omission of specific reference to them in Scripture does not mean that they were not there. See Comment 6 for further discussion of this point. The Shekinah glory is a different matter, for this was beyond human competence to provide. See Editorial for a brief discussion of this aspect of remnant experience. *G. P. Jr.*

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# BIBLE STUDIES

*'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11). '*

VOLUME 41

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## EDITORIAL

We approach this month the first section of the second of the great prophets of the Remnant, Zechariah. This book presents a clear unity of purpose with Haggai and yet is much longer and more wide-ranging in prophetic content. It has a less cryptic and direct approach than Haggai and contributors have noted an encouraging if simple lesson in this for all time—God uses men of diverse character and expression, often side by side, to complement each other in their ministries.

Two main divisions have been indicated in this book by many writers. Firstly, the section comprising the first eight chapters focuses mainly on the re-building of the Temple: and, secondly, the remainder of the book draws the reader's thoughts increasingly towards the end times, including the glorious future earthly reign of Messiah. It is not surprising to find the single authorship of such a work challenged, and a detailed examination of the case on both sides is impossible here. It should be noted, however, that as in the case of other books of the Bible, variations of style and content by no means establish divided authorship. A different historical standpoint, a significant interval between the writing of one part and another, and other factors, have to be taken into account in such arguments. There are able commentators who remain satisfied that Zechariah was the author of this entire book.

The problem of "prophetic perspective" arises quite markedly again in this book, with the early part more securely rooted in Zechariah's day, yet undoubtedly looking to the future in some places; and the latter section more pre-occupied with the distant future. The lesson is again towards caution in interpretation and limitation of predictions to single specific points in time.

The occurrence of the term "the angel of the Lord" in our study passage this month is interesting, and raises the question of its

interpretation in the Old Testament Scriptures. If, as some believe, this refers to the "pre-incarnate" Son of God, it would represent surely to Zechariah a very precious personal ministry of the Lord to His servant, and accord high honour to His prophetic vision.

*J. D. T.*

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GOD'S DEALING WITH HIS PEOPLE IN HAGGAI'S DAY AND TODAY

Forty-two thousand Israelites with their servants and maids took the liberty afforded them by the proclamation of Cyrus and returned from Babylon to rebuild the House of God in Jerusalem. They departed as the Lord had commanded through Isaiah: "Go ye forth of Babylon", and "Depart ye, depart ye, . . . touch no unclean thing" (Isa. 48. 20; 52. 11). Paul's quotation of this particular scripture in 2 Cor. 6. 17 amplifies the divine call to saints of the present dispensation to remove from where the house and service of God are not found.

After working for a limited time on the foundation of God's house this small remnant abandoned the task. They did so under heavy pressure of adversity and frustration but then lapsed into a negligent attitude being content to dwell in their own ceiled houses although God's house was lying waste (Hag. I. 4). His displeasure at their negligence was expressed in His withholding blessing from their labour (1. 9-11). Their indifference to the divine purpose they excused with the pretext, "It is not the time for us to come, the time for the LORD's house to be built".

While the purposes of God are eternal in character, the revealing of them to men is divinely conducted through appointed seasons and dispensations of time; thus one of Satan's great achievements has been to disarrange in the minds of men times proper to divine purpose. The most tragic example of this was when Israel in the past "knew not the time of her visitation", and crucified the One whom God had sent. The same attitude that causes the sinner to defer his acceptance of Christ until a convenient season (Acts 24. 25) can also veil the minds of saints as to worship and service peculiar to the present time.

Haggai's message confirms that the time was right and the purpose was clear, but severe apathy had taken hold of the people. His

words were designed to break that apathy and provide the necessary incentive so that the objective could be realized: "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house". Although it could never be in such glory and dimension as it had been prior to the captivity, yet God wanted the house built saying, "I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified". God takes pleasure in His house, whether in halcyon days or in remnant days.

Haggai's words were very effective, for all the remnant of the people came and worked in the house of the Lord. Was it a work in vain, a worthless expenditure of time and labour? The Lord's message removed doubt, "I am with you". A month later he reasserted His presence when the word came through Haggai, saying, "Be strong, all ye people... and work: for I am with you... according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt" (2. 4-5). When Israel came out of Egypt God brought them to Mount Horeb where Moses read in their hearing all the words of the Old Covenant, and that great company, so vast in comparison with those who were listening to Haggai, accepted the terms. Thereupon God said, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them... ". Nearly a thousand years had passed since that momentous day, yet God's desire to dwell among His people remained unchanged. He was as truly with this little remnant as He was with Israel and His purpose for them was the same.

"I am with you" are words which clearly agree with those spoken by the Lord Jesus when He committed to His disciples the commission of the New Covenant: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway" (Matt. 28. 19-20). The outworking of this commission is detailed in the Acts and Epistles of the New Testament and clearly displays the existence of a spiritual house of God consisting of churches of God built together to form a habitation for God in the Spirit (Eph. 2. 19-22, 1 Pet. 2. 5, 6, 1 Tim. 3. 75). This was not a desirable abstraction that impeded the practical logic of the apostles but rather it was the objective towards which they laboured. As for instance when Paul, according to the grace given him as a wise master builder, laid the foundation, and consequently the Church of God in Corinth was planted, which together with every other church of God was "temple of God" (1 Cor. 3. 16-17).

**The unity and order manifest at the beginning of the present dispensation and the powerful testimony of those early churches is a subject of interest and admiration. Who can evade the question, By what authority can the great commission be altered or revised? Do the "all things" which He commanded allow for human amendment? Surely the answer to these questions is "No!" At no juncture since the day of Pentecost has God dispensed with the original pattern or brought in a new arrangement. The apostolic order of testimony was designed to extend throughout the present dispensation, until the coming of the Lord.**

**God asked the remnant, "Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing?" The house of God at Jerusalem had a glorious past, beautiful and magnificent, and God gives promise of a glorious future: "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former". But the relevant question was, "How do ye see it now?" Although the ruins presented no encouragement and the surroundings no incentive, yet the rebuilding was the work for the time then present. "Now be strong", said the Lord, "and work". The past and the future were but different phases of the same purpose: the present obligation was that which was binding on the remnant.**

**Many believers would readily acknowledge that the New Testament churches of God were not autonomous units, but an expression of divine unity and oneness effected by saints together in obedience to God's word. They likewise perceive the perfect unity of the Body of Christ, when all believers will be manifest together as the Bride of the Lamb, without schism and without division. But what of God's purpose for the present day when so many are scattered in innumerable sects, subscribing to countless creeds of theology? Beyond dispute, the rebuilding of the house of God is the relevant work, and adherence to the "all things" that the Lord God commanded the binding obligation for the time now present.**

**Although only one citation is made in the New Testament from the book of Haggai (Heb. 12. 26) yet the content of the prophecy is particularly pertinent to the present day. The most obvious comparison in this study is (a) as God dealt objectively with Israel at the beginning so did He deal with the remnant in Haggai's day, moving them to rebuild the house of God: (b) as He dealt with**

His people in apostolic times bringing them together in churches of God which formed the house of God, so we conclude in the light of this prophecy that it is to the same objective that His will is directed today—that the house of God be rebuilt if only by a small remnant who in doing so act according to the mind of God.

*D. Smith*

*CHRONOLOGY: How long was work on the Temple suspended?*

In response to Editors' request for views on this subject (see page 6 of Jan. issue) certain suggestions have been received. We supply in full a proposal from Mr. L. Burrows (Kingston):

"The editorial comment on Mr. C. L. Prasher's article in the January issue brings out an interesting point. It would certainly have been out of character for Cyrus himself to have reversed the effect of his original decree, which was to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem (Ezra 1. 5). But it is unnecessary to assume that he did, and in fact Mr. Prasher does not imply this, but simply that the work ceased because of opposition. According to Ezra 4. 1-6 the work was frustrated because of harrassment by the people of the land, and it would seem quite natural to read into the story a reluctance on the part of the hired counsellors to take any official action at first because they were aware of the favourable attitude of Cyrus to the Jewish remnant. In consequence they engineered a reign of fear to deter the Jews until the political climate had changed. It was not until a new ruler came to the throne that there was any likelihood of a successful formal approach to the authorities being made. When at last this was done, the enemies of the Jews were able to go to Jerusalem with the delegated power of the Emperor and make the work cease (Ezra 4. 23, 24). If this suggestion is correct then there was a period of about five years during the reign of Cyrus when little work was done to the house of God owing to fear of the people of the land (was this why Daniel mourned for three weeks in the third year of Cyrus?), and a further 10 years when the work ceased altogether, making 15 years in all as stated in the article. "

Mr. A. M. Hope (Edinburgh) has an alternative suggestion:

"B. C. 535 Foundation of Temple laid.

B. C. 529 Cambyses succeeds Cyrus—the Ahasuerus of Ezra  
4. 6.

B. C. 522 Pseudo-Smerdis is called Artaxerxes in Ezra 4. 7, 11, 23.

B. C. 520 Ministry of Haggai.

Two things emerge:

- (i) The frustration of their purpose (Ezra 4. 5) must be distinguished from the cessation of the work (Ezra 4. 24)
- (ii) The suspension period is therefore two years, not fifteen years."

These are both feasible interpretations, although something obviously depends on the reliability of the identification of certain Persian emperors. Readers will be interested to consider whether there are additional points which would weigh in favour of any of the interpretations suggested. *Eds.*

## STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS

### ZECHARIAH 1 & 2

#### *REVIVING MERCIES TOWARDS JERUSALEM*

*From Methil.* —God loves Jerusalem and loves His people, but because of sin He must punish His people for their lawless condition. Such judgement also affects Jerusalem, the place of the Name. The Lord always seeks for the good of His people, and desires to show them mercy as soon as they are in a fit condition to receive it. So He sends His prophets to speak words of warning and comfort. Zechariah, whose name means "remembered of Jehovah", was sent with a wonderful message that also contained a promise: "Return unto Me, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will return unto you". It is a great promise both for them and us. Zechariah was the grandson of Iddo whose name significantly means "timely"; Zechariah's message was timely, and coincided with Haggai's. Haggai's message was brief, given within approximately two months (Hag. 1. 1, 2. 10), while Zechariah's occupied something over two years (Zech. 1. 1, 1. 1). Zechariah was a prophet with youth on his side (2. 4) and being young, a man of vision [Comment 1],

He was sent to encourage the people of God to rebuild the Temple of God (1. 16). The vision that Zechariah had before him, to help both himself and God's people, was the vision of the Lord as the

**Lord of Hosts.** This title is mentioned **three** times in **1. 3** and over **50** times in the entire prophecy. This vision was essential for the success of the message. **For the nations round about had severely abused God's people and had helped forward their affliction (v. 15).** However, the Lord of hosts, whose title conveys the thought of power and might, "shall yet comfort Zion" (v. 17).

*The first vision.* The angelic riders are told that God would restore Jerusalem. It was suggested that the myrtle trees speak of the return of Israel. These angelic riders will probably speak of judgements that will fall on the nations of the earth (see Rev. 6). We thought this prophecy had double fulfilment in view. Some of this will take place just before the Millennium [Comment 2].

*The second vision.* (1. 18-21) In this there were four destroying horns which were destroyed by four carpenters (or smiths). We would be very glad to hear what others think this represents [Comment 3].

*The third vision.* (2. 1-13). This is of the millennial Jerusalem, which cannot be contained by walls; it will be the home not only of Jews but of Gentiles as well; a city without walls, a city of peace [Comment 4].

Jerusalem would be restored by the Lord of hosts. Zion would be established again. How precious are God's people in His sight! They are to Him "the apple of His eye" (Zech. 2. 8).

*Neville Coomer*

*From Melbourne.* — "He keepeth not His anger for ever" is one of the characteristics of the God of Israel. The days of chastisement being ended, He longs to have again the fellowship and service of some of His people. Knowing how the returned remnant have been discouraged in their work of rebuilding for Him, He now raises up His servants Haggai and Zechariah and speaks through them with a note of insistence and urgency. Their message is concentrated into the latter half of the second year of Darius. Four times, from the sixth until the ninth month, the word of the Lord came to Haggai, while in the first chapter of Zechariah it is recorded that three times from the eighth until the eleventh month, the word of the Lord came to him. Thus there was an overlapping and confirming of their messages [Comment 5].

**God's objective is to encourage and stir up the discouraged remnant to arise and complete the work which they had returned from Babylon to do. The years of inactivity and failure to complete the building of His house had caused them to drift towards the ways of their fathers, with whom the former prophets prior to the captivity had pleaded, "Return ye now from your evil ways". They had refused to hearken, and when disaster overwhelmed them, they were compelled to confess that what had befallen them at the hands of the king of Babylon was but the inevitable and righteous result of refusal to return to the Lord. Now the memories and consciences of the returned remnant are being stirred to consider the things which befell their fathers. They too had been given a reviving. Should they continue in their failure to serve His purposes they could be found again, as were their fathers, under the heel of an oppressor.**

**In the vision of Zech. 1. 7-11, the four horses had been sent forth to walk to and fro through the earth. The burden of the report which they brought was that they had done so, and all the earth sat still and was at rest. The attitude of the Gentile nations was one of complacency. They knew nothing of God's purposes towards the city of His choice, His land, His people, or His house. They knew nothing of the pleasure which He desired to receive therefrom. The nations continued to rejoice at the continued desolation of everything belonging to Israel. His people too, had been in clanger of sitting still and at rest, remaining oblivious to His purposes.**

**As to the vision of the four horns which scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem, we are inclined to view these as the nations of Egypt, Syria, Assyria and Babylon; nations which, although raised up by God for the chastisement of His people, were in themselves likened to inanimate things, seeing nothing save the prospect and fruits of conquest. We have difficulty regarding the four smiths but make the suggestion that these may represent Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome [see Comment 3].**

**In chapter 2, we judge, there is given a preview of future millennial glories of the land which is "the glory of all lands", because it is His land. The glory of the Lord shall be seen in the midst of His people who shall dwell in the land and serve Him acceptably, and many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day. With such promises as are recorded in Zech. 2, He encourages them to look beyond the present when they are of little account in the esteem**

of the Gentile nations, to the time when they shall be the head of the nations of the earth. Though their present prospects and outlook may fall far short of the realisation of such promises, yet they are given the honour, in the midst of adversity, of holding a portion of His land and His city, and rebuilding His dwelling place therein.

WS, DM, TWF

*From Denmark Hill.* — 1. *Chronological Note.* The second year of Darius 1 was B. C. 520, the same year in which, two months earlier, Haggai had commenced to prophecy. Fifteen years earlier, in B. C. 535, the foundation of the Temple in Jerusalem had been laid, consequent upon Zerubbabel's return from Babylon in B. C. 536, under the decree of Cyrus in his first year. This year B. C. 536 marked the termination of the 70 years' captivity, which had commenced in B. C. 606, and hence the 70 years' "indignation" of Zech. 1. 12 does not coincide with that captivity. However, 70 years back from B. C. 520 was the time of the *siege* of Jerusalem on 10. 10. B. C. 589 as described in 2 Kings 25. 1. On 10. 10. 520, 69 years had been completed, and at the time when Zechariah was speaking the seventieth year was running its course. A similar situation will be found in Zechariah 7. 5 in respect of the fasts. This reference to the *siege* of Jerusalem would have a stimulating effect on the remnant who had returned to the city and were now just taking their ease, which it was God's purpose through Zechariah to shatter [Comment 6],

2. *Survey of Portion.* After an important introductory section in Zech. 1. 1-6, the portion contains three visions from God.

(a) A survey vision Zech. 1. 7-17

(b) A preparation vision relative to the nations apart from Israel Zech. 1. 18-21

(c) A preparation vision relative to Jerusalem Zech. 2. 1-13. (which is linked with the introduction).

3. *The Survey Vision.* The vision was one of military scouts reporting back to secret headquarters hidden among trees in a valley. Their report was, "All is quiet"—too quiet. The time had come for the Lord to revive His people in Jerusalem and to punish the nations that had afflicted Israel for 70 years. They further had "helped for evil" (Zech. 1. 15 R. V. M. ) while God's people were attempting to rebuild the Temple, and they had had a strong part to

play in the cessation of the work (see Ezra 4. 5-24). For too long His people in Jerusalem had been at ease; for too long the nations around had had their way by hindering the Lord's work. A period of action was ahead and the Temple would be finished (Zech. 1. 16).

4. *Preparation against the Nations.* This vision has two parts: the four horns and the four smiths. The four horns represent the rulers who had afflicted Israel in captivity, it is suggested, and there were, in fact, four kings of Babylon during that 70-year period namely, Nebuchadnezzar, Evil Merodach, Neriglissar, Nabonidus (Belshazzar co-rex last three years).

The four smiths are present to "fray" the horns, i. e. chase them away (see Deut. 28. 26) to "cast them down", and may represent the first four kings of Persia—Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius I, Xerxes (i. e. Ahaseurus of Esther). If not, has any one any other suggestion? [See comment 3],

5. *Preparation within Jerusalem.* This the third vision, focusses on a man measuring Jerusalem as a surveyor would before reconstruction work is commenced. And God indicated that He had great plans ahead for Jerusalem:

- it was to be vastly populated (v. 4)
- it was to be prosperous (cattle) (v. 4)
- it was to be protected by God (v. 5)
- it was to be filled with His glory (v. 5).

Verses 11-13, it is suggested, point to a time still future, when the great plan of reconstruction and rehabilitation will reach its climax, not only for those of Zion, but for the nations of the whole world, who shall join themselves to the Lord in the millennial reign of Christ. Then the Lord will be fully "waked up"—for His Christ will be personally present in Jerusalem.

However, the then immediate action which Zechariah called for from the inhabitants of Jerusalem of his own time was as recorded in chap. 1. 1-6. It was a call to return to the Lord, a necessary prerequisite to the great plans which the Lord had for the Temple and city. It is encouraging that Zechariah's ministry found a ready response. The Temple was completed in four years (Ezra 6. 75) and later, under Nehemiah, the city wall breaches were repaired, and Jerusalem flourished again, as a whole city. The Lord's revived

mercies found responsive reactions in His people and this is what He looks for in all ages.

*C. L. Prasher*

*From Crowborough.* —Zechariah's prophecies started before Haggai's had finished. Whilst Haggai was given direct messages which he appeared to deliver verbatim, Zechariah was given visions and signs. He was not only a prophet but the grandson of a prophet. Like Haggai, the rebuilding of God's house was the burden of his message, linked with reviving mercies towards Jerusalem.

The first vision of the man on the red horse and the others behind him, tempts us to link them with the four horsemen of the book of Revelation [see Comment 2]. There are only three colours mentioned here but even so their number is indefinite. It is as though there was a red horse, with other horses, red, sorrel and white behind. Their purpose and mission appear to be merely to range over the earth and bring back a report. It seems to be indicated that since the earth is quiet and at rest the time for showing mercy to Jerusalem should be near.

The seventy years of Jeremiah 25. 11-14 are almost completed [Comment 7]. In fact, the prophecy of Jeremiah seems much in mind, since the same terms are used of the nations that have afflicted Jerusalem in her time of trouble. The promise is given that the Lord shall yet comfort Zion. Here again the line is spoken of as being stretched over Jerusalem. God had always been jealous over this city, and had now returned to it, not this time in judgement but with mercies (see v. 16). There would, however, be punishment to those who had scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem, these being represented by the four horns seen by Zechariah; whether of wood, as suggested by the word "carpenters" used in the A. V., or of iron as "smiths" is used in the R. V. In any case the horns are frayed and cast down as would be the "nations which had lifted up their horn against the land of Judah to scatter it".

Chapter 2 is full of promise of reviving mercies. God is described as having waked up out of His holy habitation and He promises to be a wall of fire round Jerusalem and the glory in the midst of her. God's special care was summed up in the unusual words of verse 8, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye". We were unable to determine what this signified in its original meaning. Was

it a delicate **part of the eye which must be preserved, or did** it relate to an apple of special worth on a fruit tree upon which an eye was kept? [Comment 8].

### **IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS**

Papers were also received from Atherton and Leigh, Birkenhead, Derby, Nottingham and Vancouver B. C., and from these the following impressions were gathered.

Like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Zechariah was of priestly ancestry. He was grandson of Iddo, one of the chief priests who came up with Zerrubbabel from Babylon (Neh. 12. 16).

Zechariah and Haggai were contemporary (Zech. 1. 1, Hag. 2. 10, 18, Ezra 6. 14). In view of the smallness of the remnant, and their being close to Jerusalem, these two prophets would no doubt be in contact with one another. Zechariah was thought to have spoken between the last two prophecies of Haggai, the ministry of Zechariah extending to the fourth year of Darius.

Haggai's message was addressed to individuals and is blunt and corrective; it concerned the rebuilding of the temple. The message of Zechariah is addressed rather to the people in general, and stresses the promises of future prosperity for Judah, in view of which they should be faithful to the Lord in their day. Both sorts of ministry are important today (2 Tim. 4. 2, 3).

In 1. 8 we learn that the vision Zechariah saw came in the night. Micah 3. 6 seems to imply that the prophets did not expect night visions, and the only other prophet who specifically refers to night visions is Daniel.

It is a directive of Scripture that the credentials of a messenger are to be tested, and here Zechariah twice states his anxiety that the people should accept his message as from the Lord (2. 9, 11).

Zech. 1. 6 speaks of lessons which should have been learned from previous history. Although the words of prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah had been ignored, what was spoken against their fathers had come true (2 Chr. 36. 15). The message had only been heeded after calamity overtook the people. The Lord's word abides true in a changing world. A divine principle is stated in 1. 3 when God appeals, "Return unto Me, . . . and I will return unto you". Repen-

**tance is necessary before approaching the Lord for forgiveness. The Lord loves His people and longs for His people's love. When they lavish their love on other people and things, the Lord is a jealous lover.**

**The vision of chap. 1 deals with Jerusalem and the nations. Some considered that the horses would suggest warlike intentions on the part of the Lord of all the earth, being sent to spy on the nations and bring back a report. Others felt that whereas the riders of Rev. 6 execute judgements on the earth, the four riders of Zechariah are concerned only with surveying the earth. In any case here we see something of God's government of the universe through His servants [see Comment 2]. It was suggested by some that the earth was still and at rest because the Lord had finished His chastisement of Israel. On the other hand the Lord was displeased with the nations at ease; for instance, the Chaldeans who were brought against Judah and Jerusalem and subsequently helped forward their affliction. The angel of the Lord is disappointed that nothing is happening to Jerusalem after the seventy years prophesied by Jeremiah. Men would give much today to achieve a state of rest, but true peace can only come through the Prince of Peace.**

**The four horns, symbols of power, were thought to be the nations which had scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. The smiths represent agents of destruction upon the oppressing nations, for example Assyria and Babylon. It was suggested that these smiths would turn peaceful implements into swords and spears (Joel 3. 9-10) with which the Lord will cast down the horns of the nations [see Comment 3].**

**To encourage the remnant, the Lord tells them that the Temple will be built in Jerusalem. The promise of v.17 will only be fully realised in the Millenium.**

**Nehemiah was acting in accordance with God's plan in building the walls of Jerusalem. The reference in Zech. 2. 4 to dwelling outside the walls without fear might lend support to the futurity of the passage. The Lord points forward amid their distresses to His dwelling among His people with other nations showing their allegiance to Him. Ezekiel, if he speaks of the millennial city, says nothing about a city wall. Such an apparently unwallled city would encourage Satan and his hordes to come from the four corners of the earth.**

**They will learn with dismay about the wall of fire [see Comment 4].**

**Many Jews had stayed in Babylon (2. 7), the land of the north, and another call is given to them to return to the "Holy Land", a description occurring only in Zech. 2. 12. The apple of His eye (2. 8) indicates the special affection of God for His people, and His sensitivity to any oppression of them. "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem" are words which will have their complete fulfilment in the future day, but Zechariah was able to assure the people that the Lord had returned to Jerusalem with compassion (1. 16); God's house was to be rebuilt (1. 16), the city would be rebuilt (1. 16), the cities of Judah would again be prosperous (1. 17) and God would "yet choose Jerusalem".** *Eds.*

## COMMENTS

1. (*Methil*): This assumes that the young man of verse 4 refers to Zechariah himself, a view supported by many students. I would suggest an alternative, namely, that the angelic message about Jerusalem was addressed to the man with the measuring line, since it concerned the object of that man's immediate attention.

2. (*Methil*): There are various details of this vision which bring to mind other scriptures and other visions recorded, notably in Revelation. However, the specific mention of the three score and ten years (v. 12) indicates that there was an immediate and urgent application at that moment. It is difficult to think of a time in Jerusalem's future when conditions just like these will apply again, although the general attitude of arrogant disregard of Israel is characteristic of the nations around at many points in history. Therefore I would suggest that we be very hesitant to identify these riders with those in other passages which immediately come to mind, whether in Zechariah (6. 1-8) or in Daniel or Revelation. There were horses of red, sorrel and white, but no indication of how many; neither is there any indication in the passage that these horses or their riders have a role in executing divine judgement.

3. (*Methil and others*): In this vision too, the mention of horns carries our thoughts to other prophecies. Yet perhaps the basic thought of force and oppressing strength is predominant, whether four specific nations or individuals are in view, or perhaps the four

corners of the earth. The smiths, or carpenters, we are told, represent the effective means of overthrowing the horns. The suggested connection with Joel 3. 9, 10, quoted in "Impressions", is interesting, although the Joel prophecy is clearly pin-pointed in the future judgement of the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat. The paper from Melbourne suggests specific nations as represented in the "smiths" as well as in the "horns". But does this not tend to create a difficulty in grouping nations, all at some time hostile to Israel, in these essentially opposite camps in God's purpose? It is certainly true, of course, that God used the power of one nation to curb that of another in the history of His people. Another suggestion is made from Denmark Hill, identifying the horns with Babylonian monarchs and the smiths with kings of Persia. This represents a further possibility and narrows the picture down to the period immediately before and after the captivity, with the national powers directly concerned in the overthrow and restoration of Israel. Doubtless none would question that finality cannot be reached in this.

4. (*Methil and others*): With reference to Zechariah's vision recorded in chap. 2, comment has already been made above on the "young man". On the subject of the walls of Jerusalem, I suggest that this passage, while deliberately deflecting attention from the walls, and thus from the precise dimensions of the city, does not say that Jerusalem was envisaged as a city without walls. The point is correctly made in one paper that Nehemiah laboured diligently to re-build the wall. Where this truth is stressed, the thought is of the separation of the inhabitants from the nations. In Zech. 2 the thought is of prosperity and a population spreading beyond the confines of the walls of the old city, who could rely for protection on God as a "wall of fire". With regard to points quoted in "Impressions" about Ezekiel's prophecy, it is true that he does not write of the wall of Jerusalem, but then he was preoccupied with the Temple and was not at that time concerned with the wall. Is it not a walled city which is to be "compassed" after the Millennium, in the course of the final conflict (Rev. 20. 9)? As is pointed out in other papers, the new Jerusalem is a walled city (Rev. 21. 12). Again, although some commentators have assumed that the angel's message to the "young man" was to stop him measuring the city's dimensions or perimeter, this is not stated. Perhaps the measurement went on (see

1. **16) but he must understand that this was not a means of restricting the growth or prosperity of Jerusalem.**

5. (*Melbourne*): As Methil friends point out in their paper, **Zechariah's prophecy extended into the fourth year of King Darius (7. 1).**

6. (*Denmark Hill*): **The article on chronology which Mr. C. L. Prasher contributed in the January magazine has resulted in some further contributions from readers concerning the periods of seventy years involved in the story of the Remnant. Editors hope to draw these together as soon as possible in a future issue of *Bible Studies*.**

7. Consideration will doubtless be given to the suggestion that **Zech. 1. 12 may not refer specifically to the same 70 years as Jer. 25. 11, 12 (see page 4 of January issue).**

8. (*Crowborough*): **"The apple of His eye". This refers to the highly sensitive clear cornea overlying the pupil of the eye. It is this sensitivity which is the key to the use of the term in scripture (Deut. 32. 10, Psa. 17. 8, Prov. 7. 2, Zech. 2. 8). In the three earlier references the predominant thought is of "keeping" or protection. We immediately blink as a protective reflex action at the slightest irritation of the cornea. Thus the Zechariah scripture underlines the sensitivity of God with regard to His people, and those who threaten them.**

*J. D. T.*

# BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11). '

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## EDITORIAL

"They shall rejoice, and shall see the *plummet* in the hand of Zerubabel" (Zech. 4. 10).

The eyes of the Lord, which "run to and fro throughout the whole earth", picked out a plummet as an object of special note and joy. We pause to consider the wonder of the Lord, Possessor of heaven and earth, taking note of something so small and commonplace. This small instrument was significant to God because it was in the hand of Zerubbabel as he was engaged in the rebuilding of the Temple. The plummet therefore bespoke the Spirit-stirred exercise in the hearts of His people to respond to His desire for a dwelling-place among them.

"Who hath despised the day of small things?", asks the Lord of Hosts. The mind of the flesh naturally tends to measure the importance of a movement by its size or grandeur. Spiritual discernment looks beneath the surface to the divine principle expressed. After all, it was not the architectural appeal of Solomon's Temple which made it the house of God. God placed His Name there simply because divine principles were embodied in its design and ordinances of service. The earlier structure of the Tabernacle had been designed to give effect to the same principles of man's acceptable approach to God. In contrast to the Solomonic Temple the Tabernacle was an insignificant structure. Yet service carried out by Aaron and his associates glorified God as much as that rendered against a more spectacular background in Solomon's time.

As in Zerubbabel's time, the eyes of the Lord still rejoice to see the "plummet" in the hands of those who wish to maintain scriptural standards of truth in building the house of God. A day of small things it may be, but that does not detract from the value to God of adherence to divine principle.

G. P. Jr.

## GOD'S WORKING THROUGH FAITHFUL MINORITIES

**While** in scriptural terminology "faithfulness" **and** "full of faith" **are not** interchangeable **terms**, nevertheless they seem to be complementary **inasmuch as**, in respect of men, one who is faithful **must of necessity have** faith **and the greater the latter the more pronounced will be the former**. Faith is the giving of **substance to things hoped for and** faithfulness is the practical demonstration, through **trustworthiness**, of **that assurance** of things hoped for.

To **Abraham**, primarily, **God** committed something in **trust**, firstly **in what is termed** in Heb. 11, "**the land of promise**", **and finally in the "son of promise"** of whom it is said "In **Isaac shall thy seed be called**". Rom. 4. 3 states, "**Abraham believed God**" and in practical **outworking "he went out"**. Only upon the basis of **faith could he hold the charge** **God** committed to him, grasping the promise **through obedience to the Word of God**. The **coupling of these two things is emphasized in the words of Gal. 3. 9**, "**they which be of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham**".

The **truth of faithfulness is clearly expressed in Abraham**. However, **in the development of God's purposes He had no intention of confining His will, and the execution of it, to the individual**. Thus, although one **individual after another is raised up of the Lord faithfully to carry out His will yet He ever had in mind the constitution of a nation, and this desire is consummated upon the basis of Israel's confession in Exodus " . . . all that the LORD hath spoken we will do"**; thus they were entrusted with "**the oracles of God**".

Israel's trials **and triumphs are instructive but sad indeed is the record of her declension and departure from the laws of God and thus from God Himself with, in the final analysis, departure from the land which God had given them in promise**. A few who were carried into **captivity, as a result of the national overthrow, still had a desire for divine things and this was manifest in their individual testimony in Babylon**.

In the **return from Babylon, of what is named in the prophecies we are now studying "a remnant of the people"**, it is clear that **faithful men gave leadership to those "whose heart made them**

willing"—"all whose spirit God had stirred". In their return to the land, the building of the House and the establishing of the ordinances of the Lord, they could have been excused for copying the religious structures and rituals with which they had been familiar, but the keynote of faithfulness in the past had been "according to the pattern", and God had not altered His plans to suit changing times. Thus three times in the book of Ezra this statement occurs—"as it is written". Ezra 5. 1 states, "Haggai the prophet and Zechariah... prophesied unto the Jews", and further in 6. 14 "elders of the Jews builded and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai... and Zechariah". To any who place little value on oral or written ministry these things, together with the words of 1 Thes. 5. 20, "despise not prophesyings", should come with force.

As with faith, so with faithfulness; it does not pass uncontested. The pressure commenced in chapter 4 of Ezra, and in various passages in Nehemiah, with a suggestion which, if agreed to, would seemingly ease a difficult situation and still not be of great import. It was just a little thing. When Lot went up out of Sodom he said to the Lord, "This city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one". He could not get the city out of his blood and even when he later went up to the mountain it was not because of his fear of the Lord but rather his fear of the city. Had he gone there under the original direction from the Lord how different his final record might have been! The little things are still important in divine things, either for good or ill. The initial harmless-sounding suggestion to the remnant, which they rejected, swiftly developed into outright opposition; this is the price of faithfulness.

The closing chapters of Ezra and Nehemiah call for separation and judgement, possibly two of the most difficult things the remnant were called upon to face. The path of faithfulness does not grow easier with the passage of time.

Jehovah is unchanging in character; He says, "I am Jehovah, I change not" and the doctrine of the Lord is as unchanging as God Himself. The laws governing faithfulness to God are applicable in all ages and, in present day testimony, which may be a parallel of earlier remnant days, a summary of the essentials for God's people in Old Covenant times is equally binding for the 20th century.

1. **The Oracles of God (The Faith) are entrusted to those who are willing and obedient.**
2. **A faithful community is composed of faithful individuals.**
3. **God raises up faithful men for the leadership of His people and there can be no exercise, constitution and continuance of such a people apart from godly leaders.**
4. **Despite any seeming prosperity in other areas and communities, faithfulness can only be maintained by adherence to the Word of God—complete compliance with the pattern, "as it is written". This demands separation from whatever is not of God no matter how painful such may be.**
5. **Through the declaration of God's word, under those who are thus gifted of God, spiritual prosperity may be promoted, and we cannot exist as a faithful community without it.**
6. **Faithfulness seems generally to be strained to the limit by opposition from both within and without, yet like faith, it has not only its trials but also its triumphs.**
7. **Judgement is "God's strange work". Nevertheless, it is still the work of God and must be righteously executed, as necessary, under the direction of God.**

**In the final record of Scripture the word from the great I AM. The First and the Last, is: "Be thou faithful... and I will give thee**

**What a grief to the heart of the Lord unfaithfulness is! It cannot be better expressed than in the words of Prov. 25. 19: "Confidence in an unfaithful man... is like a broken tooth and a foot out of joint".**

**Shall we strive for the commendation of 3 John 5: "Beloved, thou doest a faithful work in whatsoever thou doest...".**

*J. Rodgers*

## STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS

### ZECHARIAH 3 & 4

#### *JOSHUA'S CLEANSING AND THE LAMPSTAND ALL OF GOLD*

*From Derby.* —Standing at Joshua's right hand to be his adversary it seems that Satan was opposed to the restoration of the returned remnant to Jerusalem, for the Lord says to him, "The LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee" (3. 2, see Jude 9).

