

# Christ in the Minor Prophets

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## INTRODUCTION

IN a certain city there may be seen a copy of the famous Declaration of Independence, in which the words appear to be flung down upon the parchment in the most haphazard fashion. No order is at first discernible, and one gets the impression on viewing the document that some accident must have happened to the printing machine that produced it. Instead of running on smoothly in straight lines, the sentences seem to be thrown about anyhow, and the result is most perplexing.

On further inspection, however, it begins to dawn on one that underlying all the apparent disorder there is some design. And suddenly that design stands out before the eye with startling clearness, and one sees that one is looking at a portrait of George Washington!

The words and sentences serve to form the familiar lineaments of his face. The arrangement, at first so mystifying, is now seen to have been adopted in order that Washington himself might appear in the midst of

the historic "Declaration" with which his name is so closely connected.

In reading the Minor Prophets one often finds oneself confronted by something of a similar nature. Perplexity is caused by the way that narrative, appeal, promise and prediction are often thrown together without any apparent order. Yet on closer examination one is convinced that there is a line running through each prophecy. Indeed it must be so, for these testimonies are divine. Where then shall we find a clue to the maze?

The object of this volume is to answer this question by showing that CHRIST is the theme of these twelve wonderful books. "To Him give all the prophets witness." Just as the face of Washington looks out from the old document which we have described, so the face of Christ looks out at us from these ancient prophecies. He is to be found in the little-read pages of Joel and Zephaniah as well as in the better known passages of Isaiah and Daniel. It should be our constant object, in reading the Scriptures, to see how CHRIST is presented in its different parts.

"The truth is," says the late William Kelly, "that the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, is the constant object of the Holy Ghost where He speaks of any object or office supremely excellent, no matter what its shape or nature. If it be a great priest, prophet or king; if it be a saviour, conqueror or judge, always the One whom the Holy Ghost contemplates from beginning to end is Christ; and it will be the same with our interpretation, where the Holy Ghost identifies our spiritual affections with Christ, and forms

our minds according to God's purposes and ways. Thus, in fact, the Spirit of Christ is characteristic of the Christian. Surely he of all men ought to be the first to see this running through the written Word. So, among the apostles, we find constantly in Paul—but, indeed, it belongs to the New Testament generally—this quickness of scent in the fear of the Lord, which sees Christ everywhere."

We do not, of course, find *Christianity* in the prophets, but we find CHRIST there. And we need this "quickness of scent" which perceives Him everywhere. We shall then delight to trace Him in His past humiliation and His coming glory, and to study Him, though in other connections than those in which *we* have been brought to know Him. With that which belongs to His present session at the right hand of God, with the Church, His Body, and the heavenly relationships in which we are set as members thereof, prophecy has nothing to do. But its central object is that same blessed One who has endeared Himself to us, and who has unveiled to us the heart of God.

The reader, then, will not expect to find, in the chapters that follow, any detailed exposition of the Minor Prophets. Able pens have already made such available.

On the other hand, to show how CHRIST is presented in the various prophecies, will surely be no small help in the exegesis of these twelve books. And it is this which the writer has in view, and for which he seeks grace and help from God.

# HOSEA

Chap. 1: 1, 2, 9-11.

The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beerī, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel.

The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord....

Then said God, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.

Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one Head.

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Under certain circumstances mild measures avail nothing; only those of an extreme and drastic kind are of use. The state of Israel had become such, in the days of the kings mentioned in the opening verse of the prophecy before us, that mere words were futile. They would have fallen upon ears that were utterly deaf.

So "the beginning of Jehovah's word by Hosea" was an act that must have been extremely repugnant to himself, but which should call attention in a vivid way to the backsliding state of the nation, and to the judgment that must inevitably ensue.

But the Spirit of God does not delight to dwell upon evil, though He may employ it as a dark background to set forth in all the more striking relief the glory and the blessing which are in the purpose of God for the earth.

Especially do we notice this in Hosea, where, after briefly but solemnly portraying the terrible condition of Israel, he passes on to dwell upon the glories of the day of Christ. And it is exceedingly precious to the heart that loves Him to observe how the prophecy makes all the coming blessing to centre around Him.

### THE ONE HEAD

He is first spoken of in Hosea as the one Head under which the divided nations of Judah and Israel will be reunited in that day. This He will be, not only by God's appointment, but by the choice of the people themselves. They shall *appoint themselves one Head*. Having turned with true repentance to the God of their fathers, and their stony heart being exchanged for a "heart of flesh," they will joyfully fall into line with God's gracious designs and will with one voice acclaim Him, whom God has given them, as their Head.

The breach between Israel and Judah dated back to the days that followed the reign of Solomon. Though

allowed of God in His government, it was none the less through the folly of His people that it was brought about. But when Christ gets His place in the hearts of His restored people, the breach will be for ever healed.

The unity of the people of God evidently lies very near to His heart. The Holy Spirit seems to take special delight in dwelling upon it in connection with the coming day. Elsewhere we read, "I will give them one heart and one way" (Jer. 32: 39). "And I will make them one nation. . . and one King shall be King to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided. . . any more at all. . . and they all shall have one Shepherd" (Ezek. 37: 22-24). "In that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one" (Zech. 14: 9).

If CHRIST will be the bond of unity in that day, how much more is He such to-day, when believers are members of His Body, which is one! And it is as we give Christ His place in our hearts and in our midst that *practical* unity results.

These are days when amalgamations and confederacies of all sorts are devised. To none of these would we attach much importance. But we greatly delight to see Christians laying increasing emphasis on what unites all the children of God, rather than on differences that divide them, so that there may be a drawing together on spiritual lines of those whose hearts beat true to Christ, and who "love his appearing."

**ISRAEL'S HUSBAND**

Chap. 2: 14-19.

Behold...I will give her the valley of 'Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call Me Ishi; and shalt call Me no more Baali...And I will betroth thee unto Me for ever.

In Hosea 2 we find the restoration of Israel described from the standpoint of Jehovah's faithful love. He will be known to His people by a name that expresses that love. "Thou shalt call Me Ishi (my Husband); and shalt call Me no more Baali (my Lord)." We must ever bear in mind that the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New. And in this place He, the Jehovah-Jesus known to us in grace, is addressed as Israel's Husband. After all her years of wandering and apostasy, she will be brought to know the love that has followed her unfailingly. Her coldness of heart will be gone, and warmth of affection will spring up there towards that blessed One who is Israel's Bridegroom as well as ours.

**ISRAEL'S KING**

Chap. 3: 4, 5.

For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim.

Afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.

In chapter 3 Christ is brought before us as the true David, Israel's King. The long period of scattering, when without king, or prince, or sacrifice (and without the idolatrous symbols of the false worship to which in the past they had so often had recourse) they have wandered homeless among the nations, will be over. They shall return and find the Lord and "David their King."

Regal honors will then belong to the One disowned at Calvary. Do not our hearts rejoice at the prospect? Is there one so selfish as to say: "I am not interested, because the scene referred to is not one in which I personally am concerned?" Are you not concerned in what concerns *Him*? Are you not interested in all that will give Him pleasure and conduce to His glory? When you sing, "Oh, the crowning day is coming by-and-by," is it only *your* crowning day of which you are thinking? Is it nothing to you that *His* crowning day is coming? May God deliver us all from such pitiable selfishness!

The remaining chapters of Hosea are full of instruction, but we pass over much because our search is for CHRIST in these old-time prophecies.

But it may be remarked in passing that *knowledge*, the knowledge of God, is a very great point in Hosea.

Israel's declension is traced, first of all, to her lack of knowledge concerning Jehovah's bounty, "She *did not know* that I gave her corn" (2: 8). But in the day of future glory, when Jehovah betroths her to Himself, she shall fully know Him. "*Thou shalt know the Lord*" (2: 20).



Meanwhile the prophet has to mourn over this lack of knowledge: "There is no truth . . . *nor knowledge of God* in the land" (4: 1). This was the cause of all the trouble. "My people are destroyed *for lack of knowledge*." They had "*rejected knowledge*" (4: 6).

It was this, too, that stood in the way of their return to God: "They have *not known* the Lord" (5: 4). But when repentance is wrought in them, and they are raised up, and live before God, then *shall they know*, and shall "*follow on to know* the Lord" (6: 3), and they will learn that this is more agreeable to God than anything else; "*the knowledge of God* more than burnt offerings" (6: 6).

Mere profession would not do. Though Israel cried: "My God, *we know Thee*" (8: 2), it was in vain. But even then, amid all the surrounding corruption, those who, like Hosea, groaned over it and sought the Lord should be brought into the real knowledge of His ways. "He shall understand these things . . . and *he shall know them*" (14: 9).

To know God is to be brought to the fountain-head of all blessing. There can be no happiness for the creature comparable to the revelation of the Creator in beneficence and love, and in a relationship in which He delights to have us before Him as sons. I speak now of the knowledge that is the portion of Christians. If God has revealed Himself *fully*, that means *full* blessing for us. Nothing can possibly transcend the unspeakable bliss of being brought to *know God*, in the fulness of His love, as revealed in His Son.

**ISRAEL'S REPRESENTATIVE**

Chap. 11: 1.

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

We turn, finally, to one more reference to Christ in the pages of Hosea. The quotation of this verse in Matthew 2: 15 enables us to find Christ here too. For when He came to earth He identified Himself in grace with Israel's history: the sojourn in Egypt, and the temptation in the wilderness. Where Israel had been the subject of God's preserving care, there He also trod (His faithfulness displaying itself in shining contrast to Israel's failure), so that He might, in a very real way, be able to sympathise with, to support and to succor the hearts of His people in days to come; when God shall again bring them from the lands of their oppression and cause them to pass through the wilderness (see Ezek. 20: 34, 35; Isa. 11: 16; Hos. 2: 14), before establishing them in the land which He had promised them.

# JOEL

Chap. 1: 1-19.

The word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel.

Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?

Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.

That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.

The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the Lord; the priests, the Lord's ministers, mourn.

O Lord, to Thee will I cry.

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In the days of the prophet Joel the land of Judah was visited by a terrible plague of insects. Such a thing had never been experienced before. So fearful was the scourge that generations yet unborn were to hear the story of the dire calamity which had befallen the land.

Devastation had spread on every side. With first the palmerworm, then the locust, then the cankerworm, then the caterpillar, nothing had escaped. The

vines and the fig trees were destroyed, the fields of wheat and barley were laid waste, the grass of the pastures was consumed, and the whole land lay in utter desolation. But what caused the prophet special grief amid all this sorrow was the fact that the meat offering and the drink offering were cut off from the house of the Lord. The means were no longer forthcoming to keep up these sacrifices. Twice in chapter 1 is this fact lamented, and no wonder, for the meat and drink offerings spoke of CHRIST. And now they had ceased. As God looked down from heaven there was no longer anything in Judah that presented Christ typically to His eye.

Here, then, we get the dark background of the prophecy which we are to consider, a prophecy which brightens into such glorious splendor at its close.

We must remember that all these things have a moral bearing. The desolation all around was the counterpart of the havoc that sin had wrought within. The people had grievously wandered from Jehovah, and their state was such that He could take no pleasure in them. The whole scene was one of ruin and departure from God.

Were there none that *felt* all this? None that viewed things according to God? None that groaned in secret over the condition of the land and the people?

Yes; there was Joel. No doubt there were others, godly men who feared Jehovah, just as in Elijah's day there were 7,000 who did not bow the knee to Baal. But Joel comes before us here as the one who mourned over the state of things, and carried the burden of his

people's trouble upon his spirit. And who can fail to recognize the voice of CHRIST in the way he speaks?

Who is it that speaks in vers. 6 and 7 of "*my land*," "*my vine*," and "*my fig-tree*?" Who is it that in ver. 19 cries out, in the midst of all the stress, to Jehovah as the One in whom alone a resource and refuge is to be found?

It is, I believe, the blessed Lord, in the spirit of prophecy, identifying Himself with His people in their woe, Himself feeling the pressure that is upon them, and giving voice to the feelings that the Spirit of God would produce in them by means of the trial.

Precious Saviour! With what deep delight can we, who know Him in a still more intimate way, and stand in a still closer relationship to Him, trace out His ways of grace with His people of old!

But the state of the nation was hopeless. The meat and drink offerings ceased: the people had, so to speak, lost that which was a presentation of Christ, and what possible hope could there be apart from Him?

Chap. 2: 1-13.

Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand.

A day of darkness and gloominess...there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.

And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army; for his camp is very great; for He is strong that executeth his word.

Therefore also now, saith the Lord....turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil.

In chapter 2 the whole situation is changed. God brings forward His great resource. If there was no outlook for Judah but one of darkness and despair, if their sky was covered with murky clouds without a gleam of sunshine, their extremity gives God His opportunity to bring in that which He ever had in view, and which is completely secure from all possibility of breakdown, the fruit of His own counsel.

So in chapter 2 the situation is transformed by the introduction of Mount Zion, and the prophecy forthwith carries us on into the future.

The plague of insects is then seen to be figurative of a still more terrible scourge that should come upon the land and the people of Israel in the last days (days yet to come): a time of which it could be said with even greater truth than with respect to the devastation by insects, "There hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations."

Into the details of the prophetic future I do not propose to enter, for my subject is not an exposition of the book of Joel, but to show how Christ is presented therein. But we must have some understanding of what is referred to, in order that we may see how God brings in His great resource.

