

## The Book of the Prophecy of Zechariah (6)

—H. Rossier

### The Last Day — Chapters 12-13

#### *The Person of Christ*

With chapter 12 begins the third part of the second book of Zechariah. The previous part, chapters 9-11, began with the words: "The burden of the word of Jehovah, in the land of Hadrach," and in it the judgment was announced over the nations around Israel. This third part begins with the same words: " *The burden of the word of Jehovah,*" but now *"concerning Israel"* and it is not for judgment, but for *deliverance*.

Chapters 12-14 contain the future events that will take place in Jerusalem and in Judah. As we have frequently mentioned before, the prophet Zechariah concerns himself nearly exclusively with Jerusalem and Judah. The future of the ten tribes he only touches upon as a coincidental matter when mentioning the restoration of Israel's unity, for the glory of Christ's kingdom. (See ch. 10 & 11).

The things revealed to us in this part are closely related to Christ's sufferings and His appearance for His people. The previous chapters described the shepherds of Judah; in chapter 12 another subject comes to the fore. The characteristic words: "In that day" are repeated fifteen times in the last three chapters and each time with other details. Indeed, these chapters speak to us, not of the last *days*, but of the last *day* and of the events that characterize this last day. They neither present to us the "beast," i.e. the Roman Empire, (except in chapter 12:3 in a very general sense), nor the false prophet, i.e. the antichrist. Their fate is already sealed, and their history completed when the events described in chapter 12 begin: the sword has come upon the arm and the right eye of "the unworthy shepherd." His history is closed, and after that *the last day* begins. Before we discuss the details of these chapters we want once more to draw attention to the fact that Zechariah introduces the person of Christ in a very unexpected manner. In chapter after chapter, the Lord suddenly takes the place of other persons who, because they were only weak types of Him, disappear totally before Him. This happens with Joshua (in ch. 3 & 6), and with Zerubbabel (in ch. 4). At other places He appears, without introduction, as King in Zion (ch. 9), as Shepherd (ch. 11), or as the One who is "no prophet" (ch. 13). His person occupies the central place in the midst of the events, while being also their origin, else the prophecies would entirely lose their value. Let us therefore always search in them for the person of Christ; let us give Him the place that is due to Him. If we do so, a different light will shine for us on all prophecy. Precisely because this principle is disregarded, many Christians find in the Prophets only unintelligent words, and they remain closed books to them.

#### *Summary of the Events on the Last Day*

Now let us begin with rendering the events that characterize the last day in broad lines.

At the still-future return of the unbelieving Jewish people in Palestine, Jerusalem will have become the city of the antichrist. A small part of the faithful remnant of Judah will still be there, and their leaders will be destined for martyrdom.

The greater part of this same remnant, however, will have fled and found shelter among the surrounding nations. Jerusalem will then be the center and goal upon which all God's ways and judgments will converge. The city will be threatened by the Assyrian of the end times who will plan to conquer Judah and will succeed in obtaining supporters in Palestine. Both the antichrist, the worldly and the spiritual head of the apostate nations, and Jerusalem, the stronghold of his power, will seek assistance from the "beast," the Roman Empire, who will head up an alliance of ten kings with Rome as its capital. This alliance has the avowed purpose of resisting the king of the North, the general of the Assyrian armies. But the hidden purpose is to make war against Christ by resisting the establishment of His kingdom. Then the Lord will appear with His hosts from heaven and destroy the antichrist with the "beast," casting them alive "in the lake of fire that burns with brimstone" (Rev. 19:20). The events described in the last three chapters of Zechariah will actually only take place after the judgment we just mentioned. For all does not end with the destruction of the false prophet and the beast. Jerusalem will then still be in the hands of its rulers appointed by the antichrist. They will oppress the poor remnant in this city, causing it to suffer. After the disappearance of the western power, in alliance with the antichrist, the King of the North will enter the land like a flood, and under its lead, the surrounding nations will lay siege to Jerusalem. The city will

be taken, a part of the population will go into captivity, but the poor ones of the flock will remain behind. Then the King of the North will with full force turn to Egypt. During that time the remnant of Judah that had fled among the nations will return into its land and through the power God gives it, it will be able to resist the Assyrian, even pushing him back in battle to his own territory. Hearing this, the King of the North will pull back out of Egypt and surround Jerusalem with his armies. Then the moment has come in which the Lord will deliver His people and the beloved city, finally establishing His rule over Israel and the nations. This short summation was needed to show in what a restricted circle of events the last chapters of Zechariah unfold.

