Ezekiel - Commentaries by William Kelly

Notes on Ezekiel, Ezekiel 44:15-31, Notes on

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If evidence be wanted to know the just application of this final vision (chaps. 40-48), one can hardly conceive of anything plainer or more decisive than the latter verses of our chapter convey. It is not at all a ministry to preach the good news of God in indiscriminate grace or to establish the children of God in His truth and their privileges. The church state is gone before this prophecy begins to be fulfilled, as surely as that church state began long after the prophecy was written. As we have seen the house of Jehovah with its inner and outer courts, its gates and its porches, its separate place, its chambers, and its sanctuary, so now we have the sons of Zadok as the priests the Levites who alone are authorized to draw near in divine services for Israel.

It is in vain to plead that under Christianity there are priests; for this does not mean a class of Christian officials who represent their brethren and enjoy a greater nearness to God than the rest. It is the mystic priesthood of those who believe in Christ. They are all free to draw near to God, being equally brought nigh by the blood of Jesus. To assert a relationship of greater nearness for some is to deny the gospel not only for the others but for all; inasmuch as it is the very essence of it that grace now puts all who are Christ's in the same absolute perfection by His blood. The efficacy of His sacrifice is complete, unchanging and everlasting. He annuls the work of Christ who attributes to it a various value; he has only a human traditional notion of it; he has not learned what God reveals as to it. The teaching accordingly of the New Testament is that all who believe are priests. The same precious blood which has blotted out their sins has brought themselves near to God. They are in Christ before Him. As there was no difference of old in their sinfulness, so is there none in their access to God. We have therefore, all alike, boldness for entering into the holy places by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way which He has dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh (Heb. 10:19-20). We are a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifice to God by Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5), yea, a royal priesthood to set forth the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness to His wonderful light (1 Pet. 2:9).

But here it is a certain favored portion of the chosen people who could represent all where the rest could not go; and as this is an earthly priesthood, so the offerings are akin. “But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near to Me to minister unto Me, and they shall stand before Me to offer unto Me the fat and the blood, saith Jehovah God: They shall enter into My sanctuary, and they shall come near to My table, to minister unto Me, and they shall keep My charge” (vss. 15-16). “The fat” and “the blood” according to the law were Jehovah's portion, as we see claimed punctiliously in the directions for the peace-offering (Lev. 3; 7). It has been pointed out already that, though the altar in the Old Testament is designated the table of Jehovah, nowhere is the Lord's table in the New Testament spoken of as His altar. The altar of old might fittingly be styled His table because thereon was laid and consumed “the food of the offering made by fire unto Jehovah” (Lev. 3:11). This in no way applies to the New Testament, where it is no question of any such oblation but of the church's communion in the remembrance of Christ and thus in showing forth His death.

The details quite fall in with the remarks just made and confirm them. Thus, linen was enjoined for the priestly ministration and wool forbidden; and this for the head as well as the body. Their ordinary clothes are all well outside, but they must wear the due priestly garments in their office and lay them in the holy chambers. They must neither shave their heads nor wear long hair; they must drink no wine when they enter into the inner court. They must not marry a widow save of a priest or maidens of Israel. “And it shall come to pass, [that] when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them, whiles they minister, in the gates of the inner court, and within. They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird [themselves] with anything that causeth sweat. And when they go forth into the outer court, into the outer court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments; and they shall not sanctify the people with their garments. Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads. Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court. Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before” (vss. 17-22). It is clearly a repetition of Levitical order for the earthly priests of Israel in the days of the future kingdom, with even increase of strictness in this that all the priests are to be put under the conditions of marriage laid of old on the high priest. But in their literal bearing these precepts have no reference to Christians, still less to any class among them.

Their duties are next shown to embrace both ceremonial and judicial decisions. “And they shall teach My people [the difference] between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; they shall judge it according to My judgments; and they shall keep My laws and My statutes in all Mine assemblies; and they shall hallow My Sabbaths” (vss. 23-24).

The law of defilement for the dead holds as rigidly as ever. “And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves; but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister that hath had no husband, they may defile themselves. And after he is cleansed, they shall reckon unto him seven days. And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin-offering, saith Jehovah God” (vss. 25-27). Death may be but rare and exceptional in that day, but so much the more reason why the priests should not be under its power in any way.

They are to be content with Jehovah as their inheritance, instead of the carnal portion of an Israelite. But they are appointed their share out of His offerings, dedicated things and first-fruits, abstaining from any food of what had died of itself or been torn. “And it shall be unto them for an inheritance: I [am] their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel: I [am] their possession. They shall eat the meat-offering, and the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering; and every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs. And the first of all the first-fruits of all [things], and every oblation of all, of every [sort] of your oblations, shall be the priest's; ye shall also give unto the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house. The priests shall not eat of anything that is dead of itself, or torn,

whether it be fowl or beast” (vss. 28-31). Surely it is not needful to demonstrate that these regulations are wholly outside Christianity; yet will they assuredly be in force when the glory of Jehovah visits and governs the earth. In heaven, or to the partakers of the heavenly calling, they are quite inapplicable. They will be lessons beautiful in their place and season. They are but beggarly elements now if taken literally, whatever spiritual instruction they furnish, as they undoubtedly may and do.

All turns on Christ. If He is known to faith while He is on high on the Father’s throne, a heavenly relationship is formed; and “as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly” (1 Cor. 15:48). But when He is manifested in glory and takes the earth, there will be a corresponding change in the relative place of His people. They will be no longer heavenly but earthly; and the Holy Spirit will not form them into the one body of a heavenly Head, but place them as Israel and the nations in their due positions, and of course, distinct; though the old enmity and jealous alienation shall have passed away under the reign of Him whom all own as Jehovah, king over the whole earth. Hence also earthly distinctions as priests and Levites, with the other features of an earthly worship, are again set up according to the will of God, instead of a common place of heavenly nearness in Christians as now.

Notes on Ezekiel, Ezekiel 44:1-14, Notes on

The prophet is again brought back to the gate that looks toward the east. This time it was shut. When he saw it before, the glory of Jehovah came by this very way into the house, and filled it. This gives occasion for the word of Jehovah. And there is ample instruction to decide its application. “Then He brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looketh toward the east; and it was shut. Then said Jehovah unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut. It is for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before Jehovah; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the, same” (vss. 1-3).

The entrance of Jehovah, the God of Israel, was enough to close it for all but His representative. But He will have a representative upon earth—the prince—and the prince shall sit “to eat bread before Jehovah.” He is to have the honor of entering in and going out by the way of the porch of that gate. No high priest ever claimed this. Indeed it is not a priest but the prince, the earthly chief of Israel. We shall learn from chapters 45 and 46 a little more about the prince. Suffice it to say that he is certainly not the Messiah; for although he is thoroughly distinguished from a priest, he needs to offer a sin-offering, and he may have sons. Doubtless, it is a future prince of the house of David.

“Then brought He me the way of the north gate before the house. And I looked, and behold the glory of Jehovah filled the house of Jehovah; and I fell upon my face” (v. 4). It is clearly the kingdom. The prince shall be there, and the glory of Jehovah too. No approach to it has yet been seen, only a type in the days of Solomon. Greater things are yet in store for Israel.

“And Jehovah said unto me, Son of man, mark well; behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of Jehovah, and all the laws thereof. And mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary” (v. 5). It is here that men have failed to set their heart. They have not understood the difference between all the ordinances and laws of the house here noted, and the past circumstances of the temple. They have failed to mark well, and confounded all with that which has been. Indeed it is where man habitually is dull. The Holy Ghost alone can show us “things to come” (John 16:13) according to God.

“And thou shalt say to the rebellious, to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Let it suffice you of your abominations, in that ye have brought children of a stranger, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary, to pollute it, My house, when ye offer My bread, the fat, and the blood; and they have broken My covenant, because of all your abominations” (vss. 6-7). There will be no following of idols any more. Israel will have done with all their abominations. No longer will there be a tampering with the priesthood, nor yet a breach of Jehovah's covenant. Holiness will be observed henceforth in the house of Jehovah forever. Here he reminds them of their sins, but shows that there can be no toleration of such ways longer.

“And ye have not kept the charge of Mine holy things, but ye have set keepers of My ordinance in My sanctuary for yourselves” (v. 8). There is an end of every such failure.

“Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, no stranger uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into My sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel. And the Levites that are gone away far from Me, when Israel went astray, when Israel went astray far from Me, shall even bear their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, having charge of the gates of the house, and ministering to the house. They shall slay the burnt-offering, and the sacrifice for the people; and they shall stand before them, to minister unto them. Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up Mine hand against them, saith the Lord Jehovah, and they shall bear their iniquity. And they shall not come near unto Me, to do the office of a priest unto Me, nor to come near to any of My holy things in the most holy place, but they shall bear their shame and their abominations which they have committed. But I will make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein” (v. 9-14).

Thus the Levites who had turned aside will feel their shame in the days of the kingdom. They are degraded from their proper work—at least in its higher parts—and are only allowed to do menial service for the sanctuary. Sad contrast with the Levites in the days of Moses, when even Aaron revolted! But it is the days of the kingdom, and righteousness governs. Past reputation will not suffice. If their sons have walked unfaithfully before Jehovah appears in glory, they must bear the consequences. Jehovah shall be exalted in that day, and those who have humbled themselves will He exalt in due time.

So Israel must here learn in due time upon the earth. We have had the prince and the Levites; the rest of the chapter concerns the priests.

Notes on Ezekiel, Ezekiel 43:1-12, Notes on

An incomparably more august sight now opens for the prophet. The Shechinah of Jehovah displays itself, returning to dwell in the midst of His people.

“And he brought me to the gate, the gate that faceth the east. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east, and His voice [was] as the sound of many waters, and the earth shined with His glory. And [it was] according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city; and the visions [were] like the visions that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face. And the glory of Jehovah came into the house by the way of the gate whose aspect [is] toward the east. And the Spirit took me up and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of Jehovah filled the house” (vss. 1-5).