In the last days, when the Jews are gathered back to their own land, and are again acknowledged by God

as His people, a great enemy will come up against them from the north. This enemy is not to be confounded with the Antichrist, nor with the great king called in Scripture "the Beast," who will reign over the empire of the west. This other enemy, who comes up against Jerusalem from the north, is frequently referred to by Isaiah, Ezekiel, Micah and other prophets, and is often spoken of as "the Assyrian." The first part of Joel too describes his invasion of the land of Israel and the manner of his army's advance upon Jerusalem. With sword and flame they spread destruction all around. "Nothing shall escape them."

But it is not to the enemy, or to the havoc that he works, that God would direct our attention by His servant Joel, but to the way He brings in Mount Zion as His resource. In connection with Mount Zion we have the utter overthrow of the enemy, and the final deliverance and blessing of God's people.

Of course, all this is yet future. But there is a passage in Hebrews 12 of which I would like to remind you: "Ye are come unto Mount Sion." Zion has not yet come; the blessing of God which will be secured for the earth in connection with it is still in abeyance. But though Zion has not yet come, we (Christians) have come to it. This is what Hebrews 12: 22 states. The meaning is clear enough. Zion is really a type of the risen Christ, the One in whom God has made His blessing sure, not on the ground of fulfilled responsibility on man's part, but on the ground of His own purpose. When everything on our side had broken down and every claim upon God was for-

feited, He was pleased to set forth Christ as His great Resource, the One in whom blessing is treasured up for man, according to His own purpose, and in such a way as to be eternally secure from all fear of breakdown or forfeiture.

I have no wish to follow in the steps of those who spiritualize the prophets, and make their references to Israel apply to the Church, and who interpret all the literal blessings promised to the chosen nation as referring in a spiritual and allegorical way to Christians. Great harm has been done in this way. When Israel is spoken of, Israel, not the Church, is meant. When the Jews are mentioned the reference is to them literally, and not to Christians.

At the same time we Christians have come to that of which the literal Zion is a type, and with this thought in mind I will ask you to look with me at the seven passages in which Joel speaks of Zion.

### **1. "Sound an Alarm"**

The first thing is that from Zion an alarm is sounded. The effect of it, in the future day, is described in 2:11. The calamity under which the people suffer is recognized as coming upon them *from God*; the devastating army was but executing His Word. Then a proclamation of God's goodness follows, and a call for fasting and repentance.

Now see how this applies to us when we think of Zion as a type of Christ. In Him we have a perfect expression of God's grace and goodness, and the first effect of that upon our souls is to bow us down in



repentance. An alarm is sounded; we acknowledge our lost condition and fall at His feet. It is a great mercy to be able to learn our state of misery in the light of the risen Christ, for by this means we learn it in the presence of infinite grace. Otherwise, like Judas, we should be filled with remorse at the discovery of our condition, and with bitterness in our hearts we should turn away, as he did, into the darkness of eternal alienation from God.

We cannot be too thankful that it is from Zion that the alarm has been sounded; that is, that the light that has shone upon us and brought us down (as it did Saul the persecutor on the road to Damascus) is the light of the grace of God in Christ risen.

## 2. "Gather the people"

Chap. 2: 15-21.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly.

Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children;

Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them;

Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things.

Again the trumpet is to be blown in Zion, not this time to "sound an alarm," but to gather the people to-

gether that they may learn how God is going to intervene for them. Though they have sinned and have suffered, they are *His* people, *His* heritage, *His* land, and He is jealous on their behalf. The enemy has done great things; God has allowed him to do so; but now He shows Himself to be on the side of His people, and the promise is: "*The Lord* will do great things" (2: 21). The great things that He would do for them would far surpass the great things that the Assyrian had done against them.

Again let us remember that we have come to Mount Zion. In Christ God has set forth a great rallying point for men, and in Him we learn the precious truth that *God is for us* (Rom. 8: 31). The enemy's power may be ever so great, but can he touch us if God is on our side?

This is a most establishing thought. We begin by seeing that God's judgment is against us, and righteously so, because of our sin. Then we see how Christ has been down under that judgment and has borne it for us, and that now God Himself is righteously *for us*. It is not merely that in Christ we have a complete settlement of the question that stood *between God and us*; but that the question between God and the enemy has been settled by the utter overthrow of the latter, and the right has thus been secured for God to come in on our behalf as our Deliverer, as the One who is *for us*. We have the light of this in Christ risen, the true Mount Zion.

### 3. "Children of Zion"

Chap. 2: 23-31.

Be glad, then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God.

And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.

And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.

The people now become identified in the mind of God with Zion, and are addressed as "children of Zion." Suffering and sorrow are things of the past; joy and gladness fill their cup to overflowing. "Ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied," they are told, "and praise the name of the Lord your God that hath dealt wondrously with you; and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God" (2: 26, 27).

Then the gift of the Spirit is promised. The "wonders" of verse 30 happen, we read, *before* the great and terrible day of the Lord come. But "*afterward*," it says, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." God will be able to dwell with complacency among His people, and to signify His pleasure in them, as children of Zion, by pouring out His Spirit upon them.

To all this we, Christians, have already come. After

learning that God is for us, we learn that we are on a new footing before Him, associated with the risen Christ, "children of Zion." We are made companions of Christ, and share in His anointing, having received the gift of the Spirit. He always retains His place of pre-eminence (how gladly do our hearts accord it to Him!), but we have His Spirit, and are thus able to enter into the joys of the new position into which we are brought as having "come unto Mount Sion," the companions of the risen Christ.

#### **4. The Call of God**

Chap. 2: 32.

And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered, for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.

Here we find that salvation, or deliverance, is in Zion for Israel in the last days, but it is in connection with *the call of God*, and will be made in a remnant. It will be there for all, for "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord," but the call of God has to come in to make it effectual. He calls a remnant, and this remnant gets the benefit of the deliverance that is in Zion.

Again I quote the passage in Hebrew 12 that I am using as a key to these prophecies: "Ye are come unto Mount Sion." We have in Christ the One in whom the call of God is made effective, and in whom we therefore have deliverance. In Him, blessing for man is lifted entirely off the plane of responsibility,

and put on the ground of the call of God. 2 Timothy 1: 9 speaks of salvation in this connection. God's purpose and grace are spoken of as having been given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began. According to this (and not by any means according to our works) is His salvation and holy calling.

In speaking of salvation in this way we must not limit it to salvation from going to hell. It is salvation from every form of power that the enemy can bring against us. Those who are saved are those who are the subjects of the sovereign call of God, and who are connected, according to His purpose, with Zion, that is, with Christ risen.

## 5. The Judgment of the Nations

Chap. 3: 1-16.

For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem.

Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.

Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision [threshing]: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision [threshings].

The Lord also shall roar out of Zion and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake; but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

In this last chapter the prophecy looks on to the time of full blessing and glory. But first it shows us

how the world has to be prepared for it by the sweeping judgment of God upon the nations. Zion is the place from which that judgment goes forth. The nations are summoned to the valley of Jehoshaphat ("Jehovah judges"). They are seen in their multitudes in the valley of threshing. Then the Lord roars out of Zion and the very heavens shake at the sound.

But for His people He has something very different in store. He is their hope, or their "place of repair," their "harbor" (see A. V., *margin*), in that day.

It is a solemn thing to remember that the risen Christ is not only the fountain-head of blessing, but the Executor of all judgment. The guilty nations will meet their doom at the hands of a Man; not the man of their choice, but the Man of God's choice. If He is to hold the universe for God, and fill it with what is agreeable to Him, He must first remove all that is contrary. This involves judgment. It is a necessity, if the blessing centred in Christ is to fill the earth, that whatever blocks the way should first be removed. And Christ, the Mighty One, will gird His sword upon His thigh, and will sweep out of His kingdom all things that offend.

But we "are come unto Mount Sion." The world for us is already a judged thing. In Christ risen we have arrived at the blessing with which the whole earth is to be filled, and all that is outside of that lies under judgment. That is how we view things from the standpoint of the risen Christ. It was Paul's outlook when he said, "The world is crucified to me."

If a Christian is going on with the world, it is evi-

dent that he is not governed by the truth of this. But Zion is a great reality, and involves the disappearance under judgment of the whole world-system. How happy to be able to say that for us *it has gone already!* It no longer holds us by its power, for its true character has been exposed for us in its rejection of Christ.

In times of war, a well-equipped naval port is the "place of repair" for ships that take part therein. But from the same place engines of destruction go forth against the enemy's fleet. That is like our chapter, verse 16. In Christ risen there is a harbor, a place of repair, for His people; and from Him destruction will go forth against all that has wrought confusion and damage in the world.

## 6. God's Holy Mountain

Chap. 3: 17.

So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

Here we find a very important thing. Not only will God establish blessing in Zion, but He Himself will dwell there. He will take exclusive possession; no stranger's foot shall ever again defile that holy mountain.

To this also *we are come*. For in the risen Lord we are brought to the very dwelling-place of God. Not only do we find God fully revealed, for the blessing of His people, but that He is pleased to dwell in their midst, in infinite rest and satisfaction. God

could not *dwell* in a scene where there was anything contrary to Christ. But where the excellency and fragrance of Christ pervades the whole atmosphere, where all is of Him, God can dwell with unspeakable delight.

As children of Adam there is nothing in us that God could look upon with pleasure. But as in CHRIST, God can find perfect satisfaction in us. How can this be? "If any man be in Christ there is a new creation," and, viewed in this light, there is nothing in us or about us but what is of Christ. And in a house where every stone is part of Christ, where nothing is visible but Christ, where His fragrance pervades every part, the blessed God dwells; He makes His home there with unutterable delight.

The practical result in us should be holiness. When God dwells in Zion, Jerusalem shall be holy. And holiness is more than mere abstinence from sin. It involves the exclusive possession of us by God, so that "no stranger" has any part in us.

## **7. The Lord Dwelleth in Zion**

Chap. 3: 21.

For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion.

Here the fact that we were considering just now is again stated, but in this case it is spoken of as the great *end* that God has in view. Reading verse 17 and no farther, one might think that holiness was the end or object, and that God's dwelling in Zion was merely the means whereby this end might be secured.

But it is not so. Holiness in itself is not an end or



object. I say this because there are many Christians to-day who seem to make holiness their great goal. I believe they have a very defective notion of what real holiness according to God is. In the way that they pursue it they really make *self*, in a most subtle form, their object. How fearfully insidious a thing is self! What could seem more right than to aim at a holy life and an experience of continual joy? But how that ugly "I" shows itself even in connection with a desire of this kind! How nice if "I" could be holy and good, and if "I" could have this beautiful experience! I do not want to be uncharitable, but I know of no persons more self-occupied and self-complacent than those who imagine that they have reached this state and enjoy this experience.

*God's* great end, however, is that *He* may dwell. With this there must, of course, be holiness. But holiness in itself is not the object. If we have any object or end before our souls short of God's end, we shall be losers.

How good to have before us God's great end, namely, that He is pleased to surround Himself with a universe filled with Christ, every part of it fragrant with *Him*, and there to dwell. It will actually come to pass in a day that is ever drawing nearer (never so near, thank God, as at this moment), but it is already established in Christ, and we have come to this by faith, and by faith may enjoy the glory of it now in some measure.

# AMOS

Chap. 1: 1—2: 6.

The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Thus saith the Lord. For three transgressions of Damascus,...of Gaza,...of Tyrus,...of Edom,...of Ammon,...of Moab,...of Judah...and of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof.

Chap. 3: 1, 2.

Hear the word that the Lord hath spoken against ...the whole family...brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

Chap. 3: 7.

Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

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The prophecy of Amos belongs to a period when the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were at the zenith of their glory. Illustrious monarchs filled their respective thrones and during their long reigns of forty-one and fifty-two years, secured a state of prosperity for their countries that had not been enjoyed since the palmy days of Solomon.

Worldly prosperity, however, is a transient thing at best. Of this we are reminded by the mention of *the great earthquake* by our prophet. (See also Zech. 14: 5). Perhaps nothing is better calculated to make men see the flimsiness of their greatest works than the shaking of that whereon they are all founded. But it is a lesson men are slow to learn. What are all the political plans of to-day, the pacts made at the conference table, the schemes of reform and of progress, but the work of builders engaged upon a structure that is to be shaken to pieces before long?

In contrast with this, we (Christians) receive "a kingdom which cannot be shaken" (Heb. 12: 28). We are brought to that which is eternally stable and beyond all liability to change or decay. Unless our souls are really established in the truth of this, we cannot "serve God acceptably," for our thoughts and hopes will be largely taken up with things that belong to the earth, so soon to be shaken. If, however, we make our home by faith amid "those things which cannot be shaken" we become ourselves steadfast and unmoveable, abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15: 58).

Amos, himself a man of Judah (an inhabitant of Tekoa), concerns himself for the most part with the northern kingdom of Israel. The rupture between the two tribes and the ten still existed, but the prophet, directed by the Spirit of God, does not confine his testimony to the tribes with which he is directly connected. His message is addressed to "the whole family" which had been brought out from Egypt (3: 1). Here

there is no trace of the selfishness that would consider none but those with whom we have immediate links. In spite of ruptures and dissensions, from apostolic days to the present time, the church of God is *one* under His eye. There is one body, one flock, one "household of faith" which we are to serve. Indeed, our sphere of service and testimony is wider still, for we are bidden to "do good unto *all* men" and to go into "*all* the world" with the glad tidings, and in our prayers to have "all men" in mind. In this way the character of the blessed God is set forth, for He desires the salvation of all (1 Tim. 2: 4).