In this vision **Joshua** was thought by some to be representative of the returned remnant of whom Isaiah wrote, "**But we are all as an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,, (Isa. 64. 6, AV).** The Lord commands (through His angel) that the filthy garments be taken from off him. So Joshua is cleansed and clothed. How like the poor sinner who comes to Christ the Saviour, helpless to do anything for himself, opposed by the adversary. He becomes the object of divine grace, plucked as a brand out of the eternal fire and delivered from the wrath to come (1 Thes. 1. 10). So far all has been unconditional; now the angel brings before Joshua things that are conditional: "If thou wilt walk in My ways... keep my charge, then thou shalt judge My house... keep My courts, and I will give thee a place of access among these that stand by". These are ever God's ways. Today many who gladly accept the free blessings of the gospel, the unconditional things, are not so ready to continue steadfastly in the apostles' teaching, observing all things whatsoever we have been commanded (Matt. 28. 20).

Verses 8-10 seem, we thought, to look ahead to a restored remnant of a yet future day. For the origin of the Lord's title "**The Branch**" we referred to Isa. 11. 1-10. Next we saw this same blessed Person as the Stone (see Gen. 49. 24 (last clause), Psa. 118. 22, Acts. 4. 22). The seven eyes speak of the same divine Person [Comment 1]. The engraving of v. 9 seems to relate to Jer. 31. 55, 34 and Heb. 10. 16. The last clause of v.10 we suggest could refer to Zech. 13. 1, 2; "in that day" refers to the millennial day or possibly just prior to it, when new covenant blessings will be granted to a repentant and saved remnant (Rom. 9. 27).

The details of the lampstand were thought to be symbolic. Olive oil speaks of the Holy Spirit. The lampstand was all of gold; both in workmanship and in all the arrangements to keep the lamps continuously supplied with oil, all was divine; no human hands were needed to attend to the lamps. The whole is, of course, symbolic, as in the case of the lampstands representing churches of God (Rev. 1). The light therefrom was to give divine light amid the spiritual darkness of sin and idolatry, God's desire being to have a testimony to Himself as the living and true God in this dark world. The return of the remnant was to this end but it was imperative that His people should themselves be true-hearted and faithful;

hence God's dealings with the high priest, Joshua, as an example of what He required the whole returned remnant to be.

We thought that v. 7 referred to Artaxerxes king of Persia, who was persuaded to cause the building of the temple to cease, but that mountain became a plain for God removed him and raised up another king, Darius, who was favourable to the work being completed, and greatly helped by commanding money and materials and sacrifices to be provided by the very men who were the root cause of all the trouble and delay [Comment 2], In this vision there are olive trees, two olive branches, two sons of oil (i. e. anointed ones); we suggest that as only prophets were actually anointed by God Himself, priests and kings being anointed by prophets, the two sons of oil are therefore the two prophets in the context of our study, namely Haggai and Zechariah. A. G. Willis, S. R. W.

*From Vancouver.* —Zechariah's vision in chapter 3 was a message to Israel. Joshua in all his filthiness was a picture of the nation in the sight of God, absolutely unfit to engage in holy things. However, the grace of God is expressed in the words, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" The Lord chose both Israel and ourselves when we were nothing and had nothing, and we both can say, "By the grace of God we are what we are". Joshua's condition was such that reformation was out of the question; what he needed was a completely fresh start. Joshua is then clothed from head to foot with clean rich garments. Thus the crowning work of grace is seen (as with the prodigal) in his not only being forgiven and the sin-stained garments being removed but in being clothed completely with the best that heaven can provide.

It does seem strange that in circumstances such as these, Satan should be standing there. When a sinner is forgiven there is joy in the presence of the angels in heaven, but there is no joy in Satan's heart and he would stop the joy in heaven if he could. The word of God can answer the adversary and the words are, "The Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem (so unfaithful yet forgiven and richly blessed) rebuke thee". The purpose of the adversary is still the same today, to accuse the Lord's people of their faults before their Master. We are unable to rebuke him but the Lord is able. Jude 9 shows that even Michael is unable to bring a railing judgement against him. Before Jude lays down his pen he writes, "Now unto

Him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish... be the glory... for evermore".

Chapter 4 makes it clear that light and testimony are not in the strength or might of the natural man but in the power of the Spirit of God. The vision is given of a golden Lampstand, the testimony of the Lord. The fulfilment of the purpose of the Lampstand is light and more light, and a permanent light can only be assured by a continuous flow of oil. Thus in the vision Zechariah sees two olive trees, the source of oil, and two pipes to guide the oil to the lamps. The Lord's people in testimony need a continuous flow of the Holy Spirit that the purpose of God may be clearly seen in them.

Thoughts were expressed as to who were the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth (v. 14). The heavenly messenger makes it clear to Zechariah that they are the two olive trees. Was the flow of spiritual strength for the people of God brought through the work of Haggai and Zechariah who stood in the Lord's presence and brought the message to Israel? We know that it has been expressed that the two are Joshua and Zerubbabel, the Leaders used of God in the building of the house of God and setting up the service as given by God to Moses [Comment 3]. *J. B.*

*From Atherton and Leigh.* —It was suggested that the angel of 3. 1 is the Lord of v. 2, the Son of God prior to His incarnation, named by Isaiah as "the angel of His presence" who so often appeared in Old Testament days to meet the need of His people [see answer to question from Liverpool].

The constant opposition of the Devil to the divine purposes, particularly those associated with His house, is illustrated here in remnant times. Whether we think of Job, Daniel or Joshua, whether past, present or future, his attitude is unchanged (see Rev. 12. 10). We do well to mark the dignity and authority of this mighty being which are not treated with scant respect either by Michael the archangel (Jude 9) or even by the Lord Himself, the attitude of each being to leave appropriate judgement and justice in almighty hands. In no sense should *we* adopt the flippant attitude of today towards a being to whom the Lord chooses His words so carefully.

Joshua's filthy garments seem to indicate a condition of defilement and sin, whether personal, national or through Babylonian

association. To function in such an office as high priest a cleansing was absolutely necessary, which cleaning was performed by the Lord Himself. The importance of such a procedure had been emphasized in the earliest days of the covenant relationship between God and His people. Aaron and his sons were cleansed and consecrated for their respective offices, and it was essential for Israel's first high priest to discard his attire, and adopt the specially prepared garments "for glory and for beauty". The festal apparel of Aaron or Joshua pre-figures the majesty and dignity of our great High Priest. Garments seem to speak of ways or habits, and the Spirit draws attention to our cleansing and our apparel in the light of any service we might render in His house (see Col. 3. 9, 10, Eph. 4. 22-24).

V. 8 states that Joshua and his fellows were men who are a sign, i. e. typical men, representing in some way or other the Person and work of the Lord Jesus, the Branch. The context seems to suggest representations in service as priest, deliverer and restorer, v. 10 portraying the glories of a millennial day. E. B.

*From Birkenhead.* —Our study deals with visions concerning Judah's leadership under Joshua and Zerubbabel. Firstly we have a vision of the Lord's tribunal, in which Joshua and Satan, as accuser, stood in the presence of the angel of the Lord—possibly the Lord Himself [see answer to question from Liverpool]—who commanded Joshua's filthy garments to be removed and replaced with clean robes and a fair mitre. This made Joshua fit to appear before God. We look to a future time when the Branch will be brought forth (Isa. 11. 1, Jer. 23. 5) in the millennial period, when iniquity will be removed and peace and security will be experienced. It was thought that the seven eyes (3. 9, 4. 10) were linked with Rev. 5. 6.

This episode in which Satan appears as accuser caused us to consider the similar experiences of Job. As to the clean robes of Joshua we noted the reference in Psa. 29. 2 to worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness ("in holy array" R. V. M. ) and realised the importance of being fit to appear before the Lord.

The vision of chapter 4 is of a gold seven-branched lampstand and two olive trees, and the interpretation of this vision seems to be that the lampstand is a symbol of the Jewish community supported by Joshua and Zerubbabel (the olive trees) through whom

divine grace flows [see Comment 3]. The lamps in the lampstand shed forth light to the surrounding area and it was the intention that this should be in the case of the people of that day.

The people are encouraged to realise that although mighty enemy forces may surround them they have "the Lord of the whole earth" on their side who will ensure victory for them. The continuing presence of Zerubbabel throughout the work is, according to Zechariah, to be one of the proofs that he is a prophet of God (4. 9).

*R. D. Williams, R. L. Sands*

*From Liverpool.* —Joshua, the high priest of Israel at this particular time, represented the people in the presence of God. Therefore his condition was the condition of the nation. The great adversary would have plenty to say about a people whose representative was clothed with filthy garments. He stood there to hatefully accuse (Young). This people was the apple of God's eye (2. 8). We should be careful in our behaviour, knowing that the accuser accuses the brethren before our God day and night (Rev. 12. 10). There were waywardness, apathy and indifference among the people, and these things were arrows in the hand of Satan. Nevertheless we see the grace of God in His dealings with Joshua. Filthy garments were taken from him and replaced with rich apparel. A mitre was placed upon his head. Aaron wore a mitre for his anointing (Lev. 8. 9), and on the day of atonement (Lev. 16. 4). Joshua was invested with one as a sign of his cleansing and acceptance by God. There are conditions laid down in vv. 6, 7 in relation to service and responsibility in God's house, which can be applied today to ourselves. The men which are a sign in v. 8, are they the prophets who speak the word of the Lord to this people? [Comment 4] Does the stone of verse 9 speak of the Lord Jesus, or is it the stone that was laid by Zerubbabel with the eyes of the Lord looking upon the work with pleasure? [Comment 5].

The lampstand with its seven lamps served by seven pipes from the two olive trees is the principal feature of chapter 4. The prophet did not understand the meaning of the vision, so it is unfolded in vv. 6-10. The power of the Spirit of God is given to Zerubbabel and his fellows in building for God. The "seven eyes of the Lord" seems to refer back to the seven lamps of the lampstand [see Comment 5]. Are the two olive trees and the two olive branches the

same? The two sons of oil were thought to be either the two prophets Haggai and Zechariah or Zerubbabel and Joshua [See Comments 3 and 8].

*J. W. S., M. S. E., G. S. W.*

### **IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS**

Papers were also received from Crowborough, Edinburgh and Methil, and the following are impressions from these.

In Isaiah's vision (Isa. 6) the prophet was himself cleansed from iniquity prior to service, whereas in Zechariah's fourth vision he witnessed the cleansing of someone else, namely Joshua. As to how a vision that Zechariah saw could affect Joshua, it may be that Joshua himself also experienced the vision (possibly at another time) or that Zechariah's vision was given him to pass on to Joshua as a vivid message from the Lord. In Zechariah's fifth vision it seems clear that the messages for Zerubbabel (4. 6, 8) were given to Zechariah for transmission to Zerubbabel [Comment 6].

The fourth vision has the setting of a Jewish legal trial in which the accused faced the presiding judge and the prosecutor stood at his right hand to accuse him. Joshua was about to take up his duties as high priest in the restored temple when the adversary intervened to accuse him. It seems from the reference to Jerusalem in the Lord's rebuke (3. 2) that Satan's complaint was about the restoration of priestly service in Jerusalem. He would cite Judah's recent history and the part played by Joshua's ancestors; how could the Lord permit such a person to serve Him on behalf of such a people? The Lord silences him with a question—"Is not **this** a brand plucked out of the fire?"—a reminder of the perfect blend of divine justice and mercy, both so alien to Satan's character. Surely the Lord had been just; He had punished His people most severely, almost to obliteration. But may He not pluck a brand from the fire? It is the Lord's prerogative to show mercy, and here He seems to be glorying in it, to the discomfiture of His great adversary; he that *is* not just cannot show mercy.

Satan had also failed to take account of the Lord's ability to cleanse Joshua. His filthy garments are replaced with clean ones, signifying the removal of his iniquity. Now fit for his duties, a priestly mitre is set on his head. The charges of his office are put to him; upon certain conditions of personal holiness, he is to be given

certain responsibilities. Firstly he is to "judge My house". This may mean that Joshua would have the principal charge of the Temple, though this is probably the meaning of his second task, to "keep My courts", which seems to involve supervision of the Temple courts. Perhaps the term "My house", particularly in conjunction with the word "judge", refers to the nation of Israel (c. f. Hos. 8. 1). Thirdly, Joshua was to be given "a place of access among these that stand by". This was thought to mean that in his work as high priest Joshua would be a co-worker with the angels in the fulfilment of God's purposes. The word "access", however, seems to mean access to God. Perhaps the Lord meant that Joshua would now be permitted to approach the divine presence in his temple service without fear of death [Comment 7]. The lesson of this vision is clear; Satan will persistently oppose our taking up service for the Lord, but if we come to the Lord for cleansing, He will forgive us and fit us so that our service is acceptable.

It would seem from the angel's surprise at Zechariah's not being able to interpret the details of his fifth vision about the golden lampstand (4. 4, 5, 11-13) that the meaning ought to have been obvious to him! Our own contributors thought that the lampstand signified either God's house as ministered to by the two sons of oil, or the all-surveying eyes of the Lord (4. 10, 14). There can be no doubt that the salient lesson of the vision is the necessary power of the Holy Spirit. In the former suggestion, the Holy Spirit is symbolized by the oil, which flows from the olive trees to the lampstand representing the house of God. Two difficulties arise, however: (i) the word "oil" only occurs in the term "sons of oil" (4. 14, see v. 12, RVM), (ii) the source of the Holy Spirit seems to be the human instruments.

The latter suggestion, that the lampstand itself symbolizes the Lord, i. e. the Holy Spirit, is derived from v. 10, if this is read as an interpretation of the vision that the two olive trees beside the lampstand (v. 3) represent the two sons of oil that stand by the Lord of the whole earth (v. 14). A clear association of a heavenly lampstand with the Holy Spirit is found also in Rev. 4. 5: "The seven lamps . . . are the seven Spirits of God". Moreover, in Zech. 4 there seems to be a close link between the seven lamps of the lampstand and the seven eyes of the Lord (v. 10; see also 3. 9), which are associated in very similar words with the Holy Spirit in Rev. 5. 6. In this

view, the vision means in short that the two sons of oil (possibly "anointed ones", see AV), Joshua and Zerubbabel, will only prosper as they follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, who is the all-seeing and illuminating Lord of the whole earth [Comment 8],

*Eds.*

## COMMENTS

1. (*Derby*): In interpretation of passages of this kind there must obviously be freedom for some differences of thought, and readers will wish to consider alternative suggestions, as for example in Comment 5.

2. (*Derby*): This is an interesting suggestion, although at this point in the story Artaxerxes had already been superseded by Darius; it may therefore be wiser not to specify a particular difficulty, but to regard the "mountain" as representing in a more general sense the great obstacles to the progress of the work.

3. (*Vancouver*): The parallel with the two witnesses of Rev. 11. 3. 4 would commend the view that a prophetic ministry is indicated rather than the type of responsibility shouldered by Zerubbabel and Joshua. For more general discussion, see Comment 8.

4. (*Liverpool*): A simple view of the "men which are a sign" would be that Joshua and his fellows in priestly service represented God's purpose, despite all human failure, to maintain the priestly house of Israel. Note the link with, "I will bring forth My Servant the Branch". So the fact that God had so wonderfully restored the priestly service of His house in the persons of Joshua and his fellows was a sign that the greater and fuller purposes of millennial restoration would also in due course be brought to pass.

5. (*Liverpool*): The interpretation of 3. 9 is admittedly problematic, but I find it difficult to view the stone either as speaking of the Lord Jesus or as a stone laid by Zerubbabel. Suggestively, I prefer to think of it as a stone set before Joshua in this vision. It was engraven with seven eyes, typifying the eyes of the Lord (4. 10). His eyes see the future millennial blessing, when the iniquity of that land will be removed in one day, and "ye shall call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree". It is a typical prophetic pattern to grant a brief forward glimpse of mil-

lennial purpose in association with the feebler expression of God's will in less favoured times.

6. (*Impressions*): In the absence of anything in chapter 3 to suggest the need for Joshua himself to have seen the vision, it is reasonable to assume that Zechariah would transmit the message of chapter 3 to Joshua as he would the message of chapter 4 to Zerubbabel.

7. (*Impressions*): I should have thought that the whole of verse 7 is to be understood in relation to Joshua's high-priestly responsibility in God's house. As to keeping God's charge, c. f. Lev. 8. 55; as to judging God's house, did not Eli singularly fail in just this matter? (1 Sam. 2. 22-25); as to the place of access, see suggestion in Answer to question from Atherton and Leigh.

8. (*Impressions*): Regarding the alternative interpretations suggested in the last two paragraphs of "Impressions", the following is offered for consideration. It seems to me that a useful starting point in the interpretation of Zech. 4 is the identification of the two olive trees (branches v. 12) which were seen in the vision on either side of the bowl of the lampstand. They are said to signify "two sons of oil, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth". Similar words are used of the two witnesses (Rev. 11. 3, 4) who are clearly men testifying for God in Jerusalem at the time of the end. This Revelation reference supplies a scriptural lead towards regarding the two olive trees (branches) of Zech. 4 as two men testifying for God in association with His earthly dwelling place in remnant times. I favour the view that these were Haggai and Zechariah because of the *prophetic* character of their work which had such powerful effect in stimulating divine testimony. The lampstand all of gold, with its seven lamps sustained by oil poured into its bowl from the two olive trees (branches), seems a fitting emblem of the spiritual witness through re-established temple service. As to the point that in this view the human instrument seems to be the source of the Holy Spirit, there are necessarily limitations to every figurative presentation: but in any case, are not trees wholly dependent on God for life and fruitfulness? It would seem much more difficult to understand how the lampstand could be typical of the Holy Spirit (or the Lord Jesus) when the supply of oil was flowing to the lampstand

from men on earth! Like the two witnesses in Rev. 11, Haggai and Zechariah stood by the Lord of the whole earth in the sense that they aligned themselves on earth with truth revealed by Him.

G. P. Jr.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*From Atherton and Leigh:*

What does "a brand plucked out of the fire" mean? (Zech. 3. 2).

A similar expression in Amos 4. 11 refers to some of Israel who had been spared from judgements brought upon the nation generally. Having regard to the context of Zech. 3. 2 there could be a parallel thought. For in rebuking Satan the Lord emphasized His choice of Jerusalem, and then immediately referred to Joshua as a brand plucked out of the fire, as if seeing personified in Joshua an example of divine mercy to those who had been brought back from captivity to renew divine purpose in Jerusalem. Acceptance of this as the primary sense of the verse would not of course preclude other spiritual applications of this vivid metaphor.

What do the words "a place of access" mean (3. 7), and who are those that stand by?

In relation to the context—Joshua being fitted for high-priestly activities—I consider "a place of access among these that stand by" to refer to the renewed opportunity of access into the Most Holy Place of the Temple in fulfilment of his office. "These that stand by" I would link with "thy fellows" (v. 8)—those associated with Joshua in spiritual service.

Is the stone of 3. 9 the foundation stone of the remnant house? With respect, I have difficulty about this interpretation—see Comment 5 for fuller discussion.

*From Edinburgh:*

Were Joshua and Zerubbabel the "sons of oil" or do they refer perhaps to the two witnesses of the future (Rev. 11. 3, 4)? [See Comment 8].

*From Liverpool:*

Is the angel of the Lord a divine or a created being?

In some contexts there can be no doubt that One described as "the angel of the LORD" is a divine Being, usually understood to be our Lord Jesus Christ, e. g. Gen. 16. 7-13; 31. 11, 12; Ex. 3. 1-6; Judges 6. 12-16. In each of these passages the "angel of the LORD" (or "of God") is also spoken of as God. But does this mean that it must be so wherever the expression the "angel of the LORD" is used? For instance, the statement of Psalms 34. 7 would seem to indicate a general angelic ministry on the lines of Heb. 1. 13, 14. Then what of the occurrence of this expression in Zechariah's prophecy? Some have suggested that the Lord Jesus is referred to in 1. 72 and 3. 1, 5, 6. I wonder whether this is quite so clear as in some of the other scriptures referred to above? For in 1. 12 we have the angel of the LORD addressing the LORD, and the LORD replying to him in verse 13. Then the angel passes on to Zechariah a message from the LORD in verses 14-17. Again in 3. 6 the angel of the LORD appears to transmit the message to Zechariah rather than declare it as from Himself. This is in contrast to the pattern of those passages where "the angel of the LORD" quite clearly speaks as God, or is spoken of as God. The matter is left open for further consideration.

G. P. Jr.

It seems to me that, while 1. 12 appears to separate between the angel and the Lord in the mode of address, this argument cannot be applied in 3. 2 where "the Lord" (Angel or not) says, "The Lord rebuke thee... ", equally appearing to distinguish between the two parties. Also does not 3. 1 suggest a confrontation between the Lord ( in the person of the angel, I suggest) and Satan, over Joshua?

J.

D.

T.

### PSALM 71 (continued)

Thou, which hast shewed us many and sore troubles,  
 Shalt quicken us again,  
 And shalt bring us up again from the depths of the earth.  
 Increase Thou my greatness,  
 And turn again and comfort me (verses 20, 21).

Not many have had the abundance of trouble that David had, and what was true of David is true also of the Israel people. What nation is there that has undergone sore troubles like them, both in their land and as scattered from it? David got through his troubles

and so will Israel, for **their last days will be by far their best. God will bring them up from the depths of the earth to great national greatness.** David asked God to increase **his greatness, which does not mean to add a cubit to his stature, but great in the sense in which Job was the greatest of all the children of the east, in that he was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed that which was evil", and as a result God blessed him abundantly (Job. 1. 1-3).** David associated increased **greatness with God turning and comforting him. What is the value of greatness without God's comfort? God has loved us, and given to us eternal comfort and good hope through grace (2 Thess. 2. 16).**

***J. M.***

# BIBLE STUDIES

*'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'*

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## EDITORIAL

Our study passage this month brings us to the end of the series of eight visions given to Zechariah and which have been the principal content of the book so far.

Featuring as one of these visions (chap. 3) was the cleansing of Joshua, his clothing in rich apparel and the setting of a fair mitre upon his head. Now in chap. 6, apparently in reality rather than in vision, he is crowned in clear foreshadowing of the divine Priest-King to come. On both of these occasions Joshua is given the prophecy of "the Branch" (3. 8; 6. 12), the later mention extending the role of the exalted One to embrace both royalty and priesthood. Later on in the prophecy we shall study together some of the mighty works of Messiah as revealed to Zechariah in the future deliverance and restoration of Israel.

Together we have wrestled with the visions of the early chapters. Often we would have wished to see more clearly the significance of details of some of the mysteries which Zechariah saw; and we have felt very much like Paul as he wrote to the Corinthians, "Now we see in a mirror, darkly" (1 Cor. 13. 12). Yet repeatedly we have realised that great divine principles underly these mysterious things and have learned to look for and appreciate these even when minutiae remain obscure. For the principles are the foundation for the remnant people then, and now.

*J. D. T.*

### *JERUSALEM—PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE*

Jerusalem—City of God, the Holy City, —according to Pliny "by far the most famous city of the ancient orient", is the subject of this brief essay. Variouslly defined as meaning "Vision" or "Possession of Peace" the biblical history of Jerusalem may well date back to the Salem ("Peace") of Melchizedek's day, at that time (20th cent. B. C. ) in the possession of Egypt. Today in the 20th

cent. A. D., despite forty sieges, more than thirty experiences of partial destruction, having changed hands as many times and been five times reduced to ashes, Jerusalem stands as testimony to Jehovah's intention to make this city "the place which the LORD your God shall choose... to put His name there"—"the city of the Great King".

Adoni-Bezek the Jebusite is the first named as King of Jerusalem (c. 1450 B. C. ), and so impregnable was this fortress city that even till David's day (1000 B. C ) "the lame and the blind" were thought competent to act as garrison. "Nevertheless", we read, "David took the strong hold of Zion" (2 Sam. 5. 7). Journeying from the south 900 years earlier, Abraham, in order to reach this mountain of which God would tell him, must needs climb upwards of 3000 feet to the "land of Moriah", future site of Jerusalem, if not already of Salem. And on one of these several mountain tops he assayed to offer up Isaac, his son. On this site, it seems clear, Oman the Jebusite was threshing corn when David told him of his mission, at the command of God, "to buy the threshing floor". On this very rock presently stood the altar of God and to this day the children of Abraham (Muslim and Jew) revere it, though the Dome of the Rock erected in the 7th century is the third great place of pilgrimage of the Mohammedan. To see, beneath the rock, the great chamber which received the blood of innumerable sacrifices and channelled it down to the Gehenna valley is an unforgettable experience.

Alas! that for only about four centuries Israel served God in that mountain, and thereafter for the greater part of 25 centuries Jerusalem has been trodden down of the Gentiles. We note the brief period of remnant revival of Ezra and Nehemiah's day. And so Messiah was born in the City of David, a few miles south of Jerusalem, during the reign of Caesar Augustus, when Quirinius was Governor of Syria.

The chequered history of the 400 years B. C. covers Egyptian rule under the Ptolemies and then under the Seleucidae (Syrians) whose notorious monarch Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple by sacrificing swine on the altar. Deliverance from this bitter yoke was effected by the Maccabees (165 B. C. ) whose "monument" remains in the valley hewn out between the north of Jerusalem and what is now identified as "the place of a skull", where "was

a garden; and in the garden a new tomb". On this city, where the Lord was crucified, God's eye rested "from the beginning of the year even until the end of the year". In size it had varied over the centuries, comprising only a few acres at the beginning of David's reign. Today within the walls, two miles in circumference, an area of 200 acres includes the vast Temple site of 30 acres on which it is said all the cathedrals of Great Britain could stand. Beneath it and below the present wall can be seen the very foundation, including the Wailing Wall, with its mighty stones, established there by the workmen of King Solomon, whose name, of like Hebrew derivation with Salem and Jerusalem, means "Peace". In a succession of leaps, some backwards, we have endeavoured, in a few words, to span almost 4 millennia of the history of Jerusalem, reserving the record of the stirring happenings of this century in the "Land of Israel" until we have looked briefly at the prophetic word. "Land of Israel"—a title first used in the story of Naaman of "the maiden that is of the land of Israel"—occurs 26 times in Scripture, and after 3000 years is used once again—ERETZ ISRAEL—by the nation.

In Deut. 12, though no name is mentioned, reference is made six times to the future place of the Sanctuary. Explicitly the Scriptures foretold the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kin. 22. 16, 17 et al. ), its desecration by Antiochus (Dan. 11. 31) and again its destruction by the Romans (Dan. 9. 26). Many prophecies have an application to the city during the present age (Dan. 9. 26, Zech. 12. 3) and particularly we note the words of the Lord Jesus: (1) "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem... Ye shall not see Me until ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord" (Luke 13. 33-35). (2) "He wept over it, saying... thine enemies... shall not leave in thee one stone upon another" (Luke 19. 41-44). (3) "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21. 24). Is this last prophecy being fulfilled in our time, we wonder? Just fifty years ago, those believers who had noted with deep interest General Allenby's entry into Jerusalem and the profound Balfour declaration as to the national home of the Jewish people, watched with anxiety the fulfilment of the pledge under British mandate. On May 14th, 1948, the mandate ended.

**Bitter fighting followed, during which about one million Arabs were driven from their homes. By the spring of 1949 "Eretz Israel", which had achieved independence on May 14th, 1948, was recognised by forty-five Governments; but Jerusalem was now divided and for nineteen years the old walled city remained in Arab hands. And so to 1967 when on June 7th, after 70 hours of continuous fighting the din and confusion of battle ended suddenly in Jerusalem and the troops of Israel moved into the Old City and stood for prayer at the Wailing Wall. "Praise the Lord", read Rabbi Shlomo Goren... "Trust in the Lord of Israel... He has become thy salvation. " "We have taken the City of God", he said, "we are entering the Messianic era for the Jewish people, and I promise to the Christian world that what we are responsible for we will take care of". Then "the sound of the Shofar had a beauty of the centuries", wrote an eye witness, remembering that twenty-seven centuries earlier Isaiah had called on the inhabitants of the earth: "See ye; and when the trumpet is blown, hear ye" (18. 3). For five full years now the Old City has remained in the hands of the Jews. Surely, "the times of the Gentiles" are in process of being fulfilled, or is Jerusalem again to be occupied, as many believe to be indicated by such scriptures as Zech. 14. 2 and Rev. 11. 2? And now we watch Egypt, remembering again the words contained on that scroll (Isaiah), centrepiece and most precious possession of Jerusalem Museum—a scroll almost certainly contemporary with those of Nazareth (Luke 4. 17) and the Ethiopian (Acts 8. 28): "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth" (Isa. 19. 24). Today's Editorial (Daily Telegraph 16. 11. 72) asks, "Have Israel's rulers the imagination and daring for a new approach (to Egypt) which might conceivably appeal to Sadat as a way out"? But we sadly agree with Arnold Olson (*"Inside Jerusalem"* by Arnold Olson G/L Publication, 1968, Glendak, California) that Jerusalem, the city of the "Shalom", is headed for trouble... the people of the Land have little if any faith in God, but much confidence in their own ability to make the "desert blossom as the rose". Hebrews they may be now with a pure language (Zeph. 3. 9), but seemingly almost wholly unaware that "the coming of the Messiah", for whom the religious Jew prays daily, will be fulfilled in the advent of One**

"whom they pierced", whose feet will presently stand upon the Mount of Olives from which long years ago He viewed the City and with tears cried "Jerusalem, Jerusalem". A. R. G. Chamings

## STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS

### ZECHARIAH 5 & 6

#### *THE FLYING ROLL AND OTHER VISIONS*

*From Birkenhead.* —The flying roll which the prophet saw contained a curse against stealing and perjury. There was to be no way of avoiding it for it entered into the house of the guilty. It appears possible that the roll could be symbolic of God's word which is the basis of all judgement. It was thought that it may have had writing upon it which, in view of its size, would be clearly visible.

Zechariah is next shown an ephah, which is a measure, a symbol of commerce. The headquarters of the devil's activities were in Babylon, and with the destruction of the city the centre of wickedness moved to Rome, where the Emperor was worshipped and the powers of the Roman church were so great. The vision indicates a removal of the devil's activities back to Babylon and this links in with the record of the woman in Rev. 17 [Comments 1 and 9].

The next vision is of four chariots drawn by horses of various colours coming from the presence of the Lord, and coming into view between two mountains of brass. These were thought to speak of the hidden counsels of God, which, because of their nature, could not be broken or eroded. There were two views concerning the mission of the chariots: (1) that they were sent to view the earth as did the horsemen in chapter 1; (2) that they came to execute judgement, this view being supported by 6. 8, from whence we get the impression that this action would make it possible for God's spirit to be quieted [Comment 2].

The concluding verses of chap. 6 appear to be symbolic, pointing forward to the Messiah who is the Branch of whom we read in Isa. 11. 1, 10 and Jer. 23. 5. There is a picture of a priest who is also a king, in which we see Melchizedek and the One who is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. There is mention of the Temple of the Lord, and although some commentators believe this to be spiri-

tual, we leaned to the view on the basis of references in Ezekiel, Isa. 60 and Zech. 14, that there will be a material Temple and the sacrifices connected with it.

*R. D. Williams*

*From Crowborough, —* We do not find that the prophet now needed to be awakened, as he did in 4. 1. He looked up and beheld a flying roll. This flying roll contains a curse against those who steal and those that swear. A few thought that the roll was written on both sides, and that this had reference to the tables of stone containing the ten commandments. We felt that the words in verse 3, "on the one side according to it", referred to the land (see R. V. M. ) and perhaps to Jerusalem itself.

In the second vision the prophet was unable to tell the Angel what he saw, so the Angel told him both what it was and what it meant. He saw an ephah which was used to measure corn: "This is their resemblance in all the land", that is, the resemblance of the Jewish nation. Some felt that the mentioning of an ephah which is used in buying and selling intimates that fraud and extortion in commerce were sins abounding among them at that time. Zechariah had a brief view of a woman when the talent of lead was lifted from the ephah and then replaced (vv. 5-11). He saw a woman sitting in the midst of the ephah of whom the angel said, "This is wickedness". And, with the wind in their wings, two women bore the ephah to the land of Shinar where a house was prepared for it. Reference was made to Gen. 11 and the Tower of Babel built in the land of Shinar. A coming day would find a Babylon rebuilt in Shinar which would control unmeasurable wealth and power. Thus we see the wicked harlot sovereign amidst the commerce of the nations, borne away and settled in the ancient plain of Shinar in the Middle East [Comments 3 and 9].

In chap. 5 God spoke by a vision which only the prophet saw, while in chap. 6 He speaks by a sign which many see. In v. 11 Joshua the high priest is crowned as though a king. There would appear to be two crowns, one of gold and one of silver, a beautiful type of the Lord Jesus who in a day to come shall sit as a Priest upon His throne [Comment 4],

Some difficulty was found in v. 12. What Temple was the "Branch" going to build, which is here spoken of as the Temple of

the Lord? Also in what sense could those spoken of in verse 15 "build in the Temple of the Lord?" We could not associate this with the millennial Temple. Could there be any allusion to New Testament times? In Eph. 2. 19-22 we read of churches of God as buildings "fitly framed together", growing "into a holy temple in the Lord". See also 2 Cor. 6 [Comment 5]. *James Robertson*

*From Hayes.* — "Holiness becometh Thine house, O LORD, for evermore" (Psa. 93. 5). The people to whom Zechariah spoke were rebuilding the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. Through Haggai and Zechariah God had restated His intention of dwelling in that house and that His heart was still set on Jerusalem, the apple of His eye. The service of the house and the presence of God among them required cleanness of heart and hand both in the priesthood and in the people. Apart from their apathy and preoccupation with their own things there were stealing and false swearing which God hates. A false balance, any false or double dealing, is anathema to Him. They were also doing according to the abominations of the peoples of the lands round about and intermarrying with them. Idolatry had been brought back from Babylon and must be put away. Priests, Levites and rulers were involved in the evil.

Cleansing of the priesthood as typified in chap. 3 by the taking of the filthy garments from Joshua was necessary. The purity and perfection of the Temple and what it typified had been shown by reference to the lampstand in chap. 4 with the basis of its setting up (the word of God) and the source of power (the Spirit of God). Having shown what He intends to set up, foreshadowing the Lord and His millennial Temple, He shews that their wickedness must be removed so that they might serve Him without such hindrances. The flying roll warned of God's judgement on false dealing, the ephah of idolatry and intermarrying with the people of the lands, which must be put away. The horses and chariots in 6. 1-8, indicate that God is the Judge of the whole earth and rules over all nations.

We wondered whether such things as rolls or scrolls, measuring vessels like the ephah and horses and chariots, which occur a number of times in the visions of Scripture, had a special significance to the Israelites. They were things familiar to the people of those days. Zechariah's visions were the vehicle by which God's message was

brought to **them**. **Zechariah** would **listen** and be assured he had a **message** from the Lord.