The force of this is clear enough, if men were but simple. It is the sign of God's return to Israel whom He had left ever since the carrying of the Jews to Babylon. But the return from Babylon in no way satisfies the prophecy; nor yet even the mission of the Messiah. He Himself lets us know, as we learn from elsewhere also, that the seasons of Gentile supremacy were then, as they are still, in progress. Jerusalem is trodden down of the Gentiles till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. The Son of Man at His appearing will gather Israel again and judge all the nations. Jehovah will then govern the earth with Jerusalem as His earthly center. Of this the return of the Shechinah is the symbol. When it left, the Jews ceased to be the recognized people of Jehovah; when they are taken up again under Messiah and the new covenant, the glory comes back. No mistake can be greater than the idea that this vision applies to the first advent of Christ in humiliation when the Jews rejected and crucified Him. The prophecy requires us to believe that the glory will be actually restored; but it was not, when the Jews returned by Cyrus' proclamation, any more than when the Lord Jesus was here; it will be, when He returns to reign. Theocracy will then be established and flourish as long as the earth endures; for it will rest on Christ, not on the first man with all his failures under law. With grace as its foundation, “that glory may dwell in our land” (Psa. 85:9), and this henceforth immutably. Then and not before shall the creature rejoice. Meanwhile it groans, but in hope, for all of it shall be delivered; and Christ is the sole deliverer at His coming in power and glory. The Spirit now works in testimony.

“And I heard [Him] speaking to me from the house, and a man was standing by me. And He said to me, Son of man, the place of My throne, and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever: and the house of Israel shall no more defile My holy name, they nor their kings, by their whoredom, and by the carcases of their kings in their sepulchers1; while they set their threshold beside My threshold, and their doorpost beside My doorpost, and the wall between Me and them, they even defiled My holy name with their abominations which they committed, so that I consumed them in Mine anger. Now let them remove their whoredom and the carcases of their kings far from Me; and I will dwell in the midst of them forever” (vss. 6-9).

There was a dwelling of God in the midst of Israel of old, after He had wrought redemption for them and brought them out of the land of Egypt. At once they sung His praise when delivered from the house of bondage. “Thou leadest forth Thy people whom thou hast redeemed; thou guidedst it in Thy strength unto the habitation of Thy holiness.... Thou wilt bring them and plant them on the mountain of Thine inheritance, the place, O Jehovah, which thou hast wrought for Thy dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, Thy hands have established” (Ex. 15:13, 17). But there was more than anticipation; for He adds “I will dwell among the children of Israel, and I will be their God, and they shall know that I am Jehovah their God that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt that I may dwell among them” (Ex. 29:45-46). The temple was the same thing in substance; only it was suited to the established state of Israel in the land, not the tabernacle which wandered with the Israelites up and down the wilderness. But in either case, as this was but an external redemption, so His dwelling was of an outer sort and contingent on their fidelity to Him as witnesses of the one true God and placed under the responsibility of His law. The result was, as must always be for the first man, ruin.

Afterward in due time came the Lord Jesus, the Son of Man, the true temple of God, and this in His case alone without blood, for He only was without sin, the Holy One of God. Alas! He was refused, and all the hopes of Israel and man after the flesh were buried in His grave. But the grace of God wrought redemption in Him crucified; and a new dwelling for God was formed in those who confessed His name, whether Jews or Gentiles, builded together for a habitation of God by the Spirit. It is the church and goes on still, whatever be the ruined state of that holy temple.

That however of which Ezekiel speaks is none of these things, but the dwelling which Jehovah will make for Himself “in the land of the children of Israel forever” (v. 7). Of this we hear much and often in the later Psalms, especially Psalm 132. As yet it is wholly unaccomplished. Why should it be thought an incredible thing that God should thus dwell in the midst of Israel here below? Doubtless He is now forming a body for heaven by virtue of redemption in Christ. But its worth will be unexhausted for the earth; and grace will work afresh in power for Israel and the nations, as now for the church, that all the universe may know the virtues of Christ's blood, and behold the glory of God to the blessing of the once sick and weary creation delivered from its long and otherwise hopeless thralldom. Moral evil and religious pravity shall vanish away. All will be to the praise of the only worthy One. The people who had so long wrought mischief in the earth will be ashamed of their defilements and rebellion against Jehovah, and be the witness of His mercy in that day yet more than they have been of His consuming anger.

So even then the prophet is commanded to set the house before Israel in its measured pattern, that they might feel of what their iniquity deprived them. Deeply will the vision act on them by-and-by.

“Thou, O son of man, tell the house of Israel of the house that they may be ashamed of their iniquities, and let them measure the pattern. And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, let them know the form of the house, and its arrangements, and the goings out of it, and the comings in of it, and all the forms of it, and all the laws of it; and write it in their sight, that they may observe all its forms and all its statutes and do them. This [is] the law of the house: on the summit of the mountain shall its whole limit round about be most holy. Behold, this [is] the law of the house” (vss. 10-12). Far more than of old shall holiness reign in that day. Compare also Zechariah 14.

Notes on Ezekiel, Ezekiel 40:5-49, Notes on

It is commonly laid down that the four main lines of divergence among interpreters are these—1, the historico-literal, adopted by Villalpandus, Grotius, etc., who make these chapters (Ezek. 40-48), a prosaic description, intended to preserve the memory of Solomon's temple; 2, the historico-ideal of Eichhorn, Dathe, etc., which makes them a vague announcement of future good; 3, the Jewish theory of Lightfoot, etc., which

assumes that the idea was actually adopted by the returned remnant; and 4, the Christian or allegorical hypothesis, which was that of Luther and other reformers, and followed elaborately by Cocceius, etc., and indeed generally by many to the present day, which essays to discover in them an immense system symbolic of the good in store for the church. But this leaves out the fifth, and, I have no doubt, the only true interpretation, which sees in these chapters the suited conclusion to the entire prophecy, and especially akin to the chapters which precede—the prediction of the complete re-establishment in the last days of Israel, then converted and in the possession of every promised blessing forever in their land, with the glory of Jehovah in their midst. This is the only proper Messianic fulfillment of the vision, which accordingly must be taken in its simple and just grammatical import, literal, symbolic, or figurative, as the context in each passage may decide.

Thus, in the vision that follows in the chapter before us, we have a measured description chiefly of the temple courts and their appendages, the , (as in chapter 41, of the , or), the porch of which alone had been given in the chapter before, with a sequel in chapter 42, which may be viewed as concluding the first part of the description, and is important in destroying the notion that there was, or could be, any real resemblance between the prophetic vision of Ezekiel and any temple yet realized. The “wall on the outside of the house round about” (v. 5) is not measured till we come to the end of chapter 42, where it is declared to be 500 reeds square, which, given as it is with the most express exactitude, cannot be allowed to be an “hyperbole,” without shaking the character of the prophet, and of scripture in general; that is, the precincts are to take in considerably more than the entire city did. How this can be may perhaps be shown when we come to the passage.

It is enough here to remark that, if true, the temple intended by the prophet must be looked for in the future, to which indeed, all its surroundings point. One can understand also a past tabernacle typical of present heavenly things in Christ; but here it is a prophecy of what will only be accomplished for Israel in their land, when the church is changed at Christ's coming and reigns with Him, over the earth. There is no room therefore, for the Christian or allegorical application; that to the past Jewish we have seen to be a failure, yea, impossibility; and the vague ideal we may dismiss as scarcely removed from infidelity. As regards the prophets, disciples now, as of old, are foolish, and slow of heart to believe them. The future view is not only the sole sound one, but really alone possible. At the same time, while maintaining that all the evidence is in favor of a future temple for Israel under Messiah and the new covenant, there may be also many a lesson of truth and righteousness couched under the building and ritual and general order here laid down, without endorsing all the excellent John Bunyan's fancies, still less his confusion of all the temples of scripture, Solomon's, Zerubbabel's, Herod's, and this of Ezekiel. But as to such applications, we need a vigilant watch lest we pervert the holy word of God; and I trust myself to be reticent rather than thus offend.

On the details of our chapter there seems little to remark. In the first section (vss. 6-16) the eastern gate is measured, threshold and posts, porch within and without, chambers on both sides, breadth of the entry, length of gate and pillars, the reed consisting of six cubits, and each cubit of a handbreadth above the ordinary length. In the second (vss. 17-23), where the outer court comes before us, its gate towards the north is measured, its chambers, posts, porches, and steps, with the distance between the gate of the inner court opposite to those looking east and north. In the third (vss. 24-27) we have the measure of the south gate, with its appurtenances, as before, with the distance from a southern gate of the inner court. This gate is next measured (vss. 28-31) similarly; and the eastern gate of the same court, and the northern also (vss. 35-38). Then follows a description, in verses 38 to 43, of the cells and entrances by the columns of the gates, and the eight tables of hewn stones for slaying the burnt-offerings, etc., four on each side; and (vss. 44-47) without the inner gate cells for the singers1; one, looking to the south, for the priests that had charge of the house; and one, toward the north, for those that had charge of the altar; (the court itself being 100 cubits square, with the altar before the house.) The chapter concludes with measuring the porch of the house, length and breadth, with the gate (vss. 48-49).

It will be noticed that the sons of Zadok are specified for the service of the house. They had the pledge of that everlasting priesthood which was annexed to Aaron's line. What Phinehas, son of Eleazar, had guaranteed to him forever falls in due time to Zadok, who, under Solomon's reign, set aside the line of Ithamar according to the judgment of Jehovah predicted to Eli, after Abiathar’s part in the rebellion of Absalom. We shall find the same restriction repeatedly made throughout the vision, and indeed uniformly kept up. See Ezekiel 43:19; 44:15; 48:11.

Notes on Ezekiel, Ezekiel 40:1-4, Notes on

The remaining chapters of the book present a vision of the most striking character, in which the prophet sees and communicates the pledge of more than restoration—of crowning glory—for Israel in their land. Such is its plain meaning, though there may be deep details, as indeed there are, most minute, and not without difficulty as is usual in all such descriptions. But there is scarce more of obscurity in Ezekiel 40-48 than in Exodus 25-40. It is a difficulty because of circumstantial detail outside our ordinary habits or even study. There is really none as to its general scope except to those who misapply the vision. That it is unfulfilled prophecy is very true, but that this is not the real source of its difficulty to us will appear from the parallel to which reference has been made. The details of the future temple in the land are not harder to understand than those of the past tabernacle in the wilderness.

