Synopsis of the Books of the Bible

Zechariah

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)

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Introduction

The scope and standpoint of Zechariah

Zechariah is more occupied than either of the other two post-captivity prophets with the Gentile kingdoms under whose yoke the Jews were placed, and with the establishment in its perfection of the glorious system that was to accompany the presence of the Messiah; and, on the other hand, with the rejection of that Messiah by the remnant who had returned from captivity; with the state of misery and unbelief in which the people would be left, and by which they would at length be openly characterised; and, finally, with the last attacks of the enemies of Jehovah upon Israel, and especially those directed against Jerusalem. He announces the destruction of these enemies by the judgment of God, and the glory and holiness of the people after their deliverance by the arm of Jehovah, who should thenceforth reign and be glorified in all the earth. It is the complete history of Israel, and of the Gentiles in relationship with Israel, from the captivity to the end, as far as connected with Jerusalem, the restoration of which especially occupies the prophet. For if the house was the primary object in Haggai, Jerusalem is the central point in Zechariah; although in the course of the prophecy the temple, and still more the Messiah, have the most prominent place in the scene.

The dates of the post-captivity prophets

The date of Zechariah's prophecy is nearly the same as that of the prophecies of Haggai. There are two in Zechariah, besides that of the introduction; in Haggai, four. The first date in Zechariah is only a month or two before the last two in Haggai, which were given on the same day. At the date of the second prophecy in Zechariah (Zech. 7) the temple was not finished as a whole, but sufficiently so to serve as a place of worship, although the dedication had not yet been celebrated.

Chapter 1

Exhortation to the people tro turn to Jehovah: the conduct of the Gentiles

Zechariah 1. The Spirit of God begins with an exhortation, founded on the proofs that the history of the people supplied of the manner in which the word of the prophets had taken hold of them. Jehovah's displeasure, of which these prophets had not failed to warn the people, had borne its fruit; but God was now taking knowledge of the conduct of the Gentiles, to whom He had committed the place of power, and who, being at ease themselves, did not care for the misery and ruin of God's people.

But Jehovah cares for it. He is sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease, and very jealous for Jerusalem. He is returned to Jerusalem with mercies; and prosperity and abundance shall be the portion of His people. We may remark here, that the judgment of Babylon, already accomplished, was in principle the judgment executed on the oppressor among the Gentiles, the head of the empire — of the image; and that the promise of blessing extends to that which shall be the portion of Jerusalem, when the oppressor shall be finally judged.

One Gentile empire already judged, three then existing

Three empires were existing in the eye of the Spirit. And the world was at peace under the authority of the second of the four, the first of these three. A horse is the symbol of divine energy of government in the earth, and here, in the empires succeeding Nebuchadnezzar. There are here three, besides the one that stands among the myrtle trees. But they have the character of the providentially administering spirits of the empires rather than of the empires themselves. The first of the three horses is of the same colour as that of the man who stood among the myrtles (perhaps because Cyrus and the Persians had delivered and favoured the people of God, as the Lord Jesus Himself will do in the greatness of His power).

Such, then, is the import of the first part of this prophecy: the judgment already accomplished displaying the virtue of Jehovah's word; God returning to Jerusalem with mercies and consolation, moved with jealousy for her, and sorely displeased with the nations that were at ease while she was in ruins.

Judah restored to a position to receive the Messiah

The vision controlled the whole action of the empires of the nations, and shewed that everything was subject to the providential government of God, who inquired into all for His people's sake; and who, looking on to the end of these times of the Gentiles, announced that He was occupied with the prosperity and blessing of His chosen city. Meanwhile, remark, Judah had been restored provisionally to the privileges of its own worship, and to a position in which it might be ready to receive the Messiah for the accomplishment of the purposes of God.

The empires oppressing Judah and Jerusalem

The vision at the end of the chapter embraces all the empires who shall have been in relation with Judah and Jerusalem, and have oppressed them, until their final deliverance. The horns appear to symbolise powers; and the carpenters, the instruments employed by God to break them to pieces. We observe that Israel is included in verse 19, as a part of the whole it appears to me, without entering into detail. Nineveh having come under the yoke of Babylon, and Israel being subject, as it was, to the empire, all is put together.