The **offices of priest and king are protrayed** in chap. 6. In Israel the **priesthood and kingship could not be vested** in one person, because the **priestly line was of Levi and the royal line was of Judah**. The **Lord Himself** will fulfil **both offices** as did Melchizedek who was **priest of God most High and King of Salem (peace)** (Gen. 14. 18; *Heb.* 7. 1-3).

*From Derby.* —The several references in **Scripture relating** to rolls or books all seem to forebode judgement (see Jer. 36. 2; Ezek. 2. 10; Rev. 5). The meaning of the flying roll is briefly given in v. 3, "This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole land (earth, AV)". The two divisions of the decalogue seem to be in view here. We were reminded of the word in Deut. 27. 26, and Gal. 3. 10, "Cursed is everyone which continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them". God speaks of the manward aspect first. The thief has no love towards his neighbour (c. f. 1. John 4. 20). The curse that enters into the house of the thief shall destroy it. We thought this seemed to suggest millennial conditions as in Isa. 66. 24, Matt. 5. 28-30, Mark 9. 48.

One of the first acts of the returned remnant under Zerubbabel was to **build an altar unto God and to offer the burnt offerings commanded for the seventh month, during the Feast of Tabernacles (Ezra. 3. 1-6)**. On this ground, and the rebuilding of the Temple, God was re-establishing **His testimony and a measure of rule in the midst of the nations, having in mind His complete rule as King of kings in a future day**. We noted that **thieving takes very many forms**. Many, even in these days, are prone to use **unjust weights and measures**, as in the vision of the ephah and the woman called **Wickedness**. God foresaw the need of the command as in Lev. 19. 35, 36: "Ye shall do no unrighteousness... in mete-yard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah and a just hin shall ye have, I am the LORD your God". Finally we see these women making their way to Shinar where they may feel, perhaps, more free to practise their efforts in the matter of dishonest gain [Comment 6].

In chap. 6 we come to the eighth of this series of visions. Here it was suggested we are looking mainly into yet future days. The following points seem to suggest this: the chariots, the judgement of the nations both north and south, the mention of the Branch and the millennial Temple [see Comment 5], the dual offices of King and Priest, and the counsel of peace associated therewith. We did briefly touch upon the subject of what is written in the first verse of chapter 6: "I saw and behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains". We have suggested that these were symbols of divine judgement, and they might speak of the two great attributes of God's throne, namely, righteousness and judgement which are its foundation (Psa. 89. 14; 97. 2). The colour of the horses also seems to be symbolic (c. f. Rev. 6).

Verses 9-11 would point to the time then present. Verse 9 mentions names of certain priests who were in Jerusalem at the time of the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar's army and who were wrongly executed, we believe. They were standing faithful to their charge in the Temple. God would have their memory honoured in their sons. They were to be of service to Joshua the high priest, and were to make the crown that he would wear for a memorial in the Temple of the Lord. These are the men (priests) whose names appear in 2 Kings 25. 18, 21 [Comment 7], In v. 15 we read that the Lord will draw upon skilled builders from afar and they shall come and build in the Temple of the Lord. The plan might well be provided by the Lord Himself through His princes. *A. G. Willis, S. R. W.*

*From Vancouver.* —Zechariah sees in the vision a flying roll. A roll in Scripture is symbolic of the written word (Ezek. 3. 1-3). This flying roll was large (30 by 15 feet) and open and mobile. Its message could be seen by all in the land. Unsparring judgement was to come. Two crimes are mentioned.

Stealing is appropriating what does not rightfully belong to one. This may apply to both physical and spiritual things. "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name and by Thy name cast out demons, and by Thy name do many mighty works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me" (Matt. 7. 22, 23). Such persons had stolen the Lord's name and had perhaps used it in a wonderful way

without having **any right to do so**. Swearing **falsely in Jehovah's name** means **that something wrong** is accredited **by linking that name with it**. **God will not hold him guiltless who does so** (Ex. 20. 7). **Many believers connect the Lord's name with things and activities that He hates**. Such can only **bring judgement**.

**There is no doubt that Zechariah indeed saw these visions**. Whether **he communicated them to the people is not indicated**. **The meaning of many of the visions must have been obscure to the people of that day, had he related them** [Comment 8].

**Another vision is recorded in verses 5 to 11**. The ephah could be a symbol of **measurement, or a symbol of commercialism**. The woman, **whose name is "Wickedness", is cast into the ephah and is shut up in it by the weight of the lead**. **This means that God does put restrictions on lawlessness**. **However rampant the forces of evil may be, God will not allow certain limits to be overstepped**. **This is comforting to the people of God**. **Here the thought is that, "Wickedness" is not destroyed or consumed, but is limited, and is being reserved to be dealt with later**. **The ephah would eventually be established in a house in the land of Shinar (Babylon)**. **The mystery of lawlessness is the working of Satan, and will culminate in the revelation of the man of sin**.

**The Branch refers to Christ**. **The builders in Zechariah's day were encouraged by the thought of how Christ would build the Temple**. **"They that are far off" coming and building in the Temple of Jehovah is suggestive of the Gentiles having a part in this holy work, even as it is now** [see Comment 5],

**The role of Christ will be dual**. **He will be both King and Priest**. **Such was previously prohibited**. **King Saul was severely reprimanded by Samuel**. **King Uzziah became leprous for his intrusion into the priest's office**. **The Lord Jesus Christ, a Priest after the order of Melchizedek, fulfils and will fulfil this now combined role of Priest and King**. **Nothing will be lacking in the service of His Temple**.

*John Robinson*

*IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS*

Papers were also received from Atherton and Leigh, Liverpool, Melbourne, Methil and Victoria B. C., and the following impressions are taken from these:

The idea was put forward that the prophecy of Zechariah is predominantly one of encouragement, and that in view of this the flying roll of Zech. 5 may represent the task entrusted to Israel of carrying the word of the Lord into a world of corruption in the period immediately preceding the Millennium, and of making it known during the Millennium. However, comparison with Ezek. 2. 9. 10; Rev. 5; Rev. 10 would suggest the thought of judgement in the flying roll. Moreover the roll carries the curse of the Lord to those of Israel and of the nations who do not keep His law (Deut. 27). Israel has to be purified before restoration can take place, and Gentile nations must be judged (see Isa. 14. 25, 26; Dan. 9. 11; Rom. 11. 26). The complete fulfilment will be seen in the Millennium, when judgement will pass through the land daily, bringing swift punishment on transgressions. It was noted that stealing and swearing falsely are offences against the ten commandments. The sin against man comes first.

Some saw in the ephah the practical application of the law to Israel's national life. The talent of lead was viewed as divine restraint upon the working of evil, until the great harlot of Rev. 17 will be manifested for a brief period of unrestrained iniquity and lawlessness. The working of wickedness in the midst of Israel will have frustrated the outworking of practical righteousness and made way for the man of sin. Others thought of the ephah as an emblem of trade and commerce which Babylon will largely control (Rev. 18; Hab. 2. 12; James 5), and of the woman as the commercial spirit reigning at the end of time (Isa. 14. 4-6). Commercial injustice is associated with the ephah in Amos 8. 5. The carrying of the ephah to the land of Shinar was thought to denote that Israel should leave this wickedness where it belonged (c. f. Jer. 29. 28) [see Comments 3 and 9].

The R. V. marginal reading "the two mountains" perhaps indicates Zion and the Mount of Olives. But the reference to mountains of

copper would possibly speak of divine judgement upon Israel. *Eds.*

## COMMENTS

1. (*Birkenhead*): This view, which is apparently culled from a particular book on Babylon, I do not find very convincing. It seems to introduce the complexity of the then future role of Rome and the Roman church, without any very clear reason for doing so. Various shades of thought emerge in papers on the movement between "the land" (v. 6) and Shinar (Babylon); was not the ephah physically in the land of Israel when Zechariah saw it? Presumably it is the projection of thought to Babylon of the end times which raises the Rome/Babylon issue. But that is a wide and tricky subject on its own!

2. (*Birkenhead*): A very interesting variety of thought is expressed in papers on the interpretation of the horses and chariots. They certainly cast us back in thought to chapter 1 where the riders had been on a divinely appointed roving commission and were reporting back. In the absence of any very clear indication of a different role here, it is difficult to come to any precise interpretation of the details.

3. (*Crowborough*): There is no doubt that the thought of commerce embodied in the ephah, together with the personification of wickedness as a woman, whose destination is Babylon, immediately suggest to our minds the Babylon of end times, the great harlot. But if the Holy Spirit were, let us assume for a moment, teaching in this vision a relatively simple and immediate lesson, would it be surprising that He should use the same symbols of wickedness and idolatry as later applied in Revelation to a great counterfeit system? Is it perhaps wiser to note the suggestive links in thought without attempting a close identification with future events? The short comment on this subject in the Hayes paper seems to highlight the principles very usefully.

4. (*Crowborough*): There does seem to be some doubt as to whether "crown" is singular or plural in the text, but the dual offices of priest and king stand out very beautifully in the passage.

5. (*Crowborough*): Several papers raise issues in connection with the Temple referred to in these verses, and reference is made to the view of some commentators that the primary reference is to the Church (His Body) of the present age. In connection with this idea I submit that there is the usual confusion by these commentators of the Church, Christ's Body, and the House of God. Is not the whole picture of vv. 12, 13 one of *manifest* rule and priestly service by "The Branch"? This would not fit the New Testament presentation of Christ as Head of the Body, in a mystical, spiritual union with His members. It might be argued that it could relate to Him as "Son over God's house" (Heb. 3. 6). However, the New Testament does not really present the Lord Himself as the Builder of the spiritual house today. Paul speaks of himself as a "wise master builder" (1 Cor. 3. 10). It is true, of course, that it could also be claimed that the Lord Jesus is not literally the builder of the millennial Temple; that the thought here, whichever Temple is referred to, is of Him as the One who causes it to be built. Now the truth of the spiritual house of the present dispensation is very closely linked to that of the church, His Body, in the sense that both ideally comprise the same people on earth at any time; and the truth of the Body is spoken of as "the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God". Old Testament allusions are in types and shadows. Thus a direct reference in Zechariah to either the Church, His Body, or to the spiritual house today seems inappropriate. The above factors, when considered alongside such a direct statement as, "He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne" (v. 13) lead me to think of this passage in terms of the millennial Temple. Those of v. 15 "that are afar off", who shall come and build in the Temple of the Lord, might refer to re-gathered Jews of latter days participating in the re-building of the Temple. The thought of Gentiles too need not be excluded. I wonder why Crowborough friends find it so difficult to associate this with the millennial Temple?

6. (*Derby*): I wonder whether there is justification for associating the winged women with "Wickedness" in her nefarious activities?

7. (*Derby*): This is an interesting thought. But it seems to rest entirely on the mention in 2 Kin. 25. 18 of the name of Zephaniah?

8. (*Vancouver*): The comment on this matter in the paper from Hayes seems very helpful. J. D. T.

9. (*Birkenhead and elsewhere*): Reference may usefully be made to p.100 of "Needed Truth" (1970 volume) in this connection. This is commended for consideration; it reflects a view taken by some exponents of the prophetic word. Whatever message contemporary Israel may have derived from the vision of Zech. 5. 5-11, I personally take the view that an application to the time of the end is also indicated. G. P. Jr.

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

#### *From Liverpool:*

In connection with the chariots there is mention of the north country (Syria), and the south country, presumably Egypt. Why are only these two countries mentioned?

Since Syria and Egypt are not in fact specifically identified in the text, it is difficult to comment beyond the general point that nations from the north and south of Israel feature extensively in end-time prophecy.

Does "The Branch" as a title of Christ refer to His human lineage such as we have in Isa. 11. 7?

The thought of the Lord as the Branch (or Shoot) does seem to be securely linked to His ancestry through David (Isa. 11. 1; Jer. 23. 5). We look forward to a special study article during the year in *Bible Studies* on this subject.

Will the Lord Jesus Himself build the Temple? Will this be the Temple as seen in Ezek. 41. 9?

See Comment 5.

#### *From Hayes:*

Was the crowning of Joshua (6. 9-75) only a vision or did Zechariah actually do this in the sight of the people?

I have little doubt that this was a real enactment. There is no mention\* of any vision in connection with it, and in fact 6. 8 is the

end of the series of eight visions given to Zechariah, in the view of most commentators.

*From Atherton and Leigh:*

To what does the word "both" refer in 6. 13? Since it seems more applicable to two persons than to two offices, could the reference be to the Messiah and God the Father?

Whatever way we look at the expression "counsel of peace" it seems a rather strange one in this context. I find "both" not incomprehensible in terms of the offices of priest and king; not in the sense of peace between two conflicting things or ideas, but rather "both" harmoniously contributing to a settled state of peace. Would it not need to be in this same sense that the reference would apply if indeed it did, to Messiah and the Father? I find the latter concept difficult to visualise.

*J. D. T*

#### PSALM 71 (*continued*)

I will also praise Thee with the psaltery,  
 Even Thy truth, O my God:  
 Unto Thee will I sing praises with the harp,  
 O Thou Holy One of Israel.  
 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing praises unto Thee;  
 And my soul, which Thou hast redeemed.  
 My tongue also shall talk of Thy righteousness all the day long:  
 For they are ashamed, for they are confounded, that seek my  
 hurt (verses 22, 23, 24).

The first word "praise", in verse 22 is *YADAH*, which comes from *YAD* a Hebrew word for hand, and no doubt David thinks of his hands producing the holy music on the strings of the psaltery in his devotions to God, and it may also be used of stretching out the hands in reverence. The second word "praises" is from the word *ZAMAR*, which literally means "to play on a musical instrument" (Gesenius), and with this there is the thought of singing as David struck the strings of the harp. The translators have associated David's use of musical instruments with praise to God, even though the word for praise is not in the Hebrew. The first use of the word *YADAH* in the Scriptures is in Genesis 29. 35, where Leah, at the birth of her fourth son said, "This time will I praise (*YADAH*) the

**LORD: therefore she called his name Judah". The Hebrew word is also used by Jacob as he was dying, when he said, "Judah, thee shall thy brethren praise" (Gen. 49. 8). David's praise to God was for or unto God's truth which He had revealed to him, and we also should praise God for the truth which He has been pleased to reveal unto us. How often we repeat the words of Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant" (Gen. 32. 10). The A. V. both in verses 22 and 23 gives only the word sing (ZAMAR) and omits praises. David greatly rejoiced when he sang unto God, for he was a man of most extensive emotions, great largeness of heart. He knew great sorrow on the one hand, and great joy on the other. He did not forget to tell God that He had redeemed his soul, and we also do well to tell and thank Him that He has redeemed us. David also talked of God's righteousness all the day long, something worth while to speak of that would give grace to them that heard (Eph. 4. 29). He closes the Psalm with another reference to those who were ashamed and confounded that sought his hurt.**

*J. M.*

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# BIBLE STUDIES

*'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'*

VOLUME 41

JUNE 1973

## EDITORIAL

"Ten **men** shall **take** hold, out of all **the** languages of **the** nations, shall **even take** hold of **the** skirt of him **that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you"** (**Zech. 8. 23**).

This striking prophecy **features** in our month's **study**, illustrating **the** remarkable detail **and** scope of **the** **predictive** element in **the** book of **Zechariah**. To a struggling, **tiny** people, whose **very existence as a nation must have** seemed precarious, **the** thought of **men** of all nations rivalling **each** other for a favour of **the Jew must have seemed** remote indeed. **But** God **revealed this** through **Zechariah** for **the** encouragement of those who would **rest** in faith on His long-term promises to **the** nation. **Of** all **the** minor prophets **Zechariah is** outstanding for **its** wealth of prophetic allusion to **the** Person of Christ, **and** to His **future** glorious association with Israel.

The **sufferings** of Christ **are** touched upon **in** unusual **ways**. In. 11. **12, 13** a fore-shadowing of **the** Lord's betrayal for thirty pieces of silver, **and** **the** purchase of **the** potter's field, **are** wrought out at God's direction **in** **the** experience of **the** prophet himself. Chapter 13. **6, 7** contains **reference** to His betrayal, wounding **and** being smitten by His **Father in judgement, references introduced it would seem** incidentally to **the** main bearing of **the** passage. Yet in **the** light of **the** New Testament story we **discern** the application to **the** sufferings of **the** Lord, while **right** on **the** surface of **the** ninth chapter lies **the** clear prediction of **the** lowly **King** riding into **Jerusalem** on a colt, **the** foal of an ass.

As to **the** glories **that** would follow **the** sufferings, **the** Spirit has **through** Zechariah filled **in** for **us** some remarkable detail of Israel's deliverance from **her** extremity at **the** hand of **Antichrist**, detail which is not available in other **areas** of **the** prophetic word. There

are also distinctive features of the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus which are only given through Zechariah.

We shall consider these aspects of the prophecy as our year's study progresses. To those of Zechariah's day, a struggling remnant of a past dispensation, the prophetic word was richly imparted, a basis of strong encouragement to faith. To us in the context of our time there is equally real encouragement available here. "We have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts" (2 Pet. 1. 19). The word is made more sure to us in our time because we have the opportunity of looking back and recognising the fulfilment of all that was written concerning the sufferings of Christ. While looking around at the current situation we can further see the developing fulfilment of much associated with the preparation of the world scene towards the time of the end. From this viewpoint therefore our study is of great practical usefulness.

*G. P. Jr.*

### *MY SERVANT— THE BRANCH*

"Hear now, O Joshua the high priest,  
thou and thy fellows that sit before thee;  
for they are men which are a sign:  
for, behold, I will bring forth My Servant  
the Branch" (Zech. 3. 8).

It is not difficult to identify the Person referred to in this scripture as "My Servant the Branch" with the Messiah of Israel, and it is interesting to build up a picture of Him and His glorious reign from this and other scriptures where the titles occur. This particular verse brings together two lines of Old Testament prophecy: that of "My Servant" and "the Branch". While both are distinct and separate yet they meet in one common identity, Christ.

#### *My Servant*

Prophecies concerning "My Servant" are found in Isa. 42. 1, 52.

**13 and 53. 11 where beyond question the Messiah is brought before us.**

**"Behold My Servant, whom I uphold;  
My chosen, in whom My soul delighteth. "**

**"Behold, My Servant shall deal wisely,  
He shall be exalted and lifted up,  
and shall be very high. "**

**"By His knowledge shall My  
righteous Servant justify many:  
and He shall bear their iniquities. "**

**Other scriptures in Isa. 41. 8, 43. 10 and 44. 1, refer to "My servant", but it is equally clear that God is referring to His people Israel.**

**"But thou, Israel, My servant... "**

**"Ye are My witnesses, saith the LORD,  
and My servant whom I have chosen. "**

**"Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant;  
and Israel, whom I have chosen. "**

**The thought of "My servant" is a beautiful one. Israel was His people, to obey Him and to serve Him in His sanctuary, but failure denied to Jehovah the joy and pleasure Israel should have given to Him. A servant would yet come, however, whose obedience and service would give God great delight. Not only would the Servant personally give pleasure and satisfaction, but He would also lead the nation into a fuller experience of divine service.**

**Ezekiel 34. 24 and 37. 24 also speak of "My Servant". Clearly the prophet is referring to Messiah but he calls him "David".**

**"And I the LORD will be their God,  
and My servant David prince among them. "**

**"And My servant David shall be king over them. "**

**In a special sense, the man after God's own heart was His servant. "He chose David also His servant" (Psa. 78. 70). The prophecy looks forward to the greater "David" who will yet come to rule over all Israel.**

**[With the writer's agreement, attention is drawn to the alternative view that the Ezekiel references indicate a delegation of authority by Messiah to David as prince over Israel. See "Needed Truth" 1970 Volume, page 166 or "Finger of Prophecy", page 71. Eds].**

### *The Branch*

**In the person of David, both lines of prophecy coincide. In addition to Zechariah 3. 8, 6. 12, the title of the "Branch" is also found in Isa. 4. 2, 11. 1, Jer. 23. 5 and 33. 25. In each case, except one, the Hebrew word is *tsemech* (a sprout). The exception is in Isaiah 11. 2 where the word is *netser* (a shoot) but the intended shade of meaning is not apparent. This metaphoric illustration is also very beautiful. The old tree of Israel's monarchy had been cut down. The dynasty of David had not had a reigning monarch for many years, but the promise of God concerning the throne of Israel is confirmed unto Israel, by Zechariah. "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease" (Job 14. 7).**

**A new shoot from David's family tree will come forth. The Servant of Jehovah, the Branch, will sprout from the royal root to a glory greater by far than the grandeur and wealth of the days of Solomon.**

**"In that day shall the Branch of the LORD be  
beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the  
land shall be excellent and comely for them  
that are escaped of Israel" (Isa. 4. 2).**

The descriptive picture built up by these scriptures is clearly millennial—a Throne and a Temple; a King and a Priest. Both anointed offices will be united in one Person and He shall bear the glory. Righteousness and justice shall be the basis of His kingdom and in those days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell in safety. The Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious.

Such prophecies came to Israel in dark days. They reminded them that great days would come again. A Son of David would yet sit upon the throne. The Shekinah would once again crown Zion with the glory of the awesome Presence. Through Israel the nations would know untold blessing. Righteousness and peace would be universal.

*J. M. Gault*

## STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS

### ZECHARIAH 7 & 8

#### EXHORTATIONS TO GOD'S PEOPLE

*From Victoria.* —The fastings and mournings had seemed right to the people during the seventy long years of captivity, reminding them they were in a strange land and amongst an idolatrous people; their harps had been hung up, for they could not sing the songs of Zion in such foreign conditions. The priests must have supported the people in their fasts for the question came to them (v. 3) as to whether it was necessary to prolong the fasts after the captivity was ended. The Lord answered for the priests, through Zechariah, that He seriously questioned the value of the fasts if certain other conditions were not fulfilled.

The Lord speaks of the former prosperity and the need then to send messengers to warn the people of His desire for them (v. 7). The remnant were in grave danger of following the ones who had been taken into captivity; they, like the ungodly of *Psa. 1*, "were like the chaff which the wind driveth away". God exhorts them to hear the former prophets, men whom the Lord Himself had risen early to send, that His people should walk in the way of blessing and acceptability. So their lives would become as a sweet incense to God, an odour of a sweet smell. However, they did not listen to the Lord's voice, the dire result being that God would not listen to them (v. 13). [See answer to question from Derby as to the perspective of this passage]

Now God again shows His people He has not changed; the basic requirements Zechariah is commanded to tell are the same for the people of God in all dispensations, viz., true judgement, mercy and compassion, and kind treatment of the widow, the fatherless, the stranger and the poor (vv. 9, 10); and, even more, not to imagine evil in one's heart against one's neighbour. Zechariah explained that this was a great delight to God that would bring blessing direct from His throne.

God further reveals that Zion is His chosen and He is very jealous for her; that He was the great Architect, the One who had planned the beauty and prosperity of Zion. The psalmist declares it to be "beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth". Zechariah tells of its future spiritual fulness, when it will be a city of truth and peace, a place where the aged will be able to live in quietness and prosperity, and God will delight in the children playing in the streets without anxiety. All will enjoy God's blessing upon His holy mountain (8. 4, 5). God is exhorting His people to turn from all the things that He hates, so that their fasts will become joyful feasts, for joy and gladness are experienced by a nation that loves peace and truth.

So God looks ahead with joy to the future bliss that He will bestow upon the Jew. Nations of the world will realize too, that at long last God is with him; no longer a curse, he will have become a blessing. It was a beautiful message to the remnant, filling their hearts with desire to be well pleasing to God and live in the enjoyment of a present blessing, a blessing that will have a greater fulfilment when He whose right it is shall reign in Zion. *A. McLeman*

*From Atherton and Leigh.* —Some two years after Zechariah had first spoken the word of the Lord, another message was given to him. The occasion was the arrival of a delegation from Bethel at Jerusalem, making enquiries about certain fasts. These fasts were not Fasts of Jehovah but were instituted to lament certain calamities which had come upon the nation. One fast in question had been held in the fifth month. It was probably connected with the burning down of the house of God by Nebuzaradan (2 Kin. 25. 8). There had also been fasts in the fourth, seventh and tenth months, coinciding with other events which had affected the people of Judah at the time

of the captivity. The purpose of the visit was to enquire of the priests and prophets whether the fast of the fifth month should be continued. This question was no doubt asked because the house of God had been rebuilt and this fast of affliction now seemed unnecessary. The word of the Lord to them was a challenge: "Did ye at all fast unto Me, even to Me?\*" For the period of the captivity the people of Judah had kept these self-imposed fasts. The word of God suggests that the fasts were devoid of sincere motives. They were in fact an exercise in self-pity and self-indulgence. The calamities which had befallen them were the result of national disobedience. The prophets had warned their fathers to execute true judgement, to be merciful and not to oppress the helpers. Their fathers had refused to listen (v. 11) and judgement had come upon them and they were scattered. What the Lord wanted from this remnant was a return to national righteousness, which always exalts a nation, whereas sin is a reproach to any people. Religious fasts which do not involve true repentance and sorrow have no value to the Lord.

The Lord's love for Zion is so intense that it amounts to jealousy. Jerusalem is the place where He has caused His name to dwell. Now that the Lord has returned to Zion it can be called the city of truth. The Lord's judgements had disrupted family life so as to make a young or an old person a rare sight. Yet one day there would be old men and women dwelling in the streets and there would be children playing in the streets. If this seemed marvellous to the remnant there was no reason for it to be so to the Lord. Now that the Lord had returned to Zion there was no need for apathy. Before the Temple rebuilding had commenced men could not find work and lawlessness had added to their despair. The Lord encourages them; the vine would now give its fruit and the curses be turned to blessing. While the verses in chap. 8 had an application for the remnant of the time it does seem that the prophet is given a vision of the Millennium. It is then that the fasts would be turned to feasts of joy and gladness. In the Millennium the nations will seek the Lord at Jerusalem to ask this favour. The fellowship of each Jew will be eagerly sought because men will have heard that the Lord is with him *L. deVille*

*From Denmark Hill.* —These chapters consist of two sermons or exhortations by Zechariah to the returned remnant from Babylon. The subject of these sermons and the progression of thought and

content are very similar to those of other prophetic writers, notably Isaiah and Jeremiah, for the theme is the familiar one of the declension, dispersion and final restoration of the Jewish nation.

The sermons together constitute a message from the Lord which, although addressed to the entire nation, was the direct result of a visit from two messengers (7. 2). It is probable that these messengers were representatives of the Jews remaining in Babylon, who wished to keep the national fasts and memorials in common with their brethren in the Promised Land [Comment 1], The messengers came to seek guidance on the question of retaining certain fasts which they had already kept for seventy years (7. 5). The fasts in question were not those sanctioned by the Law, but were ceremonies which the Jews themselves had instituted in commemoration of certain events which had occurred some seventy years before during the siege of Jerusalem. It is generally accepted that the fast of the fifth month marked the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple (2 Kin. 25. 8), that of the seventh month the murder of Gedaliah (2 Kin. 25. 25) and that of the fourth month (8. 19) the date when the *city* wall was breached (Jer. 39. 2).

The messengers came to a country which was depressed and miserable; the capital was in ruins, its Temple a mere shell. Underpopulation and poverty were endemic, a great contrast to former times (7. 7). The Lord took this opportunity to address through Zechariah the Jews in both Babylon and Israel, because their deplorable spiritual condition was common to both groups. Both were neglecting the things of God, symbolised by the Babylonian Jews' desire to be rid of what they apparently thought were extraneous ceremonies, because formality and emptiness had taken the place of true love and devotion to the Lord; the fasts had become mere onerous rites, sanctified only by tradition. Although religious ceremonies, they were not performed "to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10. 31). Isaiah had warned of the consequences of this decline in zeal and devotion in very similar terms many years before (Isa. 1. 1143).

Zechariah's first sermon (7. 8-14) reinforces Haggai's earlier exhortations by showing in very graphic terms precisely why the people had gained so little from their empty religious observances: their

hearts had not been full of love towards God. It is interesting that this failure to love the Lord is expressed in terms of their failure to allow love to prevade their conduct towards men. We are reminded of Jas. 2. 20: "Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren?" Our love towards our fellow-men, and particularly towards fellow-saints, can only be a reflection of our love towards God; the conduct of the Christian towards the world is clearly indicated in 7. 9: showing "mercy and compassion" and rendering "true judgement". Again, Isaiah had extolled the virtue of these qualities years before: "Learn to do well; seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isa. 1. 16-17).

The consequence of this turning away from God was the outpouring of His righteous wrath (7. 13, 14). The order of events is indicative of God's enduring mercy; God's deafness to the people's appeals and His eventual scattering of them was a consequence of their first turning away and ignoring Him.

The beginning of Zechariah's second exhortation (chap. 8) constitutes a vivid contrast to the end of chap. 7. As on so many other occasions in the Scriptures, the Lord, having condemned Israel and alluded to her scattering, refers to her glorious future. 8. 2 must have been a great comfort to the remnant; the depth of divine love for the nation is shown by the force of the words "jealous" and "fury", which indicate the firmness of the Lord's promise never to desert the nation. In fulfilment of that promise, verses 3-6, 13, and 20-23 hint at the millennial glory of Jerusalem, again in terms which are reminiscent of Isaiah's visions (Isa. 65. 18-25). Two features in particular are emphasized:

- a) The millennial holiness of Jerusalem as the divine centre of the earth, where God will once again dwell in very close proximity to His people and to which all the nations of the world will come to worship (8. 3, 22, 23).
- b) The peace which will exist during the Millennium in a land which has seldom known peace (8. 4, 5).

It is interesting that 8. 13 repeats the covenant promise to Abraham (Gen. 12. 2). How different will be the world's attitude to the

despised Jew during the Millennium (8. 23)!

However, the second sermon contains comfort for the present as well as for the future condition of Israel. Zechariah's message was a practical one. The people had only to turn back to God and to fill their empty ceremonies and rites with His love. 8. 9-12 seems to indicate that some spiritual improvement had occurred even since the laying of the foundation of the Temple. With this encouragement, the people are to be strong and not fear. As elsewhere in the book, Zechariah exhorts them to "hear the words which the Lord hath cried by the former prophets"—his message is an exhortation to return to the purity of heart of former days. Only by a conscious act of repentance and reconciliation would the people be enabled to show that love and consideration towards their fellows which was so notably missing from their corporate life (8. 16, 17).

Finally, having communicated God's words of warning, His stimulating hint of the nation's glorious future, and His encouragement to return to God and be strong, Zechariah postulates the answer to the emissaries' question (8. 19): that the fasts and feasts could be cheerful and rewarding if they were filled with "love and truth and peace".

*D. B. Viles*

*From Liverpool.*—"They of Bethel" would be those who came up with others to re-build the house of God (see Ezra. 2. 28, Neh. 7. 32 and 11. 31). They came to pray before the Lord as well as to ask about the continuance of the days of fasting. The fasts were the results of great happenings to the people of Judah in past days. They were instituted to commemorate the destruction of Jerusalem in the fifth month (Jer. 52. 12, 13), the murder of Gedaliah by Ishmael the son of Nethaniah in the seventh month (Jer. 40. 8, 9 and 41. 1-3, 18), the breaking up of the city in the fourth month (Jer. 52. 6, 7) and the setting of the face of the king of Babylon against Jerusalem in the tenth month (Ezek. 24. 1, 2). The fasts were man-made, whereas the feasts of Leviticus were "Feasts of Jehovah". No doubt the state of things brought about these days of fasting. The day would come when these fasts would give place to feasts, and joy and gladness would be the people's portion (8. 19). We noticed the searching words of vv. 8-10: "Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother:

and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart".

We were reminded of Micah's words (6. 8) But alas "they made their hearts like an adamant stone" (Zech. 7. 12). Dr. Young describes the words "adamant stone" as a piece of diamond point, that which pricks or cuts, and this is what they had done to the affections of their God, and so God had had to come down in judgement upon them (7. 13, 14).

In chapter 8 we see God's love for Zion and His longing to bless His people. The remnant found encouragement through the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (vv. 9-11). They had God's promise to bless them (vv. 16-19), and the prophet showed them a still future day when the nations shall seek the Lord in Jerusalem. *J WS., G. S. W.*

### *IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS*

Papers were also received from Birkenhead, Derby, Methil and Vancouver, and the following are impressions from these:

The incident of Zech. 7 occurred two years before the completion of the Temple (7. 1, c. f. Ezra. 6. 15). The deputation from Bethel seems to have included men of means (note "their men", v. 2). During the Babylonian captivity many of the people of Judah had commemorated the sack of Jerusalem with a fast in the fifth month. Now that work on the temple was making headway, some enquired if the fasting was any longer necessary. As the enquiry was sent to the priests and prophets it seems that the people of Bethel thought that the Lord Himself had originally instituted the fast, but the Lord through Zechariah quickly corrects them. Their fasting had given Him no pleasure; they had been merely commemorating their own loss; far better had they spent the time reflecting on the reason for the sacking of Jerusalem, i. e. the sins of their fathers. The Lord was most desirous that Judah should realise the true meaning of the seventy years\* captivity; 7. 9-14 is the divine history of that period in a nutshell. Let not men allege that God stands aloof and allows people to do as they like; the history of Israel and Judah proves otherwise. He warned, they refused to take any notice, He scattered them. And Israel is an object lesson to the nations, for they all are

alike accountable to the Almighty.

Most of chap. 8 refers primarily to the millennial blessing of Judah and Israel (v. 13). Verses 9-12, however, refer to Zechariah's day ("in these days", v. 9); verses 9, 10 seem to go back to the economic difficulties and verse 12 to the famine conditions, just prior to the rebuilding of Zerubbabel's temple (c. f. Hag. 1. 6-11).  
Eds.

## COMMENTS

### Comment 1. (*Denmark Hill*)

It would seem difficult to substantiate from the passage that Jews in Babylon had initiated the enquiry about the fasts; Liverpool's paper links other references to Bethel to confirm that some of the returned exiles had gone to that area.

### Comment 2. (*Derby*)

"The former prophets... that is, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah," It would seem from the context of verses 7 and 12 of Zech. 7 that in both cases the former prophets referred to were those who lived before the captivity.  
G. P. Jr.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### *From Birkenhead:*

- (a) How does Psalm 137 fit in with the spiritual condition referred to in Zech. 7. 5?

Psalm 137 expresses the deep sense of spiritual exile felt by the godly Israelite in Babylon. The alien spiritual environment of that idolatrous land was inappropriate for the "sons of Zion". That there was much exercise of heart with some Jewish exiles during the Babylonian captivity does not invalidate the general statement of Zech. 7. 5, 6. As God assessed the fastings of those 70 years, His verdict was that the people had fasted unto themselves rather than unto Him.

- (b) Does Zech. 8. 4 mean that life will be extended by God, or will people live longer because famine and war are removed?

In areas where famine and war are not experienced today, the span

of life is nevertheless limited. So it would seem that in the Millennium God will grant an extension of the span of life. This would be supported by Isa. 65. 20-22, particularly the simile that "as the days of a tree shall be the days of My people, and My chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands".

*From Derby:*

Does the scattering of Zech. 7. 14 refer to the final dispersion of A. D. 70?

