Zechariah - Commentaries by Algernon James Pollock

Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass, Crowning, The

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Zechariah 6:9-15

After the judgment comes the victory; after the struggle with evil comes the enthronement of the Messiah.

This is symbolized in the crowning of Joshua, type of Christ in His Millennial reign.

Joshua is, however, bidden to look on the Antitype, who will completely eclipse the type: “Behold the Man whose name is THE BRANCH; and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the Lord: even He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a Priest upon His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both [that is, between His kingly and priestly glories]” (vss.12-13).

Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass, Eighth Vision, The

Zechariah 6:1-8

Here the prophet sees four chariots emerging from between two mountains of brass. He is told that these are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. “Mountains” speak of government; “mountains of brass,” government being exercised in judgment, according to man's responsibility Godward; “chariots” speak of controlled motion, the horses being controlled by the driver.

The vision is to teach that behind man's apparent arranging and planning, God is directing earthly affairs for His own wise purposes and glory in the government of this world. In these four chariots is seen the rise and progress of the four world—empires.

The black horse (Babylonian Empire) had passed away, the north country had quieted the angel's spirit. The white would seem to indicate the Grecian Empire. This we find by comparing Zechariah 1:8. If the white horse in that chapter is clearly symbolic of the Grecian Empire, it will be so in Zechariah 6:6. The grisled horses (grisled being a mixture of colors) speak of the blending of Greek and Roman power, which took place historically as we saw in our study of Daniel 11; whilst eventually the Grecian power gave way to the Roman, and the Roman held undisputed sway. This is indicated by the bay horses. Their influence is yet to be seen in the great happenings of the world after the Church is caught up.

Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass, Seventh Vision, The

Zechariah 5:5-11

An ephah—a measure in common use at that day—is seen by the prophet, and when a talent of lead, apparently a weighty lid, was lifted up, a woman was seen sitting in the midst of the ephah. The prophet was told, “This is wickedness.”

The ephah being a measure in common use seems to point to the way the Jew has taken up commerce. When in captivity in Babylon they had given up idolatry, but acquired that spirit of commercialism which is such a marked feature of the nation today. Throughout the world the Jew is notorious, as on the one hand refusing Christ, and as a consequence they are scattered among the nations by the government of God; and on the other hand in making commerce their aim in a very intense way.

The weight of lead being cast in the mouth of the ephah speaks of God's hand in restraint, keeping wickedness within bounds.

The prophet sees two women, symbolical of evil again, the wind in their wings; that is, instead of restraint being placed upon them, providential circumstances are allowed to help them. They lift up the ephah between heaven and earth, and when the prophet asks whence they will bear it, the answer is given, “To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.”

As the woman is a symbol of “wickedness,” so the two women set forth two forms of wickedness. Bearing the ephah to the land of Shinar throws light on this.

Shinar is first mentioned in Scripture in Genesis 10:10 as the home of Nimrod, and it was in that country that Babel (Greek-Babylon) was built. Babel was the place where man's speech was confounded, because of his impious attempt to be independent of God. Tracing Babel, or Babylon, through Scripture, we find it connected with two evils—idolatry and infidelity. These two are often connected, as witness the slavish idolatry of the Roman Catholic system, and its infidelity. These, then, will mark the Jew in the last days. There will be the Anti-christ, who will be infidel, that is, refusing God; and idolatrous, as setting up himself, and the image of the beast, to be worshipped.

These evils began in Babylon, and Babylon in that way is to characterize the Jew in the last days in one form, and the Roman Catholic system in another. For this latter see Revelation 17; 18.

Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass, Sixth Vision, The

Zechariah 5:1-4

The prophet sees a flying roll. The roll was that on which the Jews of old inscribed their writing, and was made of the skin of animals, or of papyrus.

Its size was great—twenty cubits by ten cubits, that is, the same dimensions as the porch of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:3). There may be some connection between the two, probably an indication that judgment would go forth (flying roll) according to the holiness of God's house.