But though Amos had "the whole family" in view, his words of warning are intended specially for the house of Israel. Why then, it may be asked, does the prophecy begin with the doom of six *Gentile* nations? For a very cogent reason. Jehovah had said of Israel that "the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num. 23: 9). Yet Amos presents us with a list of eight guilty nations in which Judah and Israel are the last included, and marked out for doom in exactly the same formula of words as are the other six. They had, by their sin, forfeited all special recognition by Jehovah. As to their state they were even as Damascus, Philistia and Moab before Him, and are mentioned alongside these heathen peoples in a way calculated to reach their consciences, and stir up their remembrance of their peculiar place in God's favor.

Special privilege carries with it special responsibility. This important principle is enforced in the prophecy

before us. "YOU ONLY have I known of all the families of the earth, THEREFORE will I punish you." The nearer the relationship, the more serious the sin and the more severe the punishment.

Another great principle is laid down in chapter 3, namely, that when God designs to do anything He makes it known to His servants. This is true whether He has blessing or judgment in view. His hidden purposes are revealed to His servants. They are honored with His confidence and are let into His secret. It is the same with us Christians. God has been pleased to let us into the wonderful secrets of His mind, and to reveal to us, for our present joy, and as subjects for our testimony, that which He will by-and-by display to millions of wondering eyes.

### THE SHEPHERD-DELIVERER

Chap. 3: 12.

Thus saith the Lord: As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be taken out.

Chap. 5: 3-14.

For thus saith the Lord God: The city that went out by a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth by an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel.

Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time.

Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

Judgment, not blessing, is the theme upon which Amos dwells in the first part of his prophecy. The very fact, however, of doom being pronounced upon the guilty nation is the occasion of reference being made to One who should deliver a remnant. Here, surely, we trace the footsteps of Him who is the object of our study in these pages. He comes before us here as the Shepherd-Deliverer.

The nation as a whole would be given as a prey to the adversary, but a small handful would escape. Israel's Shepherd would deliver "a piece of an ear" from the mouth of the lion, and in connection with this remnant God's promises would be fulfilled. There could not be even this little remnant were it not for the delivering grace and power of the Shepherd. When restored to their land and blessed with the bounty of God, they will own that they owe it all to Him. They have been in the lion's mouth, and, while multitudes have perished, they have been delivered. And CHRIST is the One who has done it. All praise and glory to Him.

In chapter 5 this remnant of Israel comes still more distinctly into view, a mere tithe of the whole, a hundred left out of a thousand, and ten out of a hundred. (Compare Isa. 6: 13.) They are characterised by prudence, or wisdom, in the "evil time." The power of oppression seals their lips, but in their hearts they hate the evil and love the good, and they experience the goodness of the God of hosts. Thus they *live* before Him.

**THE GREAT INTERCESSOR**

Chap. 7: 2-10.

Then I said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech Thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small....

Then said I, O Lord God, cease, I beseech Thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small...

Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam, king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words.

Chap. 8: 10.

I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son.

In chapter 7 Amos himself becomes a foreshadowing of Christ as the great Intercessor. The name Amos means "burden," and in his measure he carried the burden of Israel's sin and woe upon his heart, thus prefiguring the One who did the same in a far deeper way. The prophet, acknowledging the nation's smallness and helplessness, beseeches God on its behalf. His prayer is effectual, but his service and testimony are rejected of men, and the priest seeks the aid of king to rid the land of his presence. He was not officially a prophet, being a mere herdsman, but God was with him. Those, therefore, who rejected him were fighting against God.

All this speaks eloquently to our hearts of CHRIST. No graduate in the "schools of the prophets" was He. Coming of lowly birth, He was God's Messenger to Israel. He bore upon His heart the burden of the nation's woes. Yet He was set at naught by them,

despised for His lowly birth, a mere "carpenter's son" in their eyes. Priest and king, Caiaphas and Herod, conspired to rid themselves of Him, and the cross was His award.

But He has not given up Israel for ever, and in the coming day they will prove how mighty His intercession has been on their behalf. To Him they will owe the joy and blessing which will be theirs, beyond all conception, in that day. But the *first* results of Christ's mighty intercession for Israel will not be joy or glory, but *bitter repentance*. Conscience will be awakened, and the discovery made that He whom they crucified as an impostor was their Messiah and Deliverer. The scene between Joseph and his repentant brethren will be re-enacted upon a grander scale. Sackcloth will be upon all loins, and baldness upon every head when they mourn "as for an only son."

We are reminded thus of Christ as

### THE HOPE OF ISRAEL

the One to whom Israel will at last turn in true repentance. What a moment it will be for *Him*! His love for the chosen nation has not waxed cold, and with infinite joy He will welcome them to His arms. Shall we refuse to find pleasure in the contemplation of this because *we* have no direct part therein? Perish the thought! The heart that loves Christ will rejoice to know that He is gratified, and that, with streaming eyes, Israel will turn at length to her long-rejected Lord.



## THE MAN OF GOD'S COUNSELS

Chap. 9: 9-15.

I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.

In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen...and I will build it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed....

And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel....and I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.

The nation at large must go in judgment, "all of them," to the very "last of them" (9: 1). Only the election of grace will be preserved, and of these "not the least grain" shall perish. In the midst of these preserved ones "the tabernacle of David" will be raised up. The then existing state of things under Uzziah and Jeroboam II. would be ended, and God would revert to David, and secure permanency for what is according to His own heart.

Here, too, our thoughts are carried off to CHRIST, the true David, as the Man of God's counsels. Upon Him, from the beginning, God's choice has been set. Everything here has fallen into decay, and every man that has lived has contributed to the ruin. But when

the appointed time comes, that which God has purposed will be established by Christ. None but He can accomplish this. In that day even the heathen will share in the blessing. As for Israel, they will be planted upon their land, no more to be "pulled up." Then shall the plowman overtake the reaper, and happiness be the portion of all.

The pivot on which all this turns is CHRIST. As we have seen, He is brought before us in Amos:—

(1) As Israel's Shepherd, rescuing a remnant from the lion's mouth.

(2) As Israel's Intercessor, beseeching God for them that at all events some might "arise" (or "stand," R.V.).

(3) As the One for whom Israel will mourn, and to whom their hearts will turn.

(4) As the true David, who will bring in the state of blessing and peace which God has from the beginning purposed for His people.

Into all this *Christianity* does not enter. But there are precious lessons which Christians may learn, and it is food for our souls to contemplate CHRIST, whether in connection with Israel or ourselves.

# OBADIAH

Vers. 1, 3, 4, 7.

The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom...The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?

Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord...All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border; the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee and prevailed against thee.

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What leads up to the special presentation of Christ which Obadiah has been inspired to give us is the fact that God's unsparing judgment had been declared against Edom. Jeremiah had already announced this, and from his 49th chapter the first six verses of Obadiah seem to be quoted.

Edom, with all its pride, was to be brought low. Though exalted as the eagle, and dwelling among the stars, God Himself would abase that boastful nation. He would destroy its wise men and shatter to atoms the confederacy by means of which it hoped to secure prominence and permanence in the earth.

All this had been foretold by Jeremiah and is now reiterated and emphasized by Obadiah.

Has this old-time message no voice for the men of to-day? After all, Edom is but a sample of the world at large, just as a block of coal taken at random from the pit shows the quality of all that is there.

Did human pride ever reach a higher level than in this twentieth century? Has confederacy ever been more sought after? Think for a moment of the world as it lies around us, of the onward march of civilization, of the achievements of science, of the spread of knowledge. How men boast of all this? Of a truth they say in their hearts: "Who shall bring me down to the ground?" Do they not exalt themselves as the eagle, and set their nest among the stars?

Consider, too, how the principle of confederacy is emphasized in the world to-day. Nations bind themselves together by pacts and leagues. In the industrial world there are trusts and combines, unions, and associations. There are societies for this object and for that.

All this was found in germ among the Edomites. They had their men of learning, their doughty warriors, their fortified cities. They had adopted the principle of confederacy, and had allied themselves with other nations to make common cause against God and His people.

No doubt the prophecy looks on to the last days, when Edom shall reappear and shall have a leading place in the confederacy of nations which, in alliance with the resuscitated Assyrian, will come up against Jerusalem.

Some of the nations which form this great hostile alliance are mentioned in Psalm 83, and Edom is given the first place in the list. "They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they

have consulted together with one consent; they are confederate against Thee; the tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites," and so on.

Vers. 10-14.

For thy violence against thy brother Jacob sorrow shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.

In the day that thou stoodest on the other side... and foreigners entered into his gates and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them... thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity....

Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.

Here Obadiah brings forward another trait which marked Edom, and it leads up to the foreshadowing of CHRIST, as we shall see. This trait, already hinted at in the quotation from Psalm 83, was a rancorous hatred against the people of God. "Thy violence against thy brother Jacob" is declared to be the special reason why Edom should be covered with shame and be cut off for ever. A remnant from Egypt, Assyria and other nations will be spared to enjoy the blessing of Christ's supremacy, but "there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau" (ver. 18).

Edom, or Esau, it must be remembered, was Jacob's brother. For this reason the Edomite was to be treated with special regard by the Israelite, and was to have certain privileges in connection with "the congregation of Jehovah" which were not accorded to other Gentiles. "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is

thy brother. . . The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of Jehovah in their third generation" (Deut. 23: 7, 8).

But from the beginning Edom had shown spite and ill-will against Israel, both nationally and individually. When the Israelites required to pass through the land of Edom to reach Canaan, permission to do so was peremptorily refused. Moses sent a most conciliatory message, undertaking to damage neither fields nor vineyards, and to pay for the very water which they should drink. But "Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border," and thus showed himself, even at that early date, to be an implacable and spiteful enemy (Num. 20: 14-21).

Another instance of this perpetual hatred is seen in the conduct of Doeg, an Edomite in the service of Saul. David, the Lord's anointed, had not yet come to the throne. Hunted and threatened, he fled to Abimelech the priest, who treated him kindly and supplied him with food. But the treacherous Edomite witnessed the transaction and lost no time in informing Saul, and thus procuring the death of eighty-five men of the priestly family.

"I knew it!" cried David, when he was told of the cruel deed; "I knew it that day when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul" (1 Sam. 22: 22).

Obadiah mentions yet another instance of this unbrotherly hate on the part of Edom. He refers to the day of Jerusalem's capture, when the children of Judah were carried off into Babylonian bondage. "In the day

that thou stoodest on the other side," he says, .... "foreigners entered into his gates and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them." Then comes a terrible exposure of the Edomites' conduct. They had rejoiced over the downfall of the children of Judah, had laid hands on their substance, had stood in the crossway to cut off any fugitives, and had actually given up to the cruel Babylonians those that had escaped.

It is in this connection that we find the footsteps of Christ, as we read between the lines of Obadiah's solemn charge. We saw, in studying Hosea, how Christ took the place of the true Israel before God. He was the Son called out of Egypt. And in grace He identified Himself with the remnant that feared God, entering into their sorrows, feeling the bitter smart of their woes, suffering because of their afflictions, groaning under the burdens which weighed so heavily on them.

This is quite a different thought from that of His *atonement* sufferings. He made atonement for Israel, as well as for us. But we do not get His atoning sufferings in Obadiah. We are reminded of how, in a very real way (and after a manner that endears Him to our hearts), He took upon Himself the afflictions and oppressions under which His people groaned, and felt the cruel pangs thereof in His own spirit.

And so, if we compare Obadiah with Luke 23, we have no difficulty in finding Christ portrayed in the narration of His people's sufferings at the hands of the Edomites. Herod was the cruel prince of Edomite

blood, whose hatred flamed up against the One who had in grace come to His people as their Deliverer. From the hour of His birth the Edomite had sought to slay Him. And when the final scenes were enacted, so soon to reach their culmination at Calvary, the Edomite was there to add fresh pangs to the sufferings of that Holy One.

Edom, according to Obadiah, made himself one with the Gentile oppressors. So, we read, Herod and Pilate, the Edomite and the Roman, were made friends together in their treatment of Christ.

Edom "rejoiced over the children of Judah" and "spoke proudly in the day of distress." And Herod, when he saw Jesus, "was exceeding glad" and, with his men of war, "set Him at naught and mocked Him."

Edom stood in the gates of Jerusalem in the day of Judah's affliction, to look on their calamity with triumph. Even so it is significantly stated of Herod the Edomite in the day of Christ's affliction: "himself also was at Jerusalem at that time." He was upon the scene, to add gall and wormwood to the already full cup of the holy Sufferer.

Worst of all, Edom "delivered up those of his that did remain." And the evangelist narrates of Jesus, how Herod "sent Him again to Pilate." There you read the malice of the Edomite!

In the last days, when Edom and the confederate nations come up against the chosen people, it will be a comfort indeed to those that are godly to have the sympathy and support of Him who has Himself felt the bitterness of the Edomite's hatred. They will have



Him as the support and stay of their troubled hearts, and He who knows so well what every phase of their affliction means, having gone through it all Himself in grace, will be able in a wonderful way to minister solace and strength to them.

Ver. 15.

*For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen; as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee.*

Not only Edom, however, but all the nations are guilty of enmity to Christ. All have arrayed themselves against Him, whether personally, in the days of His flesh, or as represented by Israel. All the nations, therefore, come into view for judgment, not so much for their sins as for the way they have acted towards Christ—Christ in His Jewish brethren. The whole of the great world system is to come under judgment, with its pride, its confederacies, and its hatred of Christ.

Vers. 17, 21.

But upon Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness...And saviours shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the Kingdom shall be the Lord's.

