

God's Sense stands first

by C. H. SPURGEON



on the Literality of Prophecy*
[Zechariah 11:1-5]

It is evident that this vision and prophecy graciously reveal the future history of Jerusalem. You may spiritualize, if you will, and say that Jerusalem signifies the Church: but I pray you not to forget the literal meaning of such words as these in the twelfth verse—"The Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again." Jerusalem is spoken of, and Jerusalem is meant. A man with a measuring line is about to measure the length and breadth of the city; he appears to be interrupted in his work by another angel, who foretells that so greatly shall Jerusalem extend, that she will be as a town without walls, for the number of men and cattle that shall be therein.

This prophecy has not as yet been fulfilled: it may have had some partial fulfillment in those times of peace before the coming of the Saviour, but even then Jerusalem was surrounded by a triple wall; and though it is true that there was a large suburban population, yet the city was not even then "as towns without walls," nor was the glory of God in the midst of her in any eminent degree. I believe this passage refers to a happy and glorious future yet to come, when the city of Jerusalem shall have no walls, except the protection of the Lord, but shall be extended far and wide. The Jewish people and their royal city shall remain the center of the manifestations of divine glory, just as the city of London still remains the center of the metropolis; but the nations of the earth shall be joined unto the Lord: so that while Jerusalem remains the city of the Great King, the faithful among the people of all nations shall be, as it were, a suburban population to the chosen city, and the kingdom of Messiah shall extend far and wide. Jerusalem will be rebuilt in more than her former splendor; the Jews will be restored to their own land; and Messiah will reign as a prince of the house of David. We cannot understand many portions of Scripture except upon this belief. If it be so, it appears according to this prophecy that God shall be the protection of this great city, and the glory in the midst of her. All her sons shall be gathered from their distant wandering places; and where they have associated themselves with Antichrist, they shall hear the voice which saith, "Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon." Christ Himself shall fulfil His promise, "Lo, I come;" the nations shall be judged; God shall shake His hand over all lands and give them as a spoil unto His people; Zion shall sing and rejoice; her Lord and King shall dwell in the midst of her; many nations shall join themselves unto Jehovah, and He, from shore to shore shall reign, while all flesh is silent before Him, because He is raised up out of His holy habitation.

I am not given to prophesying, and I fear that the fixing of dates and periods has been exceedingly injurious to the whole system of premillennial teaching; but I think I clearly see in Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ will come—so far I go, and take my stand—that He will come personally to reign upon this earth. At His coming it appears clear to me that He will gather together the Jewish people, that Jerusalem shall become the metropolis of the new empire which shall then extend from pole to pole, from the river even to the ends of the earth. If this be a correct interpretation of prophecy, you may read the whole of this chapter through and understand it; you have the key to every

sentence: without such a belief, I see not how to interpret the prophet's meaning.

Dear friends, we may sometimes refresh our minds with a prospect of the kingdom which is soon to cover all lands, and make the sun and moon ashamed by its superior glory. We are not to indulge in prophesyings as some do, making them our spiritual food, our meat and drink; but still we may take them as choice morsels, and special delicacies set upon the table; they are condiments which may often give a sweeter taste, or if you will, a greater pungency and savor to other doctrines; prophetic views light up the crown of Jesus with a superior splendor; they make His manhood appear illustrious as we see Him still in connection with the earth: to have a kingdom here as well as there; to sit upon a throne here as well as in yonder skies; to subdue His adversaries even upon this Aceldama, as in the realm of spirits; to make even this poor earth upon which the trail of the serpent is so manifest, a place where the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

If our view of prophecy be the correct one, it seems to be in perfect harmony with all the doctrines of the gospel. God certainly did elect His people the Jews; He made a covenant with His servant Abraham, and albeit you will remind us that this was only a temporal covenant, I would remind you that it was the type of the spiritual one, and it would be an unhappy reflection for us if the typical covenant should prove to be only temporary as well as temporal; if that came to an end, and if God cast away, in any sense, the people whom He did foreknow, it might augur to us the ill foreboding that mayhap He might cast away His spiritual seed also, and that those who were chosen as the spiritual seed of Abraham, might yet be cut off from the olive into which they had been grafted. If the natural branches are cast away for ever, why not the grafted branches too? But here is our joy, the God Who swore unto His servant Abraham that to him and to his seed would He give the land for ever, hath not gone back on His word; they shall possess the land; their feet shall joyously tread its fruitful acres yet again; they shall sit every man under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and none shall make them afraid; and so the spiritual seed to whom the spiritual heritage is given as by a covenant of salt, they also shall possess their heritage for ever, and of their rightful portion no robber shall despoil them.

Now, I think it cannot be said that I have avoided the immediate meaning of the passage before us, and that I have selected the vision as a text merely to accommodate it to my own purpose. *You have now before you the intention and mind of the Spirit of God, so far as I am able to perceive it; and having spoken thus far upon it, I now feel at liberty to interpret the vision in what is commonly called a more spiritual sense, begging you, however, not to think that I make the spiritual sense override the sense I have already given, for the mind of the Spirit in the passage is ever to be respected far beyond any human accommodation; and though the accommodation may seem to be less historical and more suitable for Sabbath food to the people of God, yet remember, God's sense stands first, and our sense is only to be regarded and respected as it stands in harmony with other portions of Holy Write.*

* From a sermon preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on the words of Zechariah 11:1-5, when Mr. Spurgeon was about thirty years of age.

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