I hardly think so. It seems to me rather that through Zechariah the Lord was reviewing by way of warning His former dealings with Israel. He had spoken to them through the pre-captivity prophets, they had refused to hear, and God recalls that He had said, "I will scatter them...". As a result the land had been left desolate (v. 14). Zechariah's hearers would feel the force of the message because of their personal experience of the desolation of the land.

*G. P. Jr.*

*Note by Editors:*

A reader of *Bible Studies* has recently written to us enquiring about access to the magazine's "Question and Answer" section for general questions, not related to the study subject for the month, or the current year. Study groups and individual contributors are indeed very welcome to submit a wide variety of questions which might stimulate "discussion" of a study nature in the magazine, as well, of course, as elicit an editorial response to the points raised in the first place. This facility has really been in existence for a long time but has not been greatly used in recent years. Wider use could be very helpful since often it may be more practical to offer a question rather than work up even a short article on a topic interesting someone at any moment.

## PSALM 72

This is the psalm of Solomon. He wrote this one psalm and also one of the Songs of Ascents (127). The latter *is* about the building of the house of God which he built, and also about the reward there is in having children lawfully born. This psalm is mainly about the reign of Messiah for a thousand years, of which Solomon's reign, in the early years thereof, was a shadow.

Give the king Thy judgements, O God,  
 And Thy righteousness unto the king's son.  
 He shall judge Thy people with righteousness,  
 And Thy poor with judgement (verses 1, 2).

The king who asks God to give him His judgements is king Solomon, and the king's son who seeks for righteousness is the same person, even Solomon the son of David. This is a similar request to that which is recorded in 2 Chron. 1. 9, 10, when he asked, "Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this Thy people, that is so great?" God's answer was, "Because... thou hast not asked riches... but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge My people, over whom I have made thee king: wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee" (verses 11, 12). God gave him much else, but these two gifts of wisdom and knowledge were vital to his reign, and the judgement of His people. Solomon's judgement of the two women in connection with the one who overlaid her child and it died and the living one is clearly a case of divine wisdom (1 Kin. 3. 16-28). It is said of this case, "And all Israel heard of the judgement which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgement". His purpose was to judge in righteousness and to give to the poor just judgement. When Christ comes to reign, people and nations will be perfectly satisfied with His just judgement, and His wise and righteous decisions (Isa. 2. 24).

The mountains shall bring peace to the people,  
 And the hills, in righteousness.  
 He shall judge the poor of the people,  
 He shall save the children of the needy,  
 And shall break in pieces the oppressor (verses 3, 4).

In Solomon there is but a shadow of the fulfilment of these words; their substance is Christ. In the Lord's reign nature will be adjusted

to the needs of the people. Present day disasters, lack of rams and famine conditions in many parts will be gone. The war of weeds, thorns and thistles against the labourer on the land will also largely disappear, not to speak of the armies of insect life which set the battle in array against mankind; such also will be adjusted. The waterless desert will "rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of the LORD, the excellency of our God" (Isa. 35. 1, 2). The poor and the needy will be treated as never before, and the oppressor, whether the military or the financial oppressor, will be broken into pieces.

They shall fear Thee while the sun endureth,  
 And so long as the moon, throughout all generations.  
 He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass:  
 As showers that water the earth (verses 5, 6).

The sun and moon which set God in the firmament on the fourth day in Genesis 1 will at the end of the reign have served God's purpose in regard to the earth, for men are to fear Him while the sun endureth and as long as the moon throughout all generations; for when the Millennium ends we read of nothing more, except the destruction of Gog and Magog, and the casting of Satan into the Lake of Fire. It says that the earth and heaven fled away from the face of Him that will sit upon the Great White Throne (Rev. 20. 7-15). How kindly is the imagery of rain showers in a warm country descending upon the mown grass to water the earth! Such will the Lord be when He returns to earth. The world will need Him as the earth needs showers of rain.

In His days shall the righteous flourish;  
 And abundance of peace, till the moon be no more.  
 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,  
 And from the River unto the ends of the earth (verses 7, 8).

During the Lord's reign on earth the righteous will flourish, for Satan the great trouble maker will be imprisoned in the abyss

**(Rev. 20. 1-3), and the nations will be ruled or shepherded with the iron rod by the Lord and those who will be overcomers (Rev. 2. 26, 27; Psa. 2. 8, 9). Lawlessness will not be allowed to raise its head. Consequently, those who set their hearts to do right will have every encouragement. There will as a result be abundance of peace till the moon be no more. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea", which means everywhere. "From the River to the ends of the earth" is also an undefined statement, signifying that His kingdom is all over all the earth. The people of Israel were to have the land from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates (Gen. 15. 18). In Num. 34. 1-12 we have the south border of the land as "unto the brook of Egypt, and the goings out thereof shall be at the sea", that is, the Great Sea, the Mediterranean. We have a somewhat similar south border given in Joshua 15. 1-4, "And it passed along to Azmon, and went out at the brook of Egypt; and the goings out of the border were at the sea: this shall be your south border". Biblical maps show what is called the Shihor, the river or brook of Egypt, as entering the Mediterranean at the corner of the Levant, which is called the sea of the Philistines. "I will set thy border from the Red Sea (at Ezion-geber, on the gulf of Akaba, the eastern arm of the Red Sea) even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness unto the River" (Euphrates, R. V. Margin Ex. 23. 31).**

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# BIBLE STUDIES

*'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)'*

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## EDITORIAL

It will echo the experience, no doubt, of all study groups to observe that there is much that is difficult of interpretation in the three chapters of Zechariah which comprise our study this month. The papers submitted reflect a wide range of attitudes to this problem. Our friends in Vancouver clearly concluded that it was more prudent not to attempt detailed interpretation, while others felt they could at least glimpse a possible meaning for e. g. the three shepherds of 11. 8. The former view about these chapters is certainly supported by some notable writers on the prophets such as H. L. Ellison, author of the very useful study "Men Spake from God". Yet, on the other hand, it seems not unreasonable or unsafe, to examine such passages in their historical setting, and in relation to New Testament predictive prophecy concerning Israel. We are not likely to fall into the mistake of expressing dogmatic views on the detailed content of such chapters as these. Both the complexity and the precision of divine predictive prophecy, however, shine through in the words "thirty pieces of silver" and "even upon a colt, the foal of an ass". If no other prize were offered, such glimpses of Christ's Person and beauties would be reward enough for our labours. *JDT*

## STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS

### ZECHARIAH CHAPTERS 9 to 11

#### *PROPHECIES REGARDING MESSIAH, ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS*

*From Birkenhead.* —The message given at the beginning is one of judgement against Syria (Damascus and Hamath), Phoenicia (Tyre

and Sidon) and Philistia (Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and Ashdod), and it appears that the people are in apprehension of the coming judgement from the Lord, although the marginal reading appears to suggest that the reverse is true—that it is the eye of the Lord watching the nations. References to the judgements against Tyre are also mentioned in Ezek. 26-28. The people of Philistia merged with the Jews and followed their religious customs, and this is the force of the word *bastard* (9. 6) which indicates people of mixed parentage.

The portion fulfilled when the Lord rode into Jerusalem (9. 9) was written approximately 500 years before Christ came and it is an interesting study to compare it with the Gospel records. "The King" is just, a characteristic that has been notably absent in some of the kings of the earth. He is bringing salvation, which has the thought of victory. The King enters the city in lowly manner upon a colt the foal of an ass. This contrasts with earthly sovereigns who, with all their weapons and armies, were unable to bring peace to the nations. In Matthew's account (ch. 21) no reference is made to the king being just and having salvation (see Answer to Question from Methil). In Mark 11 we read of the crowds crying "Hosanna" i. e. "save now", and reference is made to the Kingdom being that of "our father David". Luke 19 fills in the detail that at this time the Lord saw the city and wept over it, an evidence of His knowledge that beyond this experience of apparent welcome was to be the time of rejection—"Away with Him". It is also to be noted that the Lord Jesus told Pilate that because His kingdom was not of this world His servants would not fight. There follows an assurance (9. 10) that although weapons will be taken away victory is still assured through the King of kings, and that (9. 11) on the basis of the blood of the covenant (see Ex. 24. 8) God promises to save His people.

In chapter 10 the promise is given that if the people return to God then blessings would be theirs. They are warned of the futility of looking to false gods. The shepherds (priests and rulers) had proved bad leaders and the "he-goats" appear to be wicked persons

among God's people.

There follow clear references to the Messiah, such as "the Corner Stone" (Eph. 2. 20; 1 Pet. 2. 6) and "the Nail" (Is. 22. 23)— this is a pin or peg on which vessels or weapons hang and hence by inference the One on whom everything hangs, in whom Israel will know full salvation.

*R. D. Williams*

*From Methil.* —The Lord has an eye upon men and upon all the tribes of Israel. God is all-seeing and all-knowing. He defends His people and their land.

The judgement of Israel's enemies is seen in the light of the coming of the Prince of Peace. Verse 7 suggests that many will be converted and be a remnant for God.

The Jews, referred to as the daughter of Zion, were exhorted to rejoice at the coming of Christ the Messiah. The fulfilment of their King coming unto them, lowly and on a colt, is seen in Mat. 21. 5. When do the words "He is just, and having salvation" have their fulfilment? (see Questions and Answers). These words are omitted in the Matthew reference.

The "prisoners of hope" were exhorted to turn to the stronghold. The promise of Messiah's coming was the stronghold for the faithful long before His coming. The Messiah was their city of refuge in that day and is ours also (Is. 45. 22). His goodness is great, and also His beauty (Psa. 27. 4; Is. 33. 17). To the world, He has no form nor comeliness; to those who really know Him, He is the altogether lovely One.

In ch. 10 we learn that Israel must seek after God and not after idols. Evil shepherds ultimately give place to God's Leader who will gather His people in. As God visited His flock for sin, so also will He save and restore them. They would ask, and the Lord would answer, making bright clouds and giving beneficial showers (10. 6). He would strengthen His people, have mercy on them and hear them. They in turn will rejoice in the Lord. He would sow them among people; in far countries they would remember, and then return.

**In ch. 11 we see the Lord as the Good Shepherd who confounds the evil shepherds, but is Himself rejected. The flock consequently suffer under a worthless shepherd.**

**The Lord took his staff "Beauty" and broke it, signifying the broken covenant, we would understand, as seen in Ex. 19. Some thought the breaking of the staff is seen in Mat. 21. 43, and also when the Lord said, "Your house is left unto you desolate" [Comment 1], Worthless shepherds are frequently mentioned, as in Ezek. 34. 2, Jer. 23. 1, John 10. 12, 13, referring no doubt to the leaders of Israel, the chief priests. The poor of the flock, the publicans and sinners, came to the Lord when He was on earth and they were fed by the Good Shepherd (Psa. 23). *Neville Coomer***

*From Melbourne.* —**In the overall message of the prophet in these portions there is a continuation of encouragement and warning: encouragement to the builders of God's house and those of His people who would remain faithful to Him in the land to which He had caused them to return; warning lest they turn from Him again as did their fathers, to consult the teraphim and the diviners, or to follow the false shepherds who had often led them astray.**

**Syria, the Philistines and Tyre and Sidon were neighbours of Israel and Judah. Although small nations by today's standards, they had from time to time been bitter enemies of and had harassed Israel. Now they were prosperous and looked with scorn on the work of the remnant who had recommenced building the house of the Lord.**

**The glory of Israel had waned, the ten tribes were in captivity and dispersed throughout the countries, and it was but a handful of Jews who had returned from Babylon. No doubt the remnant would often speak of the prosperity and strength of the surrounding nations, contrasting them with their own feebleness; but now through the prophet they are told that the Lord is going to humble those nations and bring them low, while in contrast He promises that He will encamp about His house "as a garrison" (RVM) to protect it. A further source of discouragement to the remnant would**

be the fact that the nations had their kings, but Israel had none. But now through the prophet encouragement is given by the promise of a coming king whose glory will far exceed that of the kings of the nations, whose dominion will take in not only the territory promised originally to Israel, but will extend to "the ends of the earth". The remarkable characteristics of their king are in marked contrast to the kings of the nations; therefore the daughter of Zion is to rejoice greatly at the prospect of His coming. He is just. He will bring salvation to them, salvation from all that hate them, and from all their enemies. He is lowly, and his lowliness is seen in the manner of His entry into the city of the Great King, Jerusalem.

Then their king appears to be addressed in 9. *11, 12* and a statement made as to the efficacy of "the blood of thy covenant" to bring his prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Two suggestions were made regarding the possible application of this statement;

- (1) The pit was a reference to Sheol; and the sending forth of thy prisoners was the liberation therefrom of the righteous dead at the resurrection of Christ from the dead.
- (2) It was descriptive of Israel's scattering among the nations, and deliverance therefrom could be a parallel of "the valley of the dry bones" from which Israel will awaken, or possibly is awakening now [Comment 2].

The three shepherds to whom reference is made in ch. 11, we would suggest are the Herodians, the Pharisees and the Sadducees [Comment 3]. The Lord during the days of His flesh made scathing comments on the works of all three. Under the shepherding of these, we find the value which they finally placed upon their king, even thirty pieces of silver.

The concluding portion of ch. 11 which deals with the foolish and worthless shepherd, we judge to be a reference to the coming Antichrist who when he comes as their messiah will be received by them [Comment 4]. Whatever hopes the future generations of

Israel may place in his fair promises, they will soon be disillusioned. Their expectations as based upon the words of former prophets, that "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that give suck", will not be realised; Instead they will have the bitter experience, figuratively described in verse 16. *P. W. A., T. W. F.*

*From Derby.* —Chap. 9. 1-8 refers to the destruction of the nations round about Jerusalem. The reference may be to the conquests of Alexander the Great in 334 B. C. Jerusalem itself was spared. Verse 9 is an identifiable point—the entry of the Lord Jesus to Jerusalem riding on the ass (Mat. 21). Something of the peace and glory of His kingdom is suggested in verse 10 and the following verses, but His people refused to accept Him and the fulfilment of these awaits a future day. In the later verses of the chapter there may be some references to the spreading of the gospel of the kingdom.

Chap. 10 prophesies the return of Israel to the land. Then prayers for the latter rain will be answered and God will give prosperity. But all their blessings are bound up in Christ, the Corner Stone, the Nail, the Battle-Bow, the Ruler; all these speak of Him.

Chap. 11 includes the parable of the two staves, Beauty (graciousness) and Bands (union). Does this indicate God's gracious desire towards His people to bring them together in unity and blessing through Christ? They rejected Him (verse 12), the staves were broken and judgement fell, so that the purposes of God await a future time when His people shall be together in true unity. May the reference in vv. 15-17 to the worthless shepherd be to the coming Antichrist and his activity? They would not receive Him who came in His Father's Name, but they will receive him who comes in his own name. His final end may be indicated in verse 17 [Comment 4].

*L. A. Hickling*

*From Vancouver B. C.* —It is always difficult to assign some scriptures or passages of scripture to a prophetic application in a dogmatic fashion. We must first realize that most if not all of the statements of prophets of old had an application and a meaning in their own

**time. In our times we sometimes lose sight of the fact that a prophet was simply a "teller forth" and did not necessarily have to be speaking of future events.**

**Our group found difficulty in doing little more than attempting to assign the portions or verses in the three chapters before us to the three sub-headings:**

Prophecies regarding Messiah:

- 1) 9. 9, 10
- 2) 11. 12

Prophecies regarding Israel:

- 1) 9. 11-17
- 2) 10 in toto.
- 3) 11 in toto.

Prophecies regarding the nations:

9. 1-7            J.            C.            Bell

### ***IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS***

**Papers were also received from Atherton and Leigh, Crowborough, Liverpool and Nottingham, and the following impressions are taken from these.**

Chaps. 9 and 10 deal mainly with the Grecian period of Jewish history in which Alexander, the notable horn between the eyes of the he-goat (Dan. 8. 21), crossed over from Greece in the fourth century B. C. The prophecy of the destruction of the Philistines and of Damascus and Tyre was accomplished by Alexander who ravaged these countries soon after, and planted colonies in them. God's protection of His people is foretold in 9. 8. "I will encamp about Mine house against the army". This was fulfilled, some thought, when for some time after the struggles of the Maccabees, Judah was a free and flourishing state, or when Alexander, struck with an awe of Jaddus the high priest, favoured the Jews and took them under his own protection, while he wasted the neighbouring countries.

The assurance of God's favour to the Jews is accompanied by a promise of victory, plenty and joy in their own land, a type of even more glorious victories, riches and joys in the Kingdom of the Messiah. Though the Jews after the captivity would have enemies, God promises to deliver them. They would be instruments in God's hand (9. 73). Some thought that the latter part of v. 13 was fulfilled when, against Antiochus, the people that knew their God were strong and did exploits (Dan. 11. 52).

Chap. 9. 6-11 has a complete fulfilment when Christ comes to earth again, but there was a partial fulfilment when the Lord Jesus rode into Jerusalem on an ass (Mat. 21. 5; John 12. 15). Some saw in verse 9 the time of His incarnation associated with the humble shepherds and the angelic proclamation of His birth right until His death at Calvary, where the superscription testified that He was indeed King of the Jews. The animal on which He rode betokened His lowliness as well as His peaceable, gentle disposition. He was just and righteous (see Jer. 23. 5, 6). Yet despite the rejoicing which seemed to indicate a national welcome, Jerusalem accorded to Him the superficial title of "the prophet of Galilee". Between verses 9 and 10 lie the present dispensation and future seven years of Israel's revival, and the Great Tribulation. Then His kingdom will be established by proclaiming peace to the nations. Chariot, horse, and the battle-bow will no longer be necessary. The reference to Ephraim implies the restoration of the ten tribes. Verse 11 makes an interesting reference to the blood of the covenant. It was because of this covenant that the captives were to be set free (v. 11), and the use of the perfect tense in Hebrew would indicate the certainty of God's purpose in a day yet future.

Chap. 10. 1, 2 teaches that advice should be sought from God and the superstition of the nations round about should not be considered. They are reminded that they have been under divine rebuke for negligence in rebuilding the Temple, yet they are offered encouragement in the prospect of prosperity at home and victory abroad, if they will acknowledge God's hand at work amongst them.

The he-goats were leaders of the flock but by no means shepherds of it. Security is to be found in the Corner Stone, who *is* also described as the Nail or Peg, indicating reliability, and as the Bow, signifying effective power. The lands from which they will return, Egypt and Assyria, were the first and last of Israel's oppressors in the past.

In chap. 11. 1-3 is a prediction of destruction to come upon the Jewish nation. These events suggest the Roman period in which there was to be rapidly developing apostasy. 11. 7-14 gives the cause of the judgement in 11. 1-6. Zechariah is presented in 11. 7-14 as a type of the Good Shepherd (John 10. 11). One paper suggested that the two staves Beauty and Bands might represent the welding together of the divided tribes of Israel, and that the three shepherds might be prophets, priests, and lawyers (Jer. 2. 8; Mat. 16. 21), whose rule ended when the city was destroyed. Others thought that the staves were maxims of the Lord's shepherd care and control. Though some progress was attained with the degraded and poor, His ministrations were despised and rejected. The breaking of the former staff signifies the end of the Lord's favour towards His people. The heart-breaking efforts of the Lord's Servant were rewarded by the paltry sum corresponding to the compensation awarded to a slave, which money was cast into the Temple treasury (R. V. Margin). The Good Shepherd used the two staves of Grace and Truth and before laying down His life for His sheep cried "O Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together . . . and ye would not".

*Eds.*

## COMMENTS

1. (*Methil*): The covenant to be broken here *is* one "which I had made with *all the peoples*". (Although the AV gives "*all the people*", most translations including the RV, give "*peoples*"). Does this fit the thought of Ex. 19 and Mat. 21. 43? Might it not rather apply to a general divine sovereign "contract" with the nations not to molest His people? This would be withdrawn and so free these nations to

**attack and oppress Israel. This, it is true, would not be a precise use of the term "covenant" as expressed in Ex. 19 and other places, but this Exodus covenant was not with *all the peoples*.**

2. (*Melbourne*): Surely only in v. 11 could the address be to their King, since in v. 12 it is "ye prisoners of hope" who are addressed. It seems to me more likely that the entire passage (9. 9-17) is addressed to "the daughter of Zion", which would be appropriate along with "ye prisoners of hope". The direct linking of verses 12 and 13 by "for" would incline away from the thought of the release from Sheol referred to in Heb. 2. 15.

3. (*Melbourne*): Another paper (Liverpool), as indicated in "Impressions", suggested prophets, priests and lawyers as the "three shepherds". These are both interesting suggestions and other false leaders, e. g. the scribes of the Lord's day, come to mind. This is another of those prophetic statements which stimulates intelligent speculation, but does not offer any final solution!

4. (*Melbourne and Derby*): Many see a partial fulfilment of the later verses of chapter 9 in the days of Antiochus and the Maccabees, a period which seems to foreshadow in scripture that of Antichrist and his subsequent overthrow. There would certainly seem to be shadows of Antichrist in 11. 15-17, as suggested in the papers from Derby and elsewhere.

*J. D. T.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### *From Atherton and Leigh:*

(a) We would like some help upon the correct interpretation of the words "having salvation" in which the Messiah is described, not as bringing salvation, but as the passive recipient of it.

But is He really being described as the passive recipient of salvation? I read the word "having" here as meaning just "bringing", as in e. g. Rev. 20. 1. In Rev. 19. 1, 2 "salvation" is said to *belong to God*, in the context of His dispensing this salvation in "avenging the blood of His servants". See also answer to the question from Methi and Nottingham.

**(b) In the matter of the breaking of the staff "Band", how does Israel come into the context? Is this the equivalent of the casting off of the nation?**

**In what specific historical sense this act of breaking the unity of the total Israel nation is to be seen does not seem clear, but it was obviously very near to God's heart that Judah and "Ephraim" should share the future blessings (10. 6, 7), and the complete disruption of the nation, after the Lord's rejection, with such elements of Israel as existed alongside Judah, must have grieved God.**

**(c) In Zech. 9. 10, which seas and which river are referred to?**

**The comment which "A & L" friends themselves provide seems to sum the matter up well, as follows: "Some thought that the statement simply indicated Messiah's world-wide sway with no particular reference to any particular sea or river. Alternatively, the seas may well refer to the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean, indicating the whole expanse of Palestine under His rule, while various references to the river Euphrates in the Old Testament seem to be of special significance (see Gen. 15. 18; Deut. 11. 24; Josh. 1. 4)".**

**(d) Mat. 27. 9. How does Jeremiah fit the context?**

**It appears that, at the time Matthew wrote, the entire body of Old Testament prophetic books began with Jeremiah, and that therefore this name may be used in a generic sense for the books of the prophets.**

***From Methil:* When do the words "He is just, and having salvation" (Zech. 9. 9) have their fulfilment?**

***From Nottingham:* What is the full significance of the reference to this humble ride, in the midst of scriptures which deal with that time of His triumph, the millennial reign? We note the quotation in Mat. 21. 5 omits the words "He is just, and having salvation". What is the significance of this?**

**It seems to me that here we have one of those "infoldings" of prophecy where an event is surprisingly, yet unmistakably, predicted in an unexpected historical context. This matter is referred to in**

several papers this month. Before considering why "just" and "having salvation" are omitted in Matthew, I think we could agree firstly that the *only* fulfilment of the lowly ride was that recorded in the gospels. The character of His reappearance will be altogether different. Secondly, whatever the significance of the omission, He was at that time, as always, "just" and the Bringer of salvation. Some contributors wish to sharply define v. 9 as past (Mat. 21. 5 fulfilment), and v. 10 as future. Is there a comparable situation, although in the reverse historical direction as it were, in Rev. 5 where the might and power of the enthroned Son of God is seen in the *slain Lamb*? All His eternal triumph and glory is associated with that sacrifice. So His future supremacy, as seen in Zech. 9. 10-17, flows from the meekness and lowliness of heart of a suffering Messiah. It is clearly in the minds of some fellow-students that, at the future coming in power of the Son of Man, His justice and saving deliverance will be dramatic features of that world-shaking event. These characteristics were greatly muted in the Matthew fulfilment. Does this account for their omission in the quotation from Zech. 9 and indicate that 9. 9 has indeed a double and "fragmented" fulfilment—not another, future lowly ride, but a King coming manifestly and triumphantly "just" and "having salvation"? This to me seems quite feasible.

J. D. T.

### PSALM 72 (continued)

They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him;  
 And His enemies shall lick the dust.  
 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents:  
 The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.  
 Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him:  
 All nations shall serve Him (verses 9, 10, 11).

Arab peoples that inhabit the wilderness will no longer own Mahomet as their prophet and Allah as their god. They will then know that Christ is Prophet, Priest and King. His enemies will lick the dust, and dust will be the serpent's meat (Isa. 65. 25; Micah 7. 17).

**The kings of Tarshish, a place of undefined extent, will bring presents, and Sheba and Seba will offer gifts. How inclusive will His reign be when kings will fall before Him, and all nations will serve Him! "The LORD shall be king over all the earth" (Zech. 14. 9).**

**For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth;  
And the poor, that hath no helper.  
He shall have pity on the poor and needy,  
And the souls of the needy He shall save (verses 12, 13).**

**While on the one hand the Lord will rule with a rod of iron, on the other He will deal graciously and mercifully with the poor and needy. The cries of such will be heard and answered by Him. He will have pity on them and will help and save them.**

**He shall redeem their soul from oppression and violence;  
And precious shall their blood be in His sight:  
And they shall live; and to Him shall be given of the gold of  
Sheba:  
And men shall pray for Him continually;  
They shall bless Him all the day long (verses 14, 15).**

**Before the Lord comes to earth again the poor and the needy will have known ruthless oppression and violence, but He will redeem their souls or lives from such inhumanity, and he that endureth to the end the same shall be saved in the Lord's coming (Matt. 24. 23). This is not salvation from the wrath of God, but from the wrath of man. Salvation from the wrath of God is by one act of faith, not by final perseverance. It is by the vicarious sufferings of Christ that believing sinners are saved (1 Pet. 3. 18). No Christian martyr was saved by being martyred, through his own sufferings of being burned at the stake. He was saved by the Lord who suffered for his sins on the Cross. Precious is the blood of all such in the Lord's sight. Men will pray for Christ continually and bless Him all the day long. To pray (Hebrew *PAL AL*), first**

means to judge, and then to intercede, supplicate, to pray for. To bless Him is Hebrew *BARAK*, which means to kneel, and is an act of adoration on bended knees.

There shall be abundance of corn in the earth upon the top  
of the mountains;

The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon:

And they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth  
(verse 16).

A complete change of the earth's fruitfulness is in view in this verse, from the present lichens, mosses and snows on mountain tops; the tops of the mountains will be producing abundance of corn, the fruit of which will shake like Lebanon. With the vast increase of the population of the earth in the Millennium, there will be abundance of food from the mountains and the deserts to sustain all with an abundance unknown now. When one thinks of the vast areas of the earth's surface that are unproductive now one can understand the fulness of bread during the Lord's reign. The people of the city will live and flourish in such an abundance of supply as the grass of the earth.

His name shall endure for ever;

His name shall be continued as long as the sun:

And men shall be blessed in Him;

All nations shall call Him happy (verse 17).

The name of King Messiah is to endure for ever, as long as the sun. The marginal reading of the A. V. in line two of verse 17 gives, "Heb. shall be as a son to continue His Father's name for ever". I cannot find any support from any other version for such a rendering. Men will be blessed in Him. We who are saved now are blessed in Him. In the coming day "all nations shall call Him happy (Hebrew *ASHER*)". The word as first recorded in Scripture was used by Leah when Asher was born. She said, "Happy (Asher) am I! for the daughters will call me happy: and she called his name Asher" (Gen. 30. 13). The Man of Sorrows is destined to be

called happy by all nations.

**Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel,  
Who only doeth wondrous things:  
And blessed be His glorious name for ever;  
And let the whole earth be filled with His glory.  
Amen, and Amen (verses 18, 19).**

The word blessed in these two verses is the Hebrew *BARAK*. Solomon ends his psalm we might say in adoration with bowed knees, as he did in his dedicatory prayer at the handing over of the completed Temple to God as His habitation among His gathered people (1 Kin. 8. 22, 23, 54). God does not do insignificant things; He only doeth wondrous things. The Lord's work is wondrous among small things, as it was among Israel and is among His people today, and this will be revealed when the earth is filled with His glory. Happy shall we be to see the results laid out before us for our admiration which will beget adoration.

The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended (verse 20).

This of course does not mean that prayers of David are not to be found later in the book of the psalms. His prayers are to be found at least to Psalm 144, and after that there are psalms of praise. I take the meaning of the prayers of David being ended to be that Christ the Son of David is seen reigning in this Psalm 72. The last words of David are concerning the Lord's reign in 2 Sam. 23, that is, his last words that he spoke by the Spirit of the Lord.

*J. M.*

The *Notes on Psalms* published this month are the final instalment of the series, and the last of Mr. J. Miller's contributions to *Bible Studies*. As long as his health permitted our esteemed brother had persevered with his exposition and he reached the 72nd Psalm. It seems remarkable that this Psalm should close with the words, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended". Men of great spiritual stature serve the counsel of God in their generation and

**they fall on sleep (Acts 13. 36). We feel it is fitting at this point again to express our appreciation of the legacy of spiritual enrichment which under God has resulted from the tireless services of our late brother in writing for this magazine.** *Eds.*

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# BIBLE STUDIES

*'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'*

VOLUME 41

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## EDITORIAL

**"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" ( Is. 52. 9, 10).**

In notes of such thankful exaltation the defenders of Jerusalem will rejoice, "for they shall see, eye to eye, when the LORD returneth to Zion". This immediate reaction of relief and joy will be turned into mourning when they recognize their Deliverer as the rejected "Jesus of Nazareth". Nevertheless this making bare of His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations stands out in the Old Testament prophetic writings as the great climax towards which God is working in His remarkable dealings with an unbelieving Israel.

This month's study in Zechariah focuses attention on the final phase of Israeli resistance in Jerusalem and Judah, and the relief brought when the Lord goes forth to fight against those nations, and His feet stand upon the Mount of Olives. Much remarkable detail was revealed through Old Testament prophets about the coming again of the Lord Jesus as it will affect Israel and the Gentile world in final opposition to Israel.

But other aspects of truth about the Lord's coming again are not mentioned. They belong to "the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal" (Rom. 16. 25); "the mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit" (Eph. 3. 4, 5). So truth regarding the coming of the Lord Jesus as it affects saints of this dispensation, the Church the Body of Christ, was reserved for revelation through New Testament apostles and prophets.

Through the apostle John, indeed, was revealed also much regarding Israel and the nations of the world to supplement the Old

**Testament prophetic writings. Many events are set in clearer perspective as a result. Among these is the indication in Rev. 19 that the coming of the Lord to the air for His Church will take place before His advent in power and glory for the deliverance of Israel and the establishment of His millennial kingdom. For in Rev. 19 1-10 the wife of the Lamb "hath made herself ready", and she is seen arrayed "in fine linen bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints". After this John saw the heaven opened and the Rider on the white horse coming forth to judge and make war. It is at this point, we understand, that Zech. 12. 9, 10 and 14. 3, 4 will find application.**

*G. P. Jr.*

## THE COMING VISIBLE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH

### *Introduction.*

Throughout the literature of the Fellowship we find that a central feature of New Testament eschatology is the assumption of a period of one thousand years personal reign on earth by the Lord Jesus Christ after His promised return to this world's stage. The case for such an episode in end-time developments is broadly based in prophetic scripture, as we shall see, and the exact period of 1, 000 years is derived from Rev. 20. 2-6. It may come as a little surprising to some readers of "Bible Studies" to know that this conviction with regard to a 1, 000 years visible kingdom of Christ on earth is not universally shared by all Bible-believing Christians. As eminent an early Christian as Augustine (died 430) taught that the "Millennium" is the present church age, and the "first resurrection" (Rev. 20. 6) the spiritual quickening of Christians by the Holy Spirit. At the same time, of course, we must pay due regard to the important fact that belief in a visible earthly kingdom was widely subscribed to by many of the "fathers" of an even earlier period which was less affected by developing Roman Catholic influence. The names of Papias, Justin, Tertullian and Irenaeus are quoted in this context by Sauer. Commentators today who are of undoubted evangelical persuasion (e. g. Leon Morris in the New Tyndale Commentary on Revelation) favour an interpretation of Rev. 20. 2-6 which attributes an alternative meaning to the references to the 1, 000 years of

**Satan's binding, and one not involving a personal visible reign of Christ on earth.**

Since, therefore, our study subject this year touches closely on the matter of Christ's millennial reign on earth, in relation particularly to Zechariah's prophecy, it seems useful to examine the essential scriptural case for such a belief and the main opposing points of view. No attempt will be made to consider conditions on earth during the Millennium, or other intriguing problems and prospects which arise once the "orthodox" teaching on the subject is accepted. These matters are dealt with in many places in our literature, including most recently "The Finger of Prophecy" by J. L. Ferguson and R. Armstrong. This short contribution to the subject seeks only to demonstrate the substantial strength of the case for anticipating the Lord's personal presence on earth for 1,000 years before the final climax of world history. Naturally, various works of reference have had to be consulted, one of which in particular must be specially acknowledged. This is "From Eternity to Eternity" by Erich Sauer, and also the companion volume "The Triumph of the Crucified". In these great treatises of Christian teaching will be found a more extensive treatment of the subject.

### *The Main Alternative Positions:*

A. *Pre-Millennialism* (otherwise known as Chiliasm, from the Greek *chilioi*, a thousand). This is the generally accepted position in the Fellowship and refers to the expectation of a personal return to earth of Christ in glory as a prelude (hence Pre-Millennialism) to the establishment of 1,000 years rule of peace and prosperity.

B. *Post-Millennialism*. This refers to a belief in a progressive "Christianization" of world society leading up to, and followed by (hence Post-Millennialism) the personal appearing of Christ to usher in the perfect, eternal state. The "millennium" is not seen as necessarily a literal one thousand years. We shall not need to spend long in discussing this proposition.