There is salvation and blessing in store for the house of Jacob, and God will make it evident in that day that it is all connected with Mount Zion. Besides this, rule will be established over the world, and this too in connection with the mountain of God's pleasure. "Saviours shall come up on Mount Zion to judge (i.e., to govern) the mount of Esau."

Mount Zion brings before us the great principle of sovereign grace upon which God will act in blessing

for the earth when the day for it arrives. It is the spot upon which He set His choice (Ps. 132: 13) when everything committed to the hands of men had broken down. It speaks of CHRIST, risen from among the dead, the One in whom all God's purposes of blessing for men are made good. In that we Christians are already come thither (as we are told in Heb. 12: 22) we get the benefit of the two things connected in Obadiah with the literal Mount Zion, deliverance and rule.

Deliverance from the power of the world and earthly things is enjoyed as the soul is established in that which Zion typifies. It is realized when we get consciously on to the ground of God's purpose, and see how everything finds its foundation and centre in Christ.

We come under His gracious rule, too; He brings the light of heaven to bear upon us, and that light governs us as we see it shining in His face. The glory that is to irradiate the universe beams already in the face of Christ. The blessing that is to be shed abroad throughout the whole realm of God is even now brought to light in Him, for the present joy of those who are His.

The "saviours" of verse 21 are doubtless men who will carry the influences of Zion far and wide. Raised up for the purpose, they will be appointed in connection with the administration of the Kingdom to go north, south, east and west, and spread abroad the beneficence of the rule of Christ.

The prophecy belongs to a future time. But, thank

God, there are those who answer to these "saviours" in our day. There are those whose eyes have been opened to see the glories that shine in the face of Christ. And as these glories are written in their hearts by the Spirit, they are able to preach Christ Jesus for the enlightening of others, that thither other hearts may turn. Their ministry ever draws to Christ Himself, and tends to move souls off the line of human responsibility and establish them on the line of God's purpose. No small service this, to render to the saints of God. Would that we could help one another in this way more!

Obadiah's object was akin to this. His name means "servant of the Lord," and it was his privilege to render a very real service to those who lived in his day, by exposing the true character of man's world as represented by Edom, and by leading the hearts of God's people to that bright world which He will yet bring in, of which Zion will be the earthly centre, where the pride of man will have no place, and where CHRIST will be supreme.

Obadiah deals with the earthly side of that coming time of glory and blessing. We Christians have our portion in the heavenly part thereof, and enjoy a relationship and a knowledge of God that far transcends that of Israel. But the earthly side is in great measure typical of the heavenly side. And though we must not look in Obadiah for Christianity, we can find in his short prophecy that which brings Christ before our hearts, first in His sorrow and humiliation, then in His glory, as the true Zion, in whom all God's blessing is made secure according to His eternal purpose.

# JONAH

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The book of Jonah has been assailed again and again by the opponents of Christianity because of the marvellous nature of the facts which it narrates. These facts, however, have received special authentication from the Lord Jesus Himself. Sceptics have asked: How could Jonah be for three days and nights inside the whale? But the Lord Jesus affirmed that he *was* "three days and three nights in the whale's belly" (Matt. 12: 40).

In spite of this the critics continue their attacks. They have stated—

(1) That no whale has a gullet big enough to allow the passage of a man's body through it.

(2) That no city of the size of Nineveh, and answering to the description here given, existed at that time.

But God has wonderfully confounded the wisdom of the wise. It is now proved beyond all doubt—

(1)\* That there are whales, found in the very sea upon which Jonah was sailing, quite capable of swallowing a man, and that some whales have throats big enough to swallow half a dozen men at once.

(2) That there was a vast city answering to the description of Nineveh. It has been laid bare by the excavations of Layard and others. In the days of

Sargon, who reigned shortly after the visit of Jonah, it was no less than ninety miles in circumference and covered a much larger area than either Greater New York, or Greater London does to-day. It contained large enclosures of pasture land for the "much cattle" which the Ninevites kept, so that they might have food if their city were besieged.

Thus the Scriptures are vindicated by modern discoveries, and the critics convicted of ignorance.

Jonah himself, according to the New Testament, is a type of Christ, both in his sufferings and in his testimony. Yet we might draw the inference from the book that bears his name that he was by no means one of the best of men. Disobedient, distrustful, vindictive, sulky, his character is at first sight most unattractive.

But the Lord knew that Jonah was a true servant of His, in spite of failure, and He took care to leave on record a testimony that enables us to recognize him as such. In 2 Kings 14: 25 Jonah is spoken of as Jehovah's servant, whose prophecy He had Himself fulfilled.

Moreover, it is of interest to note that Jonah's native place was Gath-hepher. This village stood very near the site of the later Nazareth. The Pharisees overlooking Isaiah 9: 1, 2, declared that the Scriptures foretold no prophets arising from Galilee (John 7: 52). But Jonah, by his Galilean origin, as well as in other ways, foreshadowed the Greater than he, who was also "of Galilee."

The Book of Jonah may be taken up in more ways than one. The evangelist may use it as giving a picture of one who ran away from God. Jonah's course, like that of man generally, was a downward one. He "went down" to Joppa, and there he found a ship and "went down" into it. Not only so, but he was "gone down" into the sides of the ship to sleep.

But trouble comes, as it always does, sooner or later, to those who wander from God. Strenuous efforts are then put forth by the mariners for Jonah's salvation. But all was in vain; they could not achieve their aim. The only way of salvation lay through that which typified the death and resurrection of Christ, three days and three nights in the belly of the fish. Thus he reached "dry land."

Secondly, the book may be viewed as the history of God's dealings with one of His servants, and most instructive it is when thus regarded. We learn that God's will must at all costs be done. Jonah shrank from doing it. He recognized fully that his mission to Nineveh would be the means of mercy being shown to it (4: 2), though his actual message was one of judgment. He seemed to feel that Israel's truest interest lay in the destruction of the city, and that Nineveh's preservation would mean Israel's downfall. Like Moses and like Paul, his love for his nation was so intense that he would sacrifice himself, and incur the displeasure of God, rather than be the means of preservation to Israel's powerful foe.

Underlying all this was his lack of faith in God. Yet how graciously the Lord bears with him. He does

not rend his service from him, but disciplines him and teaches him, and then entrusts His word to him "the second time." What grace! And amid all the discipline God's care for His failing servant ever showed itself.

But though restored to the path of obedience and service, Jonah's heart was not yet brought into full communion with the heart of God, and the book closes with words of reproof. But the fact that Jonah was subsequently inspired to record this narrative, to write down his faults, and to let God have the last word, is proof that in the end his restoration was complete.

Thirdly, the book of Jonah may be viewed typically. The typical bearing of the narrative was undoubtedly in the mind of the Holy Spirit, for it is in considering it in this light that we find CHRIST in it. Let me briefly indicate how this comes out, in the four chapters of the book.

#### Chaps. 1 and 2.

Just as Jonah was bidden to go with a message to Nineveh, Israel was entrusted with a mission to the nations, to testify to Jehovah's greatness and goodness. But as Jonah failed to do God's bidding and set sail for Tarshish, one of the world's great commercial emporiums, so Israel shirked her mission, and has made commerce and the acquisition of wealth her object, instead of the testimony of God.

Jonah, by his disobedience, involved the Gentile mariners with whom he sailed in storm and tempest. Israel likewise, far from being a blessing to other nations, has brought trouble, through her unfaithfulness,

on all with whom she has had dealings, even as Abram brought trouble upon the house of Pharaoh (Gen. 12: 17).

The upshot of Jonah's course was that he was flung into the sea. Here he became the subject of God's sovereign and protecting mercy. Even thus has it been with Israel. Overthrown and scattered by the Gentile powers, her sons are to this day dispersed in the sea of the nations. Yet the preserving care of God has followed them, waves of oppression have surged against them, billows of blood have passed over their heads, yet they remain to this day a people, one of the wonders of the world, protected in spite of all their sin by the mighty hand of God.

The three days and nights which Jonah spent in the deep are no doubt typical of the depths through which Israel has passed, and will continue to pass, until the glorious "third day" of national resurrection. A passage in Hosea corroborates this: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord, for He hath torn and He will heal us; He hath smitten and He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us; in the third day He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight" (Hosea 6: 1, 2).

Now into the sorrows of Israel, torn and smitten on account of their folly, Christ has in grace entered. Delivered up to the Gentiles, He was by them buffeted, scourged and crucified. But into deeper depths yet He went. The waters came in unto His soul. He sank in "the mire of depth" where there was no standing, into "depths of waters" where the floods over-



flowed Him. Down even to death the blessed Saviour went. "The depth closed Him round about." For three days and nights He was "in the heart of the earth."

But from the depths of His sorrow He cried to God, even as Jonah did. And God "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus." On the third day Jonah came out on dry land. And on the third day Christ rose in triumph from the grave. How our hearts delight to dwell upon it! The storm that bowed His blessed head is hushed for ever now.

Jonah 2 gives us the prophet's prayer when in the belly of the fish, after his terrible experiences in the deep. He speaks under a sense of God's deliverance. The chapter is made up almost entirely of quotations from, and references to, the Psalms. And as several of these are Messianic psalms (that is, psalms relating to Christ) we have no difficulty in understanding that Jonah's experiences foreshadowed those of Christ.

The references will be more easily compared if we place them side by side.

## JONAH 2

I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me.

Thou hadst cast me into the deep.

All thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

I said, I am cast out of thy sight.

## PSALMS

In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me (120: 1).

Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps (88: 6).

All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me (42: 7).

I said...I am cut off from before thine eyes (31: 22).

## Jonah 2—continued

The waters compassed me about, even to the soul.

Yet hast Thou brought up my life from corruption.

When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto Thee, into thine holy temple.

They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

Salvation is of the Lord.

## Psalms—continued

The waters are come in unto my soul (69: 1).

Neither wilt Thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption (16: 10).

In my distress I called upon the Lord...He heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before Him (18: 6).

I have hated them that regard lying vanities (31: 6).

Salvation belongeth unto the Lord (3: 8).

How it endears the blessed Lord Jesus to our hearts to trace Him out in all these sufferings, and to know what His experiences were therein. It is not atonement that we are speaking of, nor the results of Christ's work. We speak of *the experiences* of His soul in that which did indeed make atonement, both for Israel and for us.

In dwelling upon a theme like this we are on holy ground. And we must never forget that if He came into depths where sin had brought us, it was His grace that brought Him there. Without taint Himself, the Holy One of God, He stooped to suffer for others, and endured not only that which was judicially upon every man because of sin, but also that which was governmentally upon Israel. It is in this latter connection, for the most part, that His sufferings are spoken of in the Psalms and the Prophets.

Chaps. 3 and 4.

In these chapters we have Christ in testimony set forth figuratively.

Jonah, who in a symbolic way had passed through the experience of death and resurrection, became a "sign" to the Ninevites. His marvellous story must have become known to them. Hence the reception of his testimony, and the consequent repentance of the whole city.

Now Christ was given as a "sign" to Israel in the days of His flesh. He was the "sign" that was "spoken against" (Luke 2: 34). But in resurrection He has become a "sign" to the whole world. The testimony of the risen Christ has been "spoken against" by the Jews (Acts 28: 22), but has been "sent unto the Gentiles" and heard by them (ver. 28).

Jonah's preaching among the Ninevites, and its wonderful results, is thus typical of the testimony of Christ among the Gentiles. But how much greater is the Antitype than the type! If thousands in Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, think of the millions that have been reached by the gospel of Christ, and brought thereby to repentance.

And this will be true also in a day that is yet to come. The restored of Israel, brought back to Jehovah after their experience in the deeps, will be used of Him as His messengers to the nations. Instead of shirking their mission as in the days of old, they will gladly go forth with the testimony of the coming Kingdom. And the repentance of Nineveh will again find its

counterpart in the reception of their message by multitudes of Gentiles.

No longer will Israel, like the dog in the manger, and like the elder son in the parable of Luke 15, wish to exclude the Gentiles from blessing as Jonah did. The remnant, no doubt, will be exposed to the temptation of following the traditional attitude of the Jew towards the Gentile. But in these last two chapters of Jonah they will find wholesome instruction as to the attitude that God would have them assume.

He cares for the poor Gentiles, even as Jonah cared for the gourd. God created them for His pleasure, and is not unmindful of them. His chosen people will be brought to His own mind regarding them, though for this they will need the "vehement east wind" and the scorching sun, beating upon their heads till they faint.

God will have His gracious way after all, and His blessing shall extend to the ends of the earth. Even the animal creation, the "much cattle," will enjoy the benefits of that day. The lion shall lie down with the lamb. And God's mercy will be everywhere the theme of happy song.

# Micah

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The prophecy of Micah is particularly rich in its varied presentations of the glories of Christ. Within the limited compass of a single chapter of this volume, however, a bare outline must suffice.

The book divides itself in an easily recognized way into three sections. We shall see how the One to whom *all* the prophets give witness is referred to in each of the three sections.

## First Section (chaps. 1, 2).

Chap. 1: 2-5.

Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is, and let the Lord God be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.

For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.

And the mountains shall be molten under Him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place.

For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem?

The prophecy opens with Jehovah taking the place of a witness against His people on account of their sins. How painful a position this must have been for Him to occupy, we who know something of His tender,

faithful love can in some degree understand. It is as if a father were called to the witness box to give evidence against a dearly loved child.

But God can never be indifferent to sin, whether in His own people or in the world at large. He is a God of unsullied holiness and truth. All His ways, from the earliest moment of His dealings with men, proclaim Him such. One great good that comes to us from the study of the Old Testament is that therein we learn God, as He made Himself known in His governmental ways with Israel and with certain individuals.