The prophet is told that this represented the curse that goeth forth into all the earth. Other translations give land for “earth”; the land referring to Palestine, and the context bears this out.

Stealing and swearing are the two sins recorded on the roll—stealing, a sin against one's fellow-man (though all sin is against God); and swearing, a sin exclusively against God. Doubtless these two sins are representative of all sins. In murder, life is stolen; in lying, truth is stolen; in adultery, chastity is stolen, whilst swearing would cover all deliquencies Godward.

God's judgment upon sin is then seen in the flying roll; that is, the curse of God enters the house of the sinner till it is consumed.

Doubtless this vision has reference to the Lord acting in judgment, clearing the land of all defilement, prior to His setting up His kingdom.

Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass, Fifth Vision, The

Zechariah 4:1-14

The vision is that of a candlestick all of gold and with seven lamps. Two olive trees stood by it, which emptied their golden oil presumably into the bowl at the top, which ran through seven pipes to feed the seven lamps.

There is a distinct order in the third, fourth, and fifth visions. The third gives us the promise of restoration to Israel; the fourth the means by which God in righteous grace will bring it to pass; the fifth the power by which Israel's testimony will be maintained in the Millennium, even that of the Holy Spirit.

The candlestick ever stands as a symbol of testimony; “all of gold” showing that it is a divine Person who shall render the testimony, even the Holy Ghost.

The seven branches speak of divine perfection, omniscience, fullness of testimony. Again and again the Old Testament, prophesying of the future glory of Israel, testifies how the testimony will be maintained, “I will put My Spirit within you” (Ezek. 36:27). Passage after passage could be adduced on this point.

Then Zerubbabel, the rebuilder of the temple, is addressed. Just as Joshua was typical of the nation, so Zerubbabel is typical of Christ. He was indeed His ancestor according to the flesh (Matt. 1:12), whilst his work in rebuilding the temple is typical of what Christ shall do in a future day.

The great mountain before Zerubbabel sets forth all the difficulties that lay before him in his work, as it symbolizes all the terrible opposition of the Jew to Christ, which would if possible have frustrated the will of God.

How touching are the Lord's words in Matthew 21:17-22 as explaining this. He hungered. There were no figs on the barren fig tree, no response from Israel for the heart of Christ. He hungered. His hunger shall be satisfied, and if the actual fig tree cursed by the Lord should bear no fruit forever, yet the fig tree of Israel shall bear fruit, even if God has to prune it for two thousand years.

When the disciples marveled that the Lord should cause the fig tree to wither away so soon, He tells them that if they had faith, and were without doubt, they should say to this mountain, “Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea,” (Matt. 21:21) and it should be done.

The great mountain at that time was the implacable unbelief of the Jews. That mountain has been removed, and cast into the sea; that is to say, the Jews have been dispersed among the nations, and will continue to be so till God's plans of blessing in this dispensation are worked out. Then He will bless in relation to the Jew again, leading up to the point of blessing them in their own land, and through them the nations of the earth.

In Zerubbabel's day the mountain should become a plain, and the Headstone placed with joy, that is the completion of the work, and the shouts heard, “Grace, grace unto it.”

So the greater than Zerubbabel, at once the Builder and Headstone, the Completion, as He is the Foundation Stone, of Israel's blessing, shall yet turn the great mountain of Israel's unbelief into the plain of her change of heart and mind, when the spirit of grace and supplication shall be poured forth upon the nation.

It was indeed a day of small things in Zerubbabel's day. Spite of weakness and depression, he would not only lay the foundation of the house, but finish it, just as Christ laid the moral foundation of it in His death, and shall finish it in the day of His power.

The plummet shall be in Zerubbabel's hand “with those seven,” that is, in future fulfillment Christ shall build according to His perfection and glory. These eyes are running to and fro through the whole earth; that is, God is using every providential happening in His omniscience to work out the end He has in view. Surely the Great War is a wonderful example of this, as we see how it is leading up to the return of the Jews

to Palestine.