Chapter 2

The re-establishment of Jerusalem and the house: judgment of what was wicked

From Zechariah 2 to the end of chapter 6, the Spirit presents the circumstances, the principles, and the result of the re-establishment of Jerusalem and of the house; and also the judgment of that which was wicked and corrupt. Each chapter has a distinct subject — a vision detached from the others, while

forming a portion of the whole. The present responsibility, on which the blessing depended, and the sovereign grace that would assuredly accomplish all, are both set before us, each in its place.

Jerusalem's restoration: return from captivity and the manifestation of Messiah

The restoration of Jerusalem is described in chapter 2 in a very remarkable manner, which throws much light on the connection, already spoken of, between the return from the Babylonish captivity wrought by Cyrus, the servant, the righteous man from the east, and the deliverance to be granted by the manifestation of the Messiah. First of all, the full and entire restoration of Jerusalem is announced, Jehovah Himself being her safeguard, and securing prosperity and peace to her inhabitants, Himself, her glory, dwelling in the midst of her. We can easily understand what an encouragement such a promise, and such an interest on the part of Jehovah in Jerusalem, would be to them in their then state, even if the accomplishment were not then brought about.

The return under Cyrus not the full accopmlishment of God's purposes

Jehovah calls to the people, and bids them come forth from the land of the north, an expression used for Chaldea, for they had been scattered to the four winds. The Babylonish captivity was the real sentence of Lo-ammi, as the return thence (Babylon being judged) was the earnest of a better deliverance from that which, in the last days, will represent Babylon. Zion is delivered, from her captivity in Babylon. But if, up to a certain point, this took place by means of Cyrus, it was by no means the full accomplishment of God's purposes. They were continuously, and yet are, subject to the heathen image and superscription. And, in a more special manner, the Jews will again be in subjection to that which bears the character of Babylon, and will be delivered from it; but it will be in those days when Jehovah shall manifest Himself in a glory that will admit of no resistance to His will. After the glory He will send to the nations that have spoiled Israel. The glory of Jehovah shall appear, and the enemies of His people shall be judged; for he who touches Israel, the beloved of Jehovah, shall bring judgment upon himself in that which is most dear and precious to him. The judgment of the nations shall justify the word of God to His people Israel.

Future full blessing

The daughter of Zion should sing with joy, for Jehovah would dwell in the midst of her. Many nations should come and join themselves to Jehovah in that day, and should be His people; and He would dwell in the midst of Israel. And then the word of prophecy (the accomplishment of which had been so long suspended that it appeared like a dream of the night) should be justified to Israel by its entire fulfilment. Jehovah should inherit Judah as His portion in the holy land, and should again choose Jerusalem. Solemn period! Let all flesh then be silent; for Jehovah has risen up from His holy habitation to accomplish all the good pleasure of His will.

We see, that, however great might be the encouragement for the Jews in that day, the mind of the Spirit goes on to the end of the age, and to the manifestation of the glory of Jehovah, and the blessing of Jerusalem and of the whole earth. The return from Babylon, already accomplished historically, was still future as the true deliverance of Zion. All flesh should acknowledge the coming of Jehovah. These were judgments which should take place after the glory.

Chapter 3

The high priest and the new garments wrought of God: sins removed

But in order that Jerusalem (the centre of God's dealings in Israel) should be thus re-established in blessing, something more than the mere exercise of God's power was necessary. The people were guilty and polluted. How could they be brought into the presence of God, and clothed with glory, in such a condition? Nevertheless they must be there in order to be blessed. Moreover this is the history of every sinner. It is this question, so important, so essential, that is solved in Zechariah 3. Joshua, the high priest, who represents the people (it is not a question here of interceding, but of answering for them), stands before the presence of Jehovah — before "the angel of his presence," that is to say, before God as He manifested Himself in Israel since the departure from Horeb. Satan, the adversary to the blessing of God's people, stands there to resist him. How is this to be answered? Joshua could not do it. He was clothed in filthy garments. It is Jehovah Himself who, unknown to them, undertakes the cause of His people (as He did in the case of Balaam), and employs divine authority against their adversary. Jehovah had chosen Jerusalem — had plucked the people as a brand out of the fire; and Satan desired to cast them into it again. The will of Jehovah was to save them, all guilty and polluted as they were. Nevertheless the defilement existed and was unbearable to God. But God was acting in grace; and thus acting, since He must needs remove the sin from before His eyes (for this very reason, that it is unbearable to Him), He puts away the sin and not the sinner. He makes sin to cease from before Him. He takes it away, and, clothing Joshua with new garments wrought of God, and according to His perfection, makes Him a priest before Him. This will be the position of Israel in righteousness, and in service before God — a nation of priests, clothed in the righteousness which their God has given them. We anticipate them in this in a higher and heavenly way.