In Micah we find Him *coming out of His place* (1: 3). His true place is that of Blessor. It is His delight to bestow benefits upon His people with a hand that knows no stint. Judgment is His strange work. But holiness and truth demand that He should put His hand to that work in which He finds no pleasure, and that He should come forth from His place where He sits as the beneficent Source of blessing, to punish transgression and to rebuke transgressors. Hence it is that sweeping destruction is foretold, both for Samaria and Judah.

But an important principle is made clear in this connection, namely, that warnings of impending judgment are not merely to arouse the sinful and the careless, but especially *to do good to those who walk uprightly*. Thus we read:

O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these his doings? Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? (2: 7).

It may be asked, How can predictions of coming judgment benefit the godly, who are either saved through, or exempted from, the awful destruction that will involve others?

In two ways. First, *by increasing their confidence in God*. In our day, as well as in by-gone times, cavilers are found who ask, Why does God permit all the evil in the world to go on unchecked? And wicked men encourage themselves in their apparent impunity. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccles. 8: 11). To questions to which such a state of things gives rise, a complete answer is found in a prophecy of this sort. And those who love the truth and walk uprightly are encouraged in their confidence as they learn that God is not going to permit evil to go on unchecked. He will intervene in judgment to secure the final triumph of good.

Second, *by separating them, heart and soul, from that upon which judgment is coming*. Herein lies the great value to us of the prophecies of the book of Revelation. We see there that certain things—the great world system and the professing church in its apostate state—are to be visited with unsparing judgment. The effect of that upon us is that we thankfully keep apart from both. We have no wish to be mixed up with anything which is soon to be disastrously overthrown.

Chap. 2: 10-13.

Arise ye and depart; for this is not your rest; because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.

If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold; they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.

The Breaker is come up before them; they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it; and their King shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them.

On account of sin Israel and Judah were driven out of their land. It could not be their rest; they had to arise and depart. But the prophecy looks on to the future when Jehovah will assemble the remnant of Israel, and will gather them like sheep of Bozrah. In this connection we have a beautiful presentation of Christ, for Israel's restoration will be His work.

He is here viewed as the great Breaker of obstacles. He will break through all that hinders the recovery of His chosen people. He will make an outlet for them, wherever they are scattered, that they may break forth from their captivity. Then, as their King, He takes His place as Leader, with Jehovah Himself at their head.

However far this may apply to Israel's recovery in the past from Babylon, the final fulfilment is assuredly yet future. What a day will that be when Israel's King intervenes for His people, and the fetters with which the nations have bound them will be as dried-up withs in His hands! How deep their joy when the



great Breaker of bondage leads them again into the land of their blessing!

### **Second Section (chaps. 3-5).**

Chap. 3: 8.

But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

The spirit of Christ speaks in the prophet. Whose voice can it be but His, claiming to be full of power, by the Spirit of Jehovah, and of judgment and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin? It is a foreshadowing of CHRIST, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, full of power for testimony.

Chap. 4: 1-4.

But in the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

And many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.

Here is a magnificent prophecy of millennial blessing, the chief features of which are:—

- (1) Divine teaching of the nations.
- (2) Divine rule over all.
- (3) World wide disarmament and peace.
- (4) Power and glory centred in Zion.

The “thoughts” and “counsel” of Jehovah (4: 12) will then be brought to pass. He is Lord of the whole earth, and He will dispose of it as He pleases. His pleasure will be to exalt Zion, and to cause blessing to flow out therefrom to all peoples.

Of course, God has His thoughts and counsels for His heavenly people, as well as for those whose blessing will be on the earth. His purpose for *us* is to have us holy and without blame before Him in love, dwelling in His own immediate presence as His sons, along with His beloved Son who ever dwelt there. We are to bear the image of that Son, and as His brethren to share His place in the Father’s love, to enjoy holy and blessed intimacy for ever with the Father and the Son. All this (and there is more that might be told) far transcends the portion that will be given to Israel, which the prophets describe. But the same glorious Person will be the centre of both the heavenly and the earthly spheres of blessing. And He is worthy!

Chap. 5: 1-5.

Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops; he hath laid siege against us; they shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little

among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Therefore will He give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth; then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.

And He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide; for now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.

And this Man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land.

Chapter 5 opens by presenting that blessed and adorable One, the theme of Heaven's delight, smitten with a rod upon the cheek, rejected by the Israel whose Ruler and Deliverer He came to be. The sad result of Israel's treatment of her Messiah is given in verse 3. But verse 2 comes in as a lovely parenthesis, showing that same glorious Person, whose goings forth have been from the days of eternity, yet who was born in lowly circumstances in a small town in Judah.

How utterly beyond the highest range of human thought is the wonder of all this! Whether we think of the lofty height *from* which He came, or the lowly depth *to* which He stooped; whether we dwell on who He was, or on what He became, we can only bow in worship.

Transcendently great He ever was. The days of eternal ages long past knew His goings forth, yet He stooped to the manger, to Bethlehem, to lowliness, and to poverty.

And *this* was the One smitten with a rod upon the cheek!

But if men knew not His worth, there was One who appreciated Him to the full. He was to come forth from Beth-lehem *unto God*, to be Ruler in Israel. God would see to it that He should have His place as Israel's Ruler. Meanwhile in lowly patience and grace, He would leave all to God, and be content to be for His pleasure and delight.

The consequence of Israel's rejection of Christ is that the nation is given up of God (ver. 3), for the time. The day will come, however, when the nation that refused Him will acclaim Him as Ruler. Then shall He stand and feed them, as a shepherd does his flock. And their prosperity will be assured; they shall abide, because *He shall be great*.

Hallelujah! Let this word sink into your rejoicing souls, ye who love the Lord. *He shall be great!* Personally great He always was. But here where He was belittled and put to shame, among the people who crowned Him with ignominy and contempt, *He shall be great*.

Not only in the midst of Israel will this be so, but "unto the ends of the earth." *He* will reign without a rival then. Jubilant songs will be sung in His honor. Kings will bow down before Him. His name shall be the national hymn of every tribe and kindred. *He*, He whom we know and love, He who has died for us, *He shall be great!* Where is the Christian whose heart does not throb with exultation at the thought?

The bright millennial day will be ushered in with ter-

rible conflict and unprecedented bloodshed. The vast hordes from the north, "the Assyrian" of prophecy, will swoop down upon the coveted land of the chosen.

But the presence of Christ will be the shield of His people. "This Man shall be the peace." His coming will mean more than victory. It will mean the utter destruction of the foe. Not high walls nor skilful tactics, nor powerful engines of war, will bring security in that day. *He* will be the peace.

Chap. 5: 7-9.

And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.

And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep; who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.

Thine hand shall be lifted upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.

When Christ gets His place thus, Israel will have hers, in a twofold way. First, as dew, or as showers upon the grass, she will be the channel of refreshment and blessing to all. Second, as a lion, she will be the means of cutting off all adversaries, and putting down all that is contrary to the sway of Christ.

### **Third Section (chaps. 6, 7).**

Chapter 6 brings before us a touching reminder of God's mercy and goodness, and an appeal to His people based thereon.

The concluding chapter gives us the spirit of Christ in the prophet, feeling and owning the state of the nation. Verse 6 is quoted in the Gospels as the condition of things produced by the presence of Christ among the people. His eyes (ver. 7) are upon Jehovah and he waits for God to intervene in salvation. All this voices, no doubt, the thoughts and feelings of the preserved remnant of Israel in the coming day. The spirit of Christ will be in them as in the prophets of old, and they will be able to sing the beautiful psalm of praise and triumph given in the remaining verses of the chapter, and ending thus:—

Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy.

He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

# NAHUM

## Chap. 1.

The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for his enemies.

The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked; the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him.

The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him.

Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace. O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows; for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

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Nahum was the Barnabas of the Old Testament, for his name means "consolation," and the great object of his prophecy was to comfort the sorrowing and down-cast hearts of the people of God. But, of course, his ministry differed widely from that of the "son of consolation" of whom we read in the Acts. Barnabas rejoiced when he saw the *grace* of God extended to the

Gentiles, and his exhortations were uttered in the full light of that wonderful grace. Nahum, on the contrary, rejoiced when he contemplated the *judgment* of the Gentiles, and his exhortations to the men of Judah were based upon the fact that their enemies were cut off.

But the spirit of Christ breathed as truly in Nahum as in Barnabas. Whether we think of Christ in grace, suffering and praying for His foes, or Christ in power, treading them beneath His feet, it is the same CHRIST, the One whose love we know, and whose grace and power we have proved.

Whether girded with a towel to serve His disciples in love, or with a sword to hurl destruction upon His enemies, it is the same blessed Person, and in both characters He displays *God*.

We have already remarked that one thing that makes the study of the Old Testament so profitable is that therein we learn the ways and character of God. For the full unfolding of all that He is we have, of course, to turn to the New Testament, and to see Him revealed in the Person of the Son. But the Old Testament presents God to us in connection with His ways with men, and our loss will be great if we overlook this.

We are prone to forget, when we speak of the love and mercy of God, that He is a Being great and terrible in His intolerance of sin. The God which the mind of the twentieth century has conceived is not the God of the Scriptures. It is like a breeze from the highlands of eternal truth to read the words of our



prophet, describing God's jealousy and awful anger against evil doing, His righteousness, His power, and His majesty.

True, He is *good*, and His people find Him to be a stronghold indeed in the day of trouble. Moreover, His wrath is not easily aroused; He is "slow to anger." But when evil raises its head in persistent hostility to good, and will not be subdued, then indeed God shows that He is not indifferent, but that His indignation and fierce anger are such that nothing can stand before Him. His pity is infinite, but He "*will not at all acquit the wicked.*"

The great subject of Nahum's prophecy is the overthrow and destruction of Nineveh, the chief city of Israel's great and dreaded foe, Assyria. This we find in chaps. 2 and 3.

Chapter 1 is a psalm, showing us the state of soul produced in Nahum himself and in those to whom the testimony of chaps. 2 and 3 was brought home in power by the Spirit of God.

Assyria's ascendancy meant Israel's ruin; Assyria's destruction would mean Israel's salvation. Can we wonder that those old-time saints and seers longed for the overthrow of the oppressor's power, and made it the burden of their prayers and songs? Can we wonder at Nahum's triumph and joy in contemplating the disaster that was to overtake Nineveh, and the blessing that would come to Judah as the result?

A hundred and fifty years before, God had sent warning to the guilty city by His servant Jonah. The message had been received, and Nineveh had turned

in repentance to God. But the generation to whom Jonah preached had passed away, and Nineveh had returned to her vileness and wickedness as a sow goes back to her wallowing in the mire. The fact that God had waited for a century and a half before intervening in judgment proved that He was longsuffering in grace. But the time for judgment was at hand, and those whom Nineveh had oppressed and afflicted might lift up their heads and rejoice.

All this is, no doubt, figurative of what will take place on a still larger scale at the end of the age. The "Assyrian" of the last days will be Israel's great foe, and Nahum's prophecy undoubtedly looks on to his destruction (foretold in detail by other prophets), and to the consequent deliverance of the people of God.

Nahum celebrates this deliverance in chap. 1: 15, and here our thoughts are directed to CHRIST. The "good tidings" borne across the mountains are the good tidings of *Him*, for He, born of a woman in Beth-lehem Ephratah, shall be great, and "shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land" (Micah 5: 5).

There will be no peace and no blessing apart from Christ. It is He who will break the oppressor's yoke, and burst His people's bonds in sunder (1: 13).

No doubt, in that coming day of victory and peace the majestic psalm that we have in Nahum 1 will be often sung by the faithful remnant of Israel. And thus to their hearts, as well as to the hearts of his own contemporaries, will this Old Testament Barnabas minister true consolation.

# HABAKKUK

Chap. 1: 1-4.

The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

O Lord, how long shall I cry and Thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save!

Why dost Thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me; and there are that raise up strife and contention.

Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth; for the wicked doth compass about the righteous, therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

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Habakkuk was a man who keenly felt the state of things among the people of God in his day. Looking around, he saw deeds of violence; strife and contention abounded where peace should have reigned. The wicked seemed ever to have the upper hand and made the righteous groan under their injustice.

It was difficult for the prophet to understand why God should not put an end to such a condition of things. Why did He not intervene in power for the destruction of evil doers and the salvation of those that put their trust in Him? How long would He refrain from hearing the cry of His distressed saints? Was there to be no unravelling of the tangled skein of iniquity, no escape from its meshes for those that loved righteousness?

Habakkuk's perplexity led him to cry to Jehovah, to get into His presence and enquire of Him concerning

the things over which he mourned. As a result, he got a wonderful view of the day of Christ, and learned what was God's path for His people until that day should come. In this way he was let into the secret of how to be an overcomer in an age which to sight and sense was dark indeed, but which to faith was bright with the golden light of promises that fixed heart and hope upon One that was yet to come.

How close a parallel exists between the days when Habakkuk lived and those in which our lot is cast! As we look around, do we not see, even in the circle that professes Christ's name, much to cause us deepest grief? What of the love of money, the pursuit of pleasure, and other forms of worldliness in which so many Christians are entangled? What of the general coldness of heart and indifference to the claims of Christ? What of the abominable antichristian doctrines now proclaimed from the house-top by men who once gave promise of better things? What of the jealousies and conflicts, the divisions and heart-burnings among those who should be found walking in peace and unity? A thousand other things might be mentioned, any one of them enough to make the tears start from our eyes, and to prostrate us before God, crying, "O Lord, how long?"