It is well known that some consider that the vision applies to the church that now is. Those who think so should on their own showing find it easy to explain its figures and symbols, for such writers generally assume that we cannot have an accurate understanding of a prophecy till it be accomplished, and certainly the church has been in existence for more than 1800 years. On this score therefore they ought to have the amplest materials for illustration. But these are the very persons who find insuperable difficulty in interpreting the prophecy. Nor need we wonder; for the whole thought is a mistake. Jerome and Gregory can make nothing of it but ingenious accommodation. There is no real exposition: what is in their remarks can scarcely have satisfied even their own minds. As one of the most learned of the commentators that follow them says in respect of part, so we may say of all, “How it is to be understood, nobody explains, nor dare I conjecture.” Yet this man, Cornelius à Lapide, was not to be despised, but rather to be admired, because of the honest confession of their failure and his own. The whole of the allegorizing interpreters go on an evidently false track. It would be strange, if a symbolic vision of Christianity were to leave out the day of atonement, the feast of weeks, and the action of the high priest in the presence of God—its most essential features in type!

Scarcely better is the very large class of divines who have striven hard to appropriate the vision to the Jews who returned from the Babylonish captivity, for the facts then realized stand immeasurably below this prophetic pledge. The inevitable result therefore of such applications as of this and the preceding schools is to lower the character of the divine word.1 For to speak plainly there is more contrast than analogy between

the glowing promises of the prophet and the very small installment that was paid under Zerubbabel as recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. It is not only then that both those interpretations fail to meet the prophecy, but that they do not fail to depreciate scripture itself. For if the prophets be thus hyperbolical and untrustworthy, what is to save the Gospels and the Epistles any more than the Law and the Psalms? The tendency of both schools is unwittingly but none the less really to undermine inspiration.

Who can think that the modern attempt to save appearances for the latter view is at all successful? “Ezekiel,” says the late Dr. Henderson (p. 187), “was furnished with an ideal representation of the Jewish state as about to be restored after the captivity.” Was this “ideal” then realized? Did it or did it not differ immensely from the actual state of the Jews in Palestine after their return? Did the post-captivity temple correspond with the building here so carefully measured? Had they such priests? And what about the prince, to say nothing of the feasts and the sacrifices without a high priest—so marked a peculiarity in this prophecy? Had the Jews the glory returned to their land? Did the twelve tribes, with the special provision for the priests and the Levites and the prince, take up their position so carefully laid down by the prophet? Did healing waters flow from the temple towards the Dead Sea at that period, or in any sense whatsoever? Did the priests and Levites dwell no longer up and down Palestine, but only round about the sanctuary, both henceforth having land assigned to them? We know that not one of these things applies to the post-captivity interval.

No doubt it was the restoration of the material temple then in ruins that the prophet had in his eye, and a restoration not only of its worship but of the nation in full under the richest theocratic (and not only spiritual) privileges. No doubt a just and true interpretation supersedes all necessity of confounding the Christian and the church with the hopes of Israel; but no view is less satisfactory than that which points to the five centuries which preceded Christ, and denies a literal fulfillment in the future for Israel in their land. It is an unfounded assumption that a single feature in these visions was fulfilled by a single fact among the returned captives in their past history. Less than fifty thousand men, women, and children came up from Babylon: a little remnant of a remnant, and in no sense those twelve tribes, whom the prophet sees to take up their allotted portions in the land—seven in the north, five in the south, extending beyond the ancient bounds on this side of Jordan, with Jerusalem between.

Indeed there never was the very smallest semblance of the holy oblation any more than of the allotments of the land from east to west here predicted. It is ridiculous to say that there is no valid objection against such an interpretation because in many points the city, temple, services, etc., did not accord with the prophecy. The fact is that those who returned from Babylon fell back on the order as existing before the captivity, and in no respect made good the peculiar condition predicted by Ezekiel. Thus no one appeared answering to the prince, while the high priest was as before a notable personage; the land was not parcelled out to the remnent, still less to all Israel by lot, and no strangers held inheritance any more than in ancient times. Pentecost was still as of old one of the three great feasts of the Jews, whereas it will have no place according to the prophecy. Such differences are of the most decided character, and, at any rate to believers, demonstrate that the last vision is yet absolutely unaccomplished in the history of the Jews: to say that it is never to be is to confess oneself an unbeliever in prophecy at least.

It is quite true that the vision is not to be regarded as a description of what was remembered of Solomon's temple—a work of supererogation indeed for those who possessed the books of Kings and Chronicles. It was a divine disclosure of a new condition, when Israel shall be restored finally and forever. It is a material temple, a literal but in some grave respects unprecedented arrangement of feasts, sacrifices, rites, and priesthood, as well as of general polity for the new capital and the nation, under wholly novel circumstances crowned with the glory of Jehovah who deigns again to dwell in their land. Nor does it appear consistent to interpret the temple and its ordinances literally, but as a figure the waters that carry fertility and beauty into the Dead Sea and the barren wilderness. Why this should be a mere symbol and not a fact it would be hard to tell, except that men like Secker and Boothroyd with a certain following will have it so. But we need say no more as to all these things for the present. Ample opportunity will be afforded when we come to the chapters themselves in detail.

This however we must insist on, that it is altogether illegitimate to sever these chapters in an absolute manner from those we have already had before us. The closing series (Ezek. 40-48), is the glorious but fitting and most intelligible sequel to the prophecies immediately before: so much so that the previous series (Ezek. 33-39), prepares for it, announcing the judgment but happy return of the chosen nation in the last days, far beyond what was at hand. We have had the new ground laid of individual conduct before God in chapter 33, the leaders judged in chapter 34, and Edom in chapter 35; then the prediction of Israel's restoration to their own land with a new heart and a new spirit—yea, with God's Spirit within them—in chapter 36. We have seen the parabolic vision in chapter 37 of the dry bones suddenly invested with life and strength, which are expressly said to mean not Christians, nor men at large, but the house of Israel, under the figure of resurrection, caused to live and placed by Jehovah in their own land; and this too united as they have never been—Ephraim and Judah—since the days of Jeroboam, under one head, one king, in the land, on the mountains of Israel. We have had before us the last and most formidable attack to be made upon Israel whilst thus settling in peace in Canaan, when the great north-eastern chief with his myriads of followers shall be utterly exterminated by divine intervention (chaps. 38 and 39). No allegory this, as they shall then learn to their cost; and Israel shall know and the spared Gentiles too, for Jehovah shall be thus glorified in His people on earth. Most appropriately follows the last vision, where the polity of Israel is laid down with precision, both sacred and civil, and the descending Shechinah shall once more find its place in their midst, the seal of glory never to be broken, till means melt away before blessing complete and everlasting, and judgment sees no more evil to be judged.

Beyond a doubt, the main stumbling-block in this section to most Christians is the plain prediction of sacrifices, feasts, and other ordinances according to the Levitical law. These, they conceive, must be explained (that is, are really to be explained away), so as not to clash with the Epistle to the Hebrews. But the argument assumes that there can be no change of dispensation—that because we are Christians, those whom the prophecy contemplates must be in the same relationship. This however is nothing but error. For the Epistle to the Hebrews looks at believers since redemption while Christ is on high till He comes again in glory; the prophecy of Ezekiel, on the contrary, is occupied with the earthly people and supposes the glory of Jehovah dwelling once again in the land of Canaan. The truth is that to bless Israel as such and the Gentiles only mediately and subordinately to the Jews, as this prophecy and almost all others suppose and definitely declare, is a state of things in distinct contrast with Christianity, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile but all are one in Christ Jesus. Hence the whole ground and position here are quite different from what we see in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Earthly priests distinct from the people, with a position quite peculiar to the prince, a material sanctuary and tangible sacrifices and offerings, are distinctly predicted by Ezekiel; but these are evidently wholly foreign to Christianity. One as much as the other would be inconsistent with the doctrine in the Epistle to the Hebrews for the “partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1);” but, will they therefore be out of place and season for those who have the earthly calling when Jehovah again makes choice of Jerusalem, and glory shall dwell in the land? This no one

has proved, and few have even essayed to argue; but it is the real question. Entirely do we allow the incongruity of sacrifices with our faith in that one offering which has for ever perfected us. A temple on earth is a practical inconsistency with the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man, into the holiest of which, now that for us the veil is rent, we are invited to come boldly. Further, the assertion of an earthly priesthood for Christians is in principle, if not effect, a denial not only of our nearness to God by the blood of Christ, but of the gospel itself as we know it.

But the coming of the Lord to reign over the earth will necessarily bring with it changes of immense import and magnitude. Yet this is the great object of all prophecy, which accordingly puts forward a new condition wherein Israel stands at the head of the nations under Messiah and the new covenant, the church having entirely disappeared from the earth, and, in fact, reigning over it with Christ, the Bridegroom of His then glorified bride.

Now the prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi, bring to light for that glorious day an earthly temple with sacrifices, priesthood, and rites appropriate to it. No doubt it is not Christianity; but who with such an array of inspired witnesses against him will dare to say that such a state of things will not be according to the truth, and for the glory of God in that day? It is in vain to plead the usual resource of unbelief—the cloud that overhangs unfulfilled prophecy. Not so. To unbelief all scripture is obscure; to faith it is the light of God through men empowered by the Holy Ghost to communicate it. And the particular difficulty in the present case is only, if we believe the Apostle Paul, Christendom's conceit, which assumes, or rather presumes, that the fall of the Jew is final and that the Gentile has supplanted him forever. The truth is that God will not spare the Gentiles in their present and growing unbelief, but will assuredly recall in His mercy Israel ere long about to repent. Those that now wait for Christ, with the risen saints, shall be caught up to Him, and the Deliverer will come out of Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob. If the King of kings and Lord of lords enter on so new a position, it would be singular indeed if all were not changed in accordance with it and in consequence of it. This is precisely what the prophets show in contradistinction from the Epistle to the Hebrews as well as all the rest of the apostolic Epistles. Our wisdom is to learn of God by His word and Spirit, not to judge of scripture by conclusions drawn from our own position, circumstances, or even relation to God. Let us leave room for the various evolutions and displays of His glory in the ages to come, instead of making His present ways (profound and blessed as they are) an exclusive standard: a snare natural enough to man's narrow and selfish mind, but withering to all growth in and by the knowledge of God. Christ, not the church, is His object; and the church is blessed in proportion as this is seen.