Joshua as a type of Christ: the foundation stone

Verse 7 puts Joshua, as the representative of the people, under responsibility for the time being. If faithful, he should have a place in the presence of Jehovah of hosts. Verse 8 treats him as a type of Christ, having the nation of priests associated with Himself in the blessing that shall be accomplished in the last days. The foundation-stone that was laid before the eyes of Joshua was but a feeble image of that true stone, the immovable foundation of all the blessing of Israel, of all the government of God in the earth. Jehovah Himself stamps it with its true character. It should represent the thoughts of Jehovah Himself in His government. It should have, or rather it should be, the signet of God; and the iniquity of the earth should be definitively taken away by the absolute, efficacious, and positive act of God. In this stone shall be seen also the perfect intelligency of God. The seven eyes shall be there.

The eyes of Jehovah

I would add a few words on this expression. In 2 Chronicles 16 we find the eyes of Jehovah represented as running to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards Him. This is the faithfulness of God in taking cognisance of all things in His ways of government. In Zechariah, the eyes are found upon the stone that is laid in Zion. It is there that the seat of that government is placed which sees everything and everywhere. In verse 10 of the next chapter these eyes, which behold all things, which run through the whole earth, are said to rejoice when they see the plummet in the hands of Zerubbabel, that is to say, the house of Jehovah's habitation entirely finished. In this case they are not presented as established in the seat of government upon earth, but in their character of universal and active oversight, and in this providential activity, never resting until Jehovah's counsels of grace towards Jerusalem are accomplished; and then they shall rejoice. The active intelligence of providence finds its full delight there in the accomplishment of the unchangeable purpose of the will of God. Finally these eyes are again seen in Revelation 5, in the Lamb exalted to the right hand of God, who is about to take possession of His inheritance of the earth. Here it is the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth; for the government is in the hands of the Lamb, although He has not yet exercised it in the earth, of which He is about to be put in possession.

Peace fully established by the Prince of Peace, the Branch

I return to our chapter. When the seat of Jehovah's perfect government shall be set up in Jerusalem, and the iniquity of the land of Israel shall be taken away, then peace shall be fully established, and each one shall rejoice in the peace of his neighbour, and each one be neighbour in heart to all. It is the Prince of Peace who reigns there.

All this hangs upon the introduction of Christ the Branch. Here He is not presented as king. It is His Person which is introduced, and the effect of His intervention. Observe that the word does not say that iniquity is taken away, until the effect of the work of Christ is applied by faith in Him, a faith which, with respect to Israel, depends on sight. Their hearts will have been previously drawn to Jehovah, as were the remnant by the preaching of John the Baptist; but the peace that flows from iniquity being taken away, and the joy of complete deliverance, comes after. They will then sing, "Unto us a son is born."

Chapter 4

The golden candlestick

After this Zechariah is, as it were, awakened by God to see all the perfect order of that which He was going to establish. Here also the present grace furnishes the occasion for the revelation of the ulterior purposes of God. The prophet sees the vessel of the light of God on earth ordained in all its perfection. The candlestick was one, but it had seven branches. It was unity in the perfection of spiritual co-ordination — perfect unity, perfect development in that unity. Each thing was in its place as a

means, and the two sources of spiritual grace which fed the light, were placed one on each side to sustain the light that shone before Jehovah. These are, as it appears to me, the royalty and the priesthood of Christ, which maintain, by power and spiritual grace, the perfect light of divine order among the Jews. The work was divine, the pipes were of gold. The thing ministered was the grace of the Spirit, the oil which fed the testimony, maintained in this perfect order. But the Spirit first places Israel, at the moment of the prophecy, in a very definite position. It was not yet the time for the exercise of outward power, or for Jehovah to put forth His might, and establish His glory and His worship among His people. It was His Spirit acting in the remnant of Israel, if they would hearken, to bring them into relationship with God morally, and in a worship that He would accept, if — imperfect as it must needs be, since the nation was not re-established by the power of God, but remained still in bondage — this worship was rendered to God in Spirit and in truth, according to that which He bestowed on the people. And at the same time, outward providence was exercised to accomplish all that was necessary for the maintenance of the relationship with God, and that God's grace had established for Israel, after their fall and their deliverance from Babylon by the providential interposition of God. The seven eyes which ran to and fro throughout the earth should see with joy the house in which the restored remnant would be in relationship with God, completed by the hands of Zerubbabel.