### *Deliverance of Judah and Jerusalem*

Now we will shortly go over the contents of chapter 12.

*"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of bewilderment unto all the peoples round about" (v. 2).* This verse contains the only general intimation of what will take place before the destruction of the antichrist. All nations, not just the Assyrian and the nations around Palestine, but also the mighty armies of the west, will find in Jerusalem a cup that will cause them to lose their mind: *"All that burden themselves with it shall certainly be wounded" (v. 3),* the Roman Empire as well as all other nations. The "beast" and the false prophet will think that by occupying Jerusalem they will have found the means to keep the true King from establishing His government there. But *"In that day, saith Jehovah, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness; but I will open Mine eyes upon the house of Judah" (v. 4).* At the return of the unbelieving people to Palestine the Lord will remain at rest and execute the judgment over that nation before the harvest; so it says in Isaiah 18. But here we see that He keeps His eyes open over the house of Judah. How great is His grace! The house of Judah had rejected Him, and... nevertheless He will first of all take note of that same house! After that He will begin to work through the leaders of Judah: *"And the leaders of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength through Jehovah of hosts their God" (v. 5).* The remnant of Jerusalem that has remained faithful to God will be their moral support. *"In that day will I make the leaders of Judah like a hearth of fire among wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf and they shall devour all the peoples round about, on the right hand and on the left; and Jerusalem shall dwell again in her own place, in Jerusalem" (v. 6).*

This battle by the leaders will, according to Micah 5:4 take place against the Assyrian, but also benefit Jerusalem as is evident from Zechariah 12:16, for Jerusalem is after all Zechariah's main subject. But *"Jehovah shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of... the inhabitants of Jerusalem be not magnified over Judah" (v. 7).* "and Jerusalem shall dwell again in her own place, in Jerusalem." Then even those who stumble among them will be clothed with royal apparel, and *"the house of David [will be] as God, as the Angel of Jehovah before them" (v. 8),* this means that the kingship itself will bear a divine character. This is doubtless an allusion to Him whom Ezekiel calls "the Prince," who will be the earthly representative of the King of Glory (Ezek. 45:1-8, 22-24).

### *Repentance is a Prerequisite*

But the restoration of Jerusalem can only be brought about after *repentance* (vv. 10-14). This will be brought about by the presence of all nations who come up against Jerusalem (v. 9). We find here not only a sketch of what will take place in Jerusalem, but also the spiritual history of us all. We cannot return to God, from whom we have completely separated ourselves, but by showing *repentance*. This repentance will not bring about a condition of despair for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Nor can it do so for the Christian. The sorrow of those who will find a Saviour in "Him whom they have pierced," will not be despair. It is similar to what Joseph's brothers felt when they recognized that their deliverer was their brother whom they had sold to the Gentiles. All will wail and weep; each one *individually* will have to face God regarding his sin: the rejection of Christ, the Redeemer. The generations will not face God collectively as one nation, but house by house, with the men apart and the women apart. They will *"mourn for Him, as one mourneth for an only son" (v. 10).* These words show us the character of their bitter sorrow. The Object that they had rejected, whose death they had caused, was worthy of all the love of the nation. Their sorrow and their love will melt together in one general act of repentful humbling. There will be a wailing in Jerusalem such as has only once before occurred in Israel (v. 11). King Josiah had been the instrument in God's hand to bring about the most exceptional revival in the latter days of Judah's kingdom. In a war with Egypt, that same Josiah had been cut off in the prime of his life. In a lamentation Jeremiah, and many others with him, gave expression to the mourning with which this event had filled the hearts of people and prophet. How much greater will be the sorrow when the faithful in Jerusalem will look on Him whom they have pierced. Each of them will have to say: I have been the cause of the death of the Messiah! The house of David, the royal family; that of Nathan, the prophetic family; the house of Levi, the priestly family, and last of all the family of Shimei, a portion of the house of Gershom (Num. 3:21) who, together with Kohath and Merari, formed the actual family of the Levites; "and all other families," the prophet tells us, will mourn separately. This whole scene will be the final fulfillment of the great Day of