But we must turn to the opening words of the vision. “In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of Jehovah was upon me, and brought me thither. In the visions of God brought He me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, and upon it was as it were a city on the south. And He brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee; for to the intent that I might show them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel” (vss. 1-4).

The declared aim of the vision is thus evident. God certainly did not reveal the mystery of Christ and the church to Israel or to any other, but kept it secret in Himself till the due moment came to make it known. Much of man's eventful trial yet remained. God had yet to send His one Son—the Heir, not to speak of prophets who followed Ezekiel and preceded John the Baptist. After Christ too He would add the final testimony to the risen and glorified Lord by the Spirit, besides His presence in humiliation in their midst. Accordingly the vision is of Israel's hopes when restored to their land, to show them how complete the work shall be in the last days, above all (spite of their past sins) in respect of God's presence in a new and suited sanctuary—a presence never more to be lost, least of all when time yields to eternity and to the new heavens and earth in their fullest meaning.

Notes on Ezekiel, Ezekiel 39:17-29, Notes on

Next a message of remarkable force is sent through the prophet to all birds and beasts of prey. Now is their time for a feast on a sacrifice such as they have never had before nor can have again. Vast hosts have been decimated, and the rest dispersed or taken, where they failed to make good their retreat; but has the world seen such a slaughter as this? It is assuredly to come.

“And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to My sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at My table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord Jehovah” (vss. 17-20).

If Jehovah invites to a great sacrifice for the creatures of prey, will He not make good the word? A similar call is made in Revelation 19:17-18, but there only to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven. It is in view of the carnage which is to befall the armies of the west at the end of this age; and I suppose only the birds are named as in keeping with the judgment of the apostates from the heavenly testimony of Christianity. Here it is larger, as His dealings take effect on the countless eastern hordes, who have not only despised the gospel but seek to possess themselves of the land when His earthly people are being settled there in peace. No mistake can be more glaring than the denial of these judgments on the quick before the reign of the Lord as the true Solomon here below; no truth more evident in the word of God than that the gospel is not destined to put down all rule and all authority and power, but Christ Himself when He comes in glory. In title all things have been put under His feet as He sits on the throne of God; but the process of putting all His enemies under His feet is not yet begun. He is occupied with another work now; He is calling out the joint-heirs who are to be glorified, risen or changed, at His coming, and then to reign together with Him in His kingdom. And this active subjecting of all is not the work of heavenly grace, but of power put forth on earth, of course not always in destruction, though the kingdom opens and closes with it on an immense scale, as we see here and in Revelation 20:8-9.

The moral effect of the judgment executed on Gog and his host we find afterward: “And I will set My glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see My judgment that I have executed, and My hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am

Jehovah their God from that day and forward. And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against Me, therefore hid I My face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid My face from them" (vss. 21-24). The gospel meanwhile if believed puts souls in association with Christ for heaven. The sight of the judgments will be used by the Lord to teach the nations righteousness on earth. Israel too need to learn, and so they will, that He who so deals is Jehovah their God "from that day and forward" (v. 22). It will be plain and undeniable in that day that Israel went into captivity for nothing but their iniquity; that for this only did Jehovah withdraw His favor from them and give them up to the sword of their enemies. It is His retribution that explains their past history with all its sorrows.

But there is a bright future in prospect for Israel: I do not speak of the gospel or the church, where there is neither Jew nor Greek, but of the kingdom on earth when Israel shall be restored to their land, and have the first place among the nations in favor, peace, righteousness, and the manifested power and glory of Jehovah. "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for My holy name; after that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against Me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; then shall they know that I am Jehovah their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide My face any more from them: for I have poured out My Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah" (vss. 25-29).

It may be observed here as a practical remark of much moment for souls that, if the New Testament is to be believed, God never hides His face from the Christian; and this because the believer possessing eternal life in Christ is now brought into the full efficacy of His sacrifice, and has the Holy Ghost dwelling in him as its continual witness. We accordingly anticipate in this what will be true of Israel by-and-by, instead of standing on the probationary ground of Israel's past. But the traditional unbelief of Christendom puts souls so as to cloud the true grace of God wherein we stand; and this alike among Protestants and Catholics, while the latter add the further error of antedating and appropriating to the church that place of earthly honor, and ease which is reserved for Israel under the Messiah when the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. Some Protestants indeed are so dark as to follow Romanists even in this error, though they in general put it before them as a millennial hope rather than as a present claim. But assume it as they may, the effect of the error is to degrade the church from heaven to earth, and either to deny the hopes of Israel or to make those who hold it inconsistent if they own them.

We may add that, though the Spirit is assuredly to be poured out on Israel when the new age begins, there will be no baptizing the saints then into one body. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). So in Colossians it is laid down that "Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:11) and in Ephesiaans that the middle wall of partition is broken down, and the two formed in Himself into one new man (Eph. 2:13-15). But it will not be so then here below. On the contrary, in the millennium the Jewish saints will be in a nearer and more honored position than the Gentiles on the earth. It is a state in contrast with the assembly now, where such distinctions are unknown: the cross has ended them for heaven.

Notes on Ezekiel, Ezekiel 39:1-16, Notes on

This chapter resumes the divine denunciation of the great northern enemy. There is no concealment of his formidable numbers and resources; but, whatever these may be, they will but enhance the victory Jehovah gains for His people by his utter destruction.

"And thou, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal; and I will turn thee back and lead thee [? astray1], and cause thee to come up from the sides of the north, and bring thee upon the mountains of Israel. And I will strike thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. Upon the mountains of Israel shalt thou fall, thou and all thine armies, and the people that are with thee: I have given thee for food to the ravenous bird, the bird of every wing, and to the beast of the field. Upon the open field shalt thou fall; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord Jehovah" (vss. 1-5).

The judgments of God are as usual in keeping with the sin and the people that come under His displeasure. Thus the doom of the beast and the false prophet is beyond all experience appalling; the solemn and final adjudication without further process to the lake of fire. And so, it would seem, will it be with the little horn of Daniel 8 (or king of the north in Daniel 11). They had meddled with the things of God against His people, having a character of apostate contempt for His truth or perverting it to their destructive ends. Gog is judged as a more vulgar aggressor, actuated as he will be with greed of territorial acquisition and relying on brute force. So he is confronted with a power mightier than his own, which beats him down ignominiously without relenting.

Nor is this all. God will deal with the land whence Gog came as well as with those isles which contributed their contingents to his host. "And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am Jehovah. So will I make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not let them pollute My holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am Jehovah, the Holy One in Israel" (vss. 6-7). No distance nor isolation shall screen from consuming judgment in that day; for the Lord is awaking to call the quick to account, as one out of sleep, like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. Then at length shall the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. Can argument be wanted by the believer to prove that these solemn dealings ending in so blessed a result have never yet been fulfilled? Magog is not Rome or spiritual Edom or any other than the Scythia of the ancients.

"Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord. Jehovah; this is the day whereof I have spoken. And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years: so that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord Jehovah" (vss. 8-10). It is no vague warning of the foe where and whenever he may be; it is no general principle reproducing itself often in divine providence. The Holy Spirit takes pains here to make it precise and specific, the judgment of a distinct enemy, long suspended, and

falling as the last of Jehovah's blows on the most overwhelming force that shall ever have mustered against Israel, immediately before His glory returns in more pristine splendor and peace to dwell in the midst of His people in their land. Hence the minutely graphic detail of their going forth from the cities in Palestine and burning the arms defensive and offensive of their foe; and this not only as a witness of his total destruction, but as their provision of firewood so as to dispense with all other store for seven years.

But there is another and still more permanent result as the trophy of that great victory. “And it shall come to pass in that day I will give unto Gog a place there, a grave in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea; and it shall stop the passengers; and there shall they bury Gog, and all his multitude; and they shall call it the valley of the multitude of Gog. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord Jehovah. And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search. And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-Gog. And also the name of the city shall be Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land” (vss. 11-16).

Did Gog think to take the land for a possession? Jehovah will give him there a grave; and this in no obscure spot but in the direct pathway of many passers by. The idea is not, as our translators fancied, that people would stop their noses because of the bad smell, but that the barrows of so many buried men would stay all who pass that way and lead them to think of the vengeance poured out on them. The LXX seem here confused (“the burial-place of all that approach the sea"); but there is no countenance given to the notion already mentioned. No calculation of unbelieving believers who would evaporate the prediction need embarrass the Christian. Has Jehovah spoken and will He not perform?

The care to purify the land from the sight of a man's bone is remarkable, but natural if glory is to dwell there. People in general if they were but going through are to help those formally told off for the work, “men of continuance” (v. 14), whose task is to bury every relic of the prodigious slaughter of the enemy, all the dwellers in the land also taking part in the work. The multitude thus slain and buried will give its name to a city in the land. But it is the day when all impurity disappears from the land which Jehovah recognizes as His own, when He is then and there glorified. Can there be a legitimate doubt of the epoch when these conditions meet? It is plain to see that it is a question of God's judging the last leader of the Russias in the Holy Land when Israel have been brought back from the lands of their dispersion. But preoccupation with our own place as Christians hinders here as elsewhere—hinders not only our seeing the faithfulness of God to Israel and His mercy to them yet, but also our discernment of the church's peculiar blessedness. If we are to appreciate either, we must distinguish them, and see the connection of each with Christ. The mystical interpretation gives its due place to neither, and hence envelops all in fog.

Notes on Ezekiel, Ezekiel 38:10-23, Notes on

The prophecy then supposes the return of the people as a whole to their land, not of a remnant only, as after the Babylonish captivity. But there is more. It supposes a condition of unsuspected quiet such as differs from any period of Israel's history in the past. Of this Gog is to take advantage, but to his own ruin. He has no faith in God's love for His people, and never thinks of His taking His place in their midst for their defense against their foes.

“Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, It shall also come to pass in that day that things shall come into thy mind, and thou shalt devise a wicked device, and thou wilt say, I will go up to the land of villages, I will invade those who are at ease, that dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates to take spoil and to take prey, to turn thy hand against the wastes that are inhabited and against a people gathered out of the nations, gathering cattle and goods, dwelling in the midst [or on the height] of the land” (vss. 10-12).

If the day is come for Israel to be blessed in the mercy of God, it is no less the day for the judgment of the nations. Of these we have here the last in order, and perhaps the widest in extent, the awfully impressive lesson at the final confederacy before the reign of peace and righteousness. Nothing can exceed the graphic force with which the prophet describes all. Gog calculates on finding an easy prey in a people apparently so exposed and powerless. He little thinks that on those heights of Israel he and his immense host are about to perish at the hand of Jehovah, if not by one another. Nor is it only that the actual combatants are thus taken in their own snare, but those who look on have to learn that He whose name alone is Jehovah is the Most High over all the earth. “Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?” (v. 13). They may be eager to treat with the spoiler, and profit by the purchase of the expected booty, but they too shall soon say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth.

“Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; In that day when My people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: and thou shalt come up against My people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against My land, that the heathen may know Me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes” (vss. 14-16). It will be noticed that the downfall of Gog is here expressly set down to “the latter days,” as well as to “that day when My people Israel dwell safely.” Not only was none of this true in the days of Zerubbabel, as Theodoret imagines, or when Antiochus persecuted the returned remnant, but the scale of destruction is wholly inapplicable. In no case whatever since Ezekiel's time is there so much as a point of contact. The prediction therefore, beyond just question, awaits its fulfillment in days to come.

“Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by My servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them? And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah, that My fury shall come up in My face. For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; so that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at My presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all My mountains, saith the Lord Jehovah; every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with

pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify Myself, and sanctify Myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord" (vss. 17-23).

It is the notion of not a few authors that Gog must be the great western antagonist of the Jews as in Daniel, etc. But this is to mistake the scope of our prophet who never enters on the system of the four imperial powers that were to tread down Jerusalem till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. Even Nebuchadnezzar is viewed as Jehovah's servant for accomplishing His work: as head of the image he does not appear. Gog belongs to another character of enemy and perishes afterward when, blinded by the lust of territorial aggrandizement, he sees not that he is assailing Jehovah in seeking to plunder and destroy Israel. Isaiah speaks of him in chapter 33 as the rest do in more general terms. Here attention is drawn to the longstanding predictions of this final effort (v. 17). But after all God alone governs, whatever the pride or greed or will of Gog: Jehovah brought him against Israel for his own destruction. Yet when he does come, "My fury," says the Lord Jehovah in verse 18, "shall come up in My face" (literally, nose). No more fears for the land of Israel, no need of fresh blows on the Gentiles, at least till the muster of the nations a thousand years afterward to which this invasion lends its name, the one at the beginning, the other at the end, of Messiah's reign.

That this is none other than the last destruction of Israel's foes before the millennium should be plain enough from the words that follow, not to speak of the chapter after this, and all the rest of the prophecy. To take the words as merely symbols of political revolution is quite uncalled for, yea, contrary to the context. There is no change of government whatever in Israel, nor do they suffer more, but these distant enemies who are congregated on their hills are to perish forever. The mighty concussion in Canaan adds to the solemnity of the scene, land and sea, heaven and earth, thus owning the presence of Him who made all things espousing the cause of Israel, not mutual slaughter only in the ranks of the foe, but pestilence and blood, overflowing rains and great hailstones, fire and brimstone. No wonder that the rationalistic Rosenmüller is forced to own how plain it is on the strongest evidence that Antiochus Epiphanes cannot be meant here. There is no difficulty whatever to the believer who looks for the future dealings of God in behalf of Israel. The efforts to apply it to the church would be ridiculous, if they were not flagrant and sinful unbelief, falsifying every right thought of our place as called to suffer on earth and to reign in resurrection glory with Christ at His coming.

I may add that the thought of some that the Turks are meant is evidently unfounded; for they on the contrary have been for ages allowed by God to possess the land in insulting defiance over a Christendom as guilty and idolatrous as the Jews were before Babylon carried them captive. Here, on the contrary, it is the mighty leader of the north in the latter days, followed by his myriads from the east down to the south of Asia, who perishes with all his host under the most signal judgment of God when essaying to possess himself of the land of Israel brought back from their long dispersion.

Notes on Ezekiel, Ezekiel 38:1-9, Notes on

Next follow two chapters which contain a prediction of God's judgment to fall in the last days, when Israel is restored, on a great north-eastern chief with his vast array of satellites and allies on the mountains of the Holy Land.

But it may be well to clear away some mistakes which have long, and for most readers, overhung the translation of verse 2 to the detriment of the sense. Happily the oldest version (the Septuagint) gives the true meaning; and the Greek versions of Theodotion and Symmachus did not abandon but confirm it. It is impossible on any just principles to deny that the Septuagint and those who hold with it rightly give 'P . . . for . I am aware that the Chaldee Targum of Jonathan and the Greek version of the Jew Aquila take it, like one English Bible, as "the chief prince," the Vulgate as prince of the head or chief (like our margin), the Syriac as "ruler and chief," the Arabic as "prince of the princes," etc.

But none of these affords a tolerable or even intelligible meaning, save the latter two which desert the text. It is true that , when the context requires it to be a common appellative, means "head" or "chief;" but it is this sense which in the present instance brings in confusion. There can be no doubt therefore that it must be taken as a proper name, and here not of a man as in Genesis 26:2, if the common reading stand, but of a race. This at once furnishes a suitable sense, which is strengthened by the term which precedes it, as well as by those that follow. For, as regularly means the head of a tribe, or a prince in general, so Meshech and Thubal fix as meaning a Gentilic name (Rosh). They were in fact three great tribes, by the ancients called Scythians, the first of them apparently deriving its name from their proximity in those days to the river Rha, or Volga (though some think the Araxes), and supplying that of the modern Russ, as the others are reproduced in Moscow or Muscovy, and in Tobolsk.1

There is of course no difficulty in supposing migrations northward from the original seats, supposing that they may have been the races in the north of Asia Minor during the days of Ezekiel, and familiar to us as the Moschi, Tibareni, and perhaps other tribes named in later authors of Greece.

The great questions are what, where, and when they are viewed when the vision applies, not when it was written. And of this the place it occupies in the prophetic series, the precise language of the vision and the character of the judgment pronounced, ought to leave no doubt for any believer. It can apply only in the last days when the chosen nation are peacefully restored to their land, and it speaks of such a judgment on their enemies, countless though they may be, as has never been witnessed since Ezekiel prophesied, nor anything approaching to it. The Grotian effort to apply it to Antiochus is of course a pitiable failure. Equally unsatisfying is the very vague "ideal" of Fairbairn and the modern German school. Nor are the Futurists more right who confound with the beast and the false prophet this great leader of the north-eastern nations, not without followers from the south.

Let us now look into the opening of this remarkable prediction. Who can deny that the rapid and immense development of the Russian empire bears its unmistakable witness to the judgment that is coming, as here declared so long before?.

"And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal; and I will turn thee back, and put My hook into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed

elegantly, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords; Persia, Cush, and Phut with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters; many people with thee. Be thou prepared, and prepare thyself, thou and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. After many days shalt thou be mustered; in the latter days thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, that is gathered out of many peoples against the mountains of Israel which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. Thou wilt ascend and come like a storm; thou wilt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou and all thy bands, and many people with thee" (vss. 1-9).

Here the case stands clearly defined in all but the name, which seems to be probably symbolic. It is the last enemy of Israel who confronts us. He dwells in the land of Magog, that son of Japhet who overspread in due time the vast steppes of what was anciently called Scythia. He is autocrat of all the Russias, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. Thus we have himself, his land, and his people. But the Lord Jehovah is against him who, instead of seeing when good cometh to a long-troubled people, would fain aggrandize himself, and thus finds himself in array against not merely the Israel of God but the God of Israel. Cursed must he be who thus trusts in man and makes flesh his arm; and so does Gog prove. For Jehovah declares that He will turn him back, put hooks in his jaws, and cause him to go forth, him and all his host.

Then will it appear as a final lesson that no king is saved by the multitude of his host, that a mighty man is not delivered by much strength, and that a horse is a vain thing for safety. Israel at length are poor in spirit; and Jehovah brings the counsel of the heathen to naught, whilst His counsel stands forever. There they come clothed to perfection, a great company, with shield and buckler, all of them grasping swords; Persia too is there, obliged to follow the train of the mighty northern leader, Cush and Phut with them; Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah from the sides of the north, and all his bands: many people indeed with Gog! With grave irony he is told to be prepared and prepare himself, and he and all his vast confederacy, and be their guard—if he can!

Long, long ago had been the prophetic warning. No great nation in the old world had been so slow to take up the leadership of the populous East. But, delayed as it might be, the epoch is seen vividly by the seer of the Chebar. "After many days thou wilt be mastered; in the last of the years thou wilt come into the land" (v. 8) of Israel, where they are then dwelling safely. As a storm Gog comes, as a cloud he covers the land. But no weapon formed against Israel shall prosper. Such is their heritage, when their righteousness is of Jehovah. They may as yet be few, their adversaries countless; but what is this to Jehovah but an opportunity for showing Himself the enemy of His people's enemies? This Gog finds out, as we shall see, too late not only for himself and his enormous following, but for those he had left quietly at home. It is the day of just retribution and of divine government on earth, when the manslayer, so long estranged yet preserved, returns to the land of his possession. And shall not God avenge His own elect when he whose trust is in his numbers numberless casts his greedy look on the land where Jehovah's eyes rest continually?

Notes on Ezekiel, Ezekiel 37:15-28, Notes on

But there is another and connected revelation. The revival of Israel as a people is not all that the prophet here learns and communicates. This was given in the first half of the chapter, not their quickening individually, however true it may be, but their national resuscitation under the operation of the Spirit, not of man's will or the world's politics, as becomes the people chosen and now finally to be blessed of Jehovah. There was a distinct fresh blessing to be conferred on them, the disappearance of an old reproach which had long dishonored Israel from the days of Rehoboam as long as it had subsisted in the land. When God sets to His hand for their restoration in the latter day, He will re-unite them as they were of old under David and Solomon, never to have their unity broken or even threatened again. This is reserved for the true Beloved when He reigns as the Prince of peace.