If we feel these things we shall be prepared to learn, as Habakkuk did, what the path is that God would have His people pursue. And our hearts will be held spellbound in anticipation of the bright day when Christ will be manifested, and when earth's age-long blight will be removed, and the whole scene filled with that which is of God.

In answer to the prophet's cry, Jehovah first calls attention to His own work. "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously, for I will work a work in your days." This is the passage quoted by Paul when preaching Christ at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13: 41), and his use of it shows that something further was in the mind of God, when He uttered the words, than His dealings in judgment by means of the Chaldeans. It is in Christ that these words find their real fulfilment. He is the One that God ever has in view, whatever the work to which He puts His hand may be.

Thus, when God calls upon men to have regard to His work, we may be sure that it is Christ that He has before Him. The way He takes may not be easy to trace. The evidence of His hand being at work may not be clear (save to him who has an opened eye), but all the while *God is working*, and always with Christ as His great object. If He works in a sinner's heart, it is that that sinner may be brought to Christ, to own Him as Lord. If He works in the souls of His people, it is that Christ should have a greater place in their affections, and that He should be formed in them. And if He works on the wider arena of the world's history it is all with the same great end in view, the introduction of CHRIST, as the One to whom supremacy must belong.

The grand climax of God's work is not yet reached. It was further off in Habakkuk's day than it is in ours. But the contemplation of it must have been rest to his heart, especially in view of what God was going

to tell him, namely, that He would bring up the Chaldeans against the children of Judah to carry them into captivity, and to be God's scourge upon them because of their wickedness. For before this work of God could be brought to its culminating point, two things must happen. First, His people must be humbled and taught to walk in His ways; second, the nations must fill up their cup of iniquity, and thus become ripe for judgment.

Of course the atonement of Christ was also necessary. But that is not the subject here. The prophecy, though referring to what was immediate, without doubt looks on to the future, when the Church will have been taken out of the world (1 Thess. 4: 16, 17), and God will begin to work in the scattered children of Jacob to bring them to repentance, and finally to gather them again to their promised land. Then they will cry out to Jehovah as they see the prevalence of evil and the power of the wicked one. They will wonder that God should allow the oppressor to tread them down, but they will learn that they are being chastened in view of their ultimate blessing; that the iniquity of the nations having risen to a head, they are ripe for judgment; and that God is about to bring to pass that for which He has wrought through all the ages—a universe over which Christ is to rule, and fill with His glory.

Chap. 2: 1-4.

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

And the Lord answered me and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

Habakkuk was consumed with grief for his people as he contemplated the cruel oppressions of the Chaldeans. But his heart had caught a glimpse of a brighter day, so he says, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me."

And as he looked out upon the horizon of God's future, he saw a wonderful vision of the day when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (2: 14). The day for this was yet far distant, but Habakkuk was to record the vision, so that on reading it men would start running. They were to run, in their affections, from the evil world they saw around them to the bright world of which the vision bore witness. Thus they were to hasten towards it, while in another sense they were to "wait for it."

Rather let us say that they were to wait for HIM. For, guided by the inspired quotations of this passage in Hebrews 10: 37, we find Christ here also. It is He that shall come and will not tarry. The five "its" of Habakkuk become "He" in Hebrews. The glory of the vision all shines forth from Him. He is the sun whose beams will illumine the wide creation of God, and it

is for Himself that every heart that loves His appearing waits.

For this, faith must be in exercise. There was, in our prophet's day, as in ours, an unbelieving generation, who would not believe in the work that God was doing, even though it was told them. On the other hand, there were "the just," and these would find food for their faith in the vision given to Habakkuk. Faith would make it very real to them, and thus their hearts would be carried on by faith to the age to come. They would *live* by their faith in that glorious time that was coming, though all around seemed to contradict their hopes. How happy thus to be able

"To look beyond the long, dark night  
And hail the coming day."

In Christianity brighter and better hopes are the portion of God's children. Their outlook is a heavenly one and their destiny is the Father's house. We do not find in the Minor Prophets the hopes that belong distinctively to Christians. But HE is there, to whom we belong, though in other relationships than those in which we know Him. Here in Habakkuk He is seen to be the object around which all the earthly hopes of the people of God centre, as they long for the day of the promised Kingdom, the day when Christ, the promised King, shall come and take to Himself His great power, and reign.

Chap. 3: 2-5, 10, 11, 13.

O Lord, I have heard thy speech and was afraid;  
O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in



the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens and the earth was full of his praise.

And his brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of his hand, and there was the hiding of his power.

Before Him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.

The mountains saw Thee and they trembled; the overflowing of the water passed by; the deep uttered his voice and lifted up his hands on high.

The sun and moon stood still in their habitation; at the light of thy arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear.

Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thy anointed; Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.

The prophecy of Habakkuk ends with what is really a psalm of praise, magnificent in its description of the inauguration of the coming glorious day. What gives occasion to it is a desire on the prophet's part that the work of God should prosper. The enemy's work was, alas, only too visible on all sides. But Habakkuk's soul had been established in the truth that God was working, and would work, for the accomplishment of His own purpose. And he now prays that that work may come into prominence: "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years."

In accordance with this the prophet is carried on in

spirit to the great day on which his hopes were fixed. He saw the intervention of God for His people and the utter overthrow of their adversaries. Had sea and mountain, sun and moon, been made subservient to God's ways with Israel in the past? Even so shall it be in the future, when pestilence and fire and other forms of divine visitation shall announce the advent of Jehovah's day.

Chap. 3: 17-19.

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls.

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

This was enough for Habakkuk. His soul had dropped its anchor in the calm haven of God's unalterable purpose, and he could rejoice in the Lord. Everything around might seem to wax worse and worse. The fig tree might not blossom, nor the vines bear fruit; the olive trees might be barren, and the fields yield no crops; flocks and herds might be cut off; outward prosperity might all be a thing of the past; the power of evil might be in the ascendant, and those who fear the Lord a small and weak remnant. But the prophet's eye was not upon things of this sort. From all the failure and discouragement he looked

away to the day of God's triumph, and his heart beat with gladness. He could joy in the God of his salvation. His portion was in "high places" and he could walk there by faith already. His feet were like those of the hind, able to spring forward from this age of darkness and gloom into the age of glory and joy?

Can we not do the same? We are not dependent for our joy upon environment. Things in the Church as well as in the world may present a most sombre picture. Defection after defection from the standards of truth may take place. "They of Asia," who turned aside from Paul, may be followed by thousands who care for his doctrine as little as they. Christianity, as publicly professed, may be shorn of its glory and its robes besmirched with the filth and mire of earth. But God's purpose remains firm, and CHRIST is the One who is going to bring it all into accomplishment.

Then let our eye be fixed upon Him. No failure or breakdown can ever intrude into that world of which He is the centre. He makes our feet like those of the hind. We spring, as it were, from the midst of all that surrounds us right into that other world where we shall dwell with Him, as sons before the Father's face.

These are "high places" indeed, and He makes our feet to walk therein even now. We are privileged to explore the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

# Zephaniah

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Zephaniah, like the other prophets, has in view the day of Israel's future blessing, and very touchingly he speaks of how God will then rest in His love, and joy over His ransomed ones with singing. It is now for us to study the road which leads to this glorious goal, as described by Zephaniah, and to see how everything really depends upon Christ.

Chap. 1: 2-4.

I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord.

I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling-blocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from the land, saith the Lord.

I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests.

In the opening chapter judgment of a widespread and comprehensive character is declared. Man had become obnoxious in the sight of God; he had polluted the land with his idolatry and deeds of violence. He had involved even the beasts, birds and fishes; his sin had defiled the whole creation, and there was nothing for it but for him to disappear under the judgment of God from the scene which Christ is to fill. So God

"shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land."

Chap. 2: 3, 7, 11.

Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.

And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; and they shall feed thereupon; in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening; for the Lord their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.

The Lord will be terrible unto them; for He will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen.

In the midst of all the corruption there has always been, and will be again (in the time to which the prophecy has special reference) a remnant that fear God. Such are called upon to seek Jehovah, so that in the day of His anger they may be securely hidden.

This brings us to the heart of the prophecy at once. Zephaniah means "hidden of the Lord," and in a very special way he foretells how the "hidden ones" will be brought through the storm and stress of the last days into the joy and glory of the millennial world. And it is in this connection that our thoughts are turned to CHRIST. Who but He could be the hiding-place of these godly Jews? As another prophet has said: "A Man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." In Him they will find their refuge. From Him will come the resources that will

sustain them in their faithful adherence to the way of truth. He will be their guide and protector until the land is purged from the presence of the ungodly, and all around is peace.

The prophecy does not refer to Christians, but to Jews. Yet we may observe a close parallel between what Zephaniah unfolds and what the gospel makes known to us. For we have to learn, first of all, that man in the flesh is utterly obnoxious to God because of his sin, and must be got rid of in judgment. The believer can see this effected for him in the cross of Christ. Man, the world, sin, himself, are all judged and removed from the eye of God in the death of Christ. The end of all flesh has thus come before Him. But in raising Him from among the dead God starts, as it were, the history of man again. It is, however, man of a new order, of the order of Christ. He becomes the hiding-place, the covert, of His people and we are brought to God in Him, as hidden in and covered by Him. This is beyond what we find in the prophets, but we can hardly read the words of Zephaniah without being reminded of the way that God has brought us into blessing in the risen Christ.

In chapter 2 the nations round about the land of Israel come into view for judgment. Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, Assyria: these central nations were all to be judged. But just as there will be a spared remnant of Judah, so there will be some spared from among the Gentiles to share the blessing of Christ's Kingdom. Idolatry will be utterly destroyed, but "the isles of the heathen" (that is, the remoter parts of the

earth in contrast to the countries immediately surrounding Judah) shall come into blessing, and men shall worship the Lord, every one from his place in all these outlying regions. They are not "hidden," like the remnant of Judah, during the time of the outpouring of wrath. But when judgment is executed they are spared, and have the healing and peace that will come into the world with the advent of Christ.

Both in chapters 2 and 3 "the remnant" is chiefly in view, "The remnant of the house of Judah," "the remnant of my people" (2: 7, 9). These are "the afflicted and poor people" who trust in the name of the Lord (3: 12), and who are blessed in connection with Christ.

Bearing this in mind, we shall look at the threefold way in which Christ is presented here. Three times in three different connections Jehovah is said to be *in the midst* of His people. That surely is Christ. *He* was Jehovah, come into the midst of His people for blessing.

Chap. 3: 5.

The just Lord is in the midst thereof; He will not do iniquity...He faileth not.

It is the state of Jerusalem that is dealt with in this chapter. She is called "filthy" and "polluted." Her princes had become roaring lions; her prophets light and treacherous persons. Her priests had defiled the sanctuary and outraged the law. But in shining contrast to all this we have Him presented, who was.

"Faithful amid unfaithfulness;  
'Mid darkness, only light."

In His pathway here He never swerved for a moment from that which was right. He was entirely uninfluenced by all that was around. Amid the prevalent corruption and hypocrisy He shone as the true Light. He was "in the midst" of Israel as the Just One, the maintainer of truth and righteousness.

But His presence brought to light the workings of evil, and necessitated the condemnation thereof. This we find in our prophet. But, besides judgment for the rebellious, there were other results that flowed from His presence in the midst of Israel. He wrought by His grace upon the hearts of many and attracted them to Himself. They were not of much account in the world, a few poor fishermen and others, but they were precious beyond rubies in His sight. And they will have their counterpart in the day that is coming, for there shall be "an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of Jehovah."

This remnant, the work of Jehovah's hands, will be characterized by that which marked Himself when He was here. He did no iniquity; so we are told "the remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity." Manifesting His character, refreshed by the food that He gives them, secure in His mighty protection, they shall lie down, satisfied and at rest.

This brings us to the second presentation of Christ, as Jehovah in the midst.

Chap. 3: 15.

The King of Israel, even Jehovah, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.



God's thought of a king is that he should rule for the comfort, peace and blessing of his subjects. This Christ will indeed do. If He puts forth His might for the destruction of His enemies, He puts it forth also to ensure the welfare of His people.

Israel had suffered much at the hands of many kings. Her first monarch oppressed the families and appropriated the possessions of his subjects (1 Sam. 8: 11-18), and most of his successors walked in his ways. But at last Jehovah Himself will, in the person of Christ, take possession of the throne, and will be in the midst of His people with unbounded blessing. His hands will be filled with bounty. If, as the Righteous One in the midst, He has exposed Israel's sin (and borne it Himself), as the King in the midst He will drive all evil away, so that it may be said: "Sing . . . shout . . . be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem."

More, however, has to be told. For He who is the Righteous One, and the King, is also God. As such He is presented in

Chap. 3: 17.

Jehovah thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy.

What an insight we get here into the very heart of God Himself, Israel's God and ours! Again and again He had mourned over the unfaithfulness and sin of His people. He had, times without number, entreated and warned them. But they had turned a deaf ear, and had run eagerly in the paths of pride, lust and idolatry.

But at length God takes His place "in the midst" and shows Himself mighty, not to judge, but to save. Instead of mourning over His wayward people, He will rejoice over them with joy. Instead of continually entreating them, He will be silent (as the margin reads) in His love. It is the deep silence of a love that is perfectly satisfied, a silence broken only by the sound of joyful singing. *Whose joyful singing? Ours? Israel's?* Nay: God Himself "will joy over thee with singing."