Atonement. Only then will God's people understand the bearing of this type. "In the seventh month, on the tenth of the month, ye shall afflict your souls," they had been told (Lev. 16:29). But on that day, Israel knew that atonement had been made *for just one year*. For the remnant this affliction of soul will occur *once for all* when it will know true atonement. During the thousand year reign of Christ, there will no longer be room for the Day of Atonement, but only for the Passover, as a *memorial* of the sacrifice of the Lamb, and for the Feast of Booths, of which the prophet spoke at the end of his book (ch. 14; cf. Ezek. 45:21-25).

### *Cleansing*

The beginning of chapter 13 mentions another blessing: "In *that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness*" (v. 1). This verse, in my opinion, does not refer to cleansing by blood, for in the previous chapter we saw the scene that agrees with the Day of Atonement. Those of whom it speaks here have already humbled their souls, finding redemption through the blood of the Lamb and all that is connected with this. They have been cleansed by the washing of regeneration, looking upon Him whom they pierced, upon a Christ who has died upon the cross out of whose side flowed the water of cleansing and the blood of redemption. But there will always be an opened fountain against sin and uncleanness, a continual practical cleansing during Christ's Millennium. Then, as now, the Word will be the means used to this end. Under Christ's reign nothing can exist that is not in agreement with this cleansing. "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered; and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land" (v. 2). The cleansing will stretch itself out over the entire land and not be restricted to Jerusalem. A spirit of holiness will be poured out in all hearts. The most intimate bonds will not influence this. The father and the mother will pierce their own children; when they prophesy, they will say to them: "Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of Jehovah" (v. 3). They will not tolerate that the name of the Lord be used to make room for the work of Satan, the father of lies. But the prophets themselves will be ashamed about the role they have played in presenting themselves as true prophets — a hairy mantle — to do the work of Satan (v. 4). Alas, such false prophets, their outward appearance and their habits, are not only found in Israel, but also in our days among all people to whom God has entrusted His name and testimony. Would that He gave all His children the zeal of a Phinehas, a zeal that will not tolerate evil when it is found among them who bear the name of the Lord. For His service only one thing is needed: God Himself and the glory of His name ought to be the highest object of our love.

### *Christ, the Servant of Man*

After the prophet has shown the future cleansing of the nation, he suddenly saw without the least introduction the Shepherd appear whom he had to present in chapter 11. He stood there in His own person before Zechariah. He spoke and said: "I am no prophet." He did not say like Amos, "I was no prophet," but I became one (Amos 7:14-15), but He said, "I am no prophet." This means that He acted here in an entirely different character. Beyond doubt, Christ has been a prophet, just as He has been a teacher and evangelist, for He combined in His person all spiritual gifts. In the Gospels His character as prophet comes to the fore. But for this He had not come into the world. "I am," He said, "a tiller of the ground; for man acquired Me as Bondman from My youth" (v. 5). That was His character as Man. In Genesis 3, after the fall, God said to man: "Cursed be the ground on thy account; with toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life... Therefore Jehovah Elohim sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken" (vv. 17,21). He, who presented Himself here, and whom Jehovah called "My Shepherd," wanted to subject Himself to the results of sin. He took the place that had been given to man because of his disobedience. With sorrow He did His work, suffered hunger in the wilderness, felt tired and thirsty at Shichar's well. Even more, in grace He did not only subject Himself to the results of the fall, which sinful man had to bear, but He subjected Himself to this man: "for man acquired Me as Bondman from My youth." Humbling Himself, and taking on the form of a slave (Phil. 2:7), He became the Bondman of man, whom He had created and who was in rebellion against God! He allowed Himself to be bought by man (Ex. 21:2-6; Dt. 15:12-18), to allot to man rights over Him even from His youth, so as to serve man (Lam. 3:27; Ps. 129:1). Never was such self-denial seen! The Creator made Himself humbly available to man to set him free from the consequences of sin, the fruit of his disobedience. He came to subject Himself to those consequences, to experience them, and to pass through them in grace, so as to be able to reach out a helping hand to man!