This clearly defines the position of the people, and the two orders of things set before us in this prophecy. The present condition was that of relationship with God, established in sovereignty by His Spirit, through which He could accept their worship, His Spirit being in the midst of the restored remnant, and providential power being in exercise to secure blessing, but no immediate government on God's part. Government was left in the hands of the Gentiles.

That which was prophetically in view, was the perfect order established in Jerusalem as the vessel of divine light on earth, maintained by the ministry of the two sons of oil — the royalty and the priesthood — which stood before the Lord* of the whole earth. The God of Israel had had His throne at Jerusalem. The God of heaven had bestowed the dominion of the whole earth on the head of the Gentiles. Now the Lord* of the whole earth would establish earthly order, according to His will, at Jerusalem; and would there maintain divine light by a royal priesthood in His presence. {* 'Adon.' Zech. 4:14; 6:5.}

Chapter 5

The flying roll: Israel's true position

Zechariah 5 shews us the other side of the picture, that is to say, the judgment of the wicked in Israel in the last days. The prophet sees an immense roll filled with a curse for the wicked, for those that sin against their neighbour and against the name of Jehovah, to cut off both them and their houses.

The people, as a whole also, are then put in their true position. That which called itself Jerusalem and Israel and the people of God, belonged in fact to Babylon. God, by His mighty providence, takes them up and sets them on their true base; and their house is built in the land of Shinar. Its Babylonish character is fully evidenced by its position.

Chapter 6

Mediate power: God's government on earth after Nebuchadnezzar's failure

In Zechariah 6 we are shewn the government of God in the four monarchies, but neither as immediate government on God's part nor merely that of human government. We have seen power committed to man in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, and that he had failed therein. But it was not the will of God immediately to resume the reins of government in the earth, neither to leave the earth to the wickedness and the will of man without any providential bridle, without any government. He controls them, not by acting directly, so as to maintain the testimony of His character and His ways, but by means of instruments whom He employs, the result of whose activity is according to His will. The only wise God can do this, for He knows all things and directs all things to the accomplishment of His purposes. This is the reason that we see all sorts of things morally in disagreement with His ways in government, which yet succeed: a chaos as to the present, but the issue of which will furnish a clue, that will make manifest a wisdom even more profound and admirable than that which was displayed in His own immediate government in Israel, perfect as this was in its place. It is that universal providence, which, in its results, satisfies the moral exigencies of the nature of God; while in the intermediate course of things free scope is left to the active energies of man's will.

This mediate power, exercised by means of instruments proceeding from the presence of the Most High God, is employed in connection with His rights over the whole earth. This is the character of God in the prophecy of Zechariah. It is the character also of His government for the time being, that is, during the four empires. When Christ shall reign, the government will again be immediate in His Person, and Jerusalem be its centre.

I think that the judgment executed upon Babylon answers to that which is said in verse 8. We know that Chaldea was always the north country to Israel. The spirits employed by God have accomplished the will of God there. The seventh verse appears to indicate the Roman empire, comprising everything from its first establishment to the present time, and its historical character at all times. The white horses would be the representatives of that which God has done by means of the Greek empire. The grisled and bay appear to indicate a mixture of Greek and Roman power — at least, these horses have a double character, which becomes afterwards two distinct classes (the last only having the character of universality, which goes to and fro throughout all the earth). I doubt not that all these proud instruments of His government will be found again as spheres of judgment in the last days, when God begins to assert His rights as the God of the whole earth, unless Babylon geographically may be an exception in virtue of what is said in verse 8.

