Zechariah - Commentaries by John Gifford Bellett

Minor Prophets, Zechariah 6:9-15

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Zechariah 6:9-15

These closing verses of the same chapter seem to be a kind of appendix to this vision of the four chariots. (For it intimates a fifth kingdom which in season is to be revealed, the four kingdoms of the Gentiles having preceded it.) The prophet is instructed to take certain children of the returned captives, and in their presence to set crowns on the head of Joshua, the high priest; and then to address Joshua as a type of the Branch, the destined builder of the Lord's temple, the bearer of the glory, the combined priest and king who is to secure peace in the coming days of His kingdom. And having gone through this ceremony, the prophet was ordered to lay up these crowns under the hand of certain guardians, in the house of the lord, as a memorial of all this destined glory and power which are to be displayed in the last days, in the person of the Branch, that is, the Messiah of Israel, the Christ of God.

But now we may observe, that on closing the sixth chapter, we have done with Zechariah's visions. We are also in another year, the fourth instead of the second of Darius. But I would separate these remaining chapters into what appears to me to be their distinct portions, as I have done with the preceding.

Minor Prophets, Zechariah 6:1-8

Zechariah 6:1-8

The eighth vision is that of "the four chariots." These symbolize the four great monarchies so much spoken of by the prophet Daniel. These chariots, drawn by different horses, come forth from between mountains of brass, and then take their appointed course over different parts of the earth, and this may remind us of the first vision, or that of "the horses among the myrtle trees." Only we have a new fact here: namely, that the second chariot has settled God's question with the first; or, in the language of this vision, "those that go forth to the north country have quieted My spirit," saith the Lord, "in the north country." The Persian had, in the days of Zechariah, put down the Chaldean.

Minor Prophets, Zechariah 5:5-11

Zechariah 5:5-11

The seventh vision is that of "the Ephah with the woman sitting in it." This is a picture of wickedness, or lawlessness. It is hidden—the woman in the ephah— and it is borne to the land of Shinar, its base, where it began its course. This we know; for Nimrod was the first great representative of the wicked or the lawless one, who is to be destroyed in the day of the Lord. This "wickedness" is hidden as here in an "ephah," or, as in Matthew 13, in "three measures of meal"—hidden, I may say, under a profession, as of the religion of Israel, or of the name of Christendom. But it is really Babylon at the end as at the beginning, "the land of Shinar"; as we again see in Revelation 17, and many other Scriptures.

Minor Prophets, Zechariah 5:1-4

Zechariah 5:1-4

The sixth vision is that of "the flying roll." This is an exhibition of curse or judgment finding out sinners, whether sinners against their neighbors as thieves, or sinners against God, as false swearers. Curse follows law (Gal. 3:10). As the law had its two tables, the curse has its two sides, corresponding, as we here see, to the two tables. The previous visions had been of mercy to Israel, either under the providence of God, or under Messiah, or under the Spirit; but now we get visions of judgment.

Minor Prophets, Zechariah 1:18-21

Zechariah 1:18-21

The second vision we may call, "the vision of the four horns and the four carpenters." It gave the prophet a view of the Gentile adversaries that had dispersed Judah, and also of the friends who were soon to avenge Judah at the hand of his Gentile adversaries.

Minor Prophets, Zechariah 1:7-17

Zechariah 1:7-17

This may be called “the vision of the horses among the myrtle-trees.” The first of these horses had a rider on it, the others were in the rear, and, as far as we learn, were without riders. (They are without riders, I believe, in order to represent the senseless, brutish force which marked the Gentiles, unguided as they were by the Spirit of God. The first horse was ridden by a man, a symbol of the divine energy that ruled the fortunes of Israel. It was “the angel of the Lord” that was the rider. Nebuchadnezzar had been already as an unridden horse (Dan. 4). So now the remaining three Gentile powers. (See Psa. 49:20.) So, in the next vision, the Gentiles are “horns,” senseless things; Israel’s friends are “Carpenters.”) The prophet asks the angel that waited on him what this meant. The rider upon the foremost horse tells him that these unridden horses were the agents of the Lord’s pleasure in the earth. The unridden horses, the representatives of the Gentiles, then speak and say that the whole earth was still and at rest; that is, just as they would have it. For such, surely, was the mind of the nations of the earth, whom God had set up upon the degradation and fall of Jerusalem. So would they have it—their exaltation upon the ruin of God’s people.

The angel, who stood for Jerusalem, upon this, at once takes the alarm, and pleads for the city of the Lord and of Israel. The Lord having answered this appeal of the angel, the angel seems to let the prophet know the answer, telling him that the Lord was displeased with the Gentiles, who were thus at ease, though they had helped forward the affliction of Jerusalem; that Jerusalem should be restored, the Lord’s house be built there again, and the cities of the land be reoccupied.

Minor Prophets, Zechariah 1:1-6

Zechariah 1:1-6

This book opens with a kind of preface in which the prophet, before he details his visions, challenges the people, warning them not to treat the Lord’s words by him as their fathers had treated other words of the Lord by other prophets, and which, nevertheless, had been fulfilled against them—had “taken hold of them,” as he speaks (Zech. 1:1-6).

He then begins to record his visions. Haggai had no visions. Zechariah is principally instructed by them. But they both prophesied in the same year, the second of the reign of Darius the Persian.

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