### *A Friend of Sinners*

"And one shall say unto Him, What are those wounds in Thy hands? And He will say, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends" (v. 6). Here we see that He will personally present Himself to His own. Earlier they had seen Him *through faith*, Him whom they had pierced (ch. 12:10). Just as once Thomas after His resurrection (Jn. 21:27), they will be

able to touch Him, for He will be seen by them in His resurrection body. They will establish that what has been said of Him by the prophet: "They have pierced My hands and My feet" (Ps. 22:17). And what will be His response? "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." He had called them *His friends*! Isn't the place the Lord Jesus has taken most admirable? Servant of God-opposing men, and come as Friend in the midst of sinners! How little did the Pharisees and the teachers of the law realize what a deep truth lay in the mocking remark: "He is the Friend of publicans and sinners." All despised Him. He spoke of "My friends." Judas betrayed Him with a kiss. "Friend," the Lord addressed him, "for what purpose art thou come?" A friend is someone for whom one gives up one's life (Jn. 15:13). Could He not call them friends when He came to die for them? That is divine love. But what did He find with them? "He came to His own," for the house of His friends is His own house, "and His own received Him not" (Jn. 1:11). Much worse! They pierced His hands and His feet! We cannot imagine what such a love must have felt when faced with the satanic hatred of man.

### *The Smitten Shepherd*

Yet, how much less can we fathom what He has experienced under the judgment of God! "*Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, even against the Man that is My fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts:* (v. 7). Scene full of horror! God's Shepherd, the only One, who having a right to this title, answered to all the requirements for doing this blessed work, had to endure God's judgment! But had He not entered by the door of the sheep? Had He not fulfilled all that the prophets had spoken of Him, from Bethlehem till John the Baptist? Had not the Lord said of Him: "I set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My Servant David: He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd" (Ezek. 34:23; Ps. 78:70-72)? Had He, only even once during His whole course, denied His character of Good Shepherd who feeds His flock, gathering the lambs with His arm and carrying them in His bosom, while softly leading those who give suck (Isa. 40:11)? And now this Shepherd had to be smitten unto death! (Mt. 26:31; Mk. 14:27). But He who fell under the judgment will suddenly appear in the midst of His own as the "Great Shepherd of the sheep, brought again from among the dead" (Heb. 13:20). See how He will return to feed them, to lead them to the fountains of living water never to leave them again (Isa. 40). How will they then, in a bursting forth of infinite gratitude, feel the depth of such a love. He, who had been smitten by the Lord so that He could bless them, is the Lord's Companion whom He had chosen for Himself, who had walked every moment in perfect communion with Him. When we consider Him as Shepherd, we see the revelation of the heart of Christ, who gave Himself, giving His life for the sheep. But we also see the heart of God, how He has sacrificed for us His own Companion.

"*Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered*" (v. 7). The sword that will smite the right eye and the arm of the foolish shepherd had to smite the true Shepherd, and did not spare Him when God, to redeem us, did judge "sin in the flesh" in Him. He who had come to gather the flock of Israel had to see that His work was as it were brought to naught, and that the flock of slaughter was scattered to the four winds of the heavens.

### *A Rich Fruit*

But let us now listen to this comforting word: "*I will turn My hand upon [or: toward] the little ones*" (v. 7). On the basis of Christ's sacrifice, these poor ones of the flock, whom He had already set apart and fed during His life (ch. 11:7,11), become the objects of His special attention and care. His weak disciples of those days were, as far as their testimony was concerned, linked to the future nation that will fill the earth and enjoy the blessing of the Messiah's reign. For here we do not speak of the Assembly, the heavenly people, of whom the twelve apostles became the nucleus. Most beautiful scene! From Israel's side all hope is gone; the flock of slaughter will meet their fate; the entire work of the smitten Shepherd seems destroyed and can be summarized in the salvation of the few poor ones of the flock. But could God restrict the reward of the Man who is His Companion to this? Impossible! "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee nations for an inheritance, and for Thy possession the ends of the earth" (Ps. 2:8). And as far as Israel is concerned: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in holy splendour: from the womb of the morning shall come to Thee the dew of Thy youth" (Ps. 110:3). Yes, this weak remnant will multiply itself infinitely through the power of God to become the true Israel under the blessings of the Millennium.

