

Zechariah

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Zechariah

Zechariah was plainly a contemporary of [Haggai](#). Like him he dates his prophecies from the second imperial power of the Gentiles; but he goes a great deal farther than [Haggai](#) in giving God's testimony about these powers. In the former prophet there was no doubt a divine intention in the allusion to the era measured by Darius's reign: not only is this kept up in Zechariah, but we have the general relation of the powers in a measure analogous to [Daniel](#), but having its own special character and design as with all scripture. Hence it is not merely the sign of subjection in the government of God; but further we have the due relationship for the present, what was to be expected in the future, and then the final overthrow of all those powers which had come in intermediately, not only on Judah's judgment, but still more widely during the time of Israel's unfaithfulness. [Malachi](#) differs from them in being exclusively occupied with the moral condition of the Jews; hence he takes no notice whatever of the Gentile powers. Thus the prophets of the restoration, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi have each sufficiently distinctive traits.

Zechariah then brings first before us Jehovah's sore displeasure with the fathers of the Jews. They had slighted the former testimony. When it had been commanded them in the name of Jehovah of hosts to turn unto Him who would turn unto them, they had not done so; and now the children are exhorted not to be as their fathers to whom the former prophets had cried in vain. □ They did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith Jehovah. Your fathers, where are they? □ The present desolation therefore, and the weakness of the things because of which the children were groaning, ought to be a serious and standing lesson to their souls. □ Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as Jehovah of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us. □ The word of Jehovah therefore had received its full sanction, and, instead of being disheartened by the circumstances which proved its truth, their place was to profit by the further communications which applied to their state. Every accomplishment of His chastening on Israel ought to be a call to their souls to heed the word of Jehovah now. This however was but prefatory, though of moral importance. The call to them to think of their fathers and their own sins and danger is the clearing of the ground for what should follow. Prophecy supposes sin and the necessary judgment of God; but then, thanks be to God, it also holds out before us a great deal more. It shows how impossible it is that God should be overcome of evil, and that the abuse of a good thing when judged He replaces by a better in His mercy. Certainly if He has called us as Christians to overcome evil with good, He acts upon it Himself: whether in government or in grace, God is supremely above evil; and this is the one resource and unfailing comfort of faith.

The vision first introduced to us the prophet has by night: indeed the same thing applies to the first six chapters where we have a series of visions which the prophet beheld in a single night, and which traverse in that kind of outline the course of God's ways from their setting aside for the time as His people till their restoration to the land with their city and temple under Messiah. □ I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white. Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these be. □

Again we find a considerable resemblance to the manner in which some of the visions of the Apocalypse were given. There is the presence of an angelic communicator and interpreter. One sees therefore how the links of divine truth are found throughout scripture and always, it may be added, with due account taken of the subject, so as to preserve moral suitability. The position of Zechariah in relation to the Jew

had many points in common with that of St. John towards the failing Christian body, which was already morally judged and was about to be spued out, as he said of Laodicea to them all in the Lord's name. We can understand therefore that the introduction of an angel who speaks, instead of Jehovah in more direct style of address, was by no means without its significance. There was reserve and distance implied, and this it was right to notice, for God meant it to be felt. This does not in the least degree hinder communications rich in compassion and divine goodness, not without present blessing, and pregnant in the glorious prospect for the future. In fact, though we may notice profitably this retreating of God and the intervention of angels, there is no prophet of the Old Testament who opens out a finer vista of blessedness on earth than Zechariah.

So we know that the Apocalypse of John is the main prophetic unfolding in the New Testament. Indeed its method is deeper and more complete, while at the same time it is more precise and orderly than any other in the whole Bible. Is it not then a matter of real thankfulness to God that we are not thrown on a mere inferential course of application in having to do with the ruin of Christendom just as Zechariah had with the ruin of the Jews? For a generous mind and a humble one would surely shrink from pronouncing on others unless divine authority interposed and made it simply a duty. The more one desired the glory of the Lord and loved the church, the slower one would be to form a strong judgment on the state of that which bears the name of the Lord. Now God has met this unwillingness which one might otherwise have excused as having really good and becoming elements in it. But there are other considerations of more importance than the feeling of Christians about their brethren in Christendom: we must not overlook but first of all weigh all in the light of the glory of God, and of what is due to Christ. Hence therefore God, who always cares for the name of His Son, and hence watches with tender interest those who have been given Him, □ God has met this reluctance by pronouncing on it with clearness and solemnity, and distinct evidence that what gave Him ground for so strong and decided a judgment was then before His eyes, though of course about to be still more developed. Evil certainly does not grow less but more in course of time, with the continual influences which go to augment its volume and to darken its character. So we know in Christendom the declension then before the eye of the Spirit of God has gone on always increasing; but the apostles were not taken away before God pronounced on its existence, its extent, and its irreparableness, only to be set aside by divine vengeance at the end of this age.

I make these remarks of a general kind to show the value of these later prophets as furnishing the final sentence of God on the state of Israel, even of those comparatively true-hearted Jews who had come back instead of going on content to be with their Gentile captors. There was no excuse therefore for their being deceived; there is less now for us, as, God has shown His mind with all fulness about the present state of Christendom and the consequent duty of saints, not a little manifest before the apostle John became the medium for the Lord Jesus to address the Asiatic churches in Rev. 2, 3. Amply sufficient is the record to give us clear grounds for a moral judgment. No man can slight this without positive loss. We are called to take heed. Let him that has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Just as the Apocalyptic epistles differ manifestly from the general testimony of apostolic letters, so does Zechariah even from preceding prophets, save in a measure Ezekiel and Daniel, still more from the rest of the Old Testament. The occasion was peculiar. The Persian empire considerably favoured the Jews. Consequently there were two things necessary to communicate: one was the Lord owning what was of Himself providentially for the help of His people, and at the same time bringing in the whole course of these powers. These two things are done separately in this chapter.

First of all we are told of the man riding upon a red horse who stood among the myrtle trees; and then further of red horses, speckled, and white, which are explained afterwards. □ These are they whom Jehovah hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the angel of Jehovah that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all

the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. □ I think that □red□ is used symbolically as a sign of devotedness to God, whether in judgment, or in grace as in the rams' skins dyed red of the tabernacle, but even these founded on judgment. He who was on the red horse had been on the Lord's behalf the executor of His judgment, and was now using Persia as His instrument for so dealing and thus favouring the Jews. This was the second of the world powers, and two more were to follow as we see here. It would seem that the symbols here are rather of the angels whom Jehovah employs to overrule than of the kingdoms themselves which follow separately; and it is clear moreover that we have the connection of these powers with the history of the ancient people, but that people now in a strikingly abnormal state. We must remember that all through the last three prophets they are never owned as the people of God. This is of much importance. They are destined to be blessed and exalted more than ever as the people of God, but meanwhile they are seen out of national relationship with God. □They *shall be* my people,□ but they are not. Such was and is then their state. Not that God ceased to care for them: the raising up of these post-captivity prophets, and above all the mission of the Messiah, prove the contrary.

But remember that vague ideas prevail as to what is meant by □the people of God.□ The proper force of that expression in the Old Testament is seen in the public relationships God had with them when He identified His name with them as His nation chosen out from all others. This tie was broken at the time of the Babylonish captivity. The Jews then ceased to be openly and formally the people of God. This in no way whatever interferes with His having persons in the midst who had living faith. There were such who by grace looked for the woman's Seed before the call of the people of God or their first father Abraham. In fact we have all been deeply injured by the current phrases of modern religious language, and indeed of ancient theology. Thus when people speak of the people of God, they almost always understand the line of believers. Now this is not the meaning of the people of God in the Bible, manifestly not in the Old Testament. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the saints before them, as Noah, Enoch, Abel, are never called the people of God. It was a new fact that began with the call of Israel, who were put in a national relationship with God, with the law subsequently to regulate their walk, and a sanctuary, ritual, and priesthood. Then a king was demanded on their part, and given in God's anger (for it was to reject Him); and when they began to fail under the new regime, and when prophets were raised up more and more on the total ruin of the house of David, and the final acceptance of idolatry by that house and the most faithful part of the people that had been raised up as a witness against it, then they lost their title. They were thenceforward to be Lo-ammi (Not-my-people). But this does not at all imply that no more believers were among them. As believers had been before □the people of God,□ so there were afterwards. In short to have believers in the midst is a wholly different thing from being the people of God: else all nations would be so. Whereas at most it can only apply to Christians now while Israel is disowned; and strictly speaking seems only applied in scripture to that portion of the Jews who believe while the rest refuse the Messiah. Compare Romans 9 and 1 Peter 2; though of course the principle applies to all baptized in His name.

In these three prophets then we find contemplated this state of things most serious for a Jew when they were no longer the people of God, and there might have risen for those who misunderstood it the danger of fearing that God no longer cared for them, because He took away their honourable title and no longer dwelt in their midst as He had once done. This would have been a fatal error. Hence therefore we find, particularly in Zechariah, the two facts clearly shown □ how far God used or recognised the external powers of the world, and what was the relationship of His people during a time that He could not publicly own them as His. The prophet shows us that everything is caused to work for the good of those that love Him □ a principle just as true in the Old Testament as in the New, but one which requires much delicacy in order to apply it aright, particularly in examining the ancient oracles of God, seeing that there is in this case a relationship different from our own.

But on the face of it we have One who proves Himself especially interested in the returned remnant. It is evident that the light of His word was afresh vouchsafed in the new circumstances when this might have

been judged impossible. We hear it from Haggai; we have fresh proofs in the visions of Zechariah. God would regulate everything with a view to this very people after they had been utterly faithless. And these different spirits go forth and do the bidding of God, not in public but in a providential way, which He makes known to the Jew as a sign of His real care for them. He would have them confide in Him. They could no longer be called His people in the formal sense now, but those who had lost the title of it were nevertheless maintained in His gracious consciousness of care, as they will surely have that title given again in a better way by and by. Such is the posture of things in Zechariah, as it was the object of his prophecy to make it known. Thus the preliminary vision was of very great importance, just as much as the moral preface that we have seen.

