Haggai - Commentaries by John Nelson Darby

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Critical 1, Scriptural Criticisms

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I SEND you some additional verbal criticisms, of importance connected with truth, though comparatively insignificant in point of learning. Those who love the truth will not despise them.

It appears to me that while in general the authorized English translation is one of incomparable value, on the subject of the dispensation of the glory to come there are several passages which the translators have forced from their plain sense, in consequence of their not seeing or not believing in it, and therefore not seeing how it could be possible to take it in the sense the passages plainly represented-otherwise their pains are very remarkable.

Some of these passages I will notice. There is one very important passage, of some length, exceedingly obscured by a fear (I suppose) of popular mistake. The word translated " condemnation " in John 5:24, and in verse 29 " damnation," is the identical word rendered " judgment " in verses 22 and 27, and correctly so rendered. The word properly used for " condemnation " is different, as in Rom. 8:1: is the word in John, in Romans. A plain and beautiful passage is obscured by this effort to meet common thoughts, or by a fear of strange ones.

The statement of the passage is, that there are two things in which respectively the Son's glory is shown-quickening and judging. In the former, as a blessing, He exercises His power conjointly with the Father; in the latter, as the vindication of His honor against those that have despised it, He is alone, and executes it in the way in which He was despised. He judges as Son of man: but as to those who are quickened, there is no need of bringing them into crisis, for they through grace have honored the Son when the rest dishonored Him unrighteously; and it is just out of such crisis they are saved, as the subjects of the exercise of the Son's quickening power; but that all men should honor Him, judgment is committed entirely to Him whom they dishonored, securing His honor as the Father's.

These then are the two great instruments by which honor is brought and secured to the Son-quickening power, and crisis. They therefore that are quickened do not come into crisis; they have passed from death into life. How are they known? They hear Christ's word, and believe God the Father who sent Him: thus we know that they have eternal life, and shall not come into crisis at all. Before the of Christ they may stand to have righteous appointment before Him; but into crisis they do not come. This is the statement of 2 Cor. 5 to: " We must all appear before the of Christ, to receive the things done in the body, good or evil." This then is the positive assertion of the Lord, that the quickened shall not come into crisis, but have everlasting life. The same is the result of resurrection, when this truth is disclosed. They that are in their graves shall come forth at the power of the same voice: they that have done good to the resurrection of life, of which they have been made partakers; not to crisis; and they that have done evil to the resurrection of judgment, a distinct thing, which is the result of the exercise of Christ's voice on an unquickened soul, and in which none at all can stand, as in Psa. 142 (LXX), Enter not into judgment with thy servant. (Hebrews and Eng. Psa. 143) Thus the resurrection of life is the filling up the quickening power of Christ as to this mortal body, mortality being swallowed up of life: the resurrection of judgment is to crisis, that is, for the wicked only, for none can stand in it.

The connection of this with present blessing is manifest; the beautiful connection with the exhibition of the power of Christ is made most plain. The change of the word destroys the consequence and connection of the passage. We cease to have the double exhibition of the power of Christ in its pursued effects, and we lose the present peace which results from knowing (conformed to our complete justification in Him who is Himself the judge) that we shall not come into crisis-into question of judgment as to our reception at all. How indeed should Christ do it, save as despising His own sacrifice and righteousness, when it is before Him we stand? Our resurrection is a resurrection of life, whatever our responsibility, which 2 Cor. 5 maintains complete in its place.

To turn to another passage (1 Cor. 11:29, et seq.), where this word is misused: " He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." The apostle is speaking of Christians fallen under chastenings of sickness, or even temporal death-sleeping (the common christian word for a believer's death), because of evils into which they had fallen; and tells them they are but eating and drinking judgment to themselves; but that, when they were judged, they were chastened of the Lord, that they should not be condemned with the world. They were Christians, and therefore chastening judgment came upon them here, that they should not be condemned along with the world. But if, says the apostle, we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged of the Lord.

The first word " judge " is here again a different one, , discern oneself. If by the cherished use of the presence of the Lord with our souls, by the Holy Ghost, we discerned the springs of evil or circumstances of evil therein, which were the occasions of what called forth the chastening, we should not come under it. Examine yourselves-and how? By the light of the presence of the Spirit of God; and hence the importance of keeping it undimmed, ungrieved in the soul, and exercising oneself by examining watchfulness so as not to lose it: otherwise the very power of discernment is gone comparatively, by which the evil is discerned; we become blind, and cannot see afar off. The good Shepherd may restore us, and does, for His name's sake; but it is by chastening, and possibly sorrowful evil. Our wisdom is the spirituality by which evil is seen in its springs, not in its effects; and the watching ourselves in this, so as that unconsciously the power of discernment be not weakened by losing the sense of the very evil which calls for it, and the remedy be the sorrowful but still loving stroke of the Lord's hand. " Make the heart of this people fat " is the worst sorrow of judgment; but any measure of it in us is a grievous evil. May we, by thus discerning ourselves, be kept or made very bright and joyful in spirit, of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord; our estimate of holiness high; because our communion, and consequently understanding, is bright, even with Him who makes us partakers of His holiness!