"The word of Jehovah came again unto me saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: and join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand" (vss. 15-17).

It is indeed no obscure proof of human perverseness that words like these should ever have been mistaken. Yet they have been and are, not among the despised Jews who cleave to their future hopes, but in contempt of their present responsibility by Christians under the gospel of God's indiscriminate grace in the dead and risen Christ to every soul that believes, be he Jew or Gentile. Thus it is then that Satan deceives all. The Jews are right in maintaining that Israel are yet to be blessed in their land under Messiah and the new covenant, and this, not vaguely nor partially, but after apostasy as well as divine judgments shall have thinned them down, all Israel that shall then be saved, gathered and united, Judah and Joseph as one whole. They are utterly, fatally, wrong now in not seeing their Messiah, the Savior, in Jesus of Nazareth, and consequently perish because they "obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thes. 1:8). But Satan deceives Christendom in this that, while they rightly confess the Crucified One to be the Son of God, they not only mix up the law with the gospel and so lose all the comfort and power and certainty of God's salvation in Christ, but yearn after the predicted glories of Israel on earth as if they were descriptive of their own privileges to the almost total ignoring of their heavenly standing as well as to the denial of God's faithfulness in future mercy to Israel.

There is indeed no excuse for misunderstanding a symbol so plain as that in verses 16-17. But, as if to clench the application, we have as before an explanation appended. "And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not show us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in Mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be My people, and I will be their God" (vss. 18-23).

It is as vain to wrest such language to the remnant of Jews that returned from Babylon as to the church at Pentecost. There is not even analogy. It is a union of the two long-divided houses of Israel, and nothing else. Not even a shadow of its accomplishment has appeared yet. Words cannot be conceived more explicit. Every sense but the future ingathering and union of all Israel as a single nation under one king is

excluded. Never more shall they be divided, never more defiled. Nay more, they shall be Jehovah's people, and He their God. As the Jew cannot say that this has yet been, so it is absurd for any Gentile to say it of or for them. Still more absurd is it for the Gentile to claim it for himself. In no case is it applicable to the Christian body. A remnant of Jews returned from Babylon to be defiled not merely with transgressions, but with a more detestable thing than their old idolatry, even the rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah. Was this a fulfillment of Ezekiel's glowing words?

But further it is added, “And David My servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes, and do them” (v. 24). Here again what confirmation if this were needed! For no sober believer can doubt that Christ only can be meant, and Christ, not as Head of the church in heaven, but as king of Israel when He reigns over the earth. Never, since the prophecy was uttered, has there been an approach to its accomplishment. Never since, have they all had one shepherd; nor have Israel walked in His judgments, nor observed His statutes and done them. Christians all over the world cannot be meant here, still less when they go to heaven, but Israel only. “And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob My servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever” (v. 25).

It is, as Isaiah says, “the sure mercies of David” (Isa. 55:3; Acts 13:34)—that everlasting covenant Jehovah makes with Israel; and this the resurrection of Christ explains. Thus was He to reign—not merely to ascend and become the beginning and Head of a new work on high, but to reign—over Israel in their land. Indeed, in language strongly resembling the prophet referred to, Ezekiel follows with the assurance of Jehovah. “Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And the heathen shall know that I Jehovah do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore” (vss. 26-28). The humbling thought is that Christians could question what is here meant. Only one thing explains it all—the deep and wide-spread departure of men in Christendom from an adequate or indeed any real sense of their own blessings. From the peace and joy proper to the Christian, they have through judaizing and the influence of Babylon slipped away into doubt and darkness and error; and in their lack of comfort in the Holy Ghost, through unbelief of the grace in which the Christian stands, they are tempted to covet their neighbors' goods, to the ruin of truth and to the confusion of relationship with God, whether of the church now or of Israel by-and-by. The issue of the prophecy is of so plain and positive and glorious a nature that the very heathen shall know that Jehovah sanctifies His people, when His sanctuary shall be in their midst forever.

It is to the shame of Christians that they who know the truth and grace of God in Christ should be so beguiled, in reading the prophecies at least, as to be justly rebuked for their dark unbelief by a Jew—himself so prejudiced as Don Balthasar Orobio. I am indebted to another for the following extract—

“If it be Israel mentioned in the passages they quote, it is the spiritual (that is, the nations who have embraced the Christian religion), and not the temporal, or in the other words the Jewish seed of Abraham. If the text affirm that Israel and Judah shall return to the land of their fathers to possess it forever, they uphold that this land is heaven, and those who have acknowledged Messiah are Israel and Judah. The wars and desolation of which the prophet speaks are also taken in a metaphorical sense. We must believe, according to them, that it is the struggle of vice with virtue—impiety with justice. Thus to annihilate the proofs which we expect will mark the fulfilment of the Almighty’s promises, they confound heaven with earth, this world with paradise, the holy city with the assemblage of Christians; Israel, Jacob, and Judah, with the Gentiles; the disorder of war with the spiritual opposition of vice to virtue; the temple, evidently temporal as it is, with the salvation of souls, the religion they profess, etc.

“The prophet Ezekiel completely destroys all these chimerical opinions. The true Israelites, he says, will be redeemed—the real seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and not the Gentiles. He does not say that the land which they will re-possess will be the church or heaven, but that same land which they had inhabited before they were scattered, and wherein they will dwell forever. The Lord commands him to take two sticks; on the one to write the name of Judah and his companions; and on the other the name of Ephraim, son of Joseph, and all the house of Israel; that is to say, the remnant of the tribes which were divided into two kingdoms after the death of Solomon: and to say to the children of Israel that at the time of the redemption the kingdoms shall be united never to be divided again. He was then to show these two sticks to the people and say to them, ‘Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the children from among the nations whither they be gone, and will gather them from every side, and bring them unto their own land: and I will make them but ONE nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel: and one king shall be king to them all: they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob My servant, wherein their fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they and their children’s children forever. And the nations shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.’

“Can the Gentiles who have embraced the Christian faith believe that they are the Israelites to whom the prophet alludes? Are the nations ever termed Judah and Ephraim? Or have they been divided into two kingdoms? Neither reason nor plain sense is the foundation of the persuasion that the land of which the prophet speaks is spiritual; that it is the church signified when he assures the people of Israel of their return to their own land—to that happy country which they had before possessed in the land of Canaan, that which the Lord had given to their ancestors. Can the mountains where the people were to assemble be spiritual? Fiction never went so far in metamorphosis.”

Who can affirm that this is true now, either of Israel, of whom it is said, or of the church, of whom it is not?

Notes on Ezekiel, Ezekiel 37:1-14, Notes on

This section contains a striking vision and a plain explanation of it. It is a question neither of the conversion of the soul nor of the resurrection of the body, but of God's causing Israel to live once more by-and-by as a people. They were at that time swept away and without a political existence; and greater troubles than those inflicted by Assyrian or Babylonian were before them, of which law and prophets clearly forewarned; but the word of Jehovah shall stand. And here again it was revealed to the sorrowing captives for their consolation after their earlier exile and before the later, that they might be sustained in presence of such overwhelming disasters by the sure hope of their national

revival under the gracious working of the Lord.

“The hand of Jehovah was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of Jehovah, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry” (vss. 1-2). There is no disguise as to the estimate intended of those meant by the bones in the valley. There was not only no strength, but not even life. In order to bring out this the more we read, “And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord Jehovah, thou knowest” (v. 3). The impotence thus implied and confessed opens the way for the word of the Lord. “Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of Jehovah. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live, and ye shall know that I am Jehovah” (vss. 4-6).

Truly it was man's extremity and God's opportunity. He is the God that quickens the dead; and where should He exercise His glorious power if not on behalf of His people? And the prophet was given to see as well as to hear and speak. “So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them” (vss. 7-8). Still more solemnly is this followed up in verses 9 and 10. “Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet an exceeding great army” (vss. 9-10). It is impossible to apply such a statement as this with any show of propriety to the return of less than 43,000 from Babylon: especially as the armies of old far exceeded those usual in modern times. The returning remnant was a very small army compared with that of Judah alone under their kings. And we shall find later on that Ephraim as well as Judah are expressly contemplated: indeed it is implied immediately after in “the whole house of Israel” (v. 11). The past return from captivity is therefore out of the question.

But we are not left to reasoning of ours on the scope of this book and the general aim of Ezekiel. He who gave us the vision through His servant has added the most explicit interpretation. “Then He said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put My spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I Jehovah have spoken it, and performed it, saith Jehovah” (vss. 11-14).

To a mind simple and subject to scripture, there can be no hesitation here. To whatever use or application we may turn the vision, its direct and express meaning is God's revival of His ancient people Israel, then utterly destroyed, dead and buried, but yet to quit their graves according to the word of Jehovah. “These bones are the whole house of Israel.” And God would comfort His people as well as rebuke the unbelief which said, “Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts” (v. 11). His own faithful grace will undertake to do what is manifestly beyond the power of man. He declares that He will not only disinter them from the graves wherein they now lie buried as a nation, but will bring them into the land of Israel—an issue suitable neither to those risen from the dead nor to souls converted to God now by the gospel, for what have we to do with the land of Israel? But restoration to their land is the simple and necessary complement of the national resuscitation of Israel. And so all the Old Testament testifies. Continually we see the people and their land bound up: blessing by-and-by on both, as now alas a curse on both.