□ We have walked to and fro (said they) through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. □ This rest of their foes boded no good to the Jew. □ Then the angel of Jehovah answered and said, O Jehovah of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah □ □ He does not say □ on the people of Jehovah □ □ □ against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And Jehovah answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words. So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen. □ Clearly this is the point that now comes forward. He first declares that He was sore displeased with their fathers, and that He had dealt accordingly, sending them into captivity and taking away their □ Teat distinctive title for the time with all the singular signs and effects of His presence with them nationally. Then it is shown that, though He had sanctioned Gentile powers in their place of earthly supremacy, He was none the less aggrieved by their pride and cruelty toward the Jews. □ I am very sore displeased with the nations that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus saith Jehovah; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith Jehovah of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. □ This was having then a partial accomplishment on the fall of Babylon, but the fulfilment in the strict sense of the word awaits another day; and we may enquire why, before we close with Zechariah.

For this reason, I suppose, it is that in the opening vision the horse of the man seen to stand among the myrtle trees in the shade (verse 8), and the first of the horses behind him were of the same colour □ red. For a similar reason also there is an absence of a fourth colour here; as in fact the Babylonian empire had been already put down by Cyrus the Persian, who in a dim way prefigured Christ as the deliverer of the Jews from their oppressive captivity, vindicating the true God and His word against idols, restoring them to their land and encouraging them to build the temple of Jehovah. The vision however seems purposely general. There is more precision in the corresponding one of chapter 6, where also the purpose in hand brought the first empire into view, as we shall see. But it is not here as in Daniel a symbolical sketch of the world-powers, outwardly or inwardly, but rather of the spiritual powers behind the scenes. □ Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these be. And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom Jehovah hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. □

It seems plain that the man who stood among the myrtle trees is no other than the angel of Jehovah, familiar to us elsewhere □ And they answered the angel of Jehovah that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. Then the angel of Jehovah answered and said, O Jehovah of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And Jehovah answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words. □ The same who revealed Himself of old to the fathers, to Moses, Joshua, and others; so did He now according to the circumstance and need of the remnant. We must distinguish Him from the angel that talked with the prophet ordinarily.

Again it must not be forgotten that the proper national history of Israel closed with the captivity, and that after their return it was only a provisional state in the mercy of God here and elsewhere guaranteed, while waiting for the Messiah. His rejection brought wrath on them to the uttermost; but in it the hidden purposes of God were accomplished where all seemed most to fail □ in the cross of the Lord Jesus, by virtue of which God not only gathers out the church now, but will return in sovereign mercy to the Jew ere long, after working graciously in their hearts and producing both repentance and a looking out in faith to Him whom they once crucified and slew by the hand of lawless men.

□Therefore thus saith Jehovah; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith Jehovah of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and Jehovah shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem. □ Now what gives this its force is that these words were uttered after the return from captivity. Consequently this return could not furnish the complete fulfilment of the divine assurance, though it was no doubt a pledge of it. Therefore the object of these words was not to make them contented with the measure of mercy already shown them, but to use the present as a ground to look for greater blessing which grace has in store: □Jehovah shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem. □ As far as the return from Babylon is concerned, it was already accomplished; and there never has been a return since but another and worse scattering. It is plain and certain therefore that God intimates a fresh return. He shall yet comfort Zion and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

But a fresh sight presents itself. □Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. □ Here we have the full course of the Gentile powers: clear if an allusion to Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, but hardly intelligible otherwise. □And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me. These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. □ It is not the providential agencies which God employed to act within and by the empire: these were represented by the horses. But here we are in presence of the kingly powers which successively ravaged Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem (verse 19). Hence horns are the symbols employed, of which the prophet saw four, as we might expect, answering to the four powers from first to last that were successively to reign. It is a general picture grouped prophetically and bringing into one glance both past and future, Babylon and Rome, Israel and Judah.

But vengeance belongs to God, and instruments of it are next seen. □And Jehovah showed me four carpenters. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them. □ They are the instrumentality God will use to overthrow the powers that He was pleased to raise up in His sovereignty for the chastening of Israel. But God will know how to deal with them, especially in the end of the age. He will then □cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it. □

Now it is clear that all this has a general character. The opening vision gives no more than a broad panoramic picture or the outline from first to last □ what was even then true but at the same time what would go down to the close when the judgment of these horns should have been finally executed.

The second chapter lets us know that, whatever God may tell us about others, His heart is always occupied with Jerusalem. □I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, and said unto him Run, speak to this young man. □ It is the prophet Zechariah, of whom we learn this personal circumstance by the way; though some take it as merely a servant apart from age, which seems to me rather unnatural.

The measuring line is the symbol of taking possession, either in title or in fact, when renewed dealings or

restorations would follow. Here it is rather the former, because the proper possession would await the overthrow of the Gentile powers; but the act of measuring was meant to show even then God's intention to bless after this sort.

□ Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: for I, saith Jehovah, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her. □ It is very evident that nothing that has yet been at all meets the terms of the prophecy. We look onward to the day when the multitude of her inhabitants will break all bounds; and, instead of vassalage under Persian or Greek or Roman masters, they will have Jehovah Himself their fortress and wall of defence.

In the next place comes the call to all that remain: the restoration of the Jews will be then complete. □ Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith Jehovah: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith Jehovah. □ This refers to the previous dispersions of Israel. □ Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. For thus saith Jehovah of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you. □ Nothing can be more distinct. How any with the smallest attention to scripture, not to say spiritual judgment, can mistake the scope or nature of this prophecy, or think that this has been fulfilled, it is difficult to understand. Observe the words □ after the glory: □ consequently no blessing before Christ came could possibly accomplish Zechariah's words. More than this; when Christ presented Himself, so far from then accomplishing these words, there was a further sin and a fresh dispersion. Thus the dealings of God after the first advent and the crucifixion put the accomplishment of this prophecy farther off than ever and brought in fresh grounds for a new punishment of Israel, not as yet the fulfilment of the prophecy. This will be □ after the glory. □ Christ must first appear in glory. □ For thus saith Jehovah of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you; for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me. □ Consequently there is a song of joy even now raised in anticipation of the fulfilment of glory for the people of Israel. □ Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee. □ What Jehovah did when He brought them out of Egypt will be accomplished and much more. □ I will dwell in the midst of thee. □

The statement of His dwelling among His people regularly follows that of their redemption; as we see in Exodus 15, 29 and many other passages. When the redemption was figurative, He dwelt after a visible sort in their midst. When true and eternal redemption shall have been by faith applied to Israel, then will be His true and everlasting dwelling in the midst of His people; but this is □ after the glory. □ □ And many nations shall be joined to Jehovah in that day. □ There we find clearly the circumstances of the millennial glory. We see how repeated is the testimony to this inestimable privilege of Zion, as indeed it goes out to all mankind. It seems astonishing how any student of scripture could point to the sojourn of the Son of God before redemption in the land of Judea. The similarity of the language to Zechariah 9:9 compels to no such conclusion, because this prophecy was fulfilled in the presentation of the King, not at all in His action or the consequences of His advent described immediately afterwards. The rejection of the King postponed the complete fulfilment. His coming will take up the broken thread and perfect the web of divine purposes. The comparison therefore with the latter chapter really compels to the inference that both await the public reign of Christ over the land. □ And I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto thee. And Jehovah shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again. Be silent, O all flesh, before Jehovah: for he is raised up out of his habitation. □ The age to come will be characterised not by some believing and others not (Mark 16:16, Acts 28:24), but by universal homage under the kingdom of Jehovah and the Christ, when judgments on the nations after the manifestation of the divine glory have broken the pride of man.

All this part is sufficiently clear. The first chapter in a general way brings in the Gentile powers and their

destroyers; the second chapter shows us proof of Jehovah's peculiar care for this purpose for the earth, of which Jerusalem is the centre, the witness of which goes out to all nations when Jehovah shall have made the daughter of Zion His holy habitation. It is to me beyond question that the moment is fixed by the expression "after the glory." That great event will be when the Lord appears in glory. "That day" fairly and fully interpreted cannot be short of His manifested kingdom over the earth, when Israel is restored to the land, and the nations, having undergone in one form, and in another continuing to undergo, the solemn judgment of the quick, learn righteousness under His reign, and bow to the holy pleasure which Jehovah takes once more and for ever in His chosen city. The fact that the remnant had already returned from the Babylonish captivity makes it so much the more evident that God here reveals His purpose of effecting a still more complete restoration of the Jews to the land. But all His purposes centre in Christ, and will only be displayed when He comes in the clouds of heaven with power and glory, not to destroy but to reign. The judgment of the dead will follow in its season.

But then supposing Jerusalem could be thus blessed according to the sovereign choice of God, who never revokes His gifts or His calling "supposing all nations could be thus joined not merely to them but to Him with Jerusalem as their centre" would that satisfy God without putting their hearts and consciences in communion with Him? Impossible. Hence another scene follows to this end in Zechariah 3. "He showed me Joshua the high priest." This, as is evident, touches relationship with God, and brings in not merely the city but the sanctuary. "He showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Jehovah, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And Jehovah said unto Satan, Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan; even Jehovah that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel." The high priest bears a representative character, not here entering within the veil, but much more like the same personage when he confessed the sins of Israel on the head of the people's lot, the live goat sent into the land of forgetfulness. We must remember that the high priest had not only an intercessory function but a representative character, the latter outside, the former within the veil when the blood was put before and upon the mercy seat.

Here the scene has clearly a representative design. Hence Joshua is seen not clothed in garments of glory and beauty, nor even in the linen garments of daily service. He is on his trial, so to speak, like one suspected of crime. Notoriously the Easterns are as to this rapid in their thoughts and prompt in action. When a man was suspected of crime, it was the common habit to take for granted that he was guilty till he had cleared himself. They do not resemble the Westerns, who take for granted that a man is innocent till he is proved guilty. Here however all stand on solemn ground. It was not a question of Oriental any more than of Western thoughts, but of God and the adversary, who both knew the guilt of Jerusalem. Properly therefore do we see the strange sight of the high priest clad in filthy garments. It was only to be expected that Satan should be there taking advantage of the guilt and the confessed condition of the representative high priest as a reason why God should cast Jerusalem back into fiery trouble again. Why should He pluck such a brand as that out of the fire? Was it better than other brands? Such was Satan's reason; but Jehovah had seen all according to His grace, and in sovereign mercy says, "Take away the filthy garments from him." It was a sentence which had its spring in His own affection. Nevertheless it has a firm ground of righteousness, as we know well, though this be not here brought forward, yet never absent from the eye of God. "And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with costly [not merely change of] raiment." Such is His good pleasure, which is not more gracious toward the Jew than glorifying to Himself. "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy," and He has mercy on Joshua as standing for the people. But this is not all. "And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head;" for he is not content with acquittal merely, but lavishes signs of honour and full favour. "So they set a fair mitre on his head, and clothed him with the garments. And the angel of Jehovah stood up. And the angel of Jehovah protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways." This solemn declaration was a charge conditional on obedience and even then valid and applicable. Although God put before the people His

purpose of grace He did not for the present take them out of government proceeding on the ground of their own responsibility. It was not the new covenant □ the Messiah. There was but a sign of the good things coming, but not yet come. The very image could not be beforehand; nor should it be looked for in the past.