C. *A-Millennialism*. According to this view no (hence A-Millennialism) earthly visible kingdom is to be expected which is ruled over by Christ in person. The essential basis of this case depends upon a "spiritualizing" of those scriptures adduced in Pre-Millennialism, and

sees **this** wonderful period as portraying a heavenly scene in the eternal state. The **view taken by Augustine, mentioned above, might be regarded as coming under this heading.**

### PRE-MILLENNIALISM

**Without attempting to touch upon all of the scriptures commonly associated with the belief in a personal earthly reign by the Lord Jesus Christ, some of the principal scriptural justifications for such a belief will first be mentioned.**

**The first issue is that of the purpose of God as revealed in the Bible in, and for, the nation of Israel. An integral part of this, of course, is the entire body of Old Testament prophecy centred upon the chosen nation, and especially that aspect of it which deals with Messianic aspirations and foretells a national Redeemer as the legitimate prospect of Israel down through the centuries. In other words, the claim stands that the inspired prophetic writings cannot, without violence to language and meaningful interpretation, be viewed as other than supportive of the personal, authoritative presence of Israel's Messiah on *this* earth.**

**Even leaving aside the general concept of Israel as an "earthly people" in contrast to the people of God today whose citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3. 20), the Old Testament prophecies seem to demand in many places a direct physical association of Messiah in glory and this world. Some of these scriptures are alluded to below.**

**In connection with the *land* itself which was promised to Abraham for his posterity (see Gen. 15. 4-7, 18; 12. 1-3; 13. 75; Rom. 4. 13-15) the total fulfilment is still awaited and must be realized. The impossibility of this apart from divine intervention should be evident to the most disinterested observer of the contemporary Middle East scene, even if it were not directly associated with the prophecies of the Lord Himself and His apostles. Linked with the matter of the actual extent of the promised land and an unchallenged supremacy of the nation of Israel therein, are the physical features of a land bringing forth a hundred-fold in unprecedented prosperity (Amos 9. 11-15; Isa. 65. 20-25; Ps. 72. 16).**

**In connection with Jerusalem and its temple service, the Old Testament prophecies abound in predictions of events and conditions**

whose realisation has never been approximated. There are the indications of dramatic divine intervention in Zechariah (2. 10-12; 9. 14-17; 14. 1-9); the promises of a situation of harmonious peaceful divine worship and service, never realised since Solomon's golden days (see Ezek. 37. 21-28; Isa. 62. 1-5; 40. 1-11); and the international status of Israel's capital city (see Isa. 62. 6-9; Zeph. 3. 16-20; Psalms 68. 28, 29) which immediately establishes its King's supremacy on the worldwide stage.

Turning for a moment to the direct references to Messiah Himself, we note the contrasting prophecies of the Suffering Servant and the Conquering Monarch—a dual presentation so incomprehensible to the Jew down the years. The question must be asked and answered "If literal fulfilment of one aspect of the Coming One, why not of the other"? The birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ compels the literal anticipation of His glorious personal appearing. The actual words associated with His promised appearance themselves strongly reinforce a literal physical presence. "Parousia" (coming) refers to the presence or arrival of a ruler; "apokalupsis" to his unveiling, i. e. visible appreciation; and "epiphaneia" to his outshining.

The second main appeal to scriptures in support of the "pre-millennial" position lies in the prophetic sayings of the Lord Himself and of His apostles as recorded in the New Testament. Mat. 23. 37-39 forms a very significant "bridge" between the subject of the previous section and the present. Here we have the Master's prediction that the city which was at that moment finally rejecting Him and His messianic claims, would one day bless His Name and acknowledge gladly these same claims. The Lord could only be referring to that same geographic earthly city over which He was then mourning. There flows from these words all the prophecy of future tribulation for Israel, and the climax of the coming in glory of their king (Mat. 24, 25). It is true, of course, that some have seen in the latter verses of Mat. 25 the ushering in of the eternal kingdom, but there can be no doubt from 25. 31 that an earthly throne is set up before the judgement of the nations (25. 32-46). Such verses, linked to Christ's promise to His disciples that they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes (Mat. 19. 28), and to Acts 1. 6, seem clearly to present a picture of an

earthly kingdom of Christ in the future. Perhaps it is well at this point just to be reminded that none of these scriptures gives any indication of the duration of this future earthly kingdom; we are entirely dependent on Rev. 20 for the figure of 1, 000 years. However, it might readily be acknowledged that a substantial period is expected over many generations to demonstrate the unbroken glories and prosperity of *this* kingdom in contrast to all human empires which, over the world's history, had either collapse or deteriorated in shorter periods.

While considering the Lord's own words which touch this subject while He was on earth, we should give some thought to the objection which has been raised to the above view, based on John 18. 36. Said the Lord to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world... ". These words have been interpreted as a renunciation for all time by Christ of an earthly kingdom. This, however, He does not say. Indeed in the same verse He adds, "*now* is my kingdom not from hence", a statement which could mean that the phase of the kingdom He was then ushering in was not characterised by outward and visible power and glory on earth. More likely, however, is the explanation that, in declaring His kingdom to be "not of this world", the Lord was speaking of its nature and origin, i. e. not one which took its character from the world and its governmental systems. Here was the Stone cut out without hands (Dan. 2. 45) before the representative of the legs of iron of Nebuchadnezzar's image.

## STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS

### ZECHARIAH 12. 1-10 & 14. 1. 1-7

#### MESSIAH'S DELIVERANCE OF ISRAEL

*From Birmingham.* —The greater part, if not all, of the events related in the set portion refer to a time yet future. God's statement through the prophet, "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of reeling unto all the peoples round about" (Zech. 12. 2), has some measure of application today: the Arab nations reeled before the armed might of Israel (e. g. the Six Day War). But hatred for Israel will intensify until it encompasses the whole world. At that stage of affairs conditions will be ripe for the time of Jacob's trouble to be followed in due course by the Battle of Armageddon.

Initially **the opposing nations will have considerable success (Zech. 14. 2). The city will be taken and the citizens suffer persecution. At the end of that period the Lord will come, and His feet will touch the Mount of Olives. With the Lord, we read, will be all His holy ones; the Lord will be coming with His saints to reign [Comment 1]. The mountain will cleave in two, creating what Joel describes as the Valley of Jehoshaphat [Comment 2]. The remnant of the defenders will drive their oppressors out of the city and into this valley, where their destruction will take place at the hands of the Lord (see Rev. 19. 16-21). We wondered whether or not the half of the citizens of the city which were taken captive will also be destroyed with their captors in the battle [Comment 3].**

**After the absolute defeat of their oppressors, the remnant will see their victorious Lord and, instead of rejoicing in their moment of victory, there will be great mourning: "They shall look unto Me whom they have pierced". We suggest that the words of Is. 53, particularly vv. 3-6, may well be the words of this remnant as they look with tear-filled eyes on the Lord of glory. J. A. T. Russell**

*From Atherton and Leigh.* —Zech. 14. 2 seems to refer to the same situation as 12. 2-9, although some have thought that 12. 2-9 refers to now past events (e. g. in the days of the Maccabees), while 14. 2 refers to the future [Comment 4],

**Just before the Lord comes to earth, the city of Jerusalem will be besieged by the nations (12. 2, 14. 2). The city will fall (14. 2) but its inhabitants will stand their ground and fight like an army of many times their strength (12. (5). The nations will reel back at the fierceness of the defence (12. 2). Zechariah's prophecy makes clear that the remnant of Judah will not be fighting in their own strength (12. 4, 6, 9). Nevertheless Jerusalem will be overwhelmed by the superior armies of the nations. It appears that right up to the end there will still be pockets of resistance ("the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city": 14. 2), but by that time, after such heavy street-fighting, a large part of the city will have fallen into enemy hands, and half of Jerusalem's population will have been taken prisoner and led away to captivity.**

**At this critical point the Lord will appear in person, and will fight**

the nations Himself (14. 3). The battle will not last long, for He will slay His enemies by the word of His mouth (Rev. 19. 21).

At His coming His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which will physically divide to the north and south, so making two mountains (14. J) and an east-to-west valley. The few remaining inhabitants of Jerusalem, having been under heavy enemy pressure for so long, will flee through this valley to safety.

Although we felt that Mat. 24. 29-31 covered roughly the same period of time as Zech. 14. 3-8, we could not dovetail the two accounts together with any degree of confidence. It appears that all the tribes of the earth will know the identity of the Son of Man before His descent to earth. The mourning of Mat. 24. 30 seems similar to that of Zech. 12. 10-14, although one passage refers to all the tribes of the earth, the other to Judah only. We wondered, too, if the pouring upon the remnant of "the spirit of grace and supplication" (12. 10) was related to the pouring out of the Spirit referred to in Joel 2. 28 [Comment 5].

*D. S. Jones*

*From Liverpool.* —Throughout the history of the children of Israel there were many deliverances, but none to compare with this deliverance, because (1) it will be a deliverance from suffering, the like of which was never known before, or ever will be known again; (2) it will be accomplished by the Lord Jesus, the Messiah Himself; (3) it will be the final deliverance before the Millennium.

God will do something to the nation of Israel which He has never done before (see v. 10). This will result in all Israel being saved (Rom. 11. 26). It does seem that before this blessed time comes some of Judah will align themselves against Jerusalem (see 14. 12), reminding us of the words of the Lord Himself: "If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5. 43) [Comment 6]. The great battle envisaged is Armageddon. It will take place on the plains of Megiddo, the scene of many battles in the past and approximately sixty miles north of Jerusalem. How do we reconcile the taking of Jerusalem and the enslavement of half of the city with the Lord's words in Mat. 24. 15-18 and Rev. 11. 2, 12. 6? Are the events in chapter 12 the same as the events in chapter 14? For instance, is the Lord's intervention in 12. 4 the same as His

intervention in 14. 3, 4? Also, is the fleeing of the people in 14. 5 the same as in Mat. 24. 15-18? [Comment 7],

Going back to chapter 12. 10, we saw the deity of Christ in the words, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication", and His humanity in the words, "They shall look unto Me whom they have pierced".  
D. E. H., G. S., G. S. W.

*From Derby.* — We have brought before us in this chapter things which belong to the closing phase of the great tribulation. God purposes to save a remnant of Judah, including descendants of David, Nathan and Levi; these latter were always closely associated with Judah and Jerusalem because of their temple services. God's dealings with the ten tribes of Israel, who will still not be united with Judah and Benjamin are seen, we submit, in Ezek. 20. 33-42; this applies to such as will have survived the fearful time of Jacob's trouble. There is a purging seen in v. 38, and a saved remnant seen in v. 42. See also Rom. 9. 27: "If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that shall be saved". [Comment 8]

As to Judah, however it seems that God will give them some power to resist the invaders, but when He sees fit will step in and defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The Lord also will save the tents of Judah first, that is Judah dwelling in the provinces where the bulk of the Beast's forces will have encamped while an effort is made to destroy the city. "In that day... I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem" (Zech. 12. 9).

Verse 10 records that for which God has been waiting for very many centuries, the true repentance of His people, but at this stage only Judah, Benjamin and a section of Levi will be privileged to look unto Him whom they pierced; for these were the tribes who were primarily guilty of that dreadful deed [Comment 9]. At this critical stage in their history they will witness the event for which all Israel has been waiting, the advent of their Messiah. They will look unto not just at Him. What astonishment will fill their hearts when they are made to realise that He is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, "the King of Israel" (John 1. 49)! The result

will be true repentance and great mourning.

In 14. 1-7 the words "a day of the Lord cometh" have particular relevance to Jerusalem. God's purpose would seem to be to allow a concentration of international armies to fight against the city and afterwards gather to the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3. 2). The Lord will Sight against those nations, and the result will be complete victory.

"His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives", the last place His feet stood upon as He left this earth (Acts 1. 12). The mighty power of God will cleave the Mount of Olives in the midst, thus creating a great valley of escape through which the remnant will flee to safety. There will also be a wonderful manifestation of divine power relating to the solar and lunar luminaries; we thought that Is. 30. 26 could have reference to what is recorded in Zech. 14. 7: "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days". This would imply that the light of the moon will also be seven times greater than normal, so that "at evening time there shall be light". The escape of this remnant will be hid from the enemy, by reason of the north and south aspect of the cleaved Mount of Olives. Great and wonderful are the works of the Lord!

*G. Conway, S. R. W.*

### **IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS**

Papers were also received from Birkenhead, Denmark Hill and Methil, and the following are impressions from these.

That Zech. 12. 1-10 and 14. 1-7 both relate to a time still future is apparent from 12. 3 and 14. 2, which state that "all the nations of the earth" shall be gathered against Jerusalem. There has been no occasion so far in the history of Jerusalem when all the nations of the earth have been gathered against it. Confirmation of this was also seen in the frequently recurring phrase "in that day" (12. 3, 4, 6, 8, 9) which, when linked with the phrase "a day of the Lord" (14. 1), was taken to refer to "the great and terrible day of the Lord" (Joel 2. 57).

Both passages deal with the interactions between the nations and the people of Judah and Jerusalem at the time of the besieging of

the city just prior to the return of the Son of Man to earth. For centuries now the city of Jerusalem has attracted the interest of many nations, for good or for evil. At the present time the status of **Jerusalem** is **far** from being an insignificant factor in world politics. It is a hot coal for any nation to try to handle or, as the Lord through Zechariah puts it, in relation to the end-times, "All that burden themselves with it shall be sore wounded" (12. 3). This is not merely a statement of what shall be; it is a statement of the Lord's definite intention to use Jerusalem in His judgement of the nations. He uses two word-pictures to describe this use of the city: "cup of reeling" (v. 2) and "a burdensome stone" (v. 3). In both cases the Lord says that He will make Jerusalem such to all the peoples. In the "cup of reeling" there is the thought that in the act of trying to absorb Jerusalem into their national and international schemes the nations will themselves be thrown off balance and lose control of even their own affairs. In the "burdensome stone" we have the idea that the nations will come to wish they could be rid of the whole business of Jerusalem but will find this impossible. And all this, Zech. 12 is telling us, will be of the Lord's doing.

Throughout Zech. 12 clear distinctions are made between three groups of people: (i) the people of Judah, (ii) the inhabitants of Jerusalem and (iii) the house of David (see particularly v. 7, but also vv. 5, 8, 10, 12). At the Messiah's coming to earth and in the subsequent kingdom, each of these three groups will have its own special role to play, and it is interesting to compare the various references to each group as the great day approaches and finally arrives. Verse 7 hints at the delicate adjustments in attitudes to each other which the Lord will skilfully bring about by certain turns of events. It is marvellous in our eyes that the Lord will, at the same time and even in the very same events, both chastise the nations and prepare His people's hearts for their Messiah's coming. *Eds.*

## COMMENTS

### *Comment 1.* (Birmingham)

Are the "holy ones" in this context necessarily His saints? 2 Thess. 1. 7 confirms that the "angels of His power" will be with Him, and I have thought of Jude v. 14 in the same sense.

*Comment 2.* (Birmingham)

No reasons are suggested to support an identity between "the very great valley" (Zech. 14. 4) and the "valley of Jehoshaphat" (Joel 3. 2, 12). If the latter valley had been so named after King Jehoshaphat of Judah it would obviously have been in existence in Old Testament times. If it is described as the valley of Jehoshaphat simply because this name means "the Lord judgeth", it could conceivably be the "very great valley" of Zech. 14. 4. But it seems to be an open question.

*Comment 3.* (Birmingham)

Most contributors have followed the thought of Zech. 14. 5 which indicates that the newly opened valley will be a way of escape for a hard-pressed remnant of the force defending Jerusalem. Where is evidence to support the proposition that the defenders will drive their oppressors into this valley? It would seem rather that from the moment of Messiah's appearing the battle will be undertaken by Him and His hosts... "in flaming fire, rendering vengeance" as 2 Thess. 1. 8 puts it. As for those taken captive earlier in the invasion, it would not at all follow that they were still in the battle area at all.

*Comment 4.* (Atherton and Leigh)

As several contributors have pointed out, chapter 12 could not have found fulfilment in past history. For when have all the nations been gathered against Jerusalem? Situations arose in the days of the Maccabees which reflected valour similar to that described in 12. 6, 8. But the chapter reads as a whole, the crisis of verse 3 followed by the defence of verses 4-9 and the climactic intervention in deliverance of verse 10. It is therefore considered that both Zech. 12. 3 and 14. 2 refer to the same great future crisis, but different aspects of the developing situation are emphasized in the two accounts.

*Comment 5.* (Atherton and Leigh)

It seems to me more probable that the pouring out of the Spirit (Joel 2. 28) will take place at an earlier phase, with the special purpose of strengthening those who will preach the gospel of the kingdom world-wide (Mat. 24. 14). As a result of this preaching,

**and of such supernatural testimony as described in Rev. 14. 6-12, there will be widespread knowledge of the central issue—Christ or Antichrist. When the Lord Jesus is manifested, therefore, there will be universal recognition of who He is. "The Spirit of grace and supplication" poured out upon the house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem will in my view be a more specialised visitation to prepare God's ancient people for the unveiling of their Messiah.**

*Comment 6.* (Liverpool)

**While appreciating the point made here, I am not clear that Zech. 14. 12 is relevant in support of it. Would not "the peoples that have warred against Jerusalem" be Gentile peoples?**

*Comment 7.* (Liverpool)

**I suggest that when Antichrist breaks the covenant with Israel in the middle of Daniel's 70th week, many of Israel will flee as warned by the words of Mat. 24. 15-18. They will be nourished in a place prepared by God as stated in Rev. 12. 6. But at the same time a strong centre of military resistance to Antichrist will develop in Israel itself. World forces will be concentrated under Antichrist's direction, against Israel in general and Jerusalem in particular. Zech. 12. 1-9 and 14. 1, 2 reveal different aspects of this onslaught and the magnificent defence against tremendous odds. Half of the city will be captured (Zech. 14. 2)—hence its being "trodden under foot forty and two months" (Rev. 11. 2). But "the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city". In their dire extremity the Israeli defenders will be saved by the advent of their Messiah in power and glory (Zech. 12. 10; 14. 3, 4; Is. 52. 7, 8). So the fleeing of Zech. 14. 5 is not the same as that of Mat. 24. 15-18, but will take place at the end of the 70th week, when a way of escape will be opened up to a despairing remnant of defenders through cleavage of the Mount of Olives.**

*Comment 8.* (Derby)

**I am not clear that the distinction between the tribal elements of the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah have been preserved in such a marked way as our friends suggest. It seems to me that in modern Israel, for example, there are representatives of many of the twelve tribes, and that there is a similar cross-section of the tribes**

in the *diaspora*. Thus the prophecies of the valley of the dry bones and of the two sticks (Ezek. 37) have both seen a measure of fulfilment in modern developments, but will both find their consummation at the advent of the Messiah. If this view is correct Ezek. 20 will find application to those of the *diaspora* (irrespective of tribal origins) who have survived the Great Tribulation and will be re-gathered, caused to "pass under the rod", and brought "into the bond of the covenant".

*Comment 9. (Derby)*

Since the coming of the Son of Man is to be "as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west", and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn when they see Him, it would seem that events will move swiftly, Jewish people of the *diaspora* being able to see and recognize their Messiah almost as soon as those in Jerusalem and Judea. One can appreciate, of course, that the re-gathering of Ezek. 20 would take place some time later.

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*From Denmark Hill*

1. What is the special significance of the phrase "the house of David" (12. 742)?

Occurrences of this expression outside the book of Zechariah (e. g. Ps. 122. 5; Is. 22. 22; Jer. 21. 12) point to the ruling family of Israel or Judah. The Zechariah references may therefore suggest that a family known to have derived from the Davidic line will emerge during this final crisis to give distinguished and valiant leadership.

2. Why is Judah separated in thought and action from Jerusalem?

A solution may be that separate centres of resistance to Antichrist's forces will develop in Judah and Jerusalem. It seems that Jerusalem will be the main target of the invading forces, and they will besiege the city (12. 2, 3). In doing so they could well cut off other Israeli forces in "provincial" Judah. The distinguished services of Judah are to be specially recognized at Messiah's return (12. 7).

3. Is Zech. 14. 4 a fulfilment of Acts 1. 11?

**The link in the questioner's thoughts appears to be that the Lord ascended from the Mount of Olives and will as Israel's Messiah return to that mountain. But is this of itself sufficient to consider that the prediction of Acts. 1. 11 finds fulfilment in Zech. 14. 4? The Acts prediction states that "this Jesus" will so come "in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven". In what manner had they seen Him go? Unobtrusively, to their private view, without the world being aware of the wonderful event that was taking place. This is not in character with the spectacular manner of His coming in Zech. 14. 4, which corresponds with the coming of the Son of Man (Mat. 24. 30). It therefore seems more in keeping to regard 1 Thess. 4. 16, 17 as the fulfilment of Acts 1. 11. See also points discussed in Editorial.**

**4. Does Mat. 24. 30 indicate that it will not only be Israel, but all nations of the world, that will mourn over the crucifixion of Christ?**

**Mat. 24. 30 states that all the tribes of the earth will mourn when they see the sign of the Son of Man, but does not specifically say why. Rev. 1. 7 states that all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him. For all who receive the mark of the beast it would seem likely that they will mourn over the realization of inevitable judgement (c. f. Rev. 18. 11). Yet the thought of mourning over Him may also imply that many of the Gentiles will react to the revelation of the Man of Calvary in the same spirit as Israel, mourning as they appreciate the fearful affront to God that His Son should have been so treated at the hands of lawless men.**

#### *From Birkenhead and Liverpool*

**Are the horses of 12. 4 to be taken as literal cavalry?**

**Divided opinion has been expressed on this point in several papers, and there are obvious difficulties whether the horses are regarded as literal or as symbolic of modern means of warfare. In this context I personally prefer the literal interpretation.**

#### *From Atherton and Leigh*

**1. What do the words of Zech. 14. J mean: "as when He fought in the day of battle"?**

**It was always true that Israel's victories were only by divine help, but on certain occasions God had demonstrated in a special way His intervention and delivering power (e. g. Ex. 14. 14; Josh. 10. 13, 14; 2 Chron. 20. 15, 29). The occasion described in Zech. 14. 3 will be reminiscent of those earlier interventions, but will transcend all that had been known before.**

**2. Why is Israel mentioned in 12. 1 whereas Judah and Jerusalem are consistently mentioned in the remainder of the chapter?**

**It appears to me that the reference to Israel in 12. 1 indicates a message affecting the nation as a whole, whereas the references to Judah and Jerusalem stress the areas in which the drama of the final assault upon the nation by Antichrist will be worked out.**

*From Liverpool*

**Is the one day of 14. 7 a period of time?**

**Please consider the suggestion in the final paragraph of Derby's paper. Another paper suggested that there would be a prolongation of that particular day similar to the long day of Joshua 10. 12-14, and for a similar reason—so that the battle against Israel's enemies might be completed. Whichever suggestion is favoured, it seems to me that the context demands we regard this as a special intervention affecting a 24-hour day, rather than a term denoting a long period.**

*G. P. Jr.*

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# BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'

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## EDITORIAL

The passage of Zechariah before us for September is one in which an encounter of intense intimacy is revealed between Israel and her Messiah. The scene has narrowed down from an overview of Israel and the related nations around, whose history has been so closely intertwined with that of Israel and whose prosperity or judgement has depended so much on their attitude to the people of God. The sweet sorrow of a family reconciliation after long estrangement is not the occasion for outside observers. Said Joseph, "Cause every man to go out from me". Yet God has here revealed something of the poignancy of Israel's supreme moment of truth—surely a challenge and opportunity for the Jew today, before *that* day of reckoning and unveiling.

Yet many fellow-students in referring to commentaries in their study must have noted the readiness with which many writers discount the implications of all this in terms of the personal unveiling of Messiah on earth before unbelieving Israel. There is a distinct school of thought which appears to regard such passages as this in Zechariah as largely allegorical and to interpret the words in terms of "the Church" today. Since the basic principles of God's dealings with men and women do not change it is not to be wondered at that some expressions and passages could be applied in isolation to believers today. We thank God that there has indeed been a "fountain opened... for sin and for uncleanness" for *all* men. To see this as the primary application of these dramatic verses in Zech. 12, 13 and 14 is altogether another matter.

It is to some extent with this problem in mind that we are currently publishing a brief examination in the magazine of the scriptural basis for the believer's expectation of a coming literal earthly rule of Christ. This subject is sure to arise again in 1974 (D. V. ) when we are looking together at the later chapters of Revelation, and editors would welcome questions and comments on this and related topics either now or later.

J. D. T.

## THE COMING VISIBLE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH

*(continued from page 118)*

Referring now for a moment to the writings of the apostles on our subject, we look first at what the Holy Spirit has given us from the pen of Paul to the Romans concerning Israel. Rom. 11. 25-32 deals with the restoring of Israel when "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in". The apostle has been dealing in this chapter with the "grafting in" by grace of the Gentiles to the divine purpose, albeit in the context of fruit-bearing (vv. 20, 21). This passage does not, of course, expand on the theme of an earthly visible kingdom of Christ, but clearly defines the future restoration of Israel and so lines up perfectly with the other scriptures referred to above.

The writings of the apostle John which directly relate to the subject of the Millennium are contained in the Revelation, and reference has already been made to the sole mention of 1, 000 years in Rev. 20. 2-6. In 1972 Bible Studies there was some debate on the seals, trumpets and bowls and, although thoughtfully challenged, the concept was restated of substantial overlap in the timing of the events represented. It is not entirely surprising that there are those who question the validity of a clear historical sequence in the Revelation narrative at any point, i. e. question the assumption that even the closing chapters of the book are as sequential as they appear. However, the closing verses of chapter 19 cannot surely but mark a crucial stage in divine judgement. There is a very obvious finality about the defeat of the Beast with the armies of the kings of the earth (19. 19-21). It cannot reasonably be doubted, I submit, that chapter 20 is an immediate sequel to chapter 19. Thereafter the events of chapter 20 flow on through, and after, the 1, 000 years of Satan's imprisonment.

Yet a further aspect of New Testament teaching which is highly relevant to our subject, is that contained in Rom. 8. 19-22 and touched upon also in Acts 3. 21, "the times of restoration of all things". The promised deliverance of the creation from the bondage of corruption *into* the liberty of the glory of the children of God, is not concerned with a new heaven and new earth, but clearly with the transformation of the existing creation. This transformation is part of the visible fruit of the redemptive work of Christ, itself the main burden of the eighth chapter of the Romans. It is at this point that the ancient Hebrew prophecies which tell of a flourishing, lib-

erated creation (e. g. Isa. 11. 1-9) find their true place in the pattern of divine redemptive and restorative purpose in Christ. The fittingness of a prolonged "sabbath" for the whole of creation seems very evident, effected by the intervention in power of the Redeemer and His continuing authoritative dominion.

### POST-MILLENNIALISM

The underlying assumption of this point of view, viz. the expectation of a progressive world movement towards "Christianity" in preparation for the opening of the eternal heavenly state by Christ, is patently false. 1 Tim. 4 and 2 Tim. 3, apart from any other forecasts of end-time approaches, leave no doubt about a progressive moral deterioration in world society. 2 Pet. 3. 3 and the parallel with the days of Noah given in Mat. 24. 37 describe a world ripe for divine judgement. If a glorious time of peace and righteousness is ever to be seen on this earth it must be after, and not before, this inevitable future intervention by the Lord in power.

It might be useful at this point, however, to recognize the difficulty some have found in the scarcity of New Testament direct references to any so-called "intermediate" kingdom, i. e. historically intermediate between the spiritual kingdom of this dispensation of grace, and the eternal state as foreshadowed in 1 Cor. 15. 23-28. Indeed, this latter passage is adduced as evidence that, immediately following Christ's return... "then cometh the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God..." It should be remembered, however, that the theme of 1 Cor. 15 is resurrection and the apostle sweeps in thought from Christ's resurrection to the thought of v. 26, viz. the final conquest of death, the "last enemy". He is concerned in this passage neither to deal with, nor to exclude, the matter of an "intermediate" kingdom. It is where the nation of Israel is particularly in view, as we have seen above, that there emerges quite clearly such an earthly kingdom (Mat. 19. 28; Acts 1. 6, 7); and this in spite of the implication of only two stages that has been read into such scriptures as Mat. 13. 37-43 and 12. 32. In the former of these two references, the parable of the sower, the coming of the Son of Man is seen as ushering in immediately "the kingdom of their Father" (v. 43), and in the latter we have "this world" set immediately against "that which is to come". It is, however, a very familiar fact to students of Scripture that a "telescoping" of events, and even ages, is often presented and in no way introduces a con-

**tradition where other** scriptures "fill in" the picture with another dimension, or from another angle. Thus in many scriptures (e. g. Eph. 3. 21; 1 Pet. 4. 11; 1 Tim. 1. 17) the words in the R. V. "for ever and ever" are given in R. V. M., as "unto the ages of the ages".

The case for "post-millennialism" is thus neither founded on sound scriptural ground, nor supported by the Word in either tenor or direct teaching.

#### A-MILLENNIALISM

The basis of **this case appears** to be a wide "spiritualization" of scriptures which appear, on initial examination, to present a promise of literal earthly glory and dominion for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have already touched above on the suggestion that the Lord's words to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world... " implied a rejection of the thought of a future earthly, visible, material kingdom. It is to some extent from this that there flows the extended claim that the kingdom "within you" (Luke 17. 21) is a spiritual expression of the blessings and glories many associate with the Millennium. True it certainly is that Christ's work was one of salvation from sin and not political oppression or adverse physical circumstances (Mat. 1. 21; Heb. 9. 24-28). Yet while this is true, and inner spiritual change in the individual is clearly fundamental, this in no way itself precludes an outward, physical manifestation of the ensuing blessings. This is perfectly exemplified in the matter of the Lord's resurrection. His supreme triumph was in the spirit world (Heb. 2. 14), yet His resurrection and all that it means hinges on the physical reality of the event. "Handle Me and see . . ." (Luke 24. 39). And again we are brought back to the unequivocal promise of Acts I. 11 about His personal physical return. It is hardly necessary to be reminded of the bizarre and pernicious errors which have flowed from the evil doctrine of the essential worthlessness of everything physical, including the body. This appears both in oriental religions, and in present-day western world sects such as "Christian Science". There is no need here to stress further the teaching of Rom. 8 about the redemption of the body, or of the clearly physical character of the heavenly things of eternity, albeit appropriately under spiritual dominion (1 Cor. 15. 44). We cannot, therefore find real scriptural backing for the "A-millennial" view.

In concluding this brief review of some of the views expressed by students of the Word on the subject of the Millennium, we might usefully again note the ever-recurring theme of "prophetic

perspective"—the apparently super-imposed "mountains" on the prophetic landscape which become discretely observable from a different vantage point in the Word; or are progressively disclosed in the unfolding written revelation (see Isa. 61. 1, 2 and Luke 4. 18-20; Isa. 53; Psa. 2 and 22). In the great and wonderful matter of the truth of the Church, His Body, how very clear the Holy spirit makes it that "the dispensation of the mystery" has been "hid in God . . . according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3. 1-11).

This being so, we may well ask why there should be reluctance to accept at "face-value" such a revelation as is contained in Rev. 20. 1-7, which complements so appropriately so many Old Testament and New Testament predictions of an earthly visible kingdom of Christ, and adds with full authority a numerical valuation of 1, 000 years.

*J. D. Terrell*

### MALACHI'S PROPHECY AS AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

"The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi". Thus Malachi, the last of the prophets, begins his prophecy. His name means "My Angel" or "My Messenger". Some would regard this to be a title descriptive of his official position rather than a proper name. In his ministry there are references to the messenger aspect of others. We see in chapter 2. 7 the priestly character of Levi as the messenger of the Lord of Hosts. Then in chapter 3. 1: "Behold, I send My messenger and he shall prepare the way before Me". These we shall consider in more detail later.

The period of Malachi's ministry was probably around 450 B. C. The decree of Cyrus of Persia had permitted a return of the Jewish exiles. A small remnant returned with a spirit of zeal and rejoicing. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua the temple was rebuilt and its services and worship restored. Gradually the former enthusiasm waned and a spirit of selfishness and apathy began to take its place. There was a drifting back to former ways of halfheartedness and indifference in service. Many were in a sad spiritual condition becoming sceptical and discouraged. There were doubts and questions. "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" (1. 2) "Wherein have we despised Thy name?" (1. 6) "It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept His charge?" (3. 14) It is against this background that we study Malachi's prophecy and in particular his

message in relation to the New Testament.

It may be helpful at this point to look briefly at some New Testament quotations from Malachi. Paul in his letter to the Romans (9. 13), in dealing with the matter of God's sovereignty in election, quotes chapter 1. 2. "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." Some authorities regard this as a Hebraism—using the negative to supply the want of the comparative. God's choice of Jacob rests upon His love and in contrast we see His rejection of Esau. Here we see the love and mercy of One who works according to His own perfect will.

"My messenger" and "Elijah the prophet" are doubtless identified with John the Baptist. The importance of John's ministry is clearly indicated in our Lord's references to his character and work. To the multitudes he declared that "among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist". Luke describes his formative years, "and the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel". (Luke 1. 80) As he preached repentance and the coming of the kingdom many came to him for baptism, and he fearlessly denounced the sins of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The reasonings of some as to whether he was the Christ were silenced as he spoke of the "One that is mightier than I". The Lord's baptism by John in the Jordan fulfilled his mission—"He must increase, I must decrease". Finally, having rebuked the sins of Herod he was imprisoned and beheaded. This sad and untimely end seems to highlight the heralding forth of the "dayspring from on high". Malachi's reference to the "sun of righteousness" (4. 2) doubtless has a future application but also has its parallel in the word and prophecy of Zacharias (Luke 1. 78).

We have already noted the prevailing conditions when Malachi spoke his message. The temple worship had become formal and feeble. There was a mood of indifference and a lack of true moral and spiritual values. This may well be reflected in a telling portrait in the messages to the seven churches in Revelation. "I know thy works... but I have this against thee that thou didst leave thy first love" (Rev. 2. 2-4). "I know thy works that thou hast a name that thou livest and thou art dead" (Rev. 3. 1). "I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot" (Rev. 3. 75).

The words of Malachi to the Levitical priesthood equally apply to the priestly service of New Testament believers in churches of God (Mai. 2. 1-9): "Ye also... a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2. 5).

So too, as a royal priesthood... "that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2. 9). In serving Him in witness, in word and in deed, "he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts" (Mai. 2. 7).

The principle to bring "the whole tithe into the storehouse" (3. 10) has its counterpart in the teaching of the Lord (Mat. 6. 33). Paul in his letter to the Corinthians further enunciates the fundamental truths in regard to the matter of giving (2 Cor. 8. 1-15, 9. 6-15).

Malachi's references to the refiner and purifier of silver present to us the future dealings of the Lord with His chosen people: "and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver" (3. J). For the Christian there may be a measure of testing and purging as the gracious Father deals with His children in love. Yet future is the appearing before the judgement-seat of Christ.

Then in His holy presence our works shall all be tried.

The dross to be consumed, the gold alone abide.

How delightful are the thoughts expressed in Mai. 3. 16! perhaps almost a reflection in some ways of that much quoted verse, John 3. 16. <sup>P?</sup>The Lord hearkened and heard"; so to this world of sin God showed forth His love. He saw mankind in all their need, His heart of love was revealed and He gave his only begotten Son. "And a book of remembrance was written before Him". He remembers their sins no more. "Then they that feared the Lord spake one with another... and they shall be Mine saith the Lord of Hosts" (v. 17). So in the prayer of the Lord in John 17 and elsewhere in the New Testament is seen the preciousness of Christian fellowship one with another and the love of the Father for those He calls His own.

A study of Malachi's prophecy in relation to the New Testament would not be complete without a reference to the day of the Lord. "But who may abide the day of His coming?" (3. 2) On the day of Pentecost there was the pouring out of the Spirit on those early disciples gathered together. The day of the Lord is yet future. Wonders and signs will be manifest. The exhortation in view of that coming day is, "Let us watch and be sober" (1 Thes. 5. 6).