The meaning therefore seems incontestable, save to men whose minds have been corrupted by the Patristic or Puritan schools, who can see none of the ways of God in Israel for the earth, any more than they read aright His heavenly counsels for the church; and this because the starting-point of both, though in different forms, is the substitution of self for Christ. Their interpretation of prophecy in particular is vitiated by this fatal mistake, which practically razes the hopes of Israel from the Bible and lowers ours to a mere succession to their hope and inheritance with somewhat better light and privilege. It is a part of the first and widest and most tenacious corruption of Christianity against which the Apostle fought so valiantly. And it comes in the more insidiously, because it seems to those under its influence that they are of all men the most distant from the false brethren Paul denounced. To their minds the truest guard against judaizing is to deny that the Jews will ever be reinstated as a people, or be restored consequently to their own land. All the predictions of future blessedness and glory to Israel they turn over to Christendom now or to the church in glory. Most pernicious error! For this is exactly to judaize the Christian and the church by making them simply follow and inherit from Israel. The truth is thus swamped; Israel's bright prospects are denied; Gentile conceit is engendered; and the Christian is rendered worldly, instead of being taught his place of blessing on high in contrast with Israel's on the earth.

Notes on Ezekiel, Ezekiel 36:16-38, Notes on

In the next message of Jehovah the moral reasons are stated why the land of Israel was left desolate, and themselves dispersed among the nations; the dishonor they did to His name even there; finally His restoring grace with its effects on the heart and ways of Israel, as well as His power in renewing their land to more than pristine prosperity and fruitfulness, Jehovah being sanctified by all before the nations.

“And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before Me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. And I poured My fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it; and I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned My holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of Jehovah, and are gone forth out of His land” (vss. 16-20). Such was Israel's way in the land and out of it, everywhere a shame to Him who chose them as His own, idolatrous corruption and murderous violence in Canaan, profaning His name among the nations. And what did He against whom they had sinned? He is Jehovah and changes not: therefore were they not consumed. Nay, He had pity for the name which they had outraged and would sanctify His name and be sanctified in them. As He says here, “But I had pity for Mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for Mine holy

name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify My great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am Jehovah, saith the Lord Jehovah, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land" (vss. 21-24).

When and how this work of divine grace was to be wrought, we need not conjecture; nor does it now want elaborate discussion to determine. There are landmarks which make the answer quite plain. The return from Babylon was no fulfillment, but at most an earnest; for then only a numerically inconsiderable remnant returned. Ezra 9 in no way takes the same ground nor claims to be what the faithful looked for, any more than later still Nehemiah 9. They speak in one of "our bondage" (Ezra 9:8), in the other of being "servants this day; and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the food thereof, behold, we are servants in it; and it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress" (Neh. 9:36-37). How far this falls short of what is pledged by Ezekiel should require no argument. "For I will take you out from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land" (v. 24). The mass of Israel remained after the decree of Cyrus up and down the nations.

But there is a further and clearer proof that it has not yet been fulfilled, for it is added, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be My people, and I will be your God" (vss. 25-28). Was the Jew, not to speak of Israel, then cleansed from all his filthiness? Malachi tells a different tale; and so in fact did our Lord prove in person. Here when fulfilled we have no less a blessing promised than the new birth of the Jewish people. God will give them a new heart and a new spirit, take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh. He will put His Spirit within them, and cause that they shall walk in holy obedience, they His people, and He their God. It is the grossest exaggeration to assume that this has ever yet been accomplished, though in addition to this is an allusion to these verses in our Lord's words in John 3:5: most real, yet wholly distinct from its predicted application.

But there is more. For the prophet proceeds to say that this blessedness in store for Israel will include outward favor and earthly abundance in a way never known before. "I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen" (vss. 29-30).

It is in vain to fritter this prediction of restored and increased fertility, or to treat it as either incredible or not an effect of Divine power extraordinarily shown, as beneath the attention of God. The New Testament shows us the principle in Romans 8. The groaning creation is yet to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. But this is under no message of the gospel, but a fruit of Divine power when Christ is no longer hidden but appears in glory, and the sons of God are revealed too. The difference here is that the Apostle connects this blessed deliverance with the revelation of the risen saints, the prophet with the restoration and renewal of Israel.

But further, it is grace alone which, applied by the Holy Spirit to the soul, produces true fear of God and judgment of self. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Psa. 130:4). It is this too which as here leads Israel to abhor and confess their past iniquities with a full heart. How glad are they to bow to His sovereignty who uses it in saving mercy! "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord Jehovah, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I Jehovah build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I Jehovah have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am Jehovah" (vss. 29-38). Thus will Jehovah wipe off all reproach from without to the praise of His own name, while He works feelings and ways suitable to repentance in Israel. Nothing approaching this was experienced by the returned remnant; and those who were brought under the gospel were called into other and better blessings which induced many to get rid of their houses and lands. There was no rebuilding of the once desolate cities as a part of their heritage. But God will surely make good every word when the day comes to restore the kingdom to Israel. Under the law Israel was ruined; under the gospel there is neither Jew nor Greek, but union with Christ in heaven; when the kingdom is manifested in power, they will be restored to their land and cities, no longer waste but under the blessing and glory of Jehovah.

Notes on Ezekiel, Ezekiel 36:1-15, Notes on

Following the denunciation of mount Seir Jehovah now addresses Himself to the personified mountains of Israel and declares the consolation in store for them, whatever the proud malice of the Edomite might have said against them.

"Also, thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of Jehovah" (v. 1).

It is well to bear in mind that in Israel of old it was a question of government under the revealed name of Jehovah, but on the conditions of law, which, being taken up by man in the flesh, could only issue as it did in ruin. Now it is a wholly different state of things; for on a rejected Christ, who is the Son of God, the assembly is built, His body and bride in grace pure and absolute, and hence formed out of believers, Jews and Gentiles indiscriminately, who are destined to be with Him on high and reign with Him over the earth. But the government of the world in Israel is not abandoned by God forever. He will take Israel up once more at the coming of the Lord, the glorious Son of Man, and display His government perfectly then to His own glory under the new covenant, and hence on a principle superior to the weakness or the evil of the

creature. This will be the epoch and turning-point of the world's blessing, not merely as now grace gathering out of it for heavenly glory with Christ, but judgment returning to righteousness on earth, and all the upright following it. Hence the second advent of the Lord for the world is characterized by the execution of judgments; and the rather as all scripture shows that the state of the earth will just before it be one of unexampled evil in apostasy, not only the rebellious rejection of the truth, but the great lie consummated of man sitting as God in the temple of God. And God will deal not with the most flagrant offenders only, but with each and all who have risen up against Him, when He delivers and exalts His ancient people still justly abased because of their sins.

To this time these prophecies look onward, whatever may have been their partial application in the past. If Israel will come forth from their hiding-place for His mercy, so will Edom for His judgment. I mean now of course for the judgment of the quick not of the dead, which will follow at the close of all when the wicked of every age and clime shall rise again and be judged by the Son of Man.

But here it is the earth dealt with, not that eternal judgment; and the prophet was to speak comfort to the long desolate mountains of Israel. For God has not made the earth or man upon it to be ever the victims of sin and sorrow, of vanity and corruption. He will surely show Himself a deliverer from all the mischief Satan has wrought; but there must be judgment as well as mercy, and both we see here. Had the enemy taunted the land of Israel, saying “Aha, even the ancient heights are become our possession” (v. 2)? Jehovah's answer through His prophet is, “Because, even because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might become a possession unto the residue of the nations, and ye are taken up on the lips of talkers, and a reproach of the people, therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of Jehovah: thus saith the Lord Jehovah to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and to the valleys...” (vss. 3-4).

If the unuttered taunt is recorded before Jehovah, how much more that malicious boasting over the needed humiliation of Israel and the consequent desolation of the land, as if it were their victory over the only true God! But He heard and was soon warned by His servant the prophet; yet was He slow to judge. But His hand will ere long make good what His mouth then declared; and a yet more tremendous downfall yet awaits the haughty Edomite. The unbelieving Jews may divert their maledictions to their so-called Christian adversaries meanwhile; for both Jews and Christendom have lost all simplicity and consequently power of faith in the word of God. But neither good nor evil have perished from before His eyes. Edom and Israel but slumber in the dust and will soon come forth, Edom with still indomitable pride and vengeance, Israel at length repentant and subdued by the patient infinite grace of God. And then in this world shall each race receive its portion in that day, and Edom finally by the hand of Israel. (Compare Isa. 11:10-14; 34; 35; 63; Obadiah.)

For it would be a sorrowful and altogether unworthy conception of that day, were it only viewed as divine wrath dispensing its death-blows on the wicked. The prophecy holds out no such monotony of gloom, but contrariwise the dark ways of man's iniquity followed by the judgment, and ushering in the day of Jehovah. “Prophesy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; Behold, I have spoken in My jealousy and in My fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen: Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah; I have lifted up Mine hand, Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame. But ye, mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to My people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown: and I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded: and I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah. Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, even My people Israel; and they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them of men. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; Because they say unto you, Thou land devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations; therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nations any more, saith the Lord Jehovah. Neither will I cause men to bear in thee the shame of the heathen any more, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nations to fall any more, saith the Lord Jehovah” (vss. 6-15).

The Lord thus pledges His oath, jealous for the blessing of Israel and indignant at their reproach not yet come, still continued from the heathen. In vain do men apply such glowing words to the return from Babylon, which was but an earnest of what is coming for the entire people. Can any one who respects scripture and knows the facts pretend that the Lord multiplied men on the mountains of Israel, “all the house of Israel, even all of it?” (v. 10). Such words seem expressly written to guard souls from such meager and misleading views. Did Jehovah settle the returned remnant after their old estate, and do good more than at their beginning? (v. 11). Did the land, did the mountains, become Israel's inheritance and no more bereave them? (v. 12). Do we not know that under the fourth empire a still worse destruction came and a longer dispersion, instead of the land devouring no more, neither bereaving its own nations nor bearing the insult of the Gentiles any more? (v. 15). No! the fulfillment of the prophecy is yet to come, but, come it will as surely as Jehovah lives and has thus sworn through His prophet concerning the land of Israel. To suppose that the gospel or the church is meant by such language is both ignorance and infatuation.

Notes on Ezekiel, Ezekiel 20:1-44, Notes on

The new division opens with a full and solemn exposure of Israel's sin, not merely in the light of Jehovah's present estimate but of His ways with them in the past and in the future. Indeed we never adequately judge our actual condition unless we are thus subject to the mind and purpose of God; for as we must weigh where He placed us at the first, so He would have us look onward to His end if we would be wise according to Him, and thus the better feel how our state answers to either.