The angel of Jehovah means, I think, Jehovah acting by one who represented Him. The angel stood in a relation with respect to Jehovah similar to that which the high priest held towards Israel □ at least to a certain point. The same principle in the Revelation is true of the angel of Jesus, and the angels of the churches, which last of course were men in their midst.

This then was the ground on which the Jews stood for the present. There was as yet no taking them out from their place of responsibility under law. This could not be till the Messiah came and was received by Israel. But there is more added. □Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy companions that sit before thee: for they are men of a sign or portent [that is, representative men]: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.□ The effort of Grotius to lower this to Zerubbabel is mischievous; and a grievous thing that Dr. Blayney should acquiesce in an unbelief too strong not only for many a learned Rabbi, but even for such rationalists as Gesenius and Hitzig, who deny not the Messianic reference. From Isaiah the application is unquestionable; and in Luke 1 we see the Septuagintal alternative, ' ?at??' , as is commonly known. □For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon the one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I *will* engrave the graving thereof, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity [or punishment] of that land in one day.□

Why should one think that the stone then in vision before Joshua sets aside the future reference of verse 9, typified by the foundation stone of the temple then laid? The context is decidedly Messianic. As yet it was the blessed sign only; the shadow and not the substance for the Jews till Jesus come and reign. □In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.□ What □one day□ but the day of Messiah's glory can remove the punishment of Judea with its cause? Meanwhile we come into the blessing for heaven □ we who believe on Him, our life hid in God. Surely it is not the day when they were still exposed to the evil eye and malicious report of their Samaritan and other envious neighbours; but a day of mercy and power flowing from God's grace towards the Jews. It is not indeed the deeper calling we know now by the Spirit according to the once hidden counsels of God, who unites us to Christ in heaven and for heaven. This will be a day for the earth. Consequently we hear of each inviting his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree. We follow Christ unseen through shame and suffering till we go to meet Him on high. Here it is not those whom the Lord is not ashamed to call His brethren, while the world disowns them, whose joy it is to know □His Father and our Father, his God and our God.□ The prophet never intimates such language for the earth any more than the New Testament puts such figures as theirs in our mouth. Although we are on the earth, we stand in a heavenly relationship already, and shall be changed accordingly when Jesus comes. (1 Cor. 15) They at His coming shall enjoy all that God promised Israel of old and down through the line of prophets.

But there is more still. □And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold.□ It is not only the future justification of Israel: it is not only that there is a foundation stone of the perfect government of God exhibited; but further we find now the manner in which Jehovah will give a suitable display of the Spirit's power in the day that is coming. This is so represented by □a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof,□ with evident allusion to Joshua and Zerubbabel, though looking on to a far greater One of manifold office and deeper glory than any type could express. Joshua represented the high priestly function, Zerubbabel in a measure bore witness to

the kingly one. As we know, this will centre in Christ, and then will perfection be seen, and not before. He only will supply, dispense, and keep up, as the true Priest and King, the light of the Spirit in Israel to the glory of Jehovah. Before this shall be established in the kingdom, we see a pledge of it in the two witnesses of Rev. 11, after the translation of the saints to heaven, when God begins to work anew in the Jewish remnant. But here it is the full divine order of Messiah. It is a state of things obviously distinct from the church. Both the high priest and the governor might be feeble shadows indeed; still they brought before the mind of God, and drew out for the remnant the sure sign of what should be when the Messiah fulfils both. So we find this assuredly is to be brought into being, not by human resources, not by a mere amelioration of the Jew, □but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts.□ It is not by might nor by power; that is, in no way through external resources, nor even the mental or moral power of man, although there will be a suitable condition of man by grace; but all will be distinctively by the Holy Ghost. On the other hand there is no reference to the operation of the Spirit in the conversion of sinners or the new birth, which is ever set forth under the figure of water. Anointing is a question of power in those already washed and set apart to God.

Obstacles are nothing to God. □Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.□ David's son is here again the plain type of Him whom Jehovah shall bring forth as the chief Stone with acclamations of Grace, grace, to it. From Gen. 49, Isa. 28 and Dan. 2 the reference is obvious. □And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto you.□ It was but a day of small things now, but the man that despised it would not be in unison with Jehovah of hosts when the accomplishment came. The same spirit which owns God's complacency in what is little will have honour from God in the great day, and none others. But the day when God is morally testing souls is always a day of small things open to the scorn of him whose heart is not content to serve God. Those whose delight is in God's will and work in the day of small things are in communion with Himself. What a thought that Jehovah can and does rejoice in the little efforts of those who are guided by His word in seeking His glory! □Then I answered, and said to him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?□ And we are told here, □These are the two anointed ones, that stand by Jehovah of the whole earth.□ That I have already explained in few words to mean Joshua and Zerubbabel, as the heads of the religious and civil power then known in Jerusalem, but looking onward to Christ who will unite both, as we see in Zechariah 6.

But now come two other and very different signs of warning. □Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.□ The Jews must not mistake, nor turn the grace of God toward their present condition into a license. It was well to know the gracious intimations of Jehovah, who fully recognises a day of small things, and will mark him who cloaks his selfish unbelief under despite of better men than himself. But the faith that sustains, spite of weakness and contumely, does look onward to the day of great things, when Jehovah-Messiah shall be the full and ultimate accomplisher of the purposes of God. And faith turns all this for use in present difficulties; and it is not blind to the awful results of the evil that was then at work among the people. The introduction of Messiah's kingdom in power on earth supposes evil exposed and judged as surely as the establishment of righteousness and peace. Both will be true, and both are predicted in their place.

We have already had the bright side; we have just seen in the flying roll the solemn testimony of God, that the evil which was then among the Jews would work out its worst results. Its source and doom are here pronounced. □Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth,□ or rather *land*. The same word in Hebrew as in Greek means □earth□ and □land.□ We are

dependent on contextual reasons to decide which is meant. But here I should suppose it is the whole land only, while unwilling to speak dogmatically. It is entirely a question of the context. The word meaning either, there is nothing to decide us in itself. The real question here, in view of what is treated, is which best suits Jehovah's object in the warning. Now the design here is not to lower the estimate of evil in the Jewish people, but rather to prepare the prophet and believer for hopes deferred; to explain how it is that with such glorious predictions there was to be a postponement in their accomplishment. Hence the occasion, actual or at hand, is shown to be frightful in God's eyes. The captivity, humiliating as it was, had not at all stamped it out of the people.

We shall see presently that the sin of the Gentiles against which Israel was raised up to be witnesses, was, or at least will be, at work, and no prospect for the present of its extirpation; and so far was Babylon from being its grave, the Spirit of God points to Shinar as its nurse and proper sphere. Babylon's doom therefore would belong to Babylon's sins; and none the less if done in Israel. It might not appear all at once, but it was there, not purged out.

And what is the wickedness here in view? Two things are noticed more particularly. □ Every one that stealeth shall be cut off; □ and □ every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it. □ These are taken as a sample, not as the whole: one from the second table of the law which deals with man; the other from the first, which deals with direct offences against God. Stealing is the evidence of utter disregard to the rights of one's neighbour in his goods. Swearing is the sign of equal disregard to the majesty and truth of God. In short both man and God were thoroughly despised and rebelled against, so that the curse which took notice of these two flagrant sins comes before us. □ I will bring it forth, saith Jehovah of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name. □ This evidently suits much more □ the whole land □ than □ the whole earth. □ □ And it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof. □

But then comes the second part of this chapter. We have had the double curse; but there is a figure appended which shows that God traced the iniquity to its source; and a very important principle this is in God's judgment. □ Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base. □ The ephah was a well-known Hebrew dry or corn measure, equal nearly to an English bushel. This is their eye, *ayinim* [\[1\]](#) in all the land. This some take to indicate the intent of the heart set on evil; and others derive from it the sense of sight, and hence appearance or resemblance. It is again (verse 8) said to be wickedness, after the woman was shown sitting in the ephah. The meaning of the sign I take to be that idolatrous wickedness is here seen caught and shut up as it were by the leaden weight, and presently afterwards (verses. 9-11) transported rapidly to the mother source of idols □ the land of Shinar □ that it might be set there in its congenial haunt: why should it pollute the land of Jehovah?

From Shinar religious corruption came, and thither it must go, forcibly and swiftly carried off: such is the measure meted by Jehovah. This again seems to confirm the idea that it is the idolatrous evil of the Jew derived from and sent back to Babylon. This was particularly emphatic. The judgment of God which had transported the Jews to Babylon had not destroyed the iniquity for which they were carried there.

The post-captivity prophet lets us know that, when God has traced the evil to its source, it has to be taken out of His land, and set upon its own base, where it really is at home, even in the land of Shinar, the plain on which Babylon was built. He does not speak of Babylon now, but simply the scene of it. It is all no doubt a symbolical prophecy. One may not agree with D. Kimchi and others of the Rabbinical commentators that the woman means the ten tribes, and the ephah Jeroboam's calves and the worship of Israel; but I am farther still from believing that the vision is God's sentence on modern commerce, borne on stork's wings from the east to the west. This seems to be the most unfounded and grotesque of all interpretations, though I do not deny the corrupting influence of commercial principles and effects.

But the vision before us carries us on to the iniquity in the land which God must judge; and I will add too in the last days, confident as some are that idolatry can never be among the Jews again. But the Lord warned them of the contrary (Matt. 13:43-45; Matt. 24:15), for the last state of that Christ-rejecting generation; and so do the prophets when speaking of the end of the age. (Dan. 11:38; Rev. 13:15; Rev. 18:4) The truth is that Babel was not only the beginning of earthly monarchy, but also, from the beginning of that power (by the man who sought self-exaltation here below in despite of God), accompanied by idolatry. Babel was thus the fountain-head of idols. Now idolatry is the evil that has afflicted the Jews, particularly as is known from all their ancient history, because of which they were at length sent to Babylon, which was no fortuitous scene of exile but retributively chosen of God.