No doubt this too is Christ. We have thus viewed Him, as Zephaniah presents Him, in the midst of His people in three different ways:—

1. As the just Jehovah, acting *for righteousness' sake*, maintaining truth.
2. As Israel's King, acting *for His people's sake*, ensuring their unspeakable blessing.
3. As Jehovah-God, acting *for His own sake*, bringing to pass His designs of grace that He might satisfy His own love, and rejoice over the objects of that love with singing.

# HAGGAI

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Haggai and Zechariah were fellow-laborers in the service of the Lord, shortly after the return of a remnant of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon.

They are mentioned together in the sacred history as prophesying to these Jews and helping in the building of the temple. We also learn that they were much blessed of God in their labors, so that those who were engaged in building prospered through their testimony (Ezra 5: 1, 2; 6: 14).

While in Ezra we have the *outward* side of Haggai's service for the cheer and encouragement of the people of God, in the prophecy that bears his name we have the *inward* side of his service. Faithfully and severely he had to deal with the people themselves, and their leaders, as to their low moral state, before he could comfort them by unfolding God's gracious purposes for them.

Chap. 1: 2-8.

Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.

Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?

Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.

Ye have sown much and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put in into a bag with holes.

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.

Go up to the mountain and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord.

The immediate occasion of Haggai's first prophecy was the stoppage of the work of building the temple. It appears from Ezra 4 that this was the result of the adversaries' work. They accused the Jews of rebellious designs and, armed with royal authority, they went up and "made them to cease by force and power."

But there was another reason, a moral one, for the ceasing of the work. Haggai discloses it. It was the cold, selfish indifference of the people of God themselves. Dwelling in their own ceiled houses, they were content to let the house of God lie waste, excusing themselves by saying: "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built."

No doubt they talked in a very pious-sounding way about waiting God's time and looking to Him to carry on His own work. But God had committed the work to *them*. Would He not be with them in protecting power if they set themselves to do His bidding? He might permit the opposition of their foes to test them. But no power could prevail against Him, and the *real* reason for the stoppage of the work was not the hostility of the opposers, nor the decree of Artaxerxes, but the fact that these returned Jews were more con-

cerned about their own houses than about the house of the Lord.

Not that they had really prospered, even in the pursuit of their own material interests. God had blown upon their efforts. They sowed much but brought in little; their labors met with but scant success. Drought and dearth prevailed in their midst.

Haggai's mission was to arouse the people to their own grievous moral state, of which their outward impoverishment was but the consequence. He appeals to them to consider their ways and to set their hands in earnest to the work entrusted to them, the building of the temple. If only they would do this, Jehovah would smile on their labors. He would take pleasure in the product thereof, and would be glorified.

Is there anything in the circumstances of the people of God to-day which makes this old-time lesson from Haggai peculiarly applicable? Assuredly there is.

The house of God is here to-day. It is not a material house built with stones and timber. It is composed of *people*. The Church of God is His house (1 Tim. 3: 15). But how little real *building* is going on in connection with it! How comparatively rare it is to find the souls of Christians *built up* in the things of God. We are exhorted to build ourselves up on our most holy faith, and to be "built up in Him" (Col. 2: 7).

This is the sort of building work that greatly needs to be done to-day. It is the only sort of building that will stand the test of the coming day. To seek to build up a cause, or an organization, or a select com-

munity of Christians who are agreed upon certain doctrines or methods of procedure, is not to build according to God's mind.

Oh, for men with God-given eyesight to perceive the desolation that has come in among the Lord's people, to note the prevailing impoverishment of soul, and then to arise and build! May God prosper the work of building up the souls of His people *in Christ!*

In the result of such work as this God takes pleasure. He is glorified thereby. To build up souls in anything but Christ is to labor in vain. But to build up the souls of His people *in Him* is to labor for the pleasure and glory of God.

If anyone asks: *How* can souls be built up in Christ? the answer is, By the ministry of Himself to those souls. When one considers the kind of subjects chosen for ordinary pulpit discourses, one is appalled to find how very little of the real ministry of Christ there is. How little He is set forth before men as a blessing, living Saviour at God's right hand, and how comparatively rare in Christendom is the ministry of the glorious and wonderful truths connected with His session there!

Alas, the Lord's servants too often spend their strength in seeking to build up "our mission," or "*our* cause," or "*our* society," or "*our* fellowship." What is all this but attending to our own ceiled houses, while true building, according to God, is neglected?

Chap. 2: 5-9.

According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not.

For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;

And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.

The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts.

The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

Haggai's message did not fall upon deaf ears. His words were attended with power. Fear fell upon the people and God stirred up their spirits. Encouraged by the assurance of His presence with them, "they came and did work in the house of the Lord."

Within four weeks of this fresh start another gracious communication was made by God to His people by the mouth of Haggai. In connection with this we find Christ introduced. This brings us to what is more immediately our subject.

The prophet is charged to remind the people of Jehovah's covenant, made with their fathers when they came out of Egypt. To that covenant the Lord of hosts would assuredly be faithful. The heavens and the earth would be shaken, everything visible would be touched by His power, but His promise would stand firm, and the Desire of the nations should come.

The word translated "Desire" is in the plural and may be rendered "the desired things." But the reference is undoubtedly to Christ. The things which

the nations desire, but for which they vainly seek in this direction and in that, will be found in Him.

Do they desire *universal peace*? It will be brought to the earth when Christ comes (Isa. 2: 4).

Is *just government* an object of desire? The desire will be gratified when He comes (Isa. 11: 4).

Is *the knowledge of the true God* desired? The coming of Christ will cover the earth with it (Heb. 8: 11).

CHRIST is the only true solution to the perplexing problems of to-day. With Him alone it rests to pacify the nations by subduing them to His benign will. His coming will introduce the golden age for the earth.

Needless to say, we do not find in Haggai, nor indeed anywhere in the Old Testament, that which is the proper hope of the Church. The New Testament shows us that before the day of Christ's appearing as the Desire of the nations He will come into the air to take all who are His to be with Him. We must never confound this, the Christian's hope, with what we find in the prophets. But it is the same blessed Person, whether we consider His coming with reference to the Church, or to Israel, or to the nations.

Chap. 2: 23.

In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet; for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts.

The prophecy concludes with a special promise to Zerubbabel, the royal prince of David's line. No doubt he is here a figure of Christ, and the promise made to



him will be fulfilled in the person of his greater Son, for "Zorobabel begat . . . Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born JESUS, who is called Christ" (Matt. 1: 13, 16).

The promise is that in "that day" (the day of universal shaking, when thrones and armies are overthrown, and warriors perish by the sword), Jehovah will give a place of peculiar exaltation to His servant, as the Man of His own choice.

For the coming of Christ will not only mean the blessing of Israel and the nations; it will be the occasion of His own glory, He who has been crowned with thorns will be as Jehovah's signet. He will be glorified in that all that God does, will be done by Christ, and for Him.

Adam failed in connection with what was committed to his charge. So did Noah, and David, and everyone else to whom responsibility was entrusted. But from the beginning God had in view not Adam, nor David, but CHRIST. He is the One upon whom God's choice rested. His sojourn for thirty-three years on earth proved the rightness of that choice, and the heart of God will find peculiar delight in honoring that blessed One who, as a Man, has so entirely justified the divine choice.

Is it not balm to *our* hearts, too, to know that the day approaches when HE will be exalted in the eyes of all?

## ZECHARIAH

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No adequate unfolding of the glories of Christ as presented in the book of Zechariah would be possible without entering into a detailed exposition of its fourteen chapters. This, of course, is out of the question in a small volume like this.

It will be helpful, however, to notice that the prophecy naturally divides itself into two portions. The first portion (chaps. 1 to 6) contains a series of prophetic visions; the second portion (chaps. 7 to 14) consists mainly of direct prophetic utterances, and is particularly rich in its personal references to CHRIST.

We find Him also set forth in the first, or apocalyptic, portion of the book. He is shown to be God's great resource, in view of the sin and failure of the nation. For this is what we understand by His title, the "Branch" (3: 8 and 6: 12). Israel had become as a dead tree, producing no fruit, and only cumbering the ground. No tillage, no dew from heaven, no showers of rain, however abundant, availed to bring about any change.

Then God, intervening in mercy and power, brought forth in connection with that dead tree a living "Branch." The Lord Jesus came of Israel's race, "a root out of a dry ground," a living branch in the midst of a lifeless profession. As such, He was Jehovah's

Servant, fulfilling all His will upon the earth, and answering to all His pleasure. In Him God had at last a Servant on whom He could absolutely depend, One who would never fail.

Everybody else whom God had trusted with any responsibility had failed. Adam, entrusted with dominion over the earth, failed. Noah, entrusted with the sword of government, failed. Moses, entrusted with the leadership of the hosts of Israel, failed. Israel, called out to be a channel of blessing to the nations, failed, and was a curse to them instead of a blessing (chap. 8: 13). David, entrusted with the honors of royalty, failed, and his kingdom had to be rent in two. The remnant of Judah, restored from captivity in Babylon and entrusted with the maintenance of Jehovah's interests, failed. The Church, entrusted with testimony to the earth-rejected, heaven-enthroned Saviour, has failed. And grievous beyond all other failures has been that of the Church? Each of us individually, entrusted with some little bit of service for the Lord, has failed, but HE—never!

He is presented thus as God's faithful Servant and unfailing resource, in connection with the feeble testimony of the Jews who had returned from their captivity. Haggai has shown us their failure, in their cessation of work for the temple. In contrast with *this* we read: "Behold the Man whose name is the Branch . . . HE shall build the temple of the Lord."

In everything committed to Him His faithfulness is manifested, and "He shall bear the glory." Great enough to sustain the weight of all that depends on

Him, mighty enough to carry into accomplishment all that God has purposed, the glory of it shall all be His. And He is worthy!

Moreover, He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all God's ways of blessing. Of this we are reminded in chaps. 3 and 4. In chap. 3 the *Foundation Stone* of the temple, with its seven eyes, sets forth symbolically Christ as the One on whom God's structure of blessing is built. In chap. 4 the *Headstone*, saluted with shoutings, symbolizes Christ as the crown and completion of that structure. If He is the foundation *from* which God works in blessing, He is also the One *in view of whom* God works. God ever has Christ before Him in all that He does. The worlds were created not only by Him, but for Him (Colos. 1: 16). He is both Foundation Stone and Headstone of all God's counsels.

But without going too much into detail, let us see how the prophecy before us traces out the service of Christ to God, whether in suffering or in glory.

Micah has shown us the lowly birth at Beth-lehem of Him whose goings forth have been "from everlasting." Hosea has hinted at His journey to Egypt and His return. Isaiah has mentioned His "growing up" before Jehovah as a tender plant, and now Zechariah brings before us some of the salient features of His pathway on earth.

### HIS MINISTRY

Chap 11: 7, 10, 11.

And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto Me two staves;

the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock.

And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people.

And it was broken in that day; and so the poor of the flock that waited upon Me knew that it was the word of the Lord.

Jehovah's flock is seen as committed to Him to be fed. Downtrodden by their "possessors" (the Romans); betrayed and sold by those who with hypocritical piety take the Lord's name upon their lips (Herod, and such as he); unpitied and uncared for by those who should have been shepherds to them (Rabbis, Pharisees, Scribes and Priests), truly might they be called "the flock of slaughter."

It was the delight of Christ to feed this poor, oppressed flock. Not that the flock, as a whole, appreciated His gracious ministry, but there were some who did, and richly did He feed their souls. It was these, the "poor of the flock," who waited upon Him and acknowledged that the word of Jehovah was in His mouth (ver. 11). For in this chapter the prophet himself is a figure of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ speaks in him.

In connection with the Lord's shepherd ministry in the midst of the flock we have the incident of the two staves, Beauty and Bands. It is easy to see the significance of these; they set forth the two great objects that the Lord had in view when He undertook the shepherding of the flock.

The staff Beauty symbolizes that which He desired to make Israel among the nations ("all the people" in ver. 10 is really "all the *peoples*," that is, the nations). God's purpose for Israel was that it should be clothed with beauty, the beauty of holiness, and should be the centre from which the knowledge of God should radiate to the uttermost ends of the earth.

The staff Bands symbolizes "the brotherhood between Judah and Israel" (ver. 14), the cementing of the two rival nations into one.

The Lord, in taking the flock under His care, had both these objects in view. He would beautify Israel with the knowledge of her God and make her a focus of light and blessing to all nations, and would unite the rent and divided people into one.

But with the rejection of His ministry, both these objects had to be, for the time, abandoned. Hence the symbolical breaking of the two staves in vers. 10 and 14. However, the day will come for both the staves to be re-united. The staff Beauty will be again taken up by Israel's Shepherd, and Zion, "beautiful for situation," will be the joy of the whole earth, and God will be known in her palaces for a refuge (Ps. 48: 2). Zion will then be "the perfection of beauty" and God will Himself shine out therefrom (Ps. 50: 2).

The staff Bands will also be taken up, and Israel and Judah "shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all" (Ezek. 37: 22). Thus will the Lord serve His people in days to come, even as He would have served them if they had received Him in days gone by.

**HIS ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM**

Chap. 9: 9.

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.

This passage is familiar to us from its quotation in the Gospels. Zion's King, contrary to what might have been expected, would not enter His royal city in pomp and splendor. He would come in lowly guise, riding upon an ass. How literally this was fulfilled we all know. But though welcomed with loud hosannas, He was not really received by the people as their God-given King. Though He brought salvation, and was just, He was not appreciated. This is brought out in chap. 11, where we have

**HIS VALUATION BY THE PEOPLE**

Chap. 11: 12, 13.

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.

And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was priced at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.