Another passage I will now refer to (Acts 3:19): " Repent, and be converted, so that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Read, " so that [ ] the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." The mission of

Jesus, whom they had lost as a nation, would be on their repentance. It is not here, " Repent and be baptized every one of you," and individual matter of salvation, as in the former sermon; but an address to the assembly of the Jews, explaining the position in which they stood by the rejection of Jesus; but that even so, upon their repentance, Jesus would be sent to them again; and on their repentance and conversion the times of refreshing would come from the presence of the Lord: , the only sense of which is " so that they may come." The sermon is a Jewish sermon to them as Jews. It states, verse 18, the sufferings; verse 21, restitution of all things; Jesus in heaven till then; and on their repentance the seasons of refreshing to come. I would also remark that " raise up," verse 26, refers, I apprehend, not to resurrection, but to the same words " raise up," verse 22, stating that what the prophet promised was indeed raised up in the person of God's Son Jesus; the " sent him to bless you," was on His mission from the Father, but it was not done on repentance now, for He would send Him, now fore-preached, in the times of refreshing which would be on their repentance. The answers to the of Eph. 1:12. The alteration , as to the matter, comes to the same sense, though it is of stronger reproach to the Jews as actually manifested and produced to them. But the whole passage is completely a Jewish sermon. " To you first "-" ye are the children of the prophets." The translators (I suppose) could not see the national repentance, or the dealing of the Lord with the Jews still, as a nation; and the passage is quite changed into rather unintelligible Gentile theology.

We have a similar instance in Rom. 1:31: " Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also might obtain mercy." This is asserting that the Jews as a nation are to obtain mercy by the Gentiles' mercy. So, doubtless, the translators thought; but it is a mistranslation, , ' : " These have now disbelieved in the mercy to you Gentiles, that they also might be brought upon terms of mercy." Promises had belonged to the Jews; but they forbad to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always, so that wrath is come upon them to the uttermost. Thus, like mere sinners of the Gentiles, it was a matter, though true to Himself, of sovereign mercy to bring in the Jews: fulfillment of promises they had rejected in Him, who was a minister of circumcision to confirm them. God concluded all in unbelief: the Gentiles naturally, the Jews now in the wisdom of dispensation, that both might come in on like terms of mercy, as the Jews surely shall in the latter day.

There is another passage which sometimes perplexes people with deep inquiries, which (I believe) take their rise merely from obscurity of expression.

In Rev. 22:9 we have, " For I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book; worship God." And again, chapter 19: to, " I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus." Now this is commonly taken as if the angel had the testimony of Jesus, and was himself as one of the prophets. But it appears to me the rendering is simply this: , " I am but a fellow-servant of thee, and of thy brethren the prophets "; thee and the prophets being in apposition, not the angel and the prophets: in the other, " of thy brethren which have the testimony of Jesus," which makes the passage very simple.

I would repeat here what has been noticed elsewhere, which makes an obscure passage very easy: " The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the glory of the former." (Hag. 2:9.) This should be, I apprehend, " The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former "; and this is not yet properly fulfilled. If we refer to verse 3, we shall see at once how " this house " is used as to both its states. The house is looked at as one thing-it is Jehovah's house, the temple, in different states; of which her first glory is one; and then " how do ye see it now? " The unity of the house in all its states makes the sentence very plain. Many of these passages may seem very simple; but it must be remarked that one passage, where the mind is subject to scripture, will arrest it in all its course; and thus all its principles will be more or less affected: and thus it becomes of great importance to free the mind from its difficulty.

There is a slight correction in 1 Peter 1:11, which makes it more strong and clear: the sufferings; the glories after these, . It enlarges the scope of the abounding glories of Christ to come, not His present glory merely at the right hand of the Father.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Critical 1, Haggai 2:5-9*, On

To the Editor of The Investigator.

SIR,

I do not pretend to an adequate knowledge of Hebrew for a criticism dependent on the language. It appears to me, however, that interpreters have hindered their apprehension of the general force of the passage in Haggai, by confining themselves to the English translation, valuable as it may generally be. The passage does not apparently contemplate two houses at all, but negatives the idea very carefully. The spirit of the prophecy is contained in this: "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." The fact of two houses of course was before them; so it has been before us. God in the exercise of His love obliterates this idea (which we have rekindled), and will allow only of a different state of the same house, and that was one of far greater glory. " Who is left among you that saw this house (àÆúÎäÇáÇÌéÄú äÇæÆÌä áÄÌëÀáÉåãÉå äÈøÄàùÉÑåï) in its former glory?" &c.

Then the Lord says (after the verse above quoted, stating His continuance with them), " Thus saith Jehovah; Yet it is a little while," &c., and He will shake all that whose apparent stability has been against the people of His love, and " I will fill this house with glory: great shall be the glory of this house, the latter than the former ": or, simply, " the latter glory of this house [looked at in its unity] shall be greater than the former."

Such seems the idea and the construction of the passage. I find the Septuagint follows it. The thought of God's mind seems to run through this construction, and to be borne upon the plain terms of the passage itself, and to be fully given by it only.

As to the other part of the passage I confess the difficulty. But it is clear to me, that it is much more abstract in intention than is generally supposed. It is not Christ shall become the desire of the Jews, nor merely the gold and silver after which the nations of the world should seek; but that that on which the heart of the Gentiles would be set should be not among them (to wit, the power and the glory), but in those that were broken and despised-God's house now among them, in its power attracting round itself all the honor and glory of the nations whose rebellious stability and consistency had been shaken to pieces.

You are aware probably of the view of Parkhurst; and that, if I remember rightly, some manuscripts insert the Cholem.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

J. N. D.

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