The future should not be overlooked. The Jews have long and completely laid aside idolatry. They always boast themselves that it was unheard of since their return from captivity. But our Lord let them know in His own day, though they were so self-complacent on this head, that as surely as there then was a swept and empty and garnished state, the unclean spirit would in the end return, and this with seven spirits worse than himself, and thus the last state should be worse than the first. This seems to link itself with the comparatively enigmatic vision seen here. The iniquity was but suppressed and shifted for the time. It is only held down, not destroyed or extirpated. Traced up to its own proper source on the plain of Shinar, it will be judged of God in that day, when not only moral offences against God and man shall be avenged speedily, but man shall consign every idol to the moles and to the bats. Idolatry will surely reappear, and this not only among the Christianised Gentiles, but among the Jews, little as they may suspect such an issue. It is an invariable truth of scripture that the mere absence of evil is never a deliverance from its power. An empty, swept, or even garnished condition in itself implies no final escape. It may go on if God so please to hinder the inroads of the enemy; but in fact an empty state always exposes to the return of the old evil. There must be possession taken by the positive power of God in order to keep mischief out. Unless the Holy Spirit seize and fill the scene, there never can be an effectual barrier against the return of the evil which we least of all look for, especially of that from which we count ourselves radically delivered. So far indeed from this it is the old evil that ever tends to come up again when conscience relaxes and faith wanes, and religious habits or traditions grow up instead. There may be other and worse evil: as we have seen, the unclean spirit will come with seven other spirits worse than himself. Thus there will be at the end of the age, and especially in Jerusalem, a combination of these two things, as we learn from our Lord's clear and full and solemn warning. There will be a special power of Satan let loose at the close of this age, as well as the recurrence of the old idolatrous evil which afflicted the Jews in times past.

Plainly then this vision traces the evil to its Babylonish source, and shows us that there will be undoubtedly an idolatrous issue in the land once again, but then to be judged in connection with that which really represents its birthplace. The ephah with the woman within and held down by the lump of lead, next carried from the land back to the plain of Shinar, appears to be the instructive but symbolical form of expressing the true character and source of the idolatry then to be judged. If it should reappear in connection with the Jews, just before the Lord returns in power and glory, they will feel the more ashamed of their folly when it is seen thus transferred to its own place to be disposed of and finally judged there. I should take the vision as a symbolical picture, as simply showing when and how the

Lord detects this iniquity at the end. The great flying roll deals with the moral transgressions of the Jew; the vision of the ephah shows that religious iniquity will be taken clean away. This, it seems, is the idea of the measure borne off by the women, with their stork-like wings filled by the wind, and bound for Shinar. They thus take all bodily away where the hidden evil will not be hindered only from working but be finally judged, and this as divinely traced to Babylon, for it had no better source than that beginning of self-will, violence, and pride. I have not the slightest doubt that idolatry will return (that is, virtual heathenism), and am persuaded that principles are at work at present in these lands which will bring it back. Even now they are working in Christendom; but what will it be when God gives men up to strong delusion that they should believe falsehood, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved?

Zechariah 6 closes these preliminary visions. □ And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass [or copper]. □ Thus we find that God fully maintains His witness of Gentile imperial authority. Israel had ceased to be the place of His direct rule on earth; but He sanctions fully the Gentiles in the government providentially given to them, which the Jew was bound to own, humiliating as it must be to him. The four chariots are an unmistakable reference (*mutatis mutandis*) to the course of earthly power as already made known in detail by Daniel. There is no more real difficulty here than in the statue or the four beasts seen to emerge together when the winds strove on the great waters there. □ These are the four spirits of the heavens which go forth. □ They are looked at not so much as powers, but in virtue of their unseen animating agents in providence: and this is the reason why we hear of spirits in this place. The horns in chapter 1, as was said before, show them as kingly powers strictly; the chariots and horses seem to be more intimate and to exhibit God's purpose, rather than simply to set them out as the powers themselves

□ In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; and in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses. □ The main point to observe is that of the red [\[2\]](#) we hear no more than the fact; that the black horses (which were quite absent from Zechariah 1) seem connected with those who followed the empire of Babylon (verse 8); that the white are shown to have pursued their way to the north country in the eastern world; and that the fourth or Roman chariot has a twofold description, an earlier and a later. The grisled are seen to push their way southward, which may indicate the full establishment of the empire by the battle of Actium, which decided the fate of the world in that day. But it is the bay or strong horses which sought to go, that they might walk to and fro through the earth. To these especially the word is, (verse 7) Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. The early powers had the title, and aspired after universality of dominion; the third won it by conquest of unexampled rapacity and success; the fourth alone made it good with anything approaching to permanence of power. The context here (I may say in contrast with verse 8) seems plainly to show that we should understand earth and not land in verse 7. How completely all were but carrying out in result the will of God, whatever their own ways, is shown for the comfort of the Jew even now in the close of the vision: much more will it be clear when He takes the kingdom whose right it is.

Hence the chapter furnishes then another picture, yet connected with what goes before. □ Take from the captivity, from Heldai, from Tobijah and from Jedaiah, who are come from Babylon, and go thou on that day, yea, go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah; and take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them on the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and speak unto him, saying. □ It is a further prophecy of the Branch, the Messiah, and thus confirms thoroughly what we have seen before. □ Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of Jehovah: even he shall build the temple of Jehovah; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne. □ The building of Zerubbabel was precious in Jehovah's eyes, but most of all as bringing before His eyes a greater Son of David and abiding glory when He sits a priest upon His throne. In no

sense was it true that Zerubbabel was a priest; in no sense was Joshua a king. The Messiah alone can build the glory and will display it to the glory of God here below. He is now the rejected King, a priest, the great high priest undoubtedly, but on His Father's throne, not yet on His own, as He Himself expressly declares and distinguishes in Rev. 3:21. He is now a priest after the order of Melchisedec; He will then exercise it in all its fulness of meaning (not as now Aaronically in the holiest, but) coming forth with refreshment for the conquerors over the hostile powers of the earth, blessing the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth (manifestly so then), and blessing man, Himself the channel and security of all blessing for ever. □ Even he shall build the temple of Jehovah; and he shall bear the glory. □ It is only prejudice which compels any one to bring in here the church; for the theme is clearly the kingdom, and embraces the Jews as His people on earth, as the temple is clearly that described in Ezekiel, not the New Testament habitation of God in the Spirit. □ And the counsel of peace shall be between them both. □ Anything short of the Messiah is altogether inapt. Further, it seems far-fetched and, if intelligible, rather strange doctrine that the priesthood and royalty should be personified, and the last phrase mean that the counsel of peace is □ between *them* both. □ The notion of Jew and Gentile is also intolerable. The only two persons named previously are Jehovah and the Branch. [3]

The crowns then were to be for Helem and his companions (ver. 14) not as their property but in memorial of the crowning of Joshua as the symbolic representative here of the Messiah; just as Zerubbabel was before, and as both together, sons of oil, were in Zechariah 4. What strikingly confirmed the provisional character of the then state of things and the symbol of Messiah's kingdom and the temple of Jehovah in the future is given in verse 15. □ And those from afar off shall come and build in the temple of Jehovah; and ye shall know that Jehovah hath sent me to you. And it shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of Jehovah your God. □ So the passage abruptly terminates. Gentiles should come and help toward the temple of Jehovah which Messiah is to build (which could not be the one then in course of building, nor surely Herod's); and the Jews are left in this inexpressible solemnity on that hinge of personal responsibility, just indeed but ever fatal to the first man.

In the fourth year of king Darius we find a strain of prophecy, but broken up like the former into various sections. As to the idea that there was any different writer, it need scarce be said that it is a dream, and quite unworthy of serious consideration for a Christian One may in grace notice it for the sake of others, and seek the removal of the diligently gathered difficulties; but there is no sufficient internal ground whatever for such a thought. There is, it is true, the remarkable fact that Matthew, in quoting words in Zechariah 11, gives us the name of Jeremiah. But this is merely a difficulty, not a ground for denying Zechariah's title to the latter half or the last quarter of his prophecy. It is quite possible that Jeremiah may have predicted the same thing, and that Zechariah may have written what Jeremiah predicted, without affirming that this is the solution of the difficulty. Again, it appears that it was customary among the Jews in quoting from the prophets to take the great characteristic prophet, and to class others under his name. Thus there is a choice of solutions of the particular difficulty in question, which the late Dean of Canterbury was not justified in branding a □ means of evading, □ any more than he is to be followed in the frightful alternative of imputing an inaccurate memory to the evangelist and so compromising the Gospel. But in no way does the point fairly touch Zechariah, though some no doubt would like thereby to lower both the Old Testament and the New. It is enough to notice these facts by the way, in order not to be detained by such external points, while Biding any who may be perplexed by such an objection.

But it is plain that in the latter half of Zechariah the first two chapters are on the surface distinct from what follows. The occasion of Zechariah 7, 8 was the fact that certain feasts had been instituted by the Jews in consequence of the captivity. They were naturally much distressed that the hand of God should be stretched out against them, as proved by the humiliation to which they were reduced before the whole world. Hence they had recourse to fasts instituted for the purpose of bewailing their sins and imploring mercy before God. Some of these Jews felt now that Jehovah had appeared for the remnant

and brought them back into the land; and, the temple approaching its completion, the continuance of these fasts was hardly suitable. This gives occasion accordingly to the prophet for a new communication from God. □ Then came the word of Jehovah of hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? Should ye not hear the words which Jehovah hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity. □

□ Execute true judgment (adds he), and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother. □ Ordinances, whatever they may do, never take the place of practical righteousness, and still less of faith, in the sight of God. There may be, there is often, the utmost zeal for an external institution where the heart is far from Him. Need it be said how perfectly this falls in both with Isaiah before the captivity, and with the Saviour's application of Isaiah to the state of things then in Israel? But while the prophet shows how Jehovah had scattered the people, spite of the ritual observances, and that consequently having recourse to them was in no way the true remedy for a low or evil condition, although they might have their place along with the weightier matters, he fully predicts the blessing in store for Jerusalem. □ Thus saith Jehovah of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury. Thus saith Jehovah; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. □ He does not say that He *was*, but that He *would be*. □ And Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of Jehovah of hosts the holy mountain. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. □ Mark, □ every man: □ he is looking onward to the day when death should not be, as we are told in Isaiah. □ Every man with his staff in his hand for very age □ □ not that there should not be the young, but that the old should not vanish away. It is the reversal of all past history □ □ and he died, □ □ and he died. □ Under Messiah men will go on living and last out the whole millennial reign. □ And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith Jehovah of hosts. □ Not so; God is always waiting for that day. □ Thus saith Jehovah of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people. □ Thus the sentence will be taken off from them. □ They shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness. □ Then all the degradation to which they had been so righteously condemned would be completely effaced in the day of renewed and better and enduring glory for Israel.