The Branch, the true Melchisedec

The full result is given in verses 9-15 in which the Branch is looked at as born and growing up in the place of His earthly glory, building the temple of Jehovah, bearing the glory, ruling upon His throne, a priest upon His throne, the true Melchisedec, maintaining for the earth the enjoyment of perfect peace — the "counsel of peace" with Jehovah. This counsel of peace is maintained between Jehovah and the

Branch (compare Ps. 85 and Ps. 87). Therefore should they come from far to build in the temple of Jehovah; and the testimony of prophecy should be made good by its fulfilment.

Judgment on Babylon: fulfilment of promise to the obedient remnant

Again we see the two elements which link the events and the dealings of God in the prophet's day, with the glorious circumstances of the last days. First, the overthrow of Babylon has already executed the judgment on the first oppressors of Jerusalem who led her captive. The whole system is thus judged in principle; as in the New Testament it is said of the adversary, "Now is the prince of this world judged." And then, the fulfilment of the promise is attached to the obedience of the remnant (v. 15). This continues with respect to Israel unto the end (see Acts 3, and even Heb. 3 and 4). But meantime the fulness of the Gentiles must come in independently of this on other grounds. At the end Israel, obedient (that is in fact, the remnant) — no longer united to the order of the assembly, but connected with the promises to Israel in the earth — will enjoy the fulfilment of these promises.

God's hidden providential government

We may remark that in Zechariah (Babylon being already judged) we have neither man invested with the government, nor the moral character of the empires presented under the form of an image or that of beasts; but the government of God hidden, providential, but real, in connection with these empires. This is an element of much importance, if we would understand the whole system existing from the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and the return from captivity, until the end, when Christ shall reign in righteousness. The first part of the prophecy closes with the end of chapter 6.

Chapters 7 to 10

Responsibility and blessing: Israel's past and future

The prophecy, from Zechariah 7 to the end of the book, has for its special object the introduction of the Messiah in Israel, with the consequences of His rejection. The same principles of responsibility and blessing, which we have already seen established with respect to the remnant on their return from Babylon, are found again here. The prophecy begins by calling to mind the insincerity of their lamentations and humiliation during the seventy years' captivity, and the example set them by the hardness of the people's heart, before that sorrowful period, which led to their dispersion among all the nations, the pleasant land being made desolate. But now Jehovah's love for Zion, His chosen city, excited His jealousy and His wrath against those who oppressed her. He was returned unto Zion, and she should be blessed as a city of truth, and the mountain of Jehovah should be His holy mountain. Jerusalem should be abundantly blessed, her streets full of inhabitants, and her old men full of days. God would bring back His people from all the countries in which they had been scattered and captive. From the day in which His people had turned to Him and laid the foundation of the temple, blessing should flow as a river, even as misery and judgment had done before. The Jews who had returned from Babylon were placed under conditions of truth and uprightness for the enjoyment of these blessings (v.

16, 17).

Besides this, Jehovah declares, unconditionally, that their fast days should be joyful feasts, and that men should come from all nations to worship Jehovah at Jerusalem, and should take hold of the skirt of a Jew, knowing that God was with that people. Here are, then, the moral consequences of disobedience, already accomplished — insincerity and hardness of heart pointed out; present blessing introduced by grace, and bestowed on the people under the condition of a godly walk, such fulness of blessing as the presence of Jehovah in their midst would involve; and, finally, the purposes of God in grace, which, depending on Himself, should be never-failing.

God's purposes of grace and the consequences

But this last thought introduces many consequences and important events. The first two consequences are, that Israel should be put in possession of the whole territory which God had given them. Enemies from without would come, but Jehovah Himself would defend His house; and the result of this direct intervention would be, that no oppressor should pass through them any more. Jehovah Himself had already looked into this matter.

It was a day in which the eyes of all mankind should be turned towards Jehovah, as well as those of the tribes of Israel. Compare this part of Zechariah 9 with Isaiah 17.

The introduction of Messiah in a twofold aspect

Now this immediate intervention of Jehovah, who encamps about His house (it is the defence of the city against the last attack of the Assyrians, which we have found more than once in the prophets), necessarily introduces the Messiah, in view of the events of the last days. Verse 9 speaks of this. It presents the Messiah in His personal character as King Messiah, but in a twofold aspect. And this is the reason why, in the New Testament, that portion only is quoted which relates to Jehovah's first coming. The King of Zion comes unto her. He is just, and brings in Himself power and salvation. This is the general idea, that which Zion needed, and which shall be accomplished in the last days. The Holy Ghost adds to this the personal character of the Lord, the spirit in which He presented Himself to Israel — lowly and riding upon an ass. We all know the fulfilment of this at His first coming.