Finally the prophet asks the meaning of the two olive branches that empty the golden oil out of themselves through the golden branches. He is told that they are “the two anointed ones [sons of oil], that stand by the Lord of the whole earth” (vs. 14).

Surely the twofold testimony of Israel in the future day will be seen in and through her King, her Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, as (1) Priest and (2) King. As Priest He will, in the power of God's Spirit, represent and maintain the people before God; as King He will represent God and maintain His character in rule over His people. He will fulfill the type of Melchisedec, who was a priest and a king, for Christ is made a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. “He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne [the king character]; and He shall be a priest upon His throne [the priest character]” (Zech. 6:13).

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Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass, Fourth Vision, The

Zechariah 3:1-10

Zechariah 3 has often been used by preachers as an illustration of the Gospel, and beautiful it is in this aspect. But we are here concerned with the strict interpretation of the vision.

The previous chapter uses for the first time the characteristic expression, “In that day” (vs. 11), employed about a score of times in the book, notably in Zechariah 12. It speaks in glowing terms of the restoration of Israel and the blessing in Zion. But God is righteous, and the vision in Zechariah 3 informs us how this restoration will take place.

In this vision there are three prominent actors—Joshua, the High Priest, the Angel of the Lord—that is, Jehovah Himself,—and Satan, the accuser. Exodus 23:20-23 tells us who the Angel of the Lord is. The translators, seeing its obvious meaning, have spelled “Angel” with a capital letter, whilst the sentence, “My name is in Him” (vs. 21), is conclusive testimony as to who the Angel is, even Jehovah in relation to His people.

Joshua stands as the representative of Israel, and what happened to him symbolically will happen to Israel in a future day.

Satan stands to resist the action of the Lord towards Joshua. That action is one of grace and compassion. Notice how verse 2 does not say, “the Angel of the Lord,” but “THE LORD said unto Satan.”

He therefore asserts His sovereignty in the choice of Jerusalem, His right to bless. He speaks of His choice of Jerusalem, and then turns to Joshua, saying of him, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” thus placing Jerusalem and Joshua together, showing that the latter stands for more than himself, but is typical of the whole people.

Joshua's filthy garments are typical of the moral condition of Israel. A High Priest is the last person one would associate with the thought of filthy garments, and it gives us thus a very vivid and affecting presentation of the utterly ungodly state of the nation in the last days when God shall bring them into blessing once more.

The filthy garments are removed, iniquity is caused to pass away, a change of raiment is given, and a fair miter is placed on the High Priest's head.

Notice as the vision proceeds it is (1) “The Angel of the Lord” (vs. 1); (2) “The Lord” (vs. 2); and (3) “I” (vss 4-5); showing more and more the Lord's direct and interested dealings in the matter.

Thus in symbol we see (1) Israel cleansed; (2) Israel's change of habits and ways before God; (3) Israel's resumption of temple worship and right relationship to God as a kingdom of priests.

The first will be fulfilled when “a fountain ... for sin and for uncleanness” is opened for “the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (Zech. 13:1); the second at the same time, when the new covenant shall be made with Israel (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:25-30), “a new heart” and “a new spirit” given them, and God's Spirit communicated to them. Their ways will then be such as is symbolized by the change of raiment, whilst the third will be seen in the re-established worship of God in the temple, built according to Ezekiel's vision.

But how is all this change to be effected in such a sinful nation, if God is to keep His character for righteousness and holiness? The answer is touchingly beautiful.

Attention is called in verse 8 to the fact that Joshua and his fellows were men to be wondered at, that is, men set for a sign or symbol. This is the meaning of the passage. Ezekiel 12:11 is a clear statement as to this in the case of that prophet.

Then we get the wonderful statement: “Behold, I will bring forth My Servant the BRANCH” (vs. 8). All this blessing that is set out prophetically before us for Israel is secured in Christ.