This accordingly is turned to present practical profit in what follows. The chapter ends with showing that fasts should be changed into feasts, and sorrow into gladness. Compare the inverse in Matt. 9 in answer to the complaining disciples of John.) And not only should this blessedness be for Israel, but □ in those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall 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. □ Such will be the complete change of the day of Jehovah.

Then we enter on two great burdens: the first of them running on from Zechariah 9 to the end of Zechariah 11; and the next taking up some special features of chapter 11, which are expanded in the last burden to the end of the book.

As to the first, beginning with chapter 11, it is said, □ The burden of the word of Jehovah in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward Jehovah. □ We find accordingly the judgment of the nations which were near at hand. But further, while there should be the overthrow of Tyre and Sidon □ while there should be sorrow therefore for Ashkelon and Gaza □ it is written that there should be a state of confusion in Judah. But Jehovah would undertake the cause of the people. □ And I will encamp about mine house because of the

army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes. □ This brings in the Messiah. □ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. □ We know how this is applied by the evangelists, just so far as was true then, and no farther, leaving for future fulfilment what did not then apply. It would be hard to wish for a finer instance of scripture exactitude where all is perfect. The mode of citation clearly shows the admirable manner in which the Holy Ghost is pleased to employ the Old Testament. There is first of all His title, and then His character, but *not* the consequences for others, of which unbelief deferred the accomplishment.

As to the early verses of the chapter there seems no reason to question that they distinctly apply to the march of Alexander's army and the heavy blows struck north and south of Judea after the battle of Issus (as well as certain successes of Jews long afterwards over Greeks), and above all to Jehovah's then protection of His house when the conqueror of the east passed by on his return westward to secure the coasts of the Mediterranean before pushing into the interior of Asia (ver. 8). Even rationalists admit the exact parallel between the list of his captures and the places which gave him especial trouble in besieging them, as Tyre and Gaza; as well as the long subsequent Maccabean victories. But plain as this is and in its measure important, how much more so is it to see that as a whole the prophecy like others is of no isolated interpretation? It joins all the rest in converging on the great events of the last days when the King shall make good the sure mercies of David, now established in His resurrection, by coming to them, not as before in humiliation but in power and glory (though that be the pledge of this), and sounding the trumpet as He defends themselves visibly (not His house as erst invisibly in His providence), and saving them in that day as the flock of His people, when they shall be more conspicuous for strength against all adversaries than they have ever been for weakness and fear, and they shall walk up and down in His name, saith Jehovah.

The prophecy most plainly renews the time of the judgment when Jehovah is seen cutting off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse and the battle bow from Jerusalem. At that very time He will undertake for the Jew. □ Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee; when I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. □ This is the more remarkable, because Greece was then coming forward and soon going to overthrow the Persian master of Israel; but the day comes when the sons of Zion shall surely overthrow Greece. If this has never yet been, it remains to be. □ And Jehovah shall be seen over them. □ This clearly marks when the accomplishment must be, even when the glory of Jehovah shall be manifested in this world. □ And Jehovah shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and Jehovah God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. □ It is really no small absurdity to apply all this to anything that has ever been since here below.

We see that Greece does not merge in the beast when it rises from the abyss according to the energetic symbolical language of the Revelation. We must leave scope for all the actors in the final crisis, for the eastern as well as the western powers, and others of less moment who move rather independently. The last resuscitated empire will represent the previous universal empires as to their principles, □ that is Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece, □ but will not have their dominions.

The principle is one thing, their territorial possessions another. It seems plain from Daniel 2 that there will be a representative of all in that day when the blow falls on the feet of iron-clay and breaks them to pieces. Then we find the gold and silver and the brass and iron not all changed into iron, but each with a representative, not excepting even Babylon, although the Roman only retain among them imperial power. Thus there will be a representative of Persia, and so it exists now. There will be a representative of Greece, as we know it has begun to be represented afresh, but it will assume, I suppose, a more

definite form and greater importance. Assyria, as we have frequently seen, will be represented by the king of the north where the Ottoman Porte is now □ I do not say properly or formally Russian, but certainly a power in league with Russia, subservient to its policy and maintained by its influence. The remoter power will be its suzerain, which seems to me implied in Daniel's description (Dan. 8:24). It will be an energetic power, which is far from being true now any more than of Greece. As we know, neither can keep head against external foes or maintain order in their own dominions: such is their state of prostration or disorganisation. But there will be a vast development, and with it may be great rapidity. It would appear that much of it will be brought about by Russian power, no doubt to further their aggressive policy. I believe that this lies before Greece; but, coming into collision later with Judah, its total overthrow is shown here in a general way. □ Jehovah of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar. And Jehovah their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people. □ Thus we see the union of future power and glory on earth with the statement that He should come having salvation. □ For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! □ The general beneficence of His reign follows.

In Zechariah 10 it is shown how God will make use of Judah and Ephraim in that day. He will fight not merely *for* them, but in and by them. It is a great mistake to suppose that all will be accomplished by Jehovah single-handed. There is a judgment which He will execute on His appearing from heaven, in which the Jews can have no part whatever, namely, the destruction of the beast and the false prophet, with the flower of the rank and power of the revived Roman empire. Thus the western powers will be completely crushed by the Lord coming in judgment from heaven. After that He will use both Judah and Ephraim, as we see here, to deal with other refractory Gentiles. □ When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion; □ and so He further says: □ Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together. □ That clearly shows the meaning. □ And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight. □ [\[4\]](#)

But this judgment is not a description of the empire and its doom, with that of its adherents. The western powers will have gone deeper in evil, and must fare accordingly. Having enjoyed unexampled privileges, they will finally turn them to the boldest impiety and lawlessness, coupled with the highest pride; and so the Lord reserves the blow to Himself. When the last Assyrian comes up against the land, he will find the two tribes there; and perhaps on the last occasion (for there are two attacks on the city of Jerusalem in the future) Israel may be there too, as we shall find further on in this prophecy. The same thing, I think, appears in Isaiah 38, 39. We can easily understand the flocking thither of Ephraim between the two assaults. This is the main question that might be raised. The Lord here promises to strengthen the house of Judah, and save the house of Joseph. Most evidently, therefore, it is the future ingathering of the whole nation, the □ all Israel □ that is to be saved. □ I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased. And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria. □ It is not a mere remnant returning from Babylon, but a complete ingathering of the people from every quarter, taking the north and the south more particularly into account, and specifying them here. Then Jehovah summarily puts down the pride and power of all their enemies. □ And I will strengthen them in Jehovah; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith Jehovah. □

But Zechariah 11 is still more solemn, and brings other and deeper elements into the final scene. □ Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down. □ They are vivid figures of judgment on the outward strength and the dignity of the Jews. The rulers are in grief and dismay at their spoliation when their hopes once more beat high. Their river, even then as ever

figuring national resource and power, suffered no less. □ There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled. □ The nations are gathering against Jerusalem. □ Thus saith Jehovah my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter. □ Flock of the slaughter □ means those of Israel that men devoted to persecution, to whom the Lord's heart specially turned: □ Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be Jehovah; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not. □ These godly Jews are in peculiar distress and danger. While the Jews themselves as a whole are hated by the nations, the true-hearted ones are hateful to their own brethren. Thus their state is outwardly deplorable. □ For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith Jehovah: but 10, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them. □ It is the final trouble of Jerusalem. □ And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. □

The crisis brings to light a remarkable under-current. What lay at the bottom? and how can one account for such a state of things? The prophet accordingly in a symbolical method, which shows us the same hand and mind as the earlier part of the book where it abounds, proceeds to explain how it came to pass. □ And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock. □ As we saw with Joshua and Zerubbabel before, so now the prophet personates first of all the Messiah, and then the Anti-Messiah. From verse 7 to 14 he personates the Christ; from verse 15 to the end he personates Antichrist, as he was directed.

□ I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock. □ These staves represent the authority that properly belongs to the Messiah. The first staff he breaks in verse 10. This is in view of the awful condition of the Jews. □ Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me. □ There was no sympathy between Christ and those who led or misled the people □ the shepherds, as they are called, who do not answer to Christian ministers, as the ignorant are apt to fancy, but mean the chief government of the nation. □ Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and the rest eat every one the flesh of another. □ Then Jehovah Messiah, personated by the prophet, takes His staff, even Beauty, and cuts it asunder, that He might break His covenant that He had made with all peoples. It is not the people of Israel, but all the nations in relationship with Him.

In short the rejection of the Messiah made it impossible to gather all nations. This seems a plain allusion to the great prophecy of Jacob: □ The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet till Shiloh come; and to him shall the gathering [or obedience] of the peoples be. □ The condition of the Jews made it no longer a question of accomplishing this great and blessed purpose of His kingdom. The Hebrew word in ver. 10 signifies □ peoples; □ and so it is in Genesis 49:10: □ To him shall the gathering of the *peoples* be. □ It is very important for the proper understanding of both. One letter makes all the difference.

Thus the unreadiness morally of the Jews for the Messiah made it impossible to gather the peoples. Their sight was abhorrent to Him, and in point of fact He was not tolerable to them. There was no groundwork therefore for gathering the peoples. It could not be then and must be postponed, but not abandoned save only for the present. So the staff Beauty was broken, the image of the authority of God to carry out this end now. But He will surely put it in force on behalf of all the peoples whom He will gather around Israel when they bow and bless their Messiah. For the time it disappears. The staff was broken in that day; and so the poor of the flock who waited upon Him knew that it was the word of Jehovah. His secret is with those that fear Him.

Then comes another development far more awful and of endless moment. □ And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. □ It was not only that the purpose of gathering the nations was postponed, but Christ also was sold unto

death by His own! and at what a price! □He came unto his own, and his own received him not. □ The consequence was the other staff had to be broken. □Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands. □ This went far beyond interfering with the gathering of the peoples; its effect was □to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. □ God would not even gather Israel now, Not only would He not gather the nations round the Messiah according to His earthly purpose of blessing; but He would not even assemble the Jewish people. Thus the rejection of Jesus during His life made it impossible to gather the Gentiles, the rejection of Jesus in His death broke for the time all hopes of gathering Israel. The Jews must be scattered instead of Israel being gathered. All such plans were shattered for the time.