The effect of Messiah's presence

The Messiah Himself having been thus presented, the definitive effect of His presence is announced in that which follows, as the continuation of verse 8, remembering who has been introduced. He will put an end to war in Israel, will establish peace among the nations, and His dominion shall be unto the ends of the earth (the land of Israel being the centre of His power). Jehovah, having delivered the people — that is, the believing remnant, who shall become the nation — by the blood of the covenant, will restore them double for all their affliction, and use them to establish His power over the isles of the Gentiles. The might of Jehovah should accompany and save them, as the flock of His people. He would pour out blessing upon the land at the prayer of the remnant of His people, who had been wandering like a flock

without a shepherd, and had sought help in vain from their idols. But Jehovah had now visited His flock, the house of Judah, and out of them strength should go forth. Judah should be as His goodly horse in the battle. He would strengthen Judah and save Ephraim. Jehovah would gather them in such numbers that there would be no place for them. He would dry up the sea and the river to make a way for them, and the pride of their enemies should be brought down. They should be strong in Jehovah their God, and walk up and down in His name.

To the end of Zechariah 10 it is the general proclamation of the blessing that should crown Judah and Ephraim, when, by the favour of Jehovah, they were restored to their land.

Chapter 11

The rejection of Messiah and its consequences

Zechariah 11. In connection with the judgments that should attend it, the Spirit enters into more detail with respect to the rejection of the Messiah, and the particular circumstances of the last days, in consequence of this rejection. It is the history of Israel in connection with Christ.

The invasion of Israel by the Gentiles; Jehovah's care for His flock

I think that the beginning of chapter 11 speaks of the invasion of Israel by the Gentiles. The first three verses give a picture of the general condition of the land. In verse 4 Jehovah takes up the case of His devastated flock. Their Gentile possessors only made a spoil of them. Their own shepherds pitied them not. Jehovah, while giving up the nation to the fruit of their iniquity, was moved with compassion for the poor of the flock, and cares for the oppressed. It is the spirit of the life of Christ in Israel.

The true Shepherd and Antichrist

The two staves represent His authority, as uniting all the nations under Him, and binding Judah and Israel together — the double effect of the presence of Christ. But the shepherds of Israel are cut off; and Christ, grieved with the wicked and corrupt people, Himself abhorred by them, leaves them to themselves and to the consequences of their behaviour. As the result of this, He renounces for that time the inheritance of the nations, since it is in Israel that He is to take possession of it. But the poor of the flock have recognised in His ways the fulfilment of the word of prophecy: they have not waited for the manifestation of the Messiah's public glory in Israel, but have attached themselves to Him personally, in consequence of the proofs He gave of His mission from God. It appears to me that this comprises the apostolic work in Israel, as well as the life of Christ. The prophecy only speaks of the fact itself. Verses 12 and 13 relate the price at which the nation estimated their King and their Saviour. The fulfilment of this is known to all. The prophet here performs the thing prophetically, marking that so it was to be according to the counsels of God. We see also that Christ appears here as Jehovah Himself. The connection between verses 6 and 9 brings out the same truth. The thoughts of Jehovah with respect to that which He will do find their accomplishment in the Person of Jesus. The union between Judah and

Israel, of which Christ should be the bond, is also deferred. In verses 15-17 the prophet is seen assuming the features of the Antichrist, to represent him in type (as previously, the actions of Judas), in order to announce that foolish shepherd who should be raised up in judgment from God, and who should himself suffer the judgment he deserved. Christ came in the name of the Father — He was not received. Another should come in his own name, and him the people would receive.