The final word of Malachi's message, "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (4. 6), takes us on to the final chapter of Revelation, verse 3—"and there shall be no curse any more". The unfolding of God's great and eternal purposes, seen only dimly now, will then be fully revealed. His promises are sure, "For I the Lord

change not" (3. 6). Malachi in his message seems to link up the past with the future. As he closes the Old Testament canon of Scripture so he foreshows the New.

A. G. Willis

## STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS

### ZECHARIAH 12. 11 to 13. 9

#### *A FOUNTAIN OPENED FOR THE SIN OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL*

*From Vancouver B. C.* —That there had been much sin and uncleanness among the people of God is very apparent from the reading of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. God *is* a forgiving God and it is His desire that sin might be forgiven. One could say, "There *is* forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared". But God's forgiveness must be based on His own righteous grounds. The word "fountain" here is from the word "dug", with the implication that the work being completed it may be a continuous source of springing water. Well might Jeremiah describe the Lord as "the Fountain of living waters". We felt that the fountain was the Word of God to Israel which was continually able to meet all their needs. However, contained in God's law are the instructions given in Leviticus regarding the forgiveness of sins, of which the writer to the Hebrews says, "Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission". In essence then, even though Israel had sinned grievously against the Lord, there was forgiveness that they might fear Him. The New Testament confirms the principle for God's people of the present. The Scriptures show us God's way, and the Holy Spirit in the heart is a well of water springing up unto eternal life, and the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. We felt that the words of the hymn, "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins", to be a case of poetic licence used to express a thought rather than a principle based on the Word of God [Comment 1].

The portion before us in Zech. 13 portrays the great grief and sorrow of heart that will fill many hearts when the Son of Man returns. They shall look on Him whom they have pierced. Ps. 22 tells us that Jew and Gentile saw Him pierced when He hung on Calvary's cross, and Rev. 1 shows clearly that every eye shall see Him; they that pierced Him and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn. When great tragedy strikes a nation, often a day of national mourning is proclaimed. Some manifest their great sorrow, but others just go about their normal life. Zech. 12. 13 reveals that the mourning

and bitterness of heart will not be in groups, cities, households or even husbands and wives, but it will be intensely individual. In the matter of God's dealing with sin, it has ever been on the basis of the individual and Himself. We hear much in the present about collective bargaining and government negotiations. Such is not God's way. The Psalmist could say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: . . . and see if there be any way of wickedness in me". The publican had the right approach, "God, be merciful to *me, the sinner*" (Luke 18. 13 R. V. M. ). May we all lay hold on this and use it in our personal dealings with the Lord [Comment 2],

Regarding those who presented themselves as prophets to the people of Israel, it would appear that the conditions were much the same as in the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. When a man of God spoke the word of the Lord, his message was refused and he was persecuted. On the other hand, when a false prophet spoke (presenting it as from the Lord) his message seemed very plausible and accepted for the time being, but it never came to pass. These conditions widely obtain today. Let us speak the Lord's word as the Lord's messengers, regardless of the consequences.

*J. B.*

*From Birkenhead.* —In "that day", the day of the Lord, the mourning in Jerusalem is to be compared with that which took place at the death of Josiah (2 Kin. 23. 29). Four families are mentioned by name and it was suggested that these may be indicative of different classes of people involved, a) David; the king, b) Nathan; the prophet, c) Levi; the priest, d) Shimei; the teacher.

The fountain opened for sin and uncleanness led us to think of the Lord Jesus Christ, but the hymn "There is a fountain filled with blood" evidently based on this passage was unacceptable to us, for we believe that it is a fountain of water. Consequent upon this our thoughts turned to Numbers 19. Here the ashes of the red heifer and cleansing by water are linked. This pointed us to the perfect Sacrifice and the cleansing that comes through identification with His death [see Comment 1].

Also in the day of the Lord idolatry will cease and unclean spirits and false prophets will be removed. Any who persist as false prophets will be put to death (13. 3), and in the circumstances many in fear will admit their deceit and lay aside their hairy mantle (13. 4), which appears to have been the usual dress of the prophet (2 Kin. 1. 8; Mat. 3. 4). Discussion on 13. 6 did not lead us to a firm con-

elusion. Taken in isolation this scripture has been used to point us to the Messiah, and the wounds as those received at the time of the crucifixion. Along with the context, the subject of which seems still to be that of false prophets, is it suggested that the wounds are self-inflicted as in the case of the prophets of Baal (1 Kin. 18. 28), and that the explanation of them is offered as a way of avoiding retribution [Comment 3],

There is however clear evidence that the Shepherd in 13. 7 is the Messiah, for Jesus Himself quoted from this verse (Mat. 26. 31; Mark 14. 27). "My fellow" can alternatively read "My equal" thus giving a useful text to confirm the Deity and humanity of our Lord. It appears that it is God the Father who smites the Son (a type given to us in Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22), so the smiting does not refer to the suffering of the Son at the hands of men. Linking the Zechariah scripture with the Gospel quotations we had difficulty in pin-pointing what event was in mind when we read "the sheep shall be scattered". The prophet's message may have been to Israel but in the Gospels it is the disciples who are addressed, so we wondered whether it had a more limited application. Two possible events occurred to us: a) the scattering of the twelve disciples when the Lord was taken to trial; and b) the scattering of the followers of the Lord consequent upon the persecution by the Jewish rulers following the ascension of the Lord [Comment 4].

*RJ, Williams*

*From Atherton and Leigh.* —It is suggested that it is not until after the destruction of the beast and false prophet and the deliverance of the remnant that the Lord Jesus reveals Himself as the One whom their forefathers had crucified. What a traumatic experience for the remnant to realise that the mighty Deliverer, who with ten thousand of His holy ones (Jude 15) had destroyed the lawless one with the breath of His mouth (2 Thes. 2. 8), was none other than the despised Nazarene. They will look upon the One whom they pierced (12. 10), and the realisation of who He is will bring about a state of national mourning. So great is the lamentation that it is compared to the time when Israel once mourned the death of Josiah (2 Chron. 35. 24 and Zech. 12. 11). It will be a painful experience as they bring to mind the words of Is. 53 concerning the suffering Servant of Jehovah who was despised, rejected, a Man of sorrows who had been wounded for them, While it is a time in which the whole nation mourns (12. 14) it is, still very much a family sorrow. The family

of David will be particularly affected seeing that the Lord was one of themselves. It was felt that the mention of Nathan (a son of David) indicated that from the highest to the lowest people there would be sorrow. Those who were ministers in the Lord's house were similarly affected; from the greatest to the least (i. e. Shimei). An alternative view was suggested that in v.12-15 we have prophet (Nathan), priest (Levi) and king (David) in mind.

Just as the brothers of Joseph were troubled at the presence of Joseph in his glory (Gen. 45. 1-4) we can appreciate the feelings of the remnant as they stand before the Lord. Those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit know the presence and salvation of the Lord (Psa. 34. 18); national mourning is accompanied by national cleansing. A fountain will be opened for the putting away of sin and uncleanness (Zech. 13. 1).

Possibly the fountain symbolizes the Lord Jesus and His finished cross work by providing salvation by virtue of the shed blood and sanctification in the giving of the Holy Spirit [see Comment 1]. Israel had again been ensnared by idols, although probably introduced by the Beast (see Rev. 13. 14, 15). The Lord would cleanse the land from all idols and have the names of them banished from memory. There will be such a zeal for the things of the Lord that should a false prophet arise the parents would seek his death, forbidding him to speak lies in the name of the Lord. The discredited false prophet would be ashamed of his vision and would not make an open profession by wearing the clothes of a prophet. He would claim to be just a humble farmworker (v. 5). However, self-inflicted wounds would betray him (v. 6; see 1 Kin. 18. 28) although he would claim they were made in the house of friends. While v. 6 seems to refer to the wounding of the Lord Jesus it is hard to sustain such a view since v. 6 is directly linked to v. 5 which deals with the false prophet. It does not seem appropriate to apply the words contained in verses 3-5 to the Lord Jesus. Some did feel that there would be an application to the Lord in v. 7-9. A vast time expanse is covered from Calvary to the Millennium. The Lord applies some of v. 7 to Himself concerning the smiting of the shepherd but also as a Fellow, clearly indicating equality of persons. It seems that the scattered sheep of v. 7 have a wider application than just that of the disciples, having also in view the scattering of Israel amongst the nations. The little flock of Luke 12. 32 is no doubt referred to in the latter part

of v. 7. Only one third of the nation will survive the time of Jacob's trouble but this remnant would have been tried and retried [see Comment 7]. About this broken and contrite people the Lord will say, "It is My people". They will acknowledge the Lord Jesus, "The Lord is my God".

L.

DeVille

*From Liverpool.* —The mourning is both a universal and an individual one. It reaches into families, touching the royal and priestly families as well as all those that remain after the judgement of 13. 8, 9, the wives seemingly mourning as a company apart. The cause of such widespread mourning must be the sight of their Messiah with the marks of His passion seen in His glorified body. The house of David must be representative of Israel. The fountain opened must surely be the work of Christ on Golgotha. This work they will see as for them when their eyes are opened. There was a well ready for Hagar but she was unable to see it until her eyes were opened (Gen. 21. 19). A direct reference to this time seems to be Rev. 1. 7.

Sin and uncleanness imply guilt and impurity which needs justification and sanctification. (1 Cor. 1. 30; Heb. 9. 13, 14; 1 John 1. 7). Persons with names associated with idols will have such names erased and they shall no more be remembered.

Stoning was the prescribed mode of putting to death for those who were idolators and false prophets. But this chapter indicates that such persons would be thrust through as with a sword (see verse 3). When challenged the false prophet says, "I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the ground, for I have been made a bondman from my youth". Then the challenger says, "What are these wounds between thine arms?" He shall answer, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends". Some thought that these wounds referred to self-inflicted wounds like the prophets of Baal in Elijah's day, seeing that verse 3 says, "Thou shalt not live". Whatever it may mean, the antitype is the Lord Jesus wounded by those whom He came to befriend (verse 7) [see Comment 3]. We noticed the slightly different reading in Mat. 26. 31, where it indicates the scattering of the *sheep of the flock*- The Matthew scripture would be in keeping with the Lord turning His hand upon the little ones (i. e. interposing in favour of them), which happened when the Lord met them again after His resurrection.

The end verses of the chapter we thought spoke of the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30. 7-11); after coming through such times

they would once again become God's people and the Lord would be their God.

*M. A. S., G. S. W*

*From Derby.* —Chap. 12. *11-14* speaks of "the great mourning", such as had not been since the mourning for king Josiah when he was slain by the Egyptians; every family apart and their wives apart. There was the court of the men of Israel, the court of the women, and a court of the Gentiles associated with Solomon's temple. We thought that Nathan would be the prophet of David's day, and not the son of David who would be part of David's family (2 Sam. 5. *14*). Thus, prophet, priest and king will be represented in this united "sorrow of heart".

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness" (13. *1*). Calvary and Pentecost first brought this fountain into being. Many sons of Israel on that day were reached and saved by the Holy Spirit's power through the apostles's witness to the risen and glorified Lord Jesus. We were reminded also of the Red Heifer offering with the water of cleansing made available for Israel during their wilderness experiences, but Heb. 9. *14, 15* shows the more perfect medium of cleansing by the blood of the New Covenant, which, when Israel's eyes shall be opened, they will see "in that day" [Comment 5].

This chapter seems to refer to events just prior to the revealing of the Son of Man, and to the ministry of the false prophets spoken of by the Lord in Mat. 24. *11*. Verses 5 and 6 are difficult, but it was suggested that the Spirit of God may be revealing something relating to the Lord's life during the thirty years prior to His baptism and anointing for His ministry. "I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the ground". The Lord may well have been often engaged in other work besides being a carpenter helping to cultivate the "lot" of His foster-father Joseph, for the growing of the necessary food for the large family of which He was first-born. The words, "I am no prophet" would suggest, we thought, that the Lord would show no evidence of His divine origin until the time appointed of the Father. He would not assume the role of prophet until He became "the Prophet" foretold by Moses as in Deut. 18. *75, 19* (cited in Acts 3. *21*), although His godly life would be seen by all. "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and favour with God and men" (Luke 2. *52*) [Comment 6]. We believe that from His boyhood His custom was, as we are told in Is. 50. *4*, "The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words him

that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as they that are taught". We know that verse 7 refers to the sufferings of the Lord on the cross because of His quoting this scripture as cited in Mat. 26. 31 (Sept. version). Also in verse 6, the wounded hands would speak of this same event [see Comment 3].

*G. Conway, S. R. W.*

*From Melbourne.* —Here we see a nation "born in a day", the spirit of unbelief replaced by "the spirit of grace and of supplication". Yesterday the inhabitants of Jerusalem were in unbelief, perplexity and distress. On this day of which the prophet speaks the veil which has long lain upon their hearts has been lifted as they look upon the One who will stand upon the Mount of Olives for their deliverance. But a few years before they had acclaimed one as their Messiah and he proved to be false. He had deceived them, and their perplexity is great. Their confusion is multiplied by the arising of false prophets, energised by lying spirits. Now the nations of earth are concentrating on their land and city. Faced with the prospect of extermination as a people, the cry will ascend to heaven, "O that Thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down". In answer to their desperate cry, the true Messiah will stand upon the Mount of Olives as their Deliverer. What a deliverance, and yet what sorrow, as they look upon Him and see the wounds of Calvary, which the passage of many centuries has not erased. The destruction of their enemies is described elsewhere; but here the Spirit of the Lord concentrates on their reaction. Recognition, mourning, and repentance will be both individual and national, every family apart and their wives apart. None will mourn on behalf of his own household. Only yesterday they were still clinging to the law and its offerings as a means of cleansing from sin, although at the decree of antichrist these will have ceased. Now the veil lying upon their hearts is lifted by the Spirit of God, as they have viewed the wounds of Calvary in an incorruptible Man. As the veil is lifted they see Him in the light of the law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. Those wounds, though causing sorrow, tell of something better than the sacrifices of the law. They tell out the meaning of some of the Psalms, and the words of Isaiah the prophet, as they describe the means whereby an inexhaustible fountain was to be opened to the house of Israel for sin and uncleanness.

The false prophets and lying spirits which have energised them, leading many into idolatry in order to enquire from idols the cause

of all their sorrow, and the way out therefrom, will be immediately recognised as such. The prophets will be ashamed and will seek to evade detection. The parents of such as have spoken falsely will recognise their responsibility to carry out the extreme penalty fixed by the law of Moses in Deut. 13. 1-5.

We have some difficulty regarding the interpretation of 13. 6. From its setting it would appear to be coupled with what we find in the preceding verses; but to the minds of many it would be a fitting continuation to verse 10 of the previous chapter [see Comment 3].

We do not understand that all of the natural sons and daughters of the house of Israel will be brought to repentance, and amongst the nation to be "born in a day". The word of the Lord limits a third part of the people as being marked out to be brought through the fire and refined, and who will call on the name of the Lord; of whom He will say, "It is My people". Are we to understand that the other two thirds which are to be cut off and die is the percentage who will refuse to acknowledge the true Messiah, or to avail themselves of the "Fountain opened for the sin of the House of Israel"? [Comment 7]

T.            L.            F.,            T.            W.            F.

### COMMENTS

1. (Vancouver): It will be noted that most groups this month relate the "fountain" rather more directly to the redemptive work of Christ. This seems appropriate although the Word of God is a great cleansing power of perhaps more general application in the truths of sanctification (see Eph. 5. 26). The thoughts of blood and water in this connection are closely linked, nowhere more precious than in John 19. 34.

2. (Vancouver): Some have seen Zech. 12. 13 as actually suggesting group mourning by families but observing the separateness Jewish women in worship. Even if there is a family aspect to the mourning (and surely there is a national), this does not, of course, invalidate the special intimacy of individual responsibility to which attention is drawn.

3. (Birkenhead): I personally tend to share the view of Birkenhead friends here, viz. that the evidence is not clear for an application of 13. 6 to the Lord. Unlike some other striking prophecies of Messiah in Zechariah (e. g. 9. 9 and 11. 12, 13), where the New Testament specifically refers back to them, this matter of the "wounds between thine arms" has no "claim" in the New Testament. This in

itself does not, of course, exclude a prophetic significance. If applied to the Lord it would surely need to refer to the piercing of His side—"between thine arms (or hands)"—a wound rather than wounds. Moreover the link seems very close with v. 5 where an apologetic false prophet is disclaiming his ministry. Could this apply to the Lord? [see also Comment 6 and the paper from Atherton and Leigh].

4. (Birkenhead): There seems no doubt from the Lord's words in Mat. 26. 31 that an application was to His immediate disciples at that point in time, "the sheep of the flock" as Liverpool friends point out. As is suggested by Atherton and Leigh, further application may be to the sheep of the house of Israel in the persecution and suffering they encountered as the rejectors of their Messiah (this is primarily an Israel-centred prophecy), although Israel is described by the Lord Himself as "the lost sheep..." rather than as a flock. The later scattering of the disciples in the Acts (8. 1) was a purposeful one on God's part—of quite different character from that of the disciples in Gethsemane. Yet that in itself does not exclude the possibility of its expressing a part fulfilment of Zech. 13. 7.

5. (Derby): Would *it* not rather be the unveiling of their Messiah which would *produce* this spirit of repentance and restitution in the people of Israel of that day?

6. (Derby): I could not be happy about an application of 13. 5 to the Lord. He never denied His ministry or disclaimed His mission, although it is true that He openly revealed this in God's good time [see also Comment 3].

7. (Melbourne): It seems to me that the "two parts" (v. 8) who will be cut off and die, represent the victims of the onslaught of the hostile nations on Israel before her Deliverer appears ("except those days had been shortened..." Mat. 24. 22). The third part would certainly have passed through fiery trial at the hands of the Beast, yet I wonder if at least part of the application of the refining process of v. 9 *is* not the experience of repentance and restitution described in the early verses of this chapter? This will involve both direct intervention by God—"I will cut off the name of the idols..."—and self-correction and judgement of an agonizing kind—"his father and his mother... shall say unto him..."

J. D. T.

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# BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'

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## EDITORIAL

It is expected **that a change of heart should show itself in outward action.** Consider **the Gentile King Nebuchadnezzar.** In a vision **in the time of his exaltation he saw a watcher and a holy one from heaven,** who said, **"Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him".** **At the end of twelve months thereafter, when he was glorying within himself in his great achievements,** this very thing **came to pass and "he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hair was grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws"** (Dan. 4. 16, 33). **His pride of heart needed changing, and God dealt thus with him until at the end of seven years he lifted up his eyes unto heaven; his understanding returned and he blessed the Most High. Now his heart knew a change in the good sense, and he publicly proclaimed, "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven"** (Dan. 4. 34-37). This **change of heart had far-reaching outcomes.**

A **change of heart** also took place in **the case of the notable Israelite, Saul of Tarsus.** In consuming zeal **he persecuted those that were of the Way (Acts 9), and, while actively engaged in this work of havoc, he had a vision of the risen Christ.** This undeniable evidence **that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Christ, and that He was raised again, wrought a change of heart in Saul, and in consequence his manner of life was completely changed.** Formerly known by his Jewish name **Saul, and proud of his standing as a Pharisee, he was soon to be better known by his Roman cognomen Paul, and to profess himself the bondservant of Christ.** As such it was his life-work to bring **the gospel to the Gentiles. The effect was far-reaching, but at the beginning there was that complete change of heart (conversion).**

Some such principle seems to underlie the portion for this present month. **The personal presence of the Lord brings all nations into**

subjection to Him, and so there is world-wide peace and **men** of all nations desire to worship the King. J. B.

### STUDY NOTES ON MATTHEW 7. 7, 8.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

#### *Introductory*

There seems to be a progression in earnestness implied in the words "ask . . . seek . . . knock". They are linked, yet distinct in meaning. This study offers certain related scriptures which may help our understanding of this most important instruction from our Master.

The necessary attitude of mind is seen in Psa. 27. 4: "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after". Again it is reflected in Prov. 2. 1-6, where earnest desire after wisdom is enjoined. The basic condition of heart is shown by receiving God's word, laying up His commandments, and inclining the ear (vv. 1, 2). This is followed by crying after discernment and lifting up the voice for understanding (v. 3). But there is also added the seeking and searching of v. 4.

#### *Ask*

In regard to asking, Mat. 7. 8 states that "everyone that asketh receiveth". But other scriptures show that there are governing considerations in this, e. g.

"Let him ask of God . . . but let him ask in faith" (James 1. 5, 6).

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures" (James 4. 3).

"While to the sons of Zebedee the Master had to say, "Ye know not what ye ask" (Mat. 20. 22).

Certain illustrations from Old Testament experiences are relevant, e. g.

(1) As warning against failure to ask, "The men . . . asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD" (Josh. 9. 14). This failure proved tragic for those concerned.

(2) As encouragement to bring everything to God, "The children of Israel asked of the LORD" (Judg. 1. 7). How different their

subsequent history would have been had they continued to do this!

(3) As an example of specific request, "Hanna h... prayed unto the LORD... she continued praying" (1 Sam. 1. 10, 12). As a result the Lord remembered her, and she called her son Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked him of the Lord" (v. 20).

(4) As an illustration of "asking amiss", Israel insisted on asking for "a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8. J). They persisted in this request despite warnings given by God through Samuel, until finally the Lord said, "Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king". "I have given thee a king in Mine anger, and taken him away in My wrath", was God's comment through Hosea (13. II).

(5) An example of asking aright is seen in 1 Kings 3. 5, 9, where Solomon's request for "an understanding heart to judge Thy people" so greatly pleased the Lord.

In several New Testament passages the Greek word *aiteo* is translated "ask". That it implies earnestness is shown by the fact that elsewhere it is translated "beg", "crave", "desire". "*Aiteo* more frequently suggests the attitude of a suppliant, the petition of one who is lesser in position than he to whom the petition is made; e. g. in the case of men in asking something from God, Mat. 7. 7; a subject from a king, Acts 12. 20; a beggar from a passer-by, Acts 3. 3" (Vine).

Vine also points out that the Lord Jesus never used *diteo* in the matter of making request to the Father, and quotes as follows from Trench: "The consciousness of His equal dignity, of His potent and prevailing intercession, speaks out in this, that as often as He asks, or declares that He will ask anything of the Father, it is always *erotao*, an asking, that is, upon equal terms, John 14. 16, 16. 26, 17. 9, 15, 20, never *diteo* that He uses. Martha, on the contrary, plainly reveals her poor unworthy conception of His person, that... she ascribes that *diteo* to Him which He never ascribes to Himself" (John 11. 22).

Four passages in which *diteo* is used may helpfully be noted in relation to this study:-

(a) "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him" (Mat. 6. 8).

This does not mean that there is no need to ask, as shown by Psa. 27. 8, and also the remarkable word in Isa. 65. 24: "Before they

call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear".

(b) "How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (Mat. 7. 11)

Note the emphasis on "*good things*". Contrast the warning of Psa. 78. 18 which refers to Israel tempting God by asking meat for their lust. They asked for that which was not good. But the assurance of Psa. 84. 11 abides: "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly".

(c) "I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father" (Mat. 18. 19).

It would seem that the words "of you" imply a larger group, namely the "church" of v. 17. So it is suggested that two in a church of God may lay hold of this promise and together have fellowship in more effectual prayer. It is a tremendous promise. It is of course conditioned by such further instructions as 1 John 5. 14: "If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us". But the main point for us here is that there are two who are exercised to ask, and find encouragement to ask because of the Lord's words, "I say unto you". Eccles. 4. 9 states that "two are better than one", a maxim illustrated by the words, "How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight"? (Deut. 32. 30). Jonathan and his armourbearer afford a very practical example in 1 Sam. 14, for the two agreed in their intention. As the armourbearer put it: "Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee, behold I am with thee according to thy heart" (v. 7). Heart agreement led to power in conflict, and will lead to effectiveness in united asking.

(d) "Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3. 20).

Let us note (1) *all* that we ask; (2) *above* all that we ask; (3) *abundantly* above; (4) *exceeding* abundantly. What a glorious incentive to prayer!

### *Seek*

Help may first be gleaned from some Old Testament references. The Hebrew word *baqash* is translated "ask" (twice), "beseech" (twice), "beg" (once), "make request" (four times), "seek" (193 times). These words will convey the general thought implied in *baqash*: it is stronger than asking, and involves diligence in seeking.

We may note then a few selected scriptures where *baqasb* is used:

"Seek ye the LORD and His strength; seek His face evermore" (1 Chr. 16. 11).

"If My people... humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face" (2 Chr. 7. 14).

Note in this example the three stages of humbling, praying, and seeking God's face, that He might hear and grant His people forgiveness.

"Such as set their hearts to seek the LORD" (2 Chr. 11. 16),

"When... they turned unto the LORD... and sought Him, He was found of them" (2 Chr. 15. 4).

"Because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he pondered, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written uprightly, even words of truth" (Eccles. 12. 9, 10).

These three vital steps of pondering, seeking out and setting in order show the earnestness of heart needed in teaching and preaching spiritual truths. Wisdom recognizes the need of earnest seeking in the things of God if blessing is to result.

In our New Testament the Greek word *zeteo* is rendered "inquire" (once), "desire" (three times) and "seek" (99 times). In the following examples the earnestness involved is evident:

"I know that ye seek Jesus" (Mat. 28. 5; c. f. Mark 16. 6 and Luke 24. 5).

"Seek the things that are above" (Col. 3. 1).

"To them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption, eternal life" (Rom. 2. 7).

These would appear to include many who have not been favoured with God's written revelation, yet according to their light have sought after eternal things, e. g. Cornelius.

So it is evident that the word *zeteo* implies an earnest purpose of heart, and this is enjoined upon us in regard to answered prayer by the Lord's words in Mat. 7. 8, 9.

### *Knock*

The only Old Testament reference to "knocking" is in Song of Songs 5. 2. This is a most instructive incident recorded for our learning (Rom. 15. 4). First note the word "knocketh"—a con-

tinuing action. Next note that it is a *voice* that knocketh: "It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh". Although she calls him "my beloved", yet there is a love intervening—self-love. Her ease and comfort come before him. When at last her heart is moved for him he has withdrawn himself. Then follows the sad experience of searching, midst self-reproaches. The lesson does not need to be underlined. It is graphically related by one who has had the experience.

In the New Testament there are nine occurrences, but these include the verses under discussion (Mat. 7. 8, 9 and Luke 11. 9, 10). In these words of the Lord there is a progression of activity—ask, seek, knock. Hers is a deepening exercise, finding expression in supplementary action. Knocking seems to imply a closed door, as in the following situations:

"Be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their Lord... that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open unto him" (Luke 12. 36).

"Peter continued knocking" (Acts 12. 13, 16).

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Rev. 3. 20).

In this Revelation scripture it is the Lord Himself who is knocking. There are points of similarity between this incident and the one above mentioned in Song of Songs: -

- (1) the door is shut and fastened on the inside;
- (2) it is His voice that knocks;
- (3) He waits patiently, "Behold, I stand".

In the Book of Ruth there is a touching incident which may be helpful in understanding the expressions, "It is the voice that knocketh" and "If any man hear My voice and open the door". For Boaz, the wealthy man, spoke to Ruth, and spoke so graciously that she said, "Thou hast spoken to the heart of thine handmaid" (Ruth 2. 13, R. V. M. ).

Gathering together the application of these thoughts to our exercise in prayer, we are encouraged by the Lord Jesus to "knock" where we are faced by an apparently closed door. As we entreat from our heart, there will be an answering response through Him who shows in His dealings with us an earnestness and patience so beautifully reflected in the references just considered.

*Based on Notes communicated by A. G. Jarvis (Portslade)*

## THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION

The following notes are derived mainly from a report on this version of the Bible prepared by L. Burrows, J. A. Robertson and J. D. Terrell.

The Revised Standard Version is one which has attracted considerable attention since it was first published in 1946 (New Testament). It is one of the more prominent of many recent attempts at producing a Bible translation in a form of English more appropriate to the mid-twentieth century context than that of the Authorised or Revised versions; and at the same time claiming to be a faithful representation of the meaning of the original Scriptures. Many students of the Word in the Fellowship have no doubt perused this version in their study or used it in private reading of the Scriptures. It seems worthwhile therefore to set out certain issues which arise in the difficult matter of assessing the RSV—a complex and daunting exercise in respect of any translation of the Bible, especially for students not versed in the original languages. Readers of Bible Studies are referred at this point to Vol. 31 (1963) where on pp. 50, 66, 82 Mr. L. Burrows wrote on "Thoughts on the Translation of the New Testament"; and to Vol. 36 (1968) where on pp. 86, 98 the same author's further articles on "Authorised and Revised Versions of the Bible" set out very helpfully many of the broad issues involved as well as dealing with certain details of AV and RV. In the articles mentioned reference is made at various points to the RSV.

Two quotations from the writings of the translators of the RSV themselves seem highly relevant. The danger of short quotations from such sources is acknowledged, since it is necessary to guard against misrepresentation by quoting out of full context. However, the words extracted are believed to be true to their context and to speak clearly for themselves. Firstly, in relation to the RSV translators' attitude to verbal inspiration of Scripture, the following words shed some light on this. In "An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament" (written by members of the Revision Committee) F. C. Grant says (p. 42) "No doctrine of the Christian Faith has been affected by the revision... out of the thousands of variant readings in the manuscripts, none has turned up thus far that requires a revision of Christian doctrine.

At the same time their variety takes us back to the great days of freedom and private initiative, when Christians copied out their own gospels and epistles, and occasionally made mistakes in doing so, and occasionally also added some words to their copies, for the sake of completeness". And H. J. Cadbury says (p. 52); "As they wrote with neither grammatical precision nor absolute verbal consistency, he (the translator) is willing to deal somewhat less meticulously with the data of simple style that was naturally not too particular about modes of expression or conscious of some of the subtleties which later interpreters read into it". It seems clear from this that there was not the same dedication amongst the RSV translators to the truth of verbal inspiration of the original text, nor in turn to meticulous verbal accuracy in translation, as is seen in the RV.

Secondly, with regard to the use of "modern" language in translation, the following words from the RSV "Introduction to the New Testament" are important: "For use in public and private worship, it is not necessary that the language of the English Bible be stiff or strange or antique, or that it convey the impression of a self-conscious effort to be reverent. But it must not be irreverent, and it must not be colloquial or trivial. For use in worship the Bible must be cast, not in what is merely the language of today, but in enduring and simple diction which is worthy to stand in the great tradition of Tyndale and the King James Version". In the measure in which the RSV lives up to this standard it is a worthy production based on sound aims.

Perhaps related to the matter of attitudes to divine inspiration, we find that the RSV is more free in its translation than either AV or RV. It tends to interpret difficult passages rather than render literally and leave it to the reader as taught by the Holy Spirit, and comparing scripture with scripture, to determine the meaning. Some examples of this are: -

(a) 2 Cor. 11. 25, "A night and a day I have been adrift at sea" instead of "a night and a day have I been in the deep".

(b) 1 Cor. 3. 4, "I belong to Paul" instead of "I am of Paul".

(c) John 8. 50, "There is One who seeks it and he will be the Judge" for "There is One that seeketh and judgeth".

*(To be continued)*

*J.*

*D.*

*Terrell*

STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS  
ZECHARIAH 14. 8-21.

*ASPECTS OF MESSIAH'S MILLENNIAL REIGN*

*From Vancouver.* —The personal **presence** of the Lord Jesus Christ will introduce this **period** of blessing. It will **not** come as the result of the **preaching** of the gospel. From Jerusalem **Jehovah** will reign. Then **there** will be one Lord, one **Name** and one King over all the earth.

Remarkable physical **changes** will **take** place in Palestine. Valleys are going to be obliterated and mountains will be levelled. **Resulting** from this will be **great** productivity and prosperity.

**Spiritual** blessings and **peace** will be prevalent. **Jerusalem** at last will **have** security, and her inhabitants will be able to dwell safely. The "plague", which will infect and afflict the enemies and even their animals, is graphically described in Zech. 14. 12.

The **Feast** of Tabernacles will be kept; and not by Israel alone. Other nations and even heathens will ascribe worship in **Jerusalem** to the **King**, the Lord of Hosts. Upon any dissentients, who dare to **refuse**, shall fall **judgements** in the form of **drought** and the plague. Godliness and prosperity will be **linked** together. **This** is in contrast to this **era** when men who **defy** God **seem** to prosper.

"Holiness unto the **LORD**" will be the imprint on every movement and every vessel of service. Holiness is an essential component of all service Godward. Then **there** will be no **impurity** or corruption with the things of God.

"No more a Canaanite in the house of the **LORD** of Hosts." The Canaanite was the ancient **enemy** who was always contesting **Israel's** possession of the promised inheritance. **Strife** and bitterness are deterrents to full and joy full service in God's house today.

*John Robinson*

*From Liverpool.* —"In that day" refers to the great day of the millennial reign of Christ upon earth. The living waters issuing from **Jerusalem** will have their source in the **Sanctuary**, as seen in Ezek. 47. The temple in that day will be outside the city of **Jerusalem** (see Ezek. 48. 8, 21) [Comment 1], the "holy oblation" being approximately **fifty** miles by **fifty** miles (see Appendix 4 in *The Finger of Prophecy*). The river will **increase** rapidly in volume: at 1500 feet from its source it will be ankle-deep, at 3000 feet it

will be knee deep, at 4500 feet it will be to the loins, at 6000 feet it will be over one's head. Being a supernatural river [Comment 2] it has supernatural qualities. Flowing through Jerusalem it branches into two, one half going toward the Eastern Sea or Dead Sea, and the other going to the Western Sea or Mediterranean.

There will be no idolatry in that day, for the Lord will be King over all the earth and the Lord will be God over all. Do verses 12-15 refer us back to the great battle of Armageddon [Comment 3] and the subsequent plagues and punishments that the Lord will inflict upon those nations that will come against Jerusalem? It was suggested that the nations will come representatively to Jerusalem. We could not visualise it in any other way. The words "families" and "family" in verses 17, 18 strengthen this thought. We wondered why Egypt was singled out in this connection. Is this because of their past history in their dealings with the Israelites? [Comment 4]

G. S., G. S. W.,

*From Birkenhead.* —It is evident that the prophet had in mind the day of the Lord when he referred to "that day". God will establish a kingdom in fulfilment of His promises to Abraham and David (Gal. 3; Psa. 89. 3, 4; Psa. 132. 11; Acts 2. 30). Before the throne is set up God has a final reckoning with the nations. Jehovah is King (v. 9). This event was seen by Daniel in the great image being broken in pieces (Dan. 2. 44). The reign of the Messiah will be for 1000 years, and at the end of this period Satan will attempt unsuccessfully to rise up and deceive the nations (Rev. 20). There will be signs and wonders taking place during Messiah's reign. Living waters go out from Jerusalem (v. 8), half to the Eastern Sea (Dead Sea) and half to the Western Sea (Mediterranean). Topographical changes will take place. Jerusalem will appear to be clearly elevated, with the large surrounding area becoming a plain (v. 10). There will be improved harvests and changes in animal temperament (Isa. 35, Psa. 72).