This introduces at once the final struggle. The whole of the wonderful dealings of God with Christianity are passed over. They are not, and could not be, the proper theme of Old Testament prophecy, though words here and there leave room for and illustrate most important points and prove that all was known from the beginning. The immense system of the church, the mystery of Christ, fills up the gap between verses 14 and 15, which last at once plunges us into the dismal circumstances at the end of the age. □And Jehovah said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. □ Having brought in Christ up to His death, now he brings in the Antichrist as it were straight upon Him. Obviously there is a moral link and a real allusive contrast between the two. So He Himself tells the Jews in John v. that if they would not have Him who came in the Father's name, they would receive the one who comes in his own name. If in the evangelist the two are brought together, we need not wonder that Zechariah does the same after his manner. □Take unto thee the instruments of a foolish shepherd. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still. □ The exact contrary Christ did: □but he [the Antichrist □ sad contrast!] shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened. □ The judgment of God shall be upon him. It is described here in terms suitable to a shepherd; but we know how it will be accomplished in the Antichrist.

Then comes the last burden of the prophet, which sets out the consummation in great prominence: only instead of confining us to an account of this alone, he interweaves once more a beautiful allusion to Christ the suffering man, yet we shall find nothing detailed, but connected with the subject in hand.

□The burden of the word of Jehovah for Israel, saith Jehovah. □ Let it be marked here, that the whole people are before Him now. It is not merely Judah. □The burden of the word of Jehovah for Israel, saith Jehovah, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, [it is the peoples again, not of course the Jews,] when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all peoples: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. In that day, saith Jehovah, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in Jehovah of hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. □ This, of course the end of the age, is to bring in the full time of blessing for Jerusalem, out of that furnace of affliction, when all nations hang around with open mouth to devour, but in vain. They will not only be disappointed, but themselves be devoured of Him who in that day reverses the long penalty, and protects Jerusalem for evermore.

But it would involve prophecy in miserable confusion to assume that these mean the western powers,

which at this time will have been totally overthrown by the Lord's judgment, as already explained. (Rev. 19) All nations must mean here the hostile Gentiles who take up arms against Israel, after the destruction of the beast, and his vassal king of the west, with their false prophet ally in Jerusalem. They are the nations in league with the king of the north, and quite opposed to the beast, though openly the antagonist of Israel. In fact all nations in the prophets never mean the western powers, but all that remain after the ruin of the beast and the horns. This may be to some an important help in interpreting these scriptures. The western powers are only a part of the nations, a particularly favoured and responsible part, with a defined relation to the Jew and even Christ, both in the past and in the future. Their position is peculiar and their responsibility; so their guilt is apart, and their judgment also. The western powers compose a special parenthesis; their connection is exclusively with the Jews, never with Israel. If this is apprehended, it may serve to make distinctions plain, which are all-important to him who would understand the divine chart of unfulfilled as well as fulfilled prophecy.

□Every horse□ here has been frequently referred to as a great array of western cavalry: why it should be □western□ does not appear. I am sorry to differ from any who say so; but the inference completely fails. There is no doubt about the cavalry: whence it comes depends on no theory, but on the accurate and full examination of scripture as to that time. I think that all who so take it mistake the true bearing, not of this passage only, but of the then situation. Besides, easterns are more remarkable for cavalry than westerns in general. Infantry was always the right hand of Roman armies; and so it has continued in the west, and will, I doubt not, spite of modern inventions, to the last. But the easterns are described as very particularly notorious for their abundance of fine and showy cavalry. Other evidence may appear as we go on, which I trust will commend itself to all unprejudiced minds; for the point is not without importance. It is a difference found among prophetic students generally, growing out of the confirmed habits of thought which tended to make everything of the beast and his satellites the ten kings.

Indeed the reason lies further back still; for it clearly is an off-shoot of the old system which loved to see the Pope in every evil one whom scripture denounces as the enemy of God's people. It was really therefore the narrowness of mind which shut the vast field of prophecy up to the limits of the circumstances which we Christians or rather Protestants were connected with. In truth, properly speaking, this is not the scheme of prophecy at all. As the rule, it embraces for its subject-matter the earth and all the nations of which the Assyrian will be the head. The imperial course of the four beasts is an exceptional intermediate system, of which Daniel treats, and Zechariah in a measure, but only touched incidentally by the general stream of the prophets greater or lesser. It is no doubt of deep interest, but still a very small part of the prophetic vista.

We must then distinguish between the Lord appearing in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that know not God, etc., and the earthly judgments He will after a certain interval execute, as in Zechariah 12. This is not His appearing to destroy the beast and the false prophet. It is afterwards that He makes Jerusalem a cup of trembling to the nations. His first judgment is on the apostates, whether Jews or Gentiles. Jerusalem will tremble for her own sins and punishment. Instead of its being as yet a cup of trembling to others, the city must bow under the Lord's righteous dealing with her own misdeeds. But when the Gentiles rise up against the chosen city, □In that day shall Jehovah defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem.□ When He appears in glory from heaven, and the beast and the false prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire, there will be no question of such a defence of the city still defiled, but of purging it of the rebels. The man of sin will have been sitting as God in the temple of God, who will not have the iniquity passed lightly over; neither on the other hand will He turn His back after His appearing till the evil is judged thoroughly, and He can reign in righteousness over them. □In that day shall Jehovah defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David.□ When Antichrist was suddenly overwhelmed, the Jews took no part whatever in that most solemn act. Long before, according to His warning (Matt 24:16), the godly ones had fled from Jerusalem. They were not inhabitants of Jerusalem from the day the abomination of desolation was set up in the sanctuary, but

had deaf here and there through horror at their sin, and for refuge from the predicted tribulation. □ And the house of David shall be as God, □ as the angel of Jehovah before them. And it shall come to pass in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. □

Here again the difference of time and circumstance is as plain as can well be conceived. □ And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me [5] whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart. □ Thus our prophet gives the general account of Jehovah's gracious action, when He espouses the cause of the remnant already delivered from the inward evil, and exposed to the attacks of the nations who believe not that Messiah is with His people. And now that this mighty overthrow of the gathered Gentiles has been wrought, an immensely deepened spiritual work goes on in their souls. The word of God enters profoundly into their conscience, the effect of which is that each retires alone as it were before God. For indeed their grief of heart is such that they feel the need of having to do with Him alone: if they could bear another's presence than His against whom they had so variously and long sinned, what could any other avail at such an hour? No; they must go to the Lord with it all □ to the very One who is not more surely their Jehovah-Elohim than their pierced Messiah! It is not despairing remorse, but a gracious sorrow. It is self-judgment that takes to heart their own sin, that looks back at all without excusing any, that takes God's side against every evil way, and above the rest their shameless rejection of His Messiah. All, no matter how far back, own it as their own sin. So they mourn as for their only son □ a mourning in love, but with the deepest pain and shame that they had so treated Him who loved them perfectly. This is what they most feel now □ it was against Him.

Thus too, we find certain families mentioned with a very peculiar choice and beauty. The family, we are told, of the house of David, beginning with the very highest or royal line. □ They mourn, □ as it is said, □ the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart. □ But the family of the reproving prophet is also there: the descendants of Nathan are mourning too. Instead of now reproving David, they unsparingly judge themselves, and confess each his own sin. Grace no doubt can identify itself with others' sins; but this cannot rightly be unless one walks with God in pure conscience. Here it is the thorough repentance of those who are the first to own their long and guilty blindness. Hence it will be no question of David exposed before Nathan, or of Nathan dealing with David: each will find his own sin, and all will deplore their common sin against the Messiah.

But further still, this might be said to be when the nation was grown up into a maturity of greatness. The work, however, will go farther back still; it will mount right up to the beginning. For as we read, □ The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart. □ Notoriously Levi and Simeon, [6] or Shimei, were the very heads who conspired in revenge for their sister Dinah, and caused the names of the sons of Jacob to stink in the earliest days; and now the posterity of the two who were together in their cruel wickedness are named together in bending alone to confess each his guilt before Jehovah. There is no more beautiful description of the power of divine grace in searching the heart, fully trusting in the Lord, yet condemning one's sins to the uttermost. There is nothing finer in its way than the view it gives of the operation of the Spirit on the conscience, which so isolates the soul that we hear of the husbands apart, and their wives apart. The closest relationship is as nothing in presence of sin and God as its judge. Each must be alone: the husband apart and the wife apart, shut out from every influence and thought save of what He is spite of what each had been to Him whom they pierced, yet who died for them. The whole work must be done □ the work not of deliverance

only, but of restoration in conscience before God.

It is not that they were not quickened before, nor that they only now first knew real compunction of conscience by the Spirit of God. But the dealing of the soul with God and under His truth is far more profound when the sense of danger is gone and the power of God has wrought unmistakable deliverance. In this case, as we have seen, not only was the beast destroyed who rose up against the Lamb, but now the open and earthly enemies of Israel. The rich and manifest mercy opens the heart, and conscience unburdens itself before God.

It seems to be after the destruction of the king of the north. Till then the Jews will be harassed and threatened. They will be in circumstances of danger and difficulty until the Lord has won the final victory for them. Not till then will there be the full work in their souls. He can then use them freely, as they can enjoy Him without a question. They will have been converted before; but this brings them by self-judgment in all that dishonoured and grieved Him into the communion of His mind and love. So true is the distinction between the two things for the Israelite as well as the Christian.

□ 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. □ It is not merely that they will □ look on him whom they have pierced, □ but besides there is the washing of water by the word. There is no such thing in scripture as a fountain of blood, spite of our own poet Cowper. To be cleansed with blood is not enough. We need to be bathed in water and to wash our feet also day by day. And all this we have in our Lord Jesus. □ This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. □ He cleanses His people morally as well as atones for them.

But in Zechariah 13 it is the water, not the blood. Here the Spirit uses the word as the moral power of the death of Christ doubtless; but still it is the word. Along with expiation, before God we need communion with the truth practically. Then appears the result for others. □ And it shall come to pass in that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. □ Everything now is weighed that was offensive to God's character. □ And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of Jehovah. □ How many and grave had been the defilements, uncleannesses, and false prophesyings in the days of Antichrist! False Christs and false prophets had abounded then. All this will now be completely purged out.