And how did Christ, Jehovah's Servant, serve? Hebrews 10 furnishes the answer. He came to do God's will, and that was accomplished at Calvary's cross. In that very chapter in a book written to Jewish believers they are reminded as the result of the work of Christ and upon its righteous ground that “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord. I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them [“change of raiment”]; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more [“filthy garments” removed]” (vss. 16-17).

Then Joshua is called upon to behold “the Stone,” “one Stone,” and set in it “seven eyes,” and graving engraved upon it. Here we get three wonderful things: (1) “The Stone,” the “one Stone,” reminding us of the foundation Stone, tried, precious, and sure, the corner Stone, spoken

of in Isaiah 28:16, showing us that all blessing is secured in Christ. (2) “Seven eyes,” speaking of Messiah's God-like qualities, for He is the God of omniscience and perfect wisdom in carrying out divine purposes of blessing for Israel. (3) The engraving speaks of God's fixed, unalterable decision to bless, in the words, “I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” This will surely come to pass, leading to the Millennium described in the last verse of the chapter.

Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass, Third Vision, The

Zechariah 2:1-13

The third vision is that of a man with a measuring line, going up to measure Jerusalem, a symbol that that city would come under God's attention for blessing.

There are two other instances of the measuring reed or line indicating that the time has come for God's gracious intervention in blessing, namely, Ezekiel 40-48:35, and Revelation 11:1, 2.

Then follows a glowing description of how Jerusalem shall be inhabited as a city without walls, and of the protection that the Lord will be to His people, even as a wall of fire round about.

A good deal of speculation has been indulged in as to what the words, “After the glory,” can mean. Matthew 24:30 appears to solve the difficulty in showing us the Lord coming in glory, and then dealing with the nations in reference to Israel, as seen in the words, “When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations” (Matt. 25:31-32). How magnificently the chapter ends: “Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for He is raised up out of His holy habitation” (vs. 13).

Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass, Second Vision, The

Zechariah 1:18-21

The prophet sees four horns, and he is told these represent the Gentile powers who have scattered God's ancient people, doubtless answering once more to the four world-empires foretold in Scripture.

Then the prophet sees four carpenters—four being a full answer to the four horns—and is told that they come to cast out the horns of the Gentiles; in other words, the prophet gets the answer to his question, that however impossible it looks, the enemies of God's people shall be destroyed, and His people blessed. This would be humanly impossible one would think, but the answer lies in one word—GOD.

The word “carpenter” is literally “carver or engraver.” The four carvers, it is suggested, carve or fray the four horns, and may represent the “four sore judgments” of Ezekiel 14:21, namely, the sword, famine, evil beasts, and pestilence, that shall diminish and weaken the great Gentile powers at the end (see also Rev. 6:8).

Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass, First Vision, The

Zechariah 1:7-17

The prophet sees a man riding on a red horse, and behind him were red, speckled, and white horses. A horse in Scripture is the symbol of divine energy of government on the earth. Behind all man's scheming, and Satan's malevolence, God is surely evolving His own plan and will.

Seeing that already the Babylonian Empire had passed away, we find symbolized in these three sets of riderless horses the three world-empires—Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman.

The fact of the man riding the red horse—that is to say, the horse is not riderless, but controlled—and the color of the first set of horses being also red, may point to the very distinct way in which God used the second Empire to do His will in making its rulers favorable to His people.

The prophet asks what these horses mean, and he is told, “These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth,” whereupon they report that they have done so, and the whole earth sits still and is at rest.

Remember everything is looked at from the standpoint of God's ancient people. The fact is, the nations into whose hands God has committed the government of the world are content to see God's people scattered and their land despoiled. They use their power, not in relation to God or intelligently as doing His purpose, but for their own lust, power, and ease.

The horses being riderless shows that the governments think they are doing their own unbridled will, but behind them, and unconsciously to the governments, God is carrying out His own purpose, and using them in its fulfillment.

The prophet is thus moved to inquire how long God will delay having mercy on His people, seeing the indignation has lasted seventy years. The answer comes in good and comfortable words, and in the prophet being given a second vision.

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