With reference to the peoples of the earth and their destiny when the kingdom is set up, we studied Mat. 25. 31-34, 13. 41 and Dan. 7. 14, 18. As to the position of Old Testament saints at this time it appears difficult to dogmatize, but it seems certain, on the basis of particular promises, that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Daniel will share in the glories of Messiah's kingdom (Heb. 11. 10; Dan. 12. 13; Luke 13. 28). References to the saints of the present

dispensation are found in 2 Tim. 2. 12 and 1 Cor. 6. 2. Those who are faithful in the tribulation period are spoken of in Rev. 20. 4.

In spite of the prevailing conditions mentioned in Isa. 11. 9, sin still seems to be on the earth, for the Devil, on his release after 1000 years, finds support and in Isa. 65. 20 we have a reference to the sinner.

There will be worship in connection with the new Temple, and the keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles (v.16). Punishments for non-attendance are listed and the family of Egypt, who already suffer due to shortage of rain, will be afflicted with a plague (v.18).

*R. D. Williams*

*From Southport.* —The year-round source of waters flowing out of Jerusalem, mentioned in 14. 8, appears to serve no ritual purpose, unlike that in 13. 1. The geography of the Holy Land will be transformed (v.10, 11). The Land will be a plain except for the lofty plateau on which Jerusalem will be situated.

Jerusalem will dwell securely, without fear of the threat of utter destruction in warfare, and horrible plagues will befall her enemies, if any are so foolhardy as to risk war against the divinely protected city. Disease and panic will overtake both men and animals, but the wealth of the nations will be collected—apparently as the spoil was left after the Syrians fled from Samaria (2 Kin. 7. 3-15). The mention of Judah fighting against Jerusalem is a discordant note [Comment 5] suggesting a persistent feeling of rivalry (found also in 12. 2-5).

After the battles the survivors from other nations will come to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (14. 16-19). This somewhat mechanical observance [Comment 6] is viewed as the prerequisite for rain upon their fields, except for Egypt [Comment 7] which, being fertilized by the Nile, must be threatened with some other plague.

The Feast of Tabernacles is important in this connection, not merely as the thanksgiving or harvest festival, but because it was the feast looking forward to the winter rains, which were essential to the agricultural well-being of Palestine. It was also probably the occasion for the recognition of God as King over His people, and is thus appropriately connected with the recognition of the reign of God over all nations.

The **prophecy** clearly intends **that** everything in **Jerusalem** will be "holy unto the Lord" (14. 20, 21). The **holy** city will **all** be one holy area devoted to the worship of the Lord. The **people** will be free to use any available pots in boiling the sacrificial meal; no business transaction ("trafficker in the house of the Lord") will be needed to secure the necessary holy equipment for the performance of the ritual [Comment 8],

Like the oracle of 12. 1-13. 6, this final oracle of the Book of Zechariah looks forward to the day of God's victory over the enemies of His people, and to the consequent blessings and privileges to be enjoyed by the inhabitants of Jerusalem. *B. E. Scott*

*From Derby.* —The living waters of v. 8 are described more fully in Ezek. 47. Before they can go out from Jerusalem, they must be built, for these waters are seen to be issuing out from the flow into that city, and at this stage the millennial Temple will have threshold of the House eastward. Like the waters from the smitten rock, they will be divinely supplied. After the river has passed through the city it will divide into two streams, as Zechariah states. This may also be referred to in Psa. 46. 4, in the words "There is a river, the *streams* whereof make glad the city of God" [Comment 9]. The stream that flows east into the Dead Sea is said to heal its extreme saltiness, causing that sea to swarm with all kinds of fish. "In summer and in winter shall it be"; there will be no need for rainy seasons to keep the waters constantly flowing. We thought the term "living waters" may not have any spiritual significance like those spoken of by the Lord Jesus in John 7. 37, 38; but they did remind us of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus providing eternal life for us. To facilitate the flow of these living waters the contour of the land will have changed as a result of the removing of mountains and hills due to the great upheavels during the great and terrible day of the Lord (Rev. 6. 14, 16. 20; Ezek. 38. 20; Isa. 54. 10).

God will severely punish the nations that have warred against Jerusalem by a dreadful plague: "Who knoweth the power of Thine anger, and Thy wrath according to the fear that is due unto Thee?" (Psa. 90. 11). This plague will befall the actual soldiers who took part in the war against Jerusalem (see 14. 2). The nations to which these fighting men belonged will be commanded by the Lord to be present in Jerusalem on the fifteenth

day of the seventh month to keep the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days. The offerings for this feast, according to Ezek. 45. 24, 25, differ from those appointed in Num. 29. 12-38. The details of the Ezekiel offerings are set out in vv. 21-24 and v. 25 says, "shall he do the like".

It was suggested that only a representative section of those nations could be accommodated at the feast. We noticed that Egypt has special mention, as that nation even today is among Israel's chief enemies. The nations dwelling in booths, or possibly tents, would solve accommodation problems. We thought the words "keep the Feast of Tabernacles" might only involve the nations in meeting some of the cost of the sacrifices offered to the Lord, namely, seven bullocks, seven rams, one he-goat, daily for seven days [Comment 10]. We also suggested that teaching priests might be employed to instruct these Gentile peoples in the retrospective character of the animal sacrifices, and to remind them that by the mercy of the Lord they had been spared the judgements that many of their fellows had suffered, rather as Israel had been delivered from the judgements on Egypt at the time of the Exodus [Comment 11].

Verse 17 seems to embrace more people than verse 16. Verse 16 states "Every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem", and in verse 17 we read, "Whoso of all the families of the earth goeth not up unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of Hosts, upon them there shall be no rain". The inference seems to be that the nations of verse 16 will be at the Feast of Tabernacles, and "all the families of the earth" (verse 17) at other times of the year, possibly at the other two feasts.

Verse 21 suggests that no traders will be allowed in the house of the Lord, as in the days when the Lord's anger was kindled: "Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise" (see John 2. 16).

*G. Conway, S. R. W.*

*From Atherton and Leigh.* —In this portion we have an insight into some outstanding features of the millennial kingdom, seven aspects being presented which distinguished it from all other dispensations:-

1. A continual outflow of running waters from Jerusalem throughout the year toward the Mediterranean and Dead Seas. Whether in grape harvest or wheat harvest, summer or winter, these waters

will never fail; so different from the dried-up rivers of previous summers.

2. Jehovah is established as King over the whole **earth** and **there** is the delightful knowledge of Him in the hearts and minds of His people according to the terms of the New Covenant. **Idolatry** of any kind appears to be done away and He alone is worshipped in that day.

3. The mountainous territory of Judah will undergo a complete transformation to become a plain, as the Arabah, the tract of level country which stretches along the lower Jordan to the Dead Sea. Jerusalem, however, shall be exalted above the **hills**, as indicated in Micah 4. *I*,

4. There shall be no more curse, or ban (R. V. M. ). This word is rendered "utter destruction" (A. V. ) comparable with its use in Deut. 7. 2. Never again will destruction be known in that Holy City; no repetition of a Babylonian or Roman desecration. The wonderful security of Ezek. 28. 26 will be fully realized.

5. Jerusalem's enemies will have been annihilated, along with their animals and beasts. The fearful retribution of bodies wasting away as they stand, the wholesale panic and total discomfiture of Anti-christ's hosts, and the ingathering of their wealth indicate the omnipotence of the Lord Almighty.

6. To all the living nations there will be a call to worship the King. From year to year they must go up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, and any failure on their part will involve a punishment in drought or plague. This seems to indicate that minor insubjections will arise from time to time even though the Lord is King.

7. The final and crowning feature will be the absolute holiness of the city and the people. Psa. 48 will have a glorious fulfilment: "Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion,... the city of the great King... Walk about Zion and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces". The very words on the mitre of the high priest of old are to be seen upon the bells of the horses (Joel 3. 17), summarizing the whole situation in transcendent terms. *E. B.*

#### COMMENTS

1. (Liverpool): Is there not the possibility that Jerusalem will be greatly enlarged? The Temple seems always in Scripture to

be associated with Zion.

2. (Liverpool): Is it not literally a river of water, but with it God associates blessing? In what sense "supernatural"?

3. (Liverpool): To me verses 12-15 are in terms not applicable to Armageddon.

4. (Liverpool): Verse 18 indicates that Egypt will not receive exceptional treatment. For Egypt the terms are the same as those for other nations. Here we see part of the great change manifested in the Millennium: in the past Israel was in bondage in Egypt, but in the Millennium Egypt is required to worship the King in Jerusalem.

5. (Southport): The marginal reading may be a help: "Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem".

6. (Southport): Is this not an overstatement? There is nothing in Zech. 14. 16-19 to justify saying that the attendance of the nations at Jerusalem in the Millennium will be perfunctory. Worship under these conditions would be an affront to the Lord.

7. (Southport): Egypt is not made an exception on these (or any other) grounds.

8. (Southport): Has not the absence of the trafficker to do with the animals offered rather than the vessels?

9. (Derby): Psa. 46. 4 does not appear to be a specific reference to this river; but the same principle may apply.

10. (Derby): This would be far from true keeping of the feast. The nations will experience a change of heart, and will desire to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts.

11. (Derby): It would be necessary to adduce adequate evidence to support such a statement.

*J. B.*

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*From Vancouver.* —Will there be blood shed in the Millennium? —if so, why?

The Millennium is described as a reign of unbroken peace. Hence, if the question refers to bloodshed (one word) in war, the answer is in the negative. But if the question has to do with sacrificial blood shed (two words) at the altar, the answer is in the affirmative.

*J. B.*

As to *why* blood was shed, and assuming this refers to animal sacrifices, can it be suggested that God wishes to keep the sacrifice

of Christ for ever in "the imagination of the thoughts of the heart", of His people? The **shedding of the blood of animals would be a vivid physical reminder of the reality of the sacrifice of the One whom they will at that time know in all His glory.** *G. P. Jr.*

*From Liverpool:* Please explain: "There shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts".

See end of paper from Derby. The marginal alternative, trafficker, is a help. As part of the universal change of heart among the nations none will come to the temple on the basis of such wrong motives as financial gain. There will be sincere desire to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts.

*From Atherton and Leigh:* Does Isaiah 40. 4, 5, apply to this period?

If we bear in mind that in Isa. 40. 4 "valley", "mountain" and "hill" are figurative and have to do with the humble and the exalted then clearly these verses do apply.

*From Atherton and Leigh:* Please explain the first part of verse 16.

Zech. 14. 16 has to do with the world-wide change of heart to be manifested in the Millennium. Not Israel alone will experience this change, but it will be found in all nations, and the outward evidence will be the flow of the peoples to worship in Jerusalem.

*From Atherton and Leigh:* Why is the Feast of Tabernacles mentioned in verse 16 and the other feasts excluded?

Ezek. 45, which also has to do with the Millennium, shows that various offerings and other feasts will be observed. The omission of the other feasts in Zech. 14. 16 is not sufficient in itself to prove that these feasts will not be observed. The singling out of the Feast of Tabernacles may be because the Millennium is the anti-type of that feast.

*From Atherton and Leigh:* What is the significance of the words "upon the bells of the horses"?

Under the Mosaic law the horse was unclean, but in that great time of peace man's attitude to God will have so changed that even the bells of their horses will bear the words, "Holy unto the Lord".

*J. B.*

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# BIBLE STUDIES

*A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11) '*

VOLUME 41

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## EDITORIAL

The closing words of God for any era command a very solemn respect and attention. They can be expected to contain a summing-up, to some extent, of the oracles delivered for His people in that particular period, as well as counsel in some form in anticipation of the Lord's next movement among His own. Aspects of these truths were helpfully dealt with in September in "Malachi's Prophecy as an Introduction to the New Testament", looking forward to our examination together of the closing book of remnant-times prophecy.

"I have loved you", declares Jehovah. There was a formal covenant between God and His people dating from the historic events of Sinai. But Israel should be in no doubt about the ultimate foundation of their relationship with their God. It was His love, an everlasting love (Jer. 31. 3). The fact that God here speaks through Malachi in the past tense has doubtless a distinct significance; certainly not that His love was failing or could fail. But perhaps "*have* loved" throws into bolder relief the unworthy and wholly inadequate response of His people. "I have loved you" ... and the result?

As though to establish the deepest bedrock of His relationship of love, the latter is revealed here as *electing* love. And here human capacity to appreciate divine purposes is challenged to its very limit. Further comment is made on this in connection with points arising from papers this month. This is but one respect in which the love of God "passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3. 19), Israel as a nation was chosen and loved. Their response had deteriorated to the point of contempt. This is the situation Malachi had to grapple with; and the substance of our study is just how he did this, with uncompromising exposure of faithlessness and imperative command towards spiritual reform and renewal.

Haggai and Zechariah had brought to the returned people a prospect of glowing promise without being in any way unfaithful about the difficulties ahead or the part required of the Lord's people

themselves. **Perhaps the people had embraced the idea of early prosperity without a balancing appreciation of their own spiritual obligations. Such an early judgement as that on Ananias and Sapphira emphasizes the still higher divine expectation of a new covenant people indwelt and empowered by the Spirit of God today. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed". J. D. T.**

## CHRONOLOGY OF MALACHI

**In contrast to that of Haggai and Zechariah, the dating of Malachi is not easy, because no mention is made of any reigning monarch and no other definite indication of timing appears to be given.**

**The theme of Malachi's message has much in common with that of Nehemiah, as exemplified in the appeal of each to wholehearted worship of the Lord, to rectitude by the priests in their service and to a cessation of marriages with heathen women. These similarities have caused some to believe that Malachi was contemporary with Nehemiah, about 445 to 432 B. C. However, the differences in respect of these themes are quite striking. In Nehemiah's time, because of their seventy years in captivity, the people had become ignorant of God's law, and Ezra's reading of the same in a way that it could be understood was essential education. By contrast, there is no indication in Malachi that the people did not know the law; the accusation was that of lack of sincerity in what they did know. The people brought the second best to God and the priests were failing to maintain a standard which had already been set; otherwise God would not have condemned them for allowing defections therefrom to creep in unchallenged. This being so, it would appear to the writer that Malachi's powerful appeal came at a later stage than Nehemiah's regime, a stage, in fact, at which the drastic reforms which Nehemiah effected and the pledges he extracted from the people had been forgotten by the majority. (It is most heartening to note God's tender words toward those who had not forgotten, as recorded in Malachi 3. 16 and 4. 2). It could well be that a new generation had grown up since the hey-day of Nehemiah's irresistible leadership; that is, perhaps twenty or thirty years lay between Nehemiah and Malachi.**

**Another very different approach has been made to the chronology of Malachi from the viewpoint of Daniel's prophecy of seventy "weeks" recorded in chapter 9. It may be asked, "Why does the**

Spirit cause Daniel to split the sixty-nine "weeks" into a seven **and** a sixty-two?" The sixty-nine span the period to the time when **the** coming prince shall be "cut off, and shall have nothing". Could not, therefore, the seven be related to the last mention in Old Testament prophecy of that coming One? (see Malachi 4. 5, 6). Now there are very strong reasons for thinking that the "weeks" are periods of seven years, each having 360 days, and it is hoped in future Bible Studies articles on chronology to set out these reasons. If that is accepted, then seven "weeks" correspond to forty-eight solar years plus about three months. There are equally strong reasons for taking the decree of Artaxerxes I in his twentieth year (445 B. C. ) as the commencement of the sixty-nine "weeks". Thus the termination of the seven "weeks" would fall in 397 B. C. Now Nehemiah went to Babylon from Jerusalem twelve years after 445 B. C. (see Nehemiah 13. 6) and hence his return to Jerusalem could well have been a year later, say 432 B. C. Between 432 and 397 B. C. lies a span of thirty-five years, but the way that Nehemiah's book closes suggests he continued for some time as governor, which could well reduce the span to 20-30 years.

Thus from two very different approaches, there are pointers to Malachi having served his God and his people at a time around 397 B. C. and it would be interesting to have the comments of others on this rather speculative conclusion and the steps whereby it is reached. For example, what *other* reason can be advanced for the split of the 69 "weeks" of Daniel 9, if the above is rejected?

*C. L. Prasher*

## STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS

### MALACHI 1 & 2

#### *EXPOSURE OF ISRAEL'S BACKSLIDING*

*From Birkenhead.* —The exact date of this prophecy is not clearly determined but with the Temple rebuilding complete in 516 B. C., it must have been later than this because of the mention of sacrifices in connection with it. Suggested dates vary between 460 and 400 B. C.

The number of times the people used the question "Wherein . . . ?" (7 times) suggests that they were surprised that the Lord should be in any way displeased with them. The sins outlined to them made us suggest that they were those against which Nehemiah took action (Neh. 13).

The prophecy of Malachi (whose name means "My Messenger") begins beautifully with the declaration, "I have loved you, saith the LORD". When taxed for evidence of this the prophet points to the fate of Edom and traces their history back to the rejection of Esau and the choice of Jacob. The use of the word "hated" in connection with Esau caused us to wonder whether in the matter of divine election such strong sentiments as are conveyed to our minds by the use of this word are involved. Paul deals with the subject in Romans 9 and quotes the words of our passage in his writings (v. 13) [Comment 1].

It seems that the Lord, using the title LORD of hosts, seeks to impress the people and priests alike with the greatness of the One whom they seek to treat in such an off-hand manner. The prophet continues his message and addresses the priests and indicates that they are the root cause of the deplorable condition of the people (1. 7, 8). They allowed anything to be offered to the Lord, and He is anxious that even one priest would realise the worthlessness of it all and close the doors of the Temple to cause the service to cease (v. 10). The Lord continues to condemn the way in which their activities had become so routine and offhand, and also to warn the people against seeking to deceive God, a practice which has never succeeded in any generation (vv. 13, 14).

Clearly the message of ch. 2 is for the priests (v. 1). The duties of the priesthood are made clear in v. 2: to hear, to lay it to heart and to give glory to God's name. They are responsible to give correct instruction, and to behave correctly towards others and towards God (vv. 6, 7). Because the priests had wandered in their behaviour, the Lord declared that He must curse their blessings, an example of which we saw in Num. 6. 22-27. In mentioning "My covenant . . . with Levi" the Lord takes the priests back to the call of Aaron to service in Ex. 28. It was interesting to look at occasions when the people had gone astray and the priests had fulfilled their duty and spoken for God. That true judgements were expected of God's people is obvious from Ps. 12. 5. The Lord also condemns the priests for showing respect of persons (v. 9) in allowing the breaking of the law in certain cases.

Besides the failure of the priesthood the people showed a disregard for the sanctity of marriage. The contracting of marriage with foreign women (v. 11) was against the covenant God had made

with the people (v. 10). Also the divorcing of Jewish wives in order to take foreign wives was abhorrent to God because—1) He witnessed the original marriage covenant (v. 14); 2) children of a mixed marriage would not be able to serve Him (v. 15); 3) cruelty was shown in setting aside the wife (v. 16).

In all the sins of the people the Lord looked for genuine repentance and any spurious attempt at this does not please Him. He was quick to point out that tears, weeping and sighing were to no avail whilst wrong practices persisted (v. 13). *R. D. Williams*

*From Hayes.* —At a time when darkness closed in on God's testimony, causing serious departure from the word of Jehovah, Malachi (the messenger) was sent to humble the hearts of the remnant before the Lord. When they had realised their sin, they were to "intreat the favour of God, that He may be gracious" (1. 9).

"The LORD of Hosts" (Jehovah Zebaoth) occurs 24 times in Malachi and denotes the One who has all the heavenly host ready to obey His command and to do His will. Knowing that He is such, and is One who commands respect, honour and fear, the people should find it difficult not to be ashamed at their behaviour.

One failure of Israel ("My son"—Ex. 4. 22) is revealed by the question, "If I then be a Father, where is Mine honour?" (1. 6). It had always been a principle of divine law, "honour thy father". If this was due to an earthly father, how much more should the Father in heaven "from whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph. 3. 15 RVM) receive honour also. But "before honour goeth humility" (Prov. 15. 33) and therefore it was necessary for Israel to be of a humble mind before the Lord at all times. Pride and arrogance had arisen in their hearts.

The perfect Example for the people of God is reflected in the word of the Lord Jesus, "I honour My Father" (John 8. 49).

"Where is My fear?" This fear (Heb. *mora*) seems to carry the thought of terror, dread and reverence in a much stronger sense than 3. 16 (Heb. *yare*). Isaiah's message was "The LORD of Hosts... let Him be your fear (*mora*), and let Him be your dread" (Is. 8. 13). It is suggested, therefore, that the Lord wanted His people to fear Him with a greater fervency than they were willing to exercise. Speaking of the covenant with Levi, the Lord says, "I gave them to Him that he might fear (*mora*), and he feared

(yare) Me, and stood in awe of My name" (2. 5). We should be stirred in our fear of the Lord, making sure that we render Him due fear (Rom. 13. 7).

The Lord's words through the prophet were, "You... that despise My Name". To distort the commandments of a king, to create traditions founded on philosophies of the people, to offer services in an unprescribed manner, and then to say that such commandments, traditions and service bear the king's seal is not only breaking the law by each act, but holding the person or name of the king in contempt thereby, "I am a great King, saith the LORD of Hosts, and My Name is terrible (yare—to be feared)" (1. 14).

"The table of the LORD" (1. 7), "Mine altar" (1. 7), "the altar of the LORD" (2. 13), all assumed to be referring to the same, was not the priests' own to use as they pleased but the Name of the Lord was associated with it.

His Name is to be "thought upon" (3. 16) and it is no use feigning service by calling "Lord, Lord" and not doing the things which He says (Luke 6. 46).

The relevance of the reference to Esau and Jacob (1. 2) was discussed. One obvious conclusion was that, since the nation of Israel had been elected in the purposes of God, and He had placed it in a position dear to His heart ("I loved Jacob"), that position could not be altered "... that the purpose of God according to election might stand" (Rom. 9. 11). It was an eternal love. Eternal love is unquestionably bound up with election (c. f. Eph. 1. 4). How could such love ever be questioned? There also appears to be a lesson for Israel in this reference, because Esau was a profane person (Heb. 12. 16) and the lot of Edom is spelt out in 1. 4. Israel was doing a similar thing (1. 12).

We would appreciate help on 1. 11. Some thought that this could not apply to the Gentiles at the time of the message, but rather (reading RVM) is a contrast to what it will be like in the Millennium (i. e. when "in every place incense is offered unto My Name"). Others felt that there were some among the Gentiles around Israel who, having learnt of the God of Israel, were offering acceptably to Him each day. The Lord was using their faithfulness to show up the backsliding of Israel [Comment 2], *David Parker*

*From Liverpool.* —The name of Malachi signifies "My messenger"

and it would appear that the prophet was contemporary with God's other messenger, Nehemiah, as the sins that he condemns are identical with the sins referred to by Nehemiah. The exact date when the book was written is not certain, but evidently some time after the exile, approximately 400 B. C. Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament, deals with the closing days of the testimony of God's people, and the general departure through idolatry, apathy and indifference. The style of the book is interesting, much of it being written in the form of dialogue between God and His people. In these two chapters Malachi clearly defines and condemns the sins of the people. The sin of the people finds expression in the insolent and arrogant questioning, "Wherein hast Thou loved us? Wherein have we despised Thy name? Wherein have we polluted Thee? Wherein have we wearied Him"?

The proof of God's love for His people is shown in His contrast of treatment between Esau and Jacob, "I loved Jacob; but Esau I hated". The question was asked, How do we interpret this statement—"Esau I hated"? It was suggested that this is not hate in the sense that we understand it, but is a relative term, rather to emphasize the love that God had for Jacob. In verse 6 God appeals to them on the basis of relationship of father and son, of master and servant. "If I then be a Father, wherein is Mine honour?" The question was asked—Was this father relationship of v. 6 the same as in 2. 10, or did that in 2. 10 refer to Adam? (See Questions and Answers).

It is evident throughout the book of Malachi that the children of Israel at this time, though positionally still the people of God, conditionally were far from God in their hearts, as is seen in the kind of offering they brought; the blind, the sick and the lame. Their service in the House was reduced to a loveless and faithless ritual. This should be a special warning to the people of God today, that it is so easy to slip back into a state of apathy and indifference, when our service may become a faithless formality. Constant vigilance and prayer are required on our part and especially in relation to our service in the sanctuary on the Lord's Day morning.

V. 10 shows the utter rejection by God of the people's service and the ignorance of all the people as to this fact. Attention was drawn to the rather strange reference to the Gentile nations in

v. 11 and the seemingly widespread reverence for God amongst them. Some wondered if this actually occurred in those days, or did it speak prophetically of the future Millennium. Most suggested that this could only refer to a future day and referred to Is. 2 [See Comment 2].

*From Melbourne.* —The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi comes like a despairing wail over the condition of Israel, both priests and people. Possibly about forty to fifty years have elapsed since the building of the wall of Jerusalem by Nehemiah, and the revival of the knowledge of the law of the Lord through Ezra and Nehemiah. The condition now prevailing is indicative of how quickly spiritual declension can follow upon days of revival.

In response to the doubting query of Israel concerning the love of God towards them, the word of the Lord through His servant is a reminder of their origin as sons of Isaac, and of His sovereign choice of Jacob and subsequent care for Israel, in contrast to Esau and his descendants. An indictment of the nation, both priests and people, for their spiritual decay follows. The priests have failed to instruct the people in the necessity of honouring Jehovah of hosts in the bringing of unblemished offerings to His altar. The blind, lame and sick were being brought for sacrifice, and no reproving or correcting voice had been raised. There had been utter indifference towards and disregard for the law of sacrifice and offering as found in Lev. 22. 22. The result, in the eyes of the Lord, has been that He has been receiving nothing from the people. The kindling of fire on His altar is in vain, and the consuming of the sacrifice is an abomination in His sight. The general attitude on the part of priests and people is, "What a weariness is it" to appear at the appointed seasons. A curse is pronounced upon the deceiver who has in his flock or herd that which is perfect, but withholds it, and the altar becomes a means of disposing of that which is imperfect, blemished, and sick.

As a contrast with the present condition of Israel and their lack of appreciation of His holiness and majesty, they are referred to the honour in which His Name is held among the Gentiles, and the perfection of their offerings upon their altars. We are not at all clear as to who and where these Gentiles were, or where were such altars as are mentioned, but we are persuaded that there would

have been many like Cornelius of a later day, who had a knowledge of the God of glory, and honoured Him according **to the degree** of their light [See Comment 2],

Chapter 2 commences with a warning to the priests **that they** lay **to** heart the word of the Lord through the prophet. They had already known His displeasure, but if they will not hearken and amend their ways and their doings, they would surely experience His hand in much greater and severer chastisement.

The covenant of peace with Levi we judge to be that which followed upon their faithfulness in executing judgement after the worship of the golden calf (Ex. 32). Then the law of truth was in his mouth and he turned many away from iniquity. Here priests and Levites appear to be classified together in the responsibility of practising and teaching righteousness. Instead of the priest's lips imparting knowledge, and the people seeking instruction at his mouth, this example has caused the people to turn aside from the law of the Lord. In the latter portion of this chapter Israel is charged with dealing treacherously against the wife of his youth, and breaking that which is compared with a marriage contract, and marrying the daughter of a strange god. *P. W. A., T. W. F.*

*From Vancouver B. C.* —The old adage "the truth hurts" is one which is rarely used these days. Truth is glossed over by tolerance and he who tells it as he sees it is shunned. Present-day times seem to be but a repetition of the times of Zechariah and especially of Malachi. The message God gave to Malachi was by no means sweet and honeyed. Yet Malachi was true and honest and told the people exactly how they appeared to God. They were being exposed. No doubt there would have been some who tried to silence Malachi, ignore him or maybe even threaten him. Nonetheless he was faithful in producing a verbatim account from God, both oral and written.

The people as a whole are addressed first. Their first and foremost departure was a lack of returned love. God had been true and blessed them. In addition He had kept His word to be opposed to any activities of the descendants of Esau. However, His people talked back and wanted to know *how* God had loved them. They had, as Esau had done, despised their birthright (i. e. the love of God).

But the brunt of God's ire fell not upon the people but upon

those who should have known better, the priests. If any should not have backslidden it should have been they, and so their exposure was that much more humiliating to them and displeasing to God. They were guilty of the following misdemeanours:

1) apathy (1. 13); 2) disobedience to the sacrificial law (1. 8, 13); 3) dishonour of God and the covenant of Levi (1. 6, 2. 4-8); 4) pollution of holy ordinances (1. 7, 12); 5) hypocrisy (2. 75). Anything which they were doing was entirely in vain, and God even wished that a man would expose them further by being righteous enough to close the doors.

God finally makes the decision to turn to the Gentiles and with resultant blessing for us. Let us beware that history does not repeat itself as is suggested in the first paragraph. God demands first place, and regards anything less as backsliding.

In chapter 2 we see that not only has God turned to the Gentiles, but that He will turn the former blessing of Israel into curses, primarily in that they would be contemptible in the sight of other nations.

It is interesting to note that God here brings up long past sins, that of Judah and Tamar during the time Joseph was sold into Egypt. This sin was being continually repeated in their day by unequal yokes in marriage. Such a sin could never be condoned and God could not overlook such a deviation. By contrast God draws a parallel between His initial covenant with Israel and that of a union between man and wife. God wished a godly seed from this covenant and yet Israel dealt treacherously with Him. He hates putting away; however at this point He can no longer see any hope of a godly seed. How could they hope to guard a true physical union in marriage among His people if they have forsaken this spiritual covenant with God [see Questions and Answers].

Lastly, the following observations merit careful thought: 1) the time of the Remnant's testimony was approximately 100 years until extinction; 2) the period of testimony of the early disciples was approximately 100 years; 3) the present testimony started late 1800's.

May we pray God that a testimony for Him may not be extinct at the Lord's return!

J.

C.

Bell

REVISED STANDARD VERSION *{contd, from p. 151}*

It should be noted too that Prof. F. F. Bruce, writing about the RSV of 1 and 2 Corinthians says, "Time and time again I have to point out that its rendering is deficient in precision".

Another important matter *is* the replacement in the RSV of the pronoun "thou" by "you" for the second person singular. While many people might reckon this to be acceptable in a modern version there are two disadvantages. The lesser of these *is* the obscuring of the difference between the singular and the plural in some places. More important is the decision of the RSV committee that "thou" should be retained when Deity was addressed, yet their failure to use it for the Lord Jesus Christ in such a passage as Mat. 16. 16 so detracting from the testimony to the deity of Christ.

Some of the above issues compel distinct reservation about the use of the RSV, certainly so long as a more accurate version *is* available, notably, of course, the RV.

Certain points, however, on the credit side should also be mentioned before some detailed scriptures are referred to in relation to specific doctrines. The language of the RSV is more restrained and reverent than most other modern versions, but archaic expressions are eliminated, so that it *is* more easily understood by those not familiar with the Bible. Few faults are to be found in the purely narrative passages. Some passages are clearer than in RV e. g. Mat. 6. 6-34; Rom. 2. 28; 5. 12-14; 1 Cor. 7; 2 Pet. 3. 15, 16. Then again certain words are more correctly rendered than in the RV e. g. "lampstands" rather than "candle-sticks" and "demons" rather than "devils". A highly important rendering is that of 2 Tim. 3. 16 in which we have, "all scripture is inspired of God", advisedly moving away from the RV's "every scripture inspired of God".

Turning now to some of the fundamental doctrines of the Faith, we commence with some references to the Person of God. *God the Father*. Most key references to the Person of God the Father in the RSV do not detract from essential doctrinal truth. Among these are the following passages:

Mat. 6. 6-34—the Lord dealing with the believer's relationship to, and reliance on, the Father.

"Our Father, who art in heaven".

John 1. 12, 13—"the power to become children of God".

4. 23—"worship the Father in spirit and truth... God is spirit".  
 Acts 17. 24-29—"the God who made the world... in him we  
 live and move and have our being".

Rom. 8. 15—"we cry, Abba, Father".

1 Cor. 8. 6—"there is one God the Father, from whom are all things  
 and for whom we exist".

Gal. 4. 6, 7—"God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts,  
 crying, Abba! Father! So through God you are... a son".

Eph. 1. 3—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus  
 Christ".

Rev. 1. 4—"Him who is and who was and who is to come".

In John 8. 42 the Lord's words "I came not of my own accord,  
 but he sent me", may be thought rather less emphatic of the equality  
 of Persons in the Godhead, than is the RV where we have, "neither  
 have I come of myself, but he sent me". No doubt it would be  
 agreed that this degree of possible criticism is not seriously damaging  
 to the RSV on this truth.

*(To be continued) J. D. Terr ell*

### IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Papers were also received from Atherton and Leigh and from  
 Derby, and the following thoughts have been gathered from these.

The words "The elder shall serve the younger" were spoken con-  
 cerning Jacob and Esau, that the purpose of God according to elec-  
 tion might stand (Rom. 9. 11). In Mai. 1. 2-5 this pattern of  
 elected favour is traced through the history of the descendants of  
 Jacob and Esau. The verse "I loved Jacob; but Esau I hated" is  
 to be understood also with reference to the descendants of these  
 men (as with Levi in 2. 4). Esau's descendants had been expelled  
 from Edom because of their evil treatment of Israel (see book of  
 Obadiah), and would not be allowed to re-settle there (Mai. 1. 4).  
 Though Jacob's descendants had also been banished from their  
 land, they had been allowed and even told to return with the Lord's  
 blessing. Thus the Lord reminds Israel of His faithful love. The  
 love of God is brought before us in Eph. 1. 4, "He chose us in  
 Him before the foundation of the world".

It was now a century since the remnant had returned from Baby-  
 lon, and since the days of Haggai and Zechariah there had been

considerable backsliding. Judah's poor response to the love **and** favour of God is recorded for our learning.

Mai. 1. 6-10 shows how the Lord watched for evidence of the honour due to Him. The words "I have no pleasure in you . . . neither will I accept an offering at your hand" make a sorrowful contrast with the days of Haggai when the Lord said, "Build the house; and I will take pleasure in it" (Hag. 1. 8).

The eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth (Zech. 4. 10), could observe better things among some of the Gentiles. It was thought that Mai. 1. 11 would have little impact on Judah unless they were able to see its truth in the contemporary situation. If the witness of Daniel and Nehemiah in Babylon had a response among certain nations, this might result in the offering of incense to God's Name (Note also 1. 14). The future tenses in the AV rendering of Mai. 1. 11 might be thought to point to the present Gentile era, and indeed none but the Gentiles brought an offering to the King at His birth. God accorded them guidance and protection, while they themselves declared, "We have come to worship Him" (Mat. 2. 2-11).

The covenant of Levi was linked with Num. 25. 12 where in the matter of Phinehas the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I give unto him My covenant of peace". God now addresses the priests who were descendants of that faithful grandson of Aaron and accuses them of corrupting the covenant of Levi.