□ And his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. □ They will play the part of Phinehas now in indignation at what dishonours the Lord. □ And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive. □ Most seem disposed to take the two next verses as a continuation of the deceiver, who now repudiates any such claim, professes nothing but a mean condition, and either pretends that the idolatrous marks in his hands were the effects of maiming in grief for friends, or alleges that he was already punished for life, though not put to death for his fault.

This may be a simple enough meaning; but it certainly presents a poor sense of verse 6. Others accordingly apply it to Christ thus: □ But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man acquired me as a slave from my youth. □ This last is a difficult passage, because it brings in Christ in so abrupt a manner; if I mistake not, contrasted with the false prophets, as we saw similarly with the shepherds. Just as in Zechariah 11 so in this, He is heard so suddenly that it is not easy to decide where Christ begins; but I suppose it to be from verse 5, which shows that the Lord was not in any way connected with the schools of men. He accepted the place of a Nazarene which God in His wisdom gave Him according to the record. For man had acquired Him as a slave from His youth. Compare the Hebrew servant in Exodus 21. He was the bondman of all, so much the more because He was the perfect

servant of God. It is a figurative expression as applied to Christ; for I am now assuming this to be the true meaning. □ And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. □ It can hardly be doubted save by an unbeliever that verse 7 applies to Christ. There may be a question about the preceding verses, but it is better in my opinion to take in all.

Then is heard a voice still more solemn. It is not wolves now, but God. □ Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. □ There is no more difficulty in □ the sword □ here than in Zechariah 11:17, where it is spoken of for the judgment of the worthless shepherd: it is used figuratively as to both for a violent end of life; but O how deep the contrast! No longer do we hear of deceivers, or idolaters, or other wicked persons, who are outwardly and ostensibly in the house of the Messiah's friends; but Jehovah Himself gives Him up to complete humiliation and rejection. A most solemn consideration; and how true! For we must remember that whatever the mischievous and miserable hatred of the Jews against the Messiah, it could have availed nothing unless Jehovah had allowed it for His own mighty purposes; and this He did. Consequently here it is applied to Him. □ Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. □ Out of the rejection of Christ comes all blessing to those that are His □ out of that which was His unexampled shame and His unutterable sorrow in the cross; and this, in every point of view, not only for the counsels of grace, but also in the government of God. There is nothing holy in God which is not vindicated by it; there is nothing gracious toward man for which it has not laid a righteous ground.

At the same time the discerning government of God will have its way, for it is said here, □ And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. □ The dross must perish, and what is precious be refined and tried. His people must go through trouble. □ They shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, Jehovah is my God. □ It is humiliating to read the comments even of such a man as Calvin, starting with the erroneous confusion of the church with the Jews in such a passage as this: □ For when three hundred shall profess to worship God, one hundred only, says Zechariah, shall be saved. □ Not so; it is only a mistaken expositor who says so, applying to the church in general what is really said of the Jews in their last crisis.

Finally, Zechariah 14 shows us how all this is brought out. □ Behold, the day of Jehovah cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. □ It is a truly singular state of things. The siege has taken place, with the king of the north at the head of all these nations. It is clearly not the beast who, instead of besieging Jerusalem, supports the false prophet with all his might, and the latter is □ the king □ who reigns in Jerusalem, whom □ the many □ accept as the Messiah and Jehovah of Israel. The king of the north is an outside enemy who at the head of all the nations of the east attacks Jerusalem. We must always remember that the man of sin, or the Antichrist, is inside Jerusalem; he is nowhere said to besiege it, for it is too submissive to him as □ the king. □ With him the beast and his ten kings make common cause. The Assyrian or □ king of the north □ is at the head of all the opposed external nations.

This is an important point to bear in mind, and contributes to make the general outline plain. The man of sin, the Antichrist, is accepted by the Jews as the Messiah, and He will reign over the land with the highest pretensions. But he none the less hates and is hated by the king of the north, who will seek his ruin and the capture of Jerusalem. Two bad princes may bitterly hate one another, because they are each striving to get the mastery. So the man of sin is not only the lawless enemy of God, but also obnoxious to the ambitious leader of the eastern powers, namely, the Assyrian, who will stand forward the then

representative of what may be called the old heathen policy, as well as of modern Russian feeling. Russia will indeed oppose to the last the powers of the west; as it will also be destroyed by the distinct judgment of God (Ezekiel 38, 39) at a different time and in a somewhat different way from the antichristian coalition. [7] There is nothing to choose between them. The western powers have no ground to glory over Russia, unless it be that they are to be more openly apostate and audacious, as they will also be destroyed first. But the doom of the Assyrian will be substantially similar to that of the beast and the false prophet; for if the beast and the false prophet be thrown alive into the lake of fire, the Assyrian will be so a little later. Isaiah 30 reveals that the Assyrian is to have Tophet prepared for him as well as for the king □ the anti-Messiah. □For the king also [not □yea□] it is prepared;□ but the Assyrian will be cast alive into the lake of fire no less than the beast and the false prophet, which last is the Antichrist. The Lord Jesus will appear on both these occasions and take the lead in them, first of all from heaven dealing with the beast and the false prophet, then on the earth and now as the king of Israel, though in an infinitely glorious way, disposing of the Assyrian at the head of all the combined nations who were not destroyed with the beast.

It is to be hoped that these distinctions of scripture may help souls and not perplex them; for it need hardly be said that the object is to solve the chief difficulties by which most students of the prophetic word are arrested. At the same time it is quite possible that those to whom the subject is somewhat new, or who have not maturely considered it, may at first find difficulties suggested or increased, which is necessarily the case in any untrodden and varied ground. But I am satisfied that the true line of things has been pointed out. For, while difficulties may first be augmented by drawing attention to the various actors in the scenes who are too often confounded to the injury of the truth, the darkening of enquirers and the strengthening of objectors, the result will be that the different persons and actions of prophecy will in the long run get cleared and settled in the minds of any who examine with care this large and momentous portion of the divine word.

Let it be observed that siege is laid by the Assyrian with all the nations who own him as leader against Jerusalem, and that the siege is partially successful, for half the city is taken. Nothing like this has ever been since Zechariah's day: still less does anything in history resemble what follows, as we shall see presently. It was not so when Ptolemy Soter took the city about B.C. 320, nor when Antiochus the Great took it B.C. 203, nor again B.C. 199, when Scopus the Egyptian general took it once more, nor the following year when it yielded to Antiochus, nor even when it was pillaged B.C. 170 by Antiochus Epiphanes, nor two years later under the frightful efforts of his army under Apollonius to destroy the city and the people, nor after that when his emissary Athenaeus profaned the sanctuary, and set up heathenism, with the utmost scorn to the law, which was followed by the exploits of the Maccabees, the issue being under Simon that the foreigner was expelled B.C. 142, and Acra demolished, as is commonly known. Under John Hyrcanus, the Syrian king Antiochus Sidetes was obliged to abandon the siege. Passing over internal or family disputes which have no possible resemblance, and the intervention of Aretas, it is impossible to identify with the prophecy Pompey's capture of the temple B.C. 63, nor Crassus' plunder of the city B.C. 54, nor the Parthian surprise B.C. 40. Herod's siege was more similar perhaps, but essentially distinct, as we shall see by and by. Neither its final destruction by Titus, nor the move of Bar-Cochba under Hadrian, calls for lengthened remarks, as they are obviously different. Nothing since bears the smallest likeness to the prophecy.

How any sensible persons can venture to say, as many have done, that the opening verses describe the past destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans is a real wonder. Waiving □the day of Jehovah□ which may no doubt apply providentially as an earnest of the great fulfilment), was that a gathering of all the nations? Is it true then that half the people went forth into captivity, and that the rest were not cut off from the city? It is in vain also to smooth over verse 3 with such words as □the Roman power was doomed in its turn to destruction.□ For what the prophet intimates is a speedy and awful overthrow, not in the course of ages and elsewhere, but as part of the same suite of events and in the neighbourhood

by a special display of divine power and glory on behalf of the Jews when at the last extremity; and this attested by the splitting of the mount of Olives toward the east and toward the west into a very great valley, half receding toward the north and half toward the south. To resolve such a carefully put geographical statement into a poetical figure, and to extract from it no more than the disciples fleeing to Pella, as Eusebius tells us, in the breaking out of the Jewish war with Rome, is to run the risk of reducing the prophets to the rank of bombastic dreamers. But the sober fact is, that the application of this chapter in the Dem. Evang. 6:18 is as dismal a specimen of forcing scripture as anything forged by the mind of a rationalist. There is this only difference between the two, that Eusebius meant well by the Bible, which is not the case with those who plume themselves on the higher criticism. But as an unfolding of the divine word they are alike misleading and I must say contemptible. He interprets the chapter of the Saviour's first advent and of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. The change of circumstance for professing Christians under Constantine seems to have turned a head which never gloried in the reproach of the cross, and led to such misinterpretation.

But there is a second siege after this first, or a second attack, at any rate, after the first success. When the Gentiles have been partially successful, Jehovah will go forth and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem on the east. This is not His coming from heaven to destroy the lawless one and his party. It is a subsequent and an earthly action. And the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of my mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. There the paragraph ends.

What is put as the last clause of the verse ought to be the beginning of a new section. These divisions are not inspired. They are only the effect of an editor's effort to give the sense, and are sometimes mistaken, as I believe the fact is here. That physical changes are meant seems to my mind beyond doubt. There will be for the alarmed Jews in that great day a complete passage made instantly by divine power through the mount of Olives a standing witness whether or not this prophecy is fulfilled. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. The distress would be immense, the danger in appearance most imminent, when safety opens by the seemingly awful door of a valley so suddenly formed for them through the solid mountain, or as it is here styled (and no wonder) the valley of my mountains. It would seem that the alarm is compared to a flight that occurred during a well-known earthquake in Uzziah's days. We can understand such a phenomenon adding to the terror of successful enemies till they know that it is the hand of God on their behalf.

After this the new section begins. And Jehovah my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. For it would be harsh to suppose that He comes afresh after His going forth and fighting against the congregated nations, as already described in verse 3. I think therefore that the context proves it must be taken as another paragraph, presenting His coming in another point of view and for other ends.