“And it came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth month, the tenth day of the month, that certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of Jehovah and sat before me” (v. 1). It was a serious reckoning this which the prophet employed, but if humiliating to the people meanwhile (and this was no evil), it kept before faith the sure intervention of divine mercy when the chastening by Gentile hands had been told out in full score. Appearances bade fair for those who presented themselves from among the elders of Israel. They came to inquire of Jehovah; was not this faith? They sat before Ezekiel: was not this the reverent humility that honors Him in His servant?

“And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Are ye come to inquire of Me? As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I will not be inquired of by you. Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge them? cause them to know the abominations of their fathers” (vss. 2-4). He who searches the reins and the heart saw that there was no exercise of conscience before Him; and why answer where there is only hollowness and hypocrisy? It was beneath Him to allow such trifling

any more. “As I live, I will not let Myself be inquired of longer by you.” At the same time He is pleased to justify His ways; and if the prophet would plead for them (or take them to task), he is directed to set their fathers' abominations before them. God thus goes to the fountainhead of the mischief, and the people must judge the evil not merely in its effects but in its spring.

The prophet then was to say to them, “Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up Mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up Mine hand unto them, saying, I am Jehovah your God; in the day that I lifted up Mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands: then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am Jehovah your God. But they rebelled against Me, and would not hearken unto Me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out My fury upon them, to accomplish My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I wrought for My name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt” (vss. 5-9). With what impressive reiteration Jehovah reminds His people of His oath, swearing, as He could by no greater, by Himself, and thus wishing to show more abundantly the immutability of His counsel! It is expressly of Israel that the Apostle declares the gifts and calling of God are not subject to change of mind. For this very reason He judges and must judge their ways: else He would be compelled to sanction or excuse sin. As this never can be, He deals with the unfaithfulness of Israel, and this noticing it from the outset. Even then, spite of expostulations directed to each one, the abominations of their eyes and following of Egypt's idols drew out His anger, so that it became a question of letting it all out against them in that land. But mercy prevailed against judgment, and regard for His own name before the heathen.

“I therefore brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them My statutes, and showed them My judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also I gave them My sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am Jehovah that sanctify them. But the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness: they walked not in My statutes, and they despised My judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and My sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out My fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. But I wrought for My name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out” (vss. 10-14). When out of Egypt, Israel was no better than when in it, yea, their evil became more evident and less excusable. For they were in the solitudes of the wilderness with Jehovah, yet they sought false gods; they had His statutes and ordinances, yet they walked not accordingly but despised them; they had His sabbaths as a sign between Him and them, yet profaned them greatly. So that Jehovah was again provoked to destroy Israel in the desert as before in Egypt: His own name, against which they sinned so proudly and perseveringly, was their shelter and defense. “Yet also I lifted up My hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands; because they despised My judgments, and walked not in My statutes, but polluted My sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols” (vss. 15-16).

“Nevertheless Mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness. But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols; I am Jehovah your God; walk in My statutes, and keep My judgments, and do them; and hallow My sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that ye may know that I am Jehovah your God. Notwithstanding the children rebelled against Me: they walked not in My statutes, neither kept My judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted My sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out My fury upon them, to accomplish My anger against them in the wilderness. Nevertheless I withdrew Mine hand, and wrought for My name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the face of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth” (vss. 17-22). Jehovah was moved with compassion, but He must assert His authority, the rightness of His judgments, and the special value of His sabbaths,1 as between Him and them. In vain! The children in the wilderness were as bad as their fathers who fell; and nothing but His own care for the name they profaned stood between Israel and destruction. But now the hand that was lifted up to the seed of Jacob's house for purposes of mercy and goodness was lifted up to them in the wilderness, before they even entered the land of Canaan, that He would scatter them among the nations and disperse them through the countries. Compare Lev. 26 and Deut. 28, 32. On the other hand when it became a question of carrying out the long-suspended threat, Amos is explicit that the captivity and dispersion of the people befell them because of their idolatrous rebellion against Jehovah in the wilderness. “Have ye offered unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacles of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith Jehovah, whose name is The God of hosts” (Amos 5:25-27).

Some have found difficulty in verse 25, and this from time immemorial amongst writers on the Bible as well as readers of it. But the solution is due to the simple principle that God in His government chastens His guilty people retributively and calls the scourges His own, even when the instruments may be wholly foreign to His mind and heart. Nay it is true even of the Holy One of God, of Christ Himself, who, when given up to utter rejection and suffering from man, is in this said to be smitten of God (Psa. 69; Zech. 13). It is a great and serious mistake that the statutes which were not good, and ordinances by which they could not live, mean God's own in which they were bound to walk obediently. This would be indeed to make scripture hopelessly obscure, and God the author of evil. Not so: whatever be the issue for the sinner, the Apostle is most energetic, in proving the misery even of a converted soul in his efforts after good and against his own evil under law, to vindicate that which in itself is holy, just and good. Assuredly then the Jewish prophet and the Apostle Paul do not contradict each other, but those who apply the expression “statutes that were not good” misunderstand the matter in hand. The true reference is to the bitter bondage of His people to the corrupt and destructive regulations of the heathen, even to the demoralization of their households, and the most cruel devotion of their first-born to Moloch, “horrid king.” Thus if they polluted God's name and sabbaths, He polluted them in their gifts: so great was the degradation of Israel in departing from the true God. Verse 26 leaves no doubt on my mind as to the real force of verse 25. “Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed Me, in that they have committed a trespass against Me. For when I had brought them into the land, for the which I lifted up Mine hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation to their offering: there also they made their sweet savor, and poured out there their drink offerings. Then I said unto them, What is the high place whereunto ye go? And the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day” (vss. 27-29). Bad as their idolatry was before in Egypt or in the desert, it was more culpable in them and more insulting to God in Canaan. False worship too perpetuates itself, but the truth stands only by grace (v. 29).

“Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredom after their abominations? For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be inquired of by you, house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I will not be inquired of by you. And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone. As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: and I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord Jehovah. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against Me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah. As for you, house of Israel, thus saith the Lord Jehovah; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto Me: but pollute ye My holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols. For in Mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve Me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things” (vss. 30-40). Thus their persevering and heinous sin in always most unnaturally dishonoring Jehovah, like fathers, like children, is pressed on their consciences, as the ground why He could not be inquired of through His prophet (vss. 30-31). But God would take care that they should not carry out all the apostate iniquity of their hearts. They should not be as the heathen after all, they should not succeed in throwing off the yoke of Jehovah to serve wood and stone. They had all the guilt of it in their minds, but God would not forget His own honor, and they should pay the penalty. “[As] I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you” (v. 33). Is this only in the way of judgments? Of judgments without doubt, but with the view and end of purging Israel. He will have His people separate from the Gentiles, whatever may seem the natural course of events, and whatever the desires not only of the Gentiles but of Israel. In the result, Jehovah only shall be exalted; and this when men least expect it. As surely as summer follows winter in the earth, so light shall succeed the darkness of man's day. For this are the ancient people kept of God spite of themselves and the enemy. For, let Satan reign as he may, God is above him and will rule openly as He does in secret providence.

But it is in verse 35 that we see one of the momentous and distinctive intimations of this new word of Jehovah. It is not a question of the temple or Jerusalem or the last reigning branch of her boughs out of which fire went and devoured her fruit, so that there is no more on her a strong branch for a scepter to rule, till Shiloh come. Here it is the people as a whole, Israel at least rather than the Jews; and of the deepest interest is the intimation of their special future. With them (not with the remnant in the land and city) will God rehearse the history of the chosen nation. After gathering them out from the people and the countries wherein they are still scattered, and this not by quiet, moral, or evangelic means, but with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, and with outpoured fury, He will bring them into the wilderness of the people, and plead or hold judgment over them face to face, as of old when He so dealt with their fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt. And there He caused them to pass in review, as a shepherd the sheep under the rod, and so brings into the bond of the covenant. It is sovereign grace, but reigning through righteousness. Hence the rebels are severed from the Israel of God, and transgressors against Jehovah (for even the Israelites are not confounded with sinners of the Gentiles) are no longer to be with His people. Out of the country of their sojourn He will cause them to go forth, but into the land of Israel shall not one enter. How strikingly in contrast with the destiny of the remnant of Judah, who are to suffer for their specific sins in the land! There they refused the Christ of God who came in the Father's name; there will they receive the Antichrist who is to come in his own name. Compare Zech. 11:16-17; 13:8-9; also Dan. 12: 1 for the remnant, and Dan 12: 2 for the body of the people among the Gentiles, as I understand each of these verses.

It was useless then for the Israelites as they were to think their worship acceptable to God. For the sin of witchcraft is rebellion, and idolatry stubbornness. If therefore they would not hearken to Jehovah, better be in the openness of their evil than keeping up a show utterly offensive to Him: gifts from men in such an idolatrous state only profane His name. But His purpose shall stand. “For on My holy mountain, on the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve Me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things” (v. 40). Who can allege with any semblance of a consistent interpretation that this word of promise in our prophet has been fulfilled or yet begun to be? The people and land of Israel will then be holy in the full force of the expression. Then, not before, will Jehovah be vindicated through Israel before the eyes of the nations. The gospel which has gone forth since the death and resurrection of Christ is in contrast with it; for there all are alike treated as sinners and lost, and those who believe not only find indiscriminate mercy, but are brought into one new man wherein is neither Jew nor Gentile. “In that day,” of which the prophet speaks, the distinction will reappear, and Israel, delivered from all their idols and every high place, will worship Jehovah their God on the mountain of His holiness, on the mountain of the height of Israel.

“I will accept you with your sweet savor, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up Mine hand to give it to your fathers. And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed. And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I have wrought with you for My name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, ye house of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah” (vss. 41-44). They will then be accepted and know Jehovah, the promises to the fathers be accomplished, not only in us who now believe and go to heaven at Christ's coming, but in the children of Israel on the earth, who shall then indeed repent, only so really because of His mercy who acts freely above the evil of the creatures for His own sake: if He did not, to be a sinner were to be ruined without remedy or hope.

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