Chapter 12

The events around Jerusalem in the last days

Zechariah 12. The introduction of Antichrist, a shepherd* in Israel, brings in also the events that crowd around Jerusalem in the last days. All the nations should be gathered round Jerusalem, but only to find it a burdensome stone that should crush them. God would judge the power of man, but would raise up His people in sovereign grace. He would destroy the nations that had come up against Jerusalem. The deliverance of the people by the power of Jehovah comes first. This is sovereign grace to the chief of sinners — the feeble but beloved Judah, who had added to all her rebellion against God, the despisal and rejection of her King and Saviour. {* The worthless shepherd (v. 17), I suppose, is the same. He deserts the Jews, and identifies himself with the Gentile power when the Jewish worship is put down. He is "a thing of nought," as Jer. 14:14.}

The rejected One whom they pierced presented to the people as Jehovah their Deliverer

The grace of God takes the lead over all the resources of man. The audacity of the enemies of God's people stirs up His affection, which never diminishes; and thus, by compelling God to act, this very audacity becomes the means of proving the faithfulness of His love. Judah, guilty yet beloved Judah, is delivered — that is to say, the remnant, to whom the affliction of Israel had been a burden; but the question of her conduct towards her God still remained. Nevertheless the grace shewn in her deliverance had wrought upon her heart. The law we know was written in it, but much more. To be loved by a God against whom one has so deeply revolted melts the heart. Grace then goes farther, and presents to the people the Messiah whom they had pierced. The Rejected One is the Jehovah that delivers them. It is now no longer merely the cry of distress, that has no refuge but Jehovah. Israel, more strictly Judah, no longer a prey to the terrible anxiety which her distress occasioned, is entirely occupied with her sin felt in the presence of a crucified Saviour. It is no longer a common grief, that of a nation crushed and trodden down in its most cherished sentiments. It is now hearts melted by the sense of what they had been towards One who had given Himself up for them. Each family, isolated by its personal convictions, confesses apart the depth of its sin; while no fear of judgment or punishment comes in to impair the character and the truth of their sorrow. Their souls are restored according to the efficacy of the work of Christ. It is this which definitively brings the people into relationship with God. We have seen the same moral order in the typical history of David — first, the ark on Mount Zion, and then the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

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Chapter 13

The cleansing fountain open

In Zechariah 13 all is cleansed. The fountain is open to the house of David, whose sin had ruined the people, without abrogating the rights or weakening the grace of God; and also to the people of Jerusalem, who were more than partners in the sins of their rulers. Here it is practical cleansing with water. Faith in Him whom they had pierced was already in their hearts. The idols and the false prophets, the two chief sources of the misery of the Jews, should be entirely taken away. No one, not even the very parents of the guilty, would tolerate these abominations and deceits. Christ is the pattern, and all shall be judged of by it. Everything takes its moral character according to the relationship of the redeemed with Him. This gives occasion to a full historical development of that which has happened to Him. How He has been pierced, and its consequences, are detailed with respect to Jerusalem, Israel, and the world.

How Christ has been pierced: His Person and sufferings

In verse 5 read, "I am no prophet, but a husbandman; for man [Adam] has acquired me as a slave from my youth." That is to say, Christ takes the humble position of One devoted to the service of man, in the circumstances into which Adam was brought by sin (that is, with respect to His position as a man living in this world). Verse 6 directs our attention to that which befell Him among the Jews, where He was wounded and treated as a malefactor. The true character of His Person and of His sufferings is then revealed in verse 7. It is the sword of Jehovah, which awakes against the man who is His companion, His equal. This verse requires no comment. It is most interesting to see that, when Christ is looked at in His humiliation as man, He is treated by the Spirit as the equal of Jehovah in His rights; and when (Ps. 45:7) He is seen upon His throne of divine glory, and addressed as God, those that are His are acknowledged as His companions in glory, sharing His position.

The result for Israel of Christ's rejection

The result of this rejection of Christ, the centre of the history of eternity, of man's connection with God, and the revelation of both — for this event is here considered in connection with the history of Israel — is the scattering of the sheep who had been gathered around the true Shepherd. Nevertheless God stretches out His hand over the little ones. The result for Judah, when the current of their history shall be resumed in the last days, is that two-thirds shall be cut off in all the land (compare Ezek. 20:34-38 with respect to Israel); and the third that is left shall pass through the fire, shall call upon the name of Jehovah, and shall be heard. Jehovah will abolish the name of Lo-ammi — not My people — by saying, It is My people; and they shall say, Jehovah is my God. This is the definite result of His dealings with His people; and here especially with Judah, of whom He had said Lo-ammi, and the remnant of whom He acknowledges as His people.