There is a peculiarity in the construction of the last clause of verse 5: And Jehovah my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. The MSS. differ too; for near forty, and all the versions, give with him; and some again follow the Rabbis in understanding with thee of Jerusalem. But the difficulty is cleared up as the text stands by seeing that the prophet turns to Jehovah who is thus to be seen interfering for the Jew, and for the greater force exclaims Jehovah my God shall come, following up this sudden change by describing in such a scene the presence of others foreseen in his vision, and all the saints with thee. Zechariah supposes himself addressing Jehovah in these words.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark [or possibly and dark]. [8] To take this as the prediction of a period of unmitigated calamity, which may be regarded as

comprehending the long centuries of Jewish suffering since Titus took the city, is an idea natural to such as can interpret the preceding verses of that famous siege. The phraseology in the close of the verse is hard. The text would mean that the precious lights should withdraw themselves; others with the Keri take it as □ shall not be, but condensed darkness, □ or thick fog.

But the incalculably great event of the day is plain enough, having its effect not only on the earth, but even in the heavens. This was reserved for the new section. The earthly fact and the destruction of foes were mentioned in the former part; another and higher fact with its consequences falls under the latter. Now the prophet looks at Jehovah coming with His holy ones □ not so much here to fight a battle, but His saints coming with Him. This has an evidently deeper purpose. Hence the marked outward change which introduces that day, in order that in every way it may stand out distinctly from all before. It is absurdly wrong to dislocate verse 7 from verse 6, as if a time wholly different were intended. Not so; it is the continuation of the same unique circumstances. Hence there will be no such changes as men have known through light and darkness following each other, but it shall be one day which shall be known to Jehovah □ not day succeeding night, □ but it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light. □ God thus marks the new era as significantly by a revolution in the heavens as He had by His intervention and the rent of mount Olivet on the earth. Thus evidently is there another paragraph introducing another order of events, with their accompaniments and effects.

But what follows is not dreadful like the yawning mountain, but most encouraging. At the evening time, instead of the darkness of night coming on, the brightness of the day continues. If the rending of Olivet was in keeping with the hopeless confusion from which they had to emerge, when all things must be shaken, the dawn of a new and brighter day shines on all from above. □ And it shall be in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. □ Unlike the torrents of the desert which dry up in time of heat, this should be ever flowing. It is a literal fact, I suppose, but highly significant of spiritual blessing at the same time. From the holy city go forth westward and eastward the waters which are destined to heal the long miseries of a world groaning under Satan's thralldom, themselves the effect and the symbol of the rich blessing which Jehovah then diffuses far and wide, and this above all the changes ordinary in nature: in summer and in winter it shall be. Drought and frost will not affect them; neither will the obstruction of the hilly ground toward the west: the waters shall flow as steadily to the great sea on the west as to the Dead Sea on the east.

In this connection the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea are specially named. For it may be well to explain that in Hebrew the east is reckoned the point at which one looks, and the west is thus behind the spectator Hence Arabia is called the land of the right hand, as the north would be the left. Of course therefore to one with Palestine as his stand-point and thus facing, the Dead Sea would be in front and the Mediterranean in the rear.

But there are better blessings still. □ In that day there shall be one Jehovah, and his name one. □ Idols fall; the King of kings reigns without rival or dispute. This is explicit, as if to cut off all possibility of evasion on the plea of previous figurative language. Who can pretend that it is so here?

A chart minutely distinct is appended, which refutes all pretence of heavenly glory being meant, or the spiritual blessing we have now in Christ: □ All the land shall be turned as into a plain from Geba [in Benjamin on the northern frontier of the kingdom of Judah] to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; and it shall be lifted up and inhabited in its place [the city on its old site] from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate up to the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's wine-presses. And they shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more curse; and Jerusalem shall dwell in safety. □ Then in verses 12-15 we learn the provision for the due maintenance of order and honour in the earth. The awful judgment of the nations which fought against Jerusalem is set forth. We see the last sample of this stroke in Ezekiel 38, 39 before peace flows like a river. It is really painful to see how Catholics like C. a Lapide

and Protestants like Venema pare down the glorious hopes of Israel to the circumstances of the Maccabean times.

From verse 16 we have the regulation of the homage imposed on the residue of those hostile nations during the kingdom. Its proper theocratic character is unquestionable, and too distinct from the nature of Christianity to call for argument. □ And it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which come against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith Jehovah will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. □ I do not pretend to say how, or how far, all the nations will attend the final feast of ingathering, the type of glory: the fact is certain, and God will see to its fulfilment. Jerusalem thus, as the city of the great King, is the religious metropolis of the earth; and there all must be at least represented year by year. We are not warranted in concluding that absence of the Passover here implies that it will not then be celebrated; for we know from the end of Ezekiel (which clearly speaks of the same time and circumstances) that it will be observed as well as the feast of Tabernacles, but *not* Pentecost, the characteristic feast which finds its full meaning exhausted in the church that now is, and therefore appears in God's wisdom to lapse. To refer the close of Ezekiel to the post-captivity state is to despise unwittingly both scripture and the facts, in order to avoid the divine testimony to the total change of dispensation at the end of this age. [9] As Egypt might be thought unaffected by the penal want of rain in case of failure to come up, the punishment is expressly said to fall there.

But so thorough and complete would be the change, that holiness pervades things the most common. The very pots, the humblest utensils in Jehovah's house, □ shall be like the bowls before the altar □ □ those that were most holy. □ Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto Jehovah: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of Jehovah of hosts. □ I admit the curse of a mercenary caste of religious teachers, and we see what a stumbling-block the covetousness of the Jewish priesthood proved in Israel; but I see no reason to abandon the simple force of Canaanite here, while allowing broad and deep principles as well as facts. He was in the land when Abram entered it; he was not banished from the land by the victories of Joshua. The enemy, never fully expelled before, should vanish then. All is to be according to God, as far as this can be in the earth till God in the most absolute way make all things new. Who can wonder when Jehovah takes the kingdom?

[1] There is a various reading in one of De Rossi's copies which means their iniquity, which seems to have been read by the LXX, Arabic and Syriac, and is preferred by not a few moderns.

[2] □ The red □ in this connection here presents a difficulty at first sight when compared with chap. 1 where the second empire is so characterised. But we must not forget that abstractions alone meet symbols. And Babylon in its day had been an instrument of God's judgment, as Persia afterwards became to Babylon itself. Hence Persia might be seen of such a colour among the three, as Babylon had been when the first of the four.

[3] There seems to me no force in Dathe's objection: □ quondam enim Deus in toto hoc loco loquitur, affixum in *senehem* non potest ad Jovam referri; □ for Jehovah does not speak of Himself in the first but in the third person. This therefore rather confirms than sets aside the reference to Jehovah and the Branch.

[4] The attempt of some freethinking Germans and others to make out two authors, if not more, by a

comparison of Zech. 9, 10 with 14 seems quite as futile as usual. If Messiah speak peace not to Israel only, but to the Gentiles □ if His rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth, what more consistent with the reign of Jehovah over all the earth? The return of the captive and dispersed Israelites is in no way compromised by the fact that half the city goes into captivity just before their final deliverance; still less is there difficulty in seeing two parts cut off, and the third going through the fire in the land, while Jerusalem has half taken and the rest not. Jehovah acts mightily for His people in Zechariah 9, and not to their exclusion in Zechariah 14. What, lastly, is to hinder Jehovah's cutting off the war-horse from Jerusalem, while the horses employed in peace bear the stamp that their masters are wholly devoted to His name? We shall see that no chapter in the prophecy deserves less than the last to be taxed with □a misty indistinctness□ The *haze* must be in the reader who says so.

[5] The reading of the Keri □on him□ instead of the textual □on me,□ seems evidently to bear the stamp of a correction designed to remove an apparent anomaly from the construction as well as to get rid of the plain truth, as the text stands that the pierced One is Jehovah. Hence the correction has even crept into the text of not a few MSS. of both Kennicott and of De Rossi. The truth is that these tamperings with the reading and the efforts of others to enfeeble the translation only show the deep moment of what is here written by the Holy Spirit. It was to escape from this text in particular that some of the Rabbis invented the absurdity of two Messiahs, Ben-Joseph and Ben-David, but even so with singular inconsistency as Mc.Caul has well shown. One may lament but need not be surprised at such a version as Mr. Leeser's who uses the transition from the first to the third person as a reason for interpolating as well as changing the natural import of the clause. He gives it thus: □They will look up towards me (for every one) whom they have thrust through.□ Even Abarbanel and other Rabbis condemned D. Kimchi's □because they pierced,□ depriving the verb of its object which is invariably expressed. What would even they have thought of introducing an imaginary one to get rid of the true one? And where is the propriety either of such rapt looking to Jehovah for □every one□ so thrust through, or for the grief beyond measure that follows in the passage? The prophet could only compare the bitter yet gracious lamentation to that for Josiah are the Jews to wail for every one they slay of their gentile assailants? And is the spirit to be poured out for an end so strange and unworthy? were it for some One incomparably glorious whom they woke up to find that they had blindly pierced, who after all appeared to save them in their last trouble, one could understand the striking force of the whole context, and especially if somehow He could unite in His person one nature entitling Him to be called Jehovah, and another which might leave Him open to be pierced.

[6] So the LXX, the Syriac and the Arabic versions.

[7] Unless Gog be identified with the Assyrian, there is DO intimation that the former is thrown alive into Tophet, as the latter is.

[8] One can hardly regard as certain the reading at the end of this verse, that of the Keri being apparently the best and well supported, especially if we give weight to the ancient versions. Translators and commentators differ widely. According to the Ketib, the sense would run, □there shall not be the light of precious things, they shall withdraw themselves,□ or be withdrawn; according to the Keri, it might be □and density□ or □but density,□ that is, darkness. Dathe, Maurer, etc. contend for the rendering □lux non erit sed frigus et gelu,□ and so the LXX. Sym. Syr. Vulg. But the process of extracting such a result seems as precarious as the result when extracted. kind is it not pitiful the comment of such a man as Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus near the Euphrates early in the fifth century, and one of the most learned and moderate of the Greek fathers, who perverts all this to the Gospel history, and finds this verse for instance fulfilled in the darkness of the cross, and the leader of the apostles warming by the fire with the high priest's servants. One wonders not that such trifling breeds or provokes rationalism.

[9] The statement in Hebrews, that where remission of sins is, there is no more offering for sin, applies to the Christian simply, and in no way forbids other facts which the prophets clearly predict of an age

wholly different and not yet arrived.