Under the Mosaic law, if a slave were killed by being gored by an ox, the master of the slave was to be recompensed by the payment of thirty shekels of silver by the owner of the ox (Exod. 21: 32). Thirty shekels of silver were therefore regarded as the equivalent of a

slave. And such was the sum at which the Lord of glory was valued by the people whom He had come to bless! They regarded Him as of no more value than a slave.

Was His heart indifferent to this contemptuous valuation of Himself? Does not His grief find vent in the exclamation of pained surprise: "A goodly price that I was priced at of them!"

But to deeper depths of sorrow the Saviour had to go, for our prophet presents Him to us as *wounded in the house of His friends*.

### HIS CRUCIFIXION

Chap. 13: 5, 6.

But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.

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.

The whole passage, if carefully examined, is full of interest. The change of subject is abrupt, but there can be little doubt, in view of the language of ver. 7, but that it is Christ Himself whose sufferings are depicted.

The concluding sentence of ver. 5 would be more correctly rendered: "For man has acquired me as a bondman from my youth." The Lord Jesus, in marvellous grace, devoted Himself from the outset to the service of man. He took the bondman's place in order that He might effectually serve the objects of His love. But wounds and bruises were His reward, and in the house of those whom He had so devotedly befriended



His hands were pierced. The cross was the shameful answer on the part of man to the unselfish love that only sought to serve.

But we find something further than this, namely,

### HIS SMITING BY GOD

Chap. 13: 7.

Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the Man that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

He is spoken of as the Man that is Jehovah's Fellow; words that could be used of none but Himself. The Lord of hosts bids His sword awake, that His Shepherd may be smitten. Here are depths that none can fathom!

Our loss will be great if we fail to distinguish between the two kinds of smiting which the Lord Jesus endured: His being wounded in the house of His friends and His being smitten by God. Both the one and the other are fully shown in the New Testament.

All the cruel sufferings heaped upon the Saviour's head by wicked men could never have made *atonement* for our sins. Love it was that made Him willing to suffer, and it was for the sake of truth and righteousness that He was afflicted.

But when men, instigated by Satan, had done their worst, and when the holy Sufferer was shrouded from their gaze for three hours by an impenetrable pall of darkness, God poured out upon Him the vials of His righteous judgment against sin. HE *bruised* Him and

put Him to grief (Isa. 53: 10); HE brought Him into the dust of death (Ps. 22: 15); HE forsook Him; HE made Him to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5: 21); HE bade His sword awake against the Man that was His Fellow.

It is here that *atonement* is found. The passage in Zechariah, it is true, does not speak of this. It shows us the sheep scattered as the consequence of the Shepherd being smitten, whereas the result of atonement is that they are saved and blessed. But atonement was made when God entered into the great sin question with Christ upon the Cross, and when the wrath that otherwise must have fallen upon us was poured out in all its severity upon Him. No mere martyr-suffering was this. The judgment of God was visited upon Christ; His soul was made an offering for sin; Jehovah's billows rolled over Him. All praise be to Him that His love made Him willing to endure it all, not only for Israel's sake, but for ours.

### **HIS COMING AGAIN**

Chap. 14: 1-3.

Behold, the day of the Lord 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.

Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle.

The last chapter of our prophet is full of the glorious day that is yet to dawn. It is not the hope of

the Christian that is here presented. Before the events that are here described shall take place we Christians, whether alive or sleeping, shall have been "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air, according to 1 Thess. 4: 15-17.

Subsequent to the Lord's coming to catch up His people from the earth and from the tomb He will come again in power and glory to establish His throne in Zion, and to reign in righteousness for a thousand years. This, His public advent, is the theme of many a glowing prophecy in both the Old and the New Testaments. In chap. 14: 5 we read: "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee." His coming thus will be preceded by what Scripture speaks of as "the day of the Lord" (ver. 1).

Various "days" are referred to, not days of twenty-four hours, but periods of time. The present age, when man seems to be having everything his own way, is spoken of as *man's day* (1 Cor. 4: 3, *margin*).

The coming day of glory, when the earth will be filled with gladness under the beneficent rule of Christ and His saints, is called *the day of Christ* (Phil. 2: 16).

The eternal state which follows, when God shall be all in all, is called *the day of God* (2 Pet. 3: 12).

But before the time of blessing comes, a period of judgment is foretold, and this period is often referred to, as in Zech. 9: 1, as *the day of the Lord*. During this space of time Jerusalem will once more pass through the horrors of a terrible siege. All nations will

be gathered against her to battle. Relief will come, however, by the sudden appearance of Christ.

### **HIS STANDING ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES**

Chap. 14: 4, 5.

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; 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 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; and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee.

It was from the mount of Olives that He ascended, with His hands upraised in blessing. Upon that same spot He will descend. The mountain will then be cleft in two, but Jerusalem will rejoice, for her deliverance will have come.

### **HIS RECOGNITION BY ISRAEL**

"They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" (12: 10). Anointed with "the spirit of grace and of supplication," they will bitterly repent of their treatment of their Messiah. With stricken hearts and streaming eyes they will look upon Him.

Glad recognition and true repentance on their part will be at once followed by acknowledgement, on God's part, that they are once again His people. "I will

say, It is my people!" "They shall say, The Lord is my God!" (13: 9).

### **HIS DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY**

When the Lord comes, He will find a great assemblage of the world's battle forces arrayed against Jerusalem. He will at once espouse His people's cause and will "go forth and fight against those nations" (14: 3). A previous chapter speaks of the destruction of Antichrist (11: 17). All that is contrary to Christ will be swept out of the way in judgment.

### **HIS REIGN OVER THE EARTH**

"The Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one" (14: 9). No rival kings will then be found, no clashing of interests, no jealousies of nations. All will be subdued to His rule.

### **HIS ROYAL PRIESTHOOD**

A remarkable passage (6: 13) tells us that when the Kingdom is established, Christ will "be a *Priest* upon His throne," and that the counsel of peace shall be between Him (as such) and Jehovah.

As King, He administers the royal bounty of God to His subjects, He secures them from danger and causes them to dwell in peace. As Priest, He maintains Jehovah's interests among them, and is the means of their approach to God. In connection with this priestly function which the Lord will exercise in that

day, we have

### **HIS BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE**

The temple re-built in the time of Zechariah was beautified and enlarged by Herod, but was destroyed by the Romans. A future temple, to be built by the renegade Jews, will also be destroyed (Dan. 8: 11). But Messiah Himself, the Priest-King, will build the temple which will be the centre of Israel's worship in the days to come (6: 12, 15). He will graciously permit others to be associated with Him in this work, but under His own eye the temple walls shall rise, and He will be its light and glory.

In that day men will go up from year to year to worship the King (14: 16). Jerusalem will be marked by holiness, even to the bells of the horses, and the bowls and pots.

A vast system of blessing and glory, embracing unnumbered millions under its beneficent influence, will then be brought into being. The centre of it all, its Pillar and Upholder, its Sun and its Brightness, will be CHRIST! What joy to us to contemplate it all, though finding our portion in a yet higher sphere, the Father's house above, where as sons we shall be *at home*, breathing the atmosphere of divine love, and knowing the Father and the Son in blessed and holy intimacy.

# MALACHI

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The pages of Malachi deal with the grievous moral condition of the remnant of Jews whom God had mercifully brought back from captivity in Babylon. In particular the evil state of the priests is dwelt upon upon.

In turning to study the prophecy one would naturally enlarge upon this, all the more so because the state of things which it depicts finds a close parallel in the present state of professed, and even of real, Christians. There is much valuable instruction, too, and great encouragement for those who seek to be true to Christ in the midst of wide-spread declension and apostasy.

All this, however, hardly comes within the scope of our chosen theme, which is *Christ* in the Minor Prophets. We must, therefore, confine our thoughts to the way in which HE is presented in Malachi.

We find Him set forth in two principal characters:—

- (1) As Jehovah's Messenger.
- (2) As the Sun of Righteousness.

The prophet was himself a type of Christ in the former character. The very meaning of his name, "My Messenger," indicates this. His service was to remind the people of Jehovah's claims upon them, and of His love and willingness to bless.

Chap. 1: 2; 3: 10.

I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob....

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse that there may be meat in mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

In this he foreshadowed the Lord Jesus in His pathway of service here. None maintained so faithfully as He the claims of God; none was ever so jealous over what was due to Him. To this His memorable words bear witness: "Render....unto God the things that are God's."

Yet none spoke so tenderly as He of God's love to His fallen creature, man. None proclaimed so constantly God's willingness to bless. Take, for instance, the glowing parable of Luke 15. Here God is set forth under the similitude of a father, with a heart full of tenderest love to an erring son, running in eager haste to welcome him and showering favors upon his undeserving head. Truly the blessed Saviour, in uttering this parable, was God's Messenger of grace to men.

But He is further set before us in this character in two passages in our prophet, chaps 2: 7 and 3: 1.

Chap. 2: 7.

For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.



In this passage the true priest is described. The sons of Aaron should have answered to this description, but none have done so save in a partial and faulty way. The priestly functions here mentioned remain to be fulfilled in their entirety by the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was mainly because of the failure of the priests in Israel that prophets were raised up. The priesthood became corrupted, the law of truth ceased to be in the mouths of the priests, and their lips did not keep knowledge. Prophets were therefore raised up to be Jehovah's messengers to the people. Zechariah has shown us, however, that in the day that is coming prophets will be no more. In that day anyone who assumes to prophesy will at once be known as "speaking lies" (Zech. 13: 3). The priestly function, taken up and exercised by Christ Himself in perfection, will render the special gift or office of a prophet unnecessary. He, the Priest upon His throne (Zech. 6: 13), will fully answer to the description given in Malachi 2. The law of truth will be in His mouth; His lips will keep knowledge; men shall seek the law at His mouth; and He will be the true Messenger of the Lord of hosts.

Then will be fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy: "He will teach us of His ways." Then shall the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

But He is also the Messenger *of the covenant*: that is, it is in Him that the covenant blessings will be made good to Israel.

## Chap. 3: 1.

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

Chapter 2 ends with the unbelieving inquiry: "Where is the God of judgment?" The opening words of chap. 3 supply the answer. God would send His messenger (John the Baptist) to prepare the way for the coming of Him for whom they had enquired. The Lord of whom they had been asking "Where is He?" would suddenly come. But who would abide His coming? Who would stand when He appeared? For, as the refiner's fire consumes the dross, He would purge away all that was obnoxious to Him, so that what is pleasant in His sight alone might remain.

The prophecy has been partially fulfilled. The messenger was sent to prepare the way of the Lord, and the Lord Himself did come to His temple. But the prophecy looks on to His coming again. The whole of the intervening period of grace is passed over, and our thoughts are carried forward to the time when Jehovah will fulfil the terms of His gracious covenant, and when CHRIST, the Messenger of that covenant, will come. His presence will test everybody and everything. The sons of Levi are specially mentioned as coming under His hand for purification, while He will be a "swift witness" against those who practise evil and fear Him not.

## Chap. 3: 16-18.

Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name.

And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not.

A special promise is given to those who fear His name. A remnant in the midst of a remnant, they have sweet communion with one another in the things of the Lord. They speak often one to another. They think upon Jehovah's name. And they are of peculiar value in His eyes. He delights to claim them as His own, His jewels.

Of course the reference prophetically is to the remnant of Israel in the future day, after the present period (of Christianity) ends, and the Church is caught away to be with the Lord. In the days which immediately precede His appearing in glory, the tide of evil will run swiftly indeed. Then will be found these godly people, a little remnant caring for Jehovah's interests and with hearts beating true to Him.

Without in any way assuming to be a remnant (for a "remnant" in any given day includes *all* the godly), surely the readers of these pages may seek to follow the practice of these godly people. May not we who fear the Lord speak often one to another of Him?

May we not thus enjoy sweet communion in His things? Will not such practice be acceptable in His sight?

Chap. 4: 1, 2.

For, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

The special promise given to those who fear Jehovah's name is that *to them* the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, with healing in His wings. To those who live in the glare of man's day no "sun" is necessary. They have their reward already. For such the future will bring darkness, not light. But to those who fear the Lord, the time of His absence is as a dark night. *To them* the promise is given of the Sun of Righteousness, which will turn their night to day.

CHRIST is the Sun of Righteousness. When He appears the dark night will be over. For those who are His, sorrow and sighing will be things of the past.

In contrast with this, *the Christian's* hope is the Bright and Morning Star (Rev. 22: 16). The morning star arises before the sun appears. Christ is the Morning Star. Before He comes with healing in His wings for this sin-stricken earth He will come to take us to be with Himself on high. Then will follow a period of deepening darkness, only to be ended when the Sun

of Righteousness flings His welcome beams of light and warmth upon the world.

### CONCLUSION

In our study of the Minor Prophets we have sought to find Him whom our souls love. To Him they one and all bear witness (Acts 10: 43). If we know Him in a deeper and fuller way through the pages of the New Testament, and if a closer relationship with Himself is ours than that which the prophets set forth as existing between Him and the chosen and beloved nation, yet it is *Himself*, the same blessed One, whom we contemplate in the writings that have been before us.

May God be pleased to make Him increasingly precious to our hearts. Apart from Him Christianity becomes mere philosophy. Doctrine, unless presented in living connection with Him, is empty theology. Prophecy, unless taken up with Himself as its known and loved Centre, is but an intellectual study. HE is the sum and substance of it all, the fulfilment of every promise, the goal of every hope. Time spent at His feet, learning of Him, is time well spent, and will bear fruit in the days of eternity yet to come.

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