Chapter 14

The final results before full blessing

Zechariah 14 announces the final events that shall bring in this result, as Zechariah 13 had especially detailed that which regarded Christ. The two subjects of Zechariah 12 are thus resumed in detail.

We may remark here, that the effect of the staff being broken, which united Judah and Israel, is here realised. The prophet speaks only of Judah, of the people who in the land were guilty of rejecting the Messiah, and who will suffer the consequence of so doing in the land during the last days, the mass of them at that time joining themselves to Antichrist. Jerusalem, as we have said, forms the centre of the prophecy. No prophet could perish outside her borders. What a terrible thing to be outwardly near God when one is not so inwardly, and when the heart invests itself with the name of God as with a cloak of pride — as a buckler, so that His arrows no longer reach the conscience!

Jerusalem taken: Jehovah's intervention in the Person of Christ on the Mount of Olives

Nevertheless, in spite of her pride and her confederacy with evil, Jerusalem shall be taken in the last days. We have seen, when studying the other prophets, that this will be the case; and then afterwards, when again besieged, Jehovah will intervene for the destruction of these enemies. This is very distinctly announced here. The nations shall be assembled by Jehovah; the city shall be taken and the houses rifled, and half the people led captive. Jehovah will then come forth against those nations, as we read in chapter 12 (compare Isa. 66 and Micah 4). He comes in the Person of Christ to the Mount of Olives, whence He ascended. The Mount of Olives cleaves in the midst, forming a great valley, spreading terror among the people who are there. But if Jehovah identifies Himself thus, so to speak, with the meek and lowly Jesus formerly on the earth, in order that the identity of the Saviour and Jehovah should be clearly acknowledged, it is not the less true that He will come from heaven in all His glory (as He Himself predicted, as well as the prophets beginning with Enoch). The heavenly saints will accompany Him in His public manifestation to the eyes of an astonished world. Marvellous glory for those that are His, with whom He will manifest Himself before all the wicked! For here it is Jehovah's public coming to the earth, as the righteous Judge, making war upon all that rebel against Him.

Jehovah's coming to the earth as the Righteous Judge: His visible relationship with Judah

I do not see that the last-mentioned event follows that which precedes it in the chapter. There is a division in the middle of verse 5. "And Jehovah my God shall come" begins a fresh subject, introducing a grand distinct event, which affects the whole earth in a manner that characterises its future existence. The presence of Jehovah upon the Mount of Olives renews, we may say, His visible relationship with Judah. This part of the subject closes with the words, "Uzziah, king of Judah." That which follows is intimately connected with the return of Christ to the Jews, in the very spot from which He left this

earth; but it looks at it from a higher point of view, and takes up the subject of the relationship of Jehovah with the whole earth, when He comes from heaven with the saints. This is another part of the subject and a very important one.

The day of mingled light and darkness

The meaning of the rather difficult passage that follows has, I think, been given, as to its general sense, by Martin in his French translation. The Hebrew is acknowledged to be obscure. It may be, perhaps, translated, "there shall not be a precious light [which] shall be withdrawn." It is "a light of preciousness and denseness"; the last word may be taken for "shall be withdrawn." It shall not be a day of mingled light and darkness, but a day appointed by Jehovah, a day characterised by His intervention and His mighty presence, and that could not be characterised by the ordinary vicissitudes of night and day; but, at the moment when the total darkness of night might be expected, there should be light. Living waters should flow from Jerusalem towards the east and towards the west, into the Dead Sea and into the Great Sea. The heat of summer should not dry up their source.

"One Jehovah, and His name one": universal holiness

Jehovah shall be God over all the earth; there shall be but one Jehovah, and His name one. It shall be truly one universal religion, the dominion of the one Jehovah, the God of the Jews, over all the earth. The land round Jerusalem shall be entirely peopled, and Jerusalem lifted up and securely inhabited in her place. There shall be no more any destruction of the city which Jehovah has chosen. A deadly plague shall smite all those that have fought against her. They shall mutually destroy each other. Judah shall also fight against them, and their riches shall be her prey. The remnant that are spared among the nations shall come up to Jerusalem, to the feast in which the entrance of God's people into their rest is celebrated. And all shall be holiness; everything in Jerusalem shall be consecrated to Jehovah.