"Have we not all one father?" (Mai. 2. 10) was understood as alluding to Abraham. Mai. 2. 11, 14-16 seems to refer to certain men of Judah divorcing their Jewish wives and marrying foreigners, as happened also in Nehemiah's time (Neh. 13. 23-28). Marriage is described as a covenant (v. 14), and the Lord is said to hate putting away. Verse 13 could refer to the weeping of divorced Jewish wives who had ruthlessly been put away to marry idolatrous women [Comment 3].

## COMMENTS

Comment 1. (Birkenhead—Any consideration of the opening words of Malachi's prophecy inevitably raises the issue of divine election, and in the more immediate context, the problem of how to regard the words, "Esau I hated". One interesting suggestion was made on this in A. G. Willis's article in September and it is

clearly impossible to **embark on any attempt at treatment of this profound subject** here. That Mai. 1. 2, 3 is to be interpreted in terms of God's electing sovereignty is not **in doubt, however, from Rom. 9, as is pointed out** in several papers. The central declaration of Paul's treatise on this subject in **Romans is that there cannot be, and is not, unrighteous with God. Any suggestion in this direction would be a denial of the essential character of Deity. (And the ultimate seal of the undeviatingly righteous character of God is Calvary). Yet unaided and unsanctified human reasoning might lead in this direction. Can the limited human mind ultimately go further than to accept in faith and reverence that the dimensions of the mind of God vastly exceed those of the mind of man, and encompass possibilities and options which appear to us to conflict with reason. Supremely on this subject, we "see in a mirror darkly"—a statement set in the context of the sweetest scriptural doxology on LOVE ( 1 Cor. 13. 12).**

Comment 2. (Hayes)—In my view, the context of 1. 11 requires a more immediate application than either a millennial or a post-Pentecost setting. There may well be a millennial prophecy contained here, but surely there is a direct, contemporary contrast between the offerings to God of the remnant and something else that He was receiving in the wider context of Gentile nations. Might it not be that it is the divine service (albeit limited by absence from the Temple) of exiled and scattered Jews which is in view and which had made God's Name great "among the Gentiles"; not necessarily an incense offered by the Gentiles themselves?

Comment 3. (Impressions)—It is suggested that in 2. 13 the weeping referred to was that of divorced Jewish wives. Are not, however, the words, "this... ye do" against this view? It seems that these words are directed as part of the general rebuke contained in the passage.

J. D. T.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*From Atherton and Leigh.*

1. Does the Fatherhood of God in 2. 10 involve only His Creatorship?

It is very interesting that in the papers contributed this month three different suggestions emerge on the interpretation of the

words in 2. 10, "Have we not all one Father"? There is no doubt in 1. 6 that God speaks of Himself as Father. Atherton and Leigh contributors, in asking the question above, imply that God Himself is under discussion in 2. 10. From Liverpool comes the suggestion that in this verse, perhaps Adam is the "one father". Derby friends advance the view that it is Abraham who is in view. Now, with regard to the Adam possibility, it is true that we tend to speak of Adam as the father of the human race, as its original progenitor. Yet Adam is not actually spoken of in Scripture, as far as I can discover, in this way. The AV of Deut. 32. 8 seems to be an isolated instance, where we have, "When He separated the sons of Adam". Despite this, it seems at least possible that Adam is in view as father. Abraham's claim to fatherhood of the Jewish people is secure enough in Scripture, in the sense of Rom. 4. 1, "Our forefather according to the flesh". The context of this relationship is a very nationalistic one, a thought which does not seem to be prominent in Mai. 2.

Perhaps the rather more likely answer is that God Himself is to be seen in 2. 10. In Jer. 31. 9 we have a divine declaration, "I am a father to Israel", and many supporting references could be cited. It is true that Israel as a nation seems more often to be seen as the "son" rather than individuals being so viewed. However, here in 2. 10 there seems to me to be identity between the "one Father" and "one God". Reverting to the specific question asked about Fatherhood and Creatorship, I see these as essentially two relationships. God is not referred to in Scripture as the Father of all mankind, though He is their Creator. In Acts 17. 28, 29 men are referred to as the "offspring of God" but not as children or sons of God. He is not there spoken of as Father; indeed our thoughts are rather directed to Him as a Creator, "The God that made the world" (17. 24). It is Gen. 1. 27 which immediately springs to mind.

The Fatherhood of God reaches a new level of relationship with a precise eternal significance in the New Testament. John 1. 11, 12 declares that "they that were His own received Him not". With the rejection of Christ by Israel came the relationship promises to "as many as received Him", associated as they are with "Ye must be born anew".

2. Do the words, "Did He not make one... " (2. 25) mean the same as "they shall be one flesh " (Gen. 2. 24) ?

I think the same basic thought is contained in these two scriptures "A. and L" friends in their paper point out the difficulty in precise interpretation of the verse. Gen. 2. 24 indicates God's basic ideal in marriage—a man and a woman becoming *one* flesh. "And wherefore one?" Because excursions beyond this ideal immediately (even Abraham and Hagar) created complications in respect of the godliness of the seed i. e. in my judgement, the preservation of the divine purpose in Israel.

*From Melbourne:*

In the figure used in Malachi 2 are we to understand that the Lord is viewed as a wife and Israel as a husband?

I do not see a specific comparison and contrast here between God's covenant with Israel and a man and wife covenant. Any covenant-breaking is abhorrent to God. The text here is referring to the actual divorcing of Jewish wives and the marrying of foreign women, so polluting the holy seed. To press the principle in the passage to an analogy of Israel as husband and God as wife is, in my view, unjustified. Other marital analogy in Scripture is in the other sense as far as God and Israel are concerned, i. e. Israel is seen as the unfaithful wife, as in Hosea's prophecy.

*From Birkenhead:*

Could comment be made on the end of the Temple of Malachi's day, a subject on which Scripture is silent?

Not only has Scripture little to say about the later history of the Temple of the remnant, but most generally available literature, e. g. Bible Dictionaries, say little either! While it is known, of course, that in the days of the Maccabees, the Temple was desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes, it does not appear to have been destroyed, and one work of reference simply refers to its being "superseded" by Herod's temple, presumably by demolition to make way for its successor.

*J. D. T.*

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# BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'

VOLUME 41

DECEMBER 1973

## EDITORS' NOTES

This month's **study brings to a close** our consideration of the "Minor Prophets". **Much of this** final section of **our** Old Testament is generally less well known **by students** of Scripture, **and it has been** our **aim** to explore **the** whole section over several years. The Volume for 1947 contains **the fruit of studies** in Hosea, Joel **and** Amos. In 1971 **we** included **seven books**, **and in 1973 have dealt with the post-captivity** prophets, **Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi**. Editors appreciate **the** efforts of all **who have kept up** interest despite some difficult **areas** of study. It is hoped **that the** availability of **the** 1947, 1971 **and** 1973 Volumes will prove helpful for **reference** purposes in relation to "The Book of **the** Twelve Prophets".

## CHANGE IN EDITORATE

**We regret that after many years of** service Mr. John Baird **has** felt it **necessary** to resign from editorship of "Bible Studies" **because of** ill health. **His** experienced help **will be** greatly missed. **He has** always shown concern for sound exposition, while his ability in English language **and** precision in proof reading **have been** invaluable. **We wish** our **brother** God's blessing **and** would **hope that he may be** strengthened for **further** written ministry to **the** magazine.

Mr. Baird's place **has been taken by** Mr. A. B. Robertson (**Macduff**) **whom** we warmly welcome to **the** editorate. *J. D. T., G. P. Jr.*

## THE MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE AND GOD'S PURPOSES THROUGH ISRAEL

Before **the** nation of Israel had come into existence, God promised to **Abraham that** his posterity would **become a great people, and to that people God gave the** land of Canaan, for "**an** everlasting possession" (Gen. 17. 5-8). God revealed **that, in the** fulfilment of His **purposes on earth, what was to become the** nation of Israel **had a** special place. **As the** development of **this** purpose proceeded, God **redeemed** Israel from **Egypt, and at Sinai the** people **agreed to be** bound **by the** provisions of **the** conditional covenant which **God of-**

ferred to them (Ex. 19 and 24). This covenant promised the presence of God among the people, so that He could display His glory through them, but it also brought severe penalties for disobedience. Privilege involved responsibility, and if the covenant were broken, it would bring forth the vengeance of the covenant (Lev. 26. 25); God could not dwell in peace among a rebellious people. Moses prophesied just before his death, when the people were about to enter the promised land, that they would forsake the God that made them (Deut. 32. 25), and so it proved. Israel had not been long in the land before Canaanite practices were adopted, and a long series of prophets sent by God warned of the vengeance of the covenant, with varying response. Among the last of these was Jeremiah, who revealed God's intention of delivering Judah (the northern kingdom of Israel had fallen previously) into the hands of Nebuchadrezzar (Jer. 21). God's longsuffering had finally come to an end, and the nation was to be taken from the Land—but only for a period. Nebuchadrezzar appeared, conquered, and took the people captive to his capital, Babylon, and this captivity was to continue for seventy years (Jer. 25. 12). The might of Chaldea seemed invincible, but God had prepared an instrument for the deliverance of the captives in Cyrus, king of Persia and Media (Is. 44. 28).

The early history of Cyrus is obscure, but Herodotus records that he was the son of Mandane, daughter of Astyages, king of the Medes. His father was Cambyses, king of Persia, who ruled from Anshan. On the death of Cambyses, Cyrus became king, and in 550 B. C. he defeated Astyages, and became himself "king of the Medes", the title used of him by the Babylonian Nabonidus. Next he defeated Croesus, king of Lydia, then turned the path of his conquests east, towards north-west India. Finally he turned south to Babylon. In 539 B. C. the Persian armies entered Babylon on the dried-up bed of the diverted river. Belshazzar was slain (Dan. 5. 30); the Chaldean empire finally fell, and Cyrus became the undisputed overlord of an empire extending from India to the Mediterranean.

In the first year of Cyrus as ruler over this great empire, he fulfilled the purpose for which God had given him this power, in making the proclamation giving the Jews the liberty to return to Jerusalem with his blessing, to build a house for the God of Israel (Ezra 1. 3). Cyrus himself did not fully appreciate the character of Jehovah as

the only true God, since he also caused the worship of the Babylonian god Marduk to be carried on, and he seems to have had the general policy of encouraging the worship of national gods by the peoples concerned. Nonetheless, as far as God's people were concerned, he was the instrument God used to give them their liberty. God's desire and purpose was that His people should dwell in the land which He had given them, and that He should dwell in the midst of them in the House on which He had put His name.

At first the returned exiles were eager to prosecute the work; they ordered materials, using the grant which Cyrus had given them (Ezra 3. 7), and began the work with joy. Soon the local inhabitants, colonists imported by the Assyrians, wanted—probably not very sincerely—to help in the work. They were not the Lord's people; they stood in no covenant relationship to Him, and their offer could not be accepted, but its rejection was the pretext for opposition which brought the work to a halt. The work was then neglected for some sixteen years, until the vigorous exhortation of Haggai and Zechariah moved the people, under Zerubbabel, to recommence it [see also discussion on page 37, March Issue]. The civil servants who governed the area required to know whether permission had been given for this building, and on being told of the decree of Cyrus, wrote to their head office asking for the files in Babylon to be checked to see whether such a decree had been issued. The record was eventually found in Ecbatana, the capital of Media, and king Darius confirmed the decree of Cyrus, and himself reinforced it by providing that offerings should be made available for sacrifice (Ezra 6. 9). Once more God used the resources of a Gentile king in furthering His purposes through Israel, and the House was finished and dedicated with this aid (Ezra 6. 15-17).

The rebuilding of the House of God had received official support, and Artaxerxes, in his turn, encouraged the service of the House of God, and sent Ezra in 458 B. C. to administer it (Ezra 7. 12-26). As Cyrus and Darius had done before him, he made generous grants for the purchase of sacrifices, and he also exempted the priests and servants of the House of God from taxation. Ezra 7. 27 reveals that God had put this into the king's heart; there must have been some receptiveness towards God—even faith towards Him—in the heart of this Gentile king.

Thirteen years later, in 445 B. C., Nehemiah heard of the broken-down state of the walls of Jerusalem and the low morale of the people (Neh. 1), and he resolved to ask Artaxerxes for leave to go to Jerusalem to promote the rebuilding of the city. Once more God used the royal power of Persia to further His purpose. Nehemiah was permitted to go to Jerusalem and begin the rebuilding of the walls. Against the initial scorn, and the continued opposition of Sanballat (later governor of Samaria) and others whose interests were affected by the fortification of the city, the walls were eventually finished, and Nehemiah was able to enforce proper rule and the observance of God's law.

At this point the Biblical record ceases, and the Medo-Persian rulers cease to be used directly as instruments of God's purpose. In 331 B. C. their empire was overthrown by Alexander the Great; yet God's purpose in the Jews continued, culminating in His sending His Son. "God chose the weak things of the world, that He might put to shame the things that are strong" (1 Cor. 1. 27). *P. L. Hickling*

#### THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION (*cont.* )

When, however, we come to the Person of the *Lord Jesus Christ*, we find rather more frequent occasion to pause in disappointment on certain scriptures; this despite the fact, which must be acknowledged, that a wide range of scriptures touching the Person of the Lord Jesus leaves nothing to be desired. We refer to some of the latter first, then go on to those which do appear seriously to call important aspects of Christ's Person into question. Some scriptures whose translation in RSV seems satisfactory: -

Mat. 1. 22, 23—"a virgin shall conceive" (in Isa. 7. 14 "Virgin" is rendered "young woman" which is disappointing).

22. 43, 44—"David... calls him Lord, saying, The Lord said to my Lord".

28. 19—"The name of the Father and of the Son... "

Mark 1. 24—"I know who you are, the Holy One of God".

Luke 1. 55—"the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God".

John 1. 1-10—"the Word was God", "all things were made through him".

1. 29—"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world".

1. 34—... this the Son of God".
5. 18—" because he . . . called God his Father, making himself equal with God".
5. 23—"that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father".
5. 46—"Moses... he wrote of me".
6. 57—"he who eats me will live because of me".
8. 58—"before Abraham was, I am".
10. 30—"I and the Father are one".
12. 41—"Isaiah... saw his glory and spoke of him".
20. 28—"My Lord and my God".
- 31—"that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name".
- Acts 2. 22—"Jesus... a man attested to you be God".
- 32—"This Jesus God raised up".
- 36—"God has made him both Lord and Christ".
- 1 Cor. 5. 7—"Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed".
- 2 Cor. 4. 6—"to give the light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ<sup>77</sup>".
- Gal. 4. 4—"God sent forth his Son . . . to redeem".
- Col. 1. 15, 16, 19—"He is the image of the invisible God . . . in him all things were created". "For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell".
2. 2, 3—"Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge".
- 9—"For in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily".
- 1 Thes. 4. 16, 17—"the Lord Himself will descend
- 1 Tim. 2. 5; 6—"there in one God, and . . . one mediator . . . the man Christ Jesus".
- Titus 2. 13—"our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ<sup>77</sup>".
- Heb. 1. 2, 8—"... a Son . . . heir of all things, through whom also he created the world", (see later ref. on v. 3).
- 2 Pet. 1. 1—"our God and Saviour Jesus Christ".
- 17—"he received honour and glory from God the Father . . . This is my beloved Son".
- 1 John 1. 7—"the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin".
2. 2—"He is the expiation for our sins".
4. 10—"God . . . sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins".

5. 20—"we know that the Son of God has come" . . . "we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life".

Rev. 20. 6—"they shall be priests of God and of Christ".

Coming now to some of **the** scriptures which **appear unsatisfactory** in relation to the person of the Lord Jesus, we give these with a note on some of them:

John 1. 14, 18—"glory as of the only Son from the Father"  
"the only Son who is in the bosom of the father"

Here the expression "only Son" is substituted for "only begotten Son", a title of great importance in relation to the truth of the Lord's eternal Sonship. See for further study Mr. J. Miller's notes on Heb. 1; Needed Truth Vol. 31 (1924). pp. 137-141; Vine's Dictionary on "only begotten".

Mat. 16. 6

John 11. 27. —"You are the Christ".

"I believe that you are the Christ".

"You" in the RSV is used in addressing man but not God, and so it *is* implied that Peter and Martha did not understand the Lord to be God.

Rom. 9. 5 — ". . . is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever".

The change in word order and in punctuation from the AV and RV texts removes a strong testimony to the deity of Christ.

Heb. 1. 3—"He reflects the glory of God". The word effulgence in the RV is expressive of the equality of the Father and the Son, While "reflects" is not.

Psa. 2. 12—"Kiss his feet" is a conjectural emendation which removes testimony to the Lord's deity as in AV (Kiss the Son), and in RV (Kiss the son).

Psa. 45. 6—"Your divine throne" for "Thy throne, O God" again involves the Lord's deity. The citation in Heb. 1. 8 *is*, however, identical to the RV.

Isa. 7. 14—"Behold, a young woman shall conceive".

Mr. L. Burrows has contributed the following note on this:

"The correct rendering of the Greek word *parthenos* is given in the RSV of Mat. 1. 23. Perhaps that is not surprising as there

is no possible alternative, but the problem is that modern scholars, including RSV translators, prefer to translate the Hebrew word *almah* in Isa. 7. 75 by "young woman"; other Hebrew scholars, deeply taught in the Word, are convinced that the correct translation in Isaiah is "virgin". The point is an important one because the integrity of the Scriptures is at stake. If Isaiah wrote "young woman" then Matthew was guilty of perverting the truth when he wrote "virgin" in quoting from the writings of the prophet. Whatever the views of prominent translators may be, the ordinary Bible student is entitled to argue that, since the Holy Spirit guided Matthew to write *parthenos* indubitably meaning "virgin", the same Spirit must previously have inspired Isaiah, writing in Hebrew, to use a word with precisely the same import. We can, therefore, with confidence assert that the phrase in Isa. 7. 14 should read "behold, a virgin shall conceive" as in RV and AV".

Furthermore there are certain scriptures touching the Person of the Lord Jesus which, although perhaps not so frankly unsatisfactory, nevertheless give us considerable pause because of possible implications or interpretations.

Among these are:

Micah 5. 2—"one... whose origin is from the old".

Origin might be thought of in terms of a beginning in contrast to going forth (RV).

Mat. 8. 2—"knelt before". In RV "worshipped" clearly indicates  
9. 18 deity.

15. 25

20. 20

John 1. 11—"His own home" could be thought of as implying an earthly origin.

Phil. 2. 6-8—"Though he was in the form of God" can be misunderstood as being in the past. "Being in the form of God" is more accurate. This whole passage is inferior to RV.

1. Tim. 3. 16—"Great... is the mystery of our religion" *Eusebia* is translated "godliness" in AV and RV—also in many places in RSV—so why not here? "Our religion" has unacceptable implications.

Heb. 2. 14—"He... partook of the same nature". "Nature" here seems to introduce interpretation, having a wider meaning

than "flesh and blood", which we understand "the same" refers to. Another view is that "nature" here means "human nature", not "sinful nature".

(To be continued)

J.

D.

Terrell

## STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS MALACHI 3 & 4

### EXHORTATION AND PROPHETIC PROMISES

*From Hayes.* —God was going to send His messenger who would prepare the way of the Lord. It is strange to find the people referred to as seeking and delighting in the Lord: "the Lord, whom ye seek", "the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in". Who will fit these descriptions when He comes? [Comment 1] A period of testing would follow (3. 2); first He will refine and purify the priests (v. 3) so that offerings from Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the Lord (v. 4). Are these offerings sacrificial? [Comment 2].

The questioning attitude of the people led them to doubt the value of serving God, and their distorted view of God and men led them into false judgements as to the true situation (w. 14, 15). But there were a few that truly served the Lord and feared Him. God took notice of them and kept a "book of remembrance" of these faithful ones who feared Him and thought upon His name (v.16). God says that they would be specially valuable to Him and He would be indulgent towards them even as a father is to his own son (v.17). In the next verse we see that when they return they will understand clearly who are the faithful and who are not.

When the day of 4. 1 comes the proud and evil-doers shall be consumed in the fire of God's judgement. A contrast is again shown with those that fear His Name, for the Lord will come with healing and blessing towards them and they will rejoice (v. 2). Does v. 3 mean that the people would be God's instruments in punishing the wicked, or (as seems more probable) do we have here a continuation of the figure seen in v.1 where God has burned up the wicked in His wrath and His people are now able to enjoy the results of this fiery judgement? [Comment 3]

God's people are reminded to keep the law of Moses, God's

servant (v. 4); if they had done this there would have been no need for them to fear God's judgements. There *is* also a looking forward to the coming of the messenger mentioned in 3. 7 called Elijah in 4. 5. This, in relation to the Lord's first coming to the earth, was John the Baptist [Comment 4].

*R. F. Robertson*

*From Atherton and Leigh.* —The promise of God to His people was that a messenger would come who would prepare the way for the Lord. There can be no doubt that this was John the Baptist. The Lord Jesus Himself confirms John's calling by quoting from Malachi's prophecy (Mat. 11. 10). The contents of the forerunner's message would be the coming of the Lord to His Temple. It is suggested that this verse has a dual application. There was a partial application when the Lord Jesus first came to the Temple and cleansed it (John 2. 13-17). The final fulfilment will occur, we judge, after the battle of Armageddon [Comment 5]. We thought that the Temple to which the Lord will come will not be Ezekiel's Temple, but that to which the beast will come and defile it (2 Thess. 2. 4). The presence of the Lord will have a cleansing effect; there will be none that can resist His holy anger, which will be like a refining fire (v. 2). Although the remnant will have been purged and refined (Zech. 13. 9), the tribe of Levi will have a further refining, because it is they who will have to minister in the holy things of the Lord. Just as Israel once offered sacrifices in anticipation of the coming of Christ, Judah and Jerusalem will offer sacrifices as of old but in remembrance of the Lamb slain (vv. 3, 4).

During the Millennium sin will not be tolerated but will be dealt with at once. In times past the Lord was slow to anger, full of mercy and compassion towards His people; this was the reason why they had not been consumed. It might seem that, in dealing with sin at once rather than tolerating it, God will be acting out of character. The Lord is changeless, Malachi reminds us, and to act in mercy or in anger is in keeping with His holy nature; all His ways are equal (Ezek. 18. 29) [Comment 6].

In v. 7 we have a review of Israel's history which had been one of disobedience to the Lord's commands. They had robbed God (yet seemed unaware of it) in that they had not brought tithes or offerings. If they had brought the Lord the whole tithe in the spirit of Deut. 28. 47 they would have been richly blessed (vv. 10, 11).

In v. 12 the prophet looks to the distant future when Israel is fully restored; then all nations will call them happy and the land will be a delightful place.

*L. de Ville*

*From Liverpool.* —The messenger of v. 1 is John the Baptist (see Mat. 11. 10, Mark 1. 2, Luke 7. 27). The scripture in Mark is a composite quotation from both Malachi and Is. 40. 3. When does the Lord come suddenly to His Temple? Did this find fulfilment in John 2. 13-17, or will it be fulfilled when events given to us in 2 Thess. 2 take place? [see Comment 5] Can we really say that the Temple where the man of sin sits is the Temple of God? [Comment 7] The messenger of 4. 5 is Elijah the prophet. John was not Elijah although he came in the spirit and power of Elijah. In John 1. 21 he makes this clear. So before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes Elijah will be back on earth witnessing to the coming of the Lord. The kind of signs the two witnesses display in Rev. 11 would indicate that Elijah is one and possibly Moses the other. These same two men conversed with the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration about His decease.

We see the grace of God in vv. 6, 7. The unchanging God is still calling the people to return to Him and He will return to them. It is a sobering thought that men can rob God. In our giving to the Lord in both material and spiritual things we can withhold that which is the Lord's and in this way rob Him. We can also rob God in absenting ourselves from assembly gatherings when we could be there. This was one of the charges against the Hebrew Christians (Heb. 10. 25). What a sad state to be in when Judah said, "It is vain to serve God". Paul said, "Your labour is not vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15. 58).

We thought the words of 3. 16 could have an application in every age, and we wondered just what kind of a record is kept in heaven. "Fear", in this context, is that reverential fear mentioned in other scriptures such as Heb. 12. 28.

*D. J. W., G. S. W.*

*From Birkenhead.* —Malachi declares that the messenger of the Lord will come and prepare the way for the Lord whom the people seek. It is evident from quotations in the gospels by Matthew, Mark and Luke that the messenger in view there is John the Baptist and this leads to the view that the initial verses of our passage are future to Malachi's day in application. Problems which faced us in con-

sidering this passage were as follows: i) Why is the quotation in Mark 1. 2 attributed to Isaiah? The only light we had was the marginal note which is less specific and says "in the prophets" [Comment 8]. ii) How does Elijah fit into the picture as a witness (see Mat. 11. 14)? On this matter we considered two possibilities: firstly that it referred to the fact that John came in the spirit and power of Elijah, and secondly that Elijah will be one of the two witnesses referred to in Rev. 11. 3. The other will possibly be Moses who was linked with Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration [see Comment 4].

The messenger of the covenant appears to be the Lord Himself. This conclusion was reached in view of the following verses which indicate judgements taking place like in character to those accompanying the Lord's return to earth. Fire and fuller's soap are both used as purifying agents, and there follows the thought that the people purified by this experience will give great pleasure to God in their life and service. The reference here to the Temple lends support to those who believe in the rebuilding of the literal Temple in Jerusalem.

We noticed the clause "I the LORD change not", and realized the encouragement of these words in the way in which God deals with mankind.

The people are assured of a divine principle that when the erring ones return to God then God will return to them (see James 4. 8). The barren experience accompanying the setting of self-interest above the claims of God is pointed out, and any ideas of catering for self-preservation by holding back from whole-hearted tithing are discouraged by God's promise that neither enemy attack nor crop failure would be the portion of a God-fearing people. Truly surrounding; nations will call God's nation happy and realize that the promised land is delightful.

In the closing chapter of the Old Testament record there is an assurance that judgement will fall on the wicked, and the God-fearing person will experience an uplifting of spirit... they will "gambol as calves of the stall" (4. 2).

There is a further link here between Moses and Elijah where firstly the people are exhorted to remember the law of Moses, and to note that Elijah will come before the great and terrible day of

the Lord. Others supported the *view* that this is a reference to John the Baptist, on account of the similarity between Mai. 4. 6 and Luke 1. 77 [Comment 9].

*R. D. Williams*

*From Derby*, —Mai. 3. 1 seems clearly to refer to John the Baptist and to the first advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. These two important events have ample New Testament reference. John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord, is said to have come in the spirit and power of Elijah, but not as a miracle worker ("for John indeed did no sign"—John. 10. 47). He preached in the power of the Holy Spirit and turned many of the children of Israel unto the Lord (see Luke 1. 17, 76, 77). With regard to the words "the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple", we thought this temple could have a dual meaning as in John 2. 13-21, where both the material building and His body are seen.

The words "Who may abide the day of His coming?" (3. 2, 3) refer to the Lord's second advent. The Millennium will commence with a refined and purged remnant of Israel. Levi may be mentioned as representative of the nation, as those originally taken instead of the firstborn [Comment 10]. Of them we read, "They shall offer unto the LORD offerings in righteousness". For the priesthood was of the tribe of Levi; these words, however, may also refer to righteous acts.

God has ever been against such as are mentioned in v. 6, especially when found among His people. Often the Lord had reminded them that such evils were a grief and a source of anger to Him. The unchanging One spared the sons of Jacob, who repented because of His love for Jacob.

And the Lord ever had His holy ears open to hear the godly conversation of those that feared the Lord and thought upon His Name, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them. His gracious promises are "They shall be Mine" and "I will spare them". Eternity will reveal the profit of keeping His charge and of serving Him.

In chapter 4 the "day of the Lord" *is* brought into view and the eternal loss of the wicked. By contrast, "To you that fear My Name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings". We are waiting for the bright, the Morning Star which will appear first (Rev. 22. 16).

"Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord come" (4. 5), This refers to the fact that Elijah will with a fellow-prophet (as yet unnamed) inaugurate the first three and a half years of Daniel's seventieth week of prophecy.

In v. 6 we notice the similarity between Elijah's ministry and that of John the Baptist (Luke 1. 17). *G. Conway, S. R. W.*

*From Melbourne.* —The messenger referred to in 3. 1 is evidently John the Baptist who came to prepare the way of the Lord. We judge that in the following verses the first and second appearances of the coming One are merged together. This is frequently done in the prophetic writings; and here there is no "valley" revealed as lying between His coming as depicted in the Gospels, and His future coming as Son of Man and Israel's King. The solemnity of His appearance for judgement among His people and the purification of the sons of Levi will bring about a condition of heart in marked contrast to that which is described by Malachi. Responsibility for the service of God's house rested heavily upon the shoulder of priests and Levites; and if their spiritual condition was as in Malachi's day, the Lord could receive nothing from His people, neither could He find any pleasure in their service. But from the sons of Levi who will serve in His millennial house when they have been purified, He will receive offerings of righteousness, offered no doubt with joyfulness of heart as they contemplate the mighty sacrifice of Calvary, and the divine love both to Israel and to the nations which was its source. With an entirely new understanding will the sons of Levi serve the God of Israel; and in that day will their offerings be pleasant unto Him. Then follows the statement that during Messiah's reign judgement will be executed swiftly upon wilful transgressors of certain of His laws. The unchangeable character of the God of Israel in His righteousness will not only be manifested thus; but there will also be seen His unchangeable lovingkindness towards the sons of Jacob, notwithstanding all their waywardness, in His preservation of them as a people for Himself.

Again the prophetic message reverts to the low spiritual condition of His people; and He charges them with having robbed Him in tithes and offerings. He calls upon them to consider the obvious

and inevitable result of having done so. They are then challenged to prove Him by bringing the whole tithe into His house and observing the result. When this is done and the nations see what He does for them, all nations shall own Israel to be a delightful land.

We suggest that "the day" of 4. *1* is "the day of the Lord" when, following upon His judgement of the nations and the purging of the dross from Israel, "the Sun of Righteousness" shall arise upon the latter with healing in His wings, and there will be experienced among the nation that freedom from disease and sickness which was foreshadowed during the days of His flesh on earth, when He healed the sick and cleansed the lepers, opened the eyes of the blind, and extended the years of human life [Comment 11].

T. W. F., P. W. A.

### COMMENTS

1. (Hayes) It would seem to me that God's people in Malachi's time delighted in the Messianic hope of Israel, as many Jewish people do today, but little realized the implications of the coming of their Messiah, which would involve the purging of the nation from evil.

2. (Hayes) A major section of Mai. 1 deals with the unacceptability of the offerings of God's people at that time; in contrast to this the offerings described in 3. 3, 4 will be "pleasant unto the Lord", because a right condition of heart will obtain. It seems clear that the same range of offerings is in view in both sections of the prophecy, and therefore sacrificial offerings will again be included. But as some contributors have remarked, these will be commemorative rather than expiatory.

3. (Hayes) The vivid figure of speech which likens judgement on the wicked to the burning of stubble is continued in v. 3 to express the triumph of the righteous over their former evil oppressors. In many scriptures dealing with Messiah's advent in judgement the emphasis seems to be on the direct effects of His irresistible might, rather than any efforts of the righteous to effect judgement.

4. (Hayes) Several contributors support this view, and I think it is justified. The Lord Jesus applied the words of Mai. 3. *1* to John the Baptist (Mat. 11. *10*), and it seems equally clear that Mat. 11. *14* was intended to link with Mai. 4. 5. So there was an

application of these Malachi scriptures to John the Baptist, who came "in the spirit and power of Elijah". In addition, of course, there will be a literal renewal of Elijah's witness to Israel at the time of the end.

5. (Atherton and Leigh) It is an interesting suggestion that the Lord coming suddenly to His temple has initial application to the incident described in John 2. 13-16, and fuller application at the time of the end; several contributors support this view. Certainly the action of the Lord in John 2. 75. 16 could answer to a coming suddenly to His Temple in purifying judgement. But is there scriptural confirmation that "the contents of the forerunner's message would be the coming of the Lord to His Temple"? John the Baptist's message seemed rather to be centred on confirming that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Nevertheless, I personally favour the dual application of the Lord coming to His Temple, first as in the gospels, and second at His advent as Son of Man.

6. (Atherton and Leigh) The declaration of Mai. 3. 6 appeals to me as related to God's sovereign election of the Israel nation. As touching this, they are "beloved for the fathers' sake. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11. 28, 29). This abiding truth accounted for the fact that the sons of Jacob had not been consumed, despite all the evils listed in v. 5. Such evils had stained their past history and were still prevalent in Malachi's day. During the future millennial reign they will be summarily curbed. But in spite of all human failure, God would carry through His unchanging elective purpose in His people Israel.

7. (Liverpool) It seems clear to me that the prophetic word does imply the building of a Temple in Jerusalem by the regathered nation of Israel, and that this will be functioning at the time of the end. Presumably it will represent orthodox Jewish thought, and will therefore be a witness to the truth of the God of Israel as revealed in the Old Testament. To that extent it will stand as a testimony to the true God in a day when Antichrist will set himself forth as God. May not the term "Temple of God" aptly be applied to it from this viewpoint? Note also the Lord's reference in Mat. 24. 15 to "the holy place", which according Dan. 9. 27 is associated with the sacrifice and oblation—presumably of revived Temple service?

8. (Birkenhead) I thought that the reference to this point in sentence 2 of Liverpool's paper was helpful.

9. (Birkenhead) Are not both these views included if there is a dual application of Mai. 4. 4-6?—i. e. one application to John the Baptist, and a further application to Elijah at the time of the end.

10. (Derby) Would it not seem that the purification of the sons of Levi is specially mentioned because of their association with the service of God's House, rather than as representatives of the nation? As pointed out in the paper from Atherton and Leigh, there is a general refinement of the people (Zech. 13. 9) and a further special refinement of the sons of Levi.

11. (Melbourne) This is an interesting point deriving from the expression "with healing in His wings". Certainly the tenor of such passages as Isaiah 61 and 66 suggests healthfulness and longevity during the millennial reign of Christ, particularly for Israel. Favourable conditions world-wide will doubtless help to minimise disease, although Zech. 14. 19 refers to a plague inflicted as punishment. Presumably there will be disease leading to death in spite of the average longer span of life?

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

#### *From Liverpool*

'The sun of righteousness' (Mai. 4. 2). We understand the Hebrew word for "sun" is feminine. Does it apply to the Lord Jesus or to His coming kingdom?

The gender of a word used figuratively would not generally govern its figurative application. For instance, in Greek the word translated "door" (John 10. 9) is feminine in gender, but the Lord Jesus was the door; in the French version of this verse "la porte" is feminine. So our interpretation must be guided rather by scriptural parallels or the sense of the passage. Most contributors see the Lord Jesus as the "Sun of Righteousness", and I personally share this view. Interestingly enough, the simile used of the righteous in Mat. 13. 43 is rather like the metaphor of Mai. 4. 2. *G. P. Jr.*

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