To this end the remnant must be purified, as silver is purified. Two parts will be destroyed; a third part, representing the true people of God, will remain (v. 8). This third part will go through the fire of the Great Tribulation, of which the Psalms and the prophets so often speak. Then they will call upon Him out of the depth; He will say: "*It is My people; and they shall say, Jehovah is my God*" (v. 9).

Appearing of the Lord Jesus and His Kingdom — chapter 14

### *A Time Difference*

Before we begin the discussion of this chapter, it is good to point once more the fact that the events in chapters 12-14 will take place on the last day, and not in the last half of the 70th year-week mentioned in Daniel 9:24-27, which is the time of the antichrist and the beast. At best one or two of the facts mentioned here will take place in the last days of this period. This remark serves to give clarity regarding one of the more difficult questions of the prophecy, namely that of the two sieges of Jerusalem according to the beginning of Zechariah 14. When will they take place? What period falls between these two? Zechariah, who was in the habit of presenting two events that are far apart as one continuous event, does not inform us about it. In other prophecies we can, however, see a clear difference. By confusing the last day with the last half week of Daniel I was led to presume that the first siege would fall near the beginning of the mentioned half year-week. I had to give up that idea. The eighth chapter of Daniel contains, it seems to me, an indication that between the end of the last half year-week of Daniel and the destruction of the King of the North (of the Assyrian) there remains sufficient time for the events of the last day. That will be the time falling between the first and the second siege of Jerusalem.

I commend this subject to the sincere study of those who occupy themselves with the details of prophecy.

#### *Attack of the King of the North on Jerusalem*

*"Behold, the day cometh for Jehovah, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. And I will assemble all the nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity; and the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city" (vv. 1-2).*

These verses speak about the first siege of Jerusalem. In "the last day," after the judgment of the antichrist and the beast, Jerusalem will be attacked by the surrounding nations. That attack will take place, although not under the personal command of the Assyrian, yet under his supervision. Jerusalem will be taken, and plundered; half of the inhabitants will go into captivity, but the remainder of the people will not be destroyed. Among those who will be spared will be the weak remnant of which a part, "the two witnesses" (Rev. 11:1-10), will already have been martyred. This is the last trial that will come over the hapless and guilty city.

Later the King of the North, of Assyria, will return with his enormous army out of Egypt and lay siege to the beloved city.

#### *On the Mount of Olives*

After this the events mentioned in our chapter will take place: *"And Jehovah will go forth and fight with those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle" (v. 3).* The words "in the day of battle" refer to what will happen when the Lord with all His hosts will come from heaven to destroy the beast and the false prophet with their armies. After that something else will also take place: *"And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem toward the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west — a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south" (v. 4).* Then it will become reality what the angels said to the disciples who were witness of the Lord's ascension on the mount of Olives: "This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall thus come in the manner in which ye have beheld Him going into heaven" (Acts 1:11). At the same moment that the humiliated Jerusalem will "speak out of the ground, and [its] speech shall come low out of the dust" (Isa. 29:4), the hour of its redemption will strike. The Lord will appear and the mount of Olives shall cleave. "Ye shall flee by the valley of My mountains; for the valley shall reach unto Azal: ye shall even flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah" (v. 5). The appearing of the Lord of hosts will be accompanied by a great earthquake (Isa. 29:6). As in the days of Uzziah, (Amos 1:1) the population will flee through the valley that will result through this exceptional natural phenomenon. I do not believe that this refers to the remnant of Jerusalem; rather, I see in it the flight of the remaining apostate people. It seems to me that the word "ye" indicates this, just as we see this in Malachi 3:5-7. This portion of the people will flee, only to rush into a greater judgment of the Lord. The poor of the flock will remain in sorrowing and humiliated Jerusalem. They are the remnant that will see in the Redeemer the Man who once rose from among the dead to set Himself at the right-hand of the Majesty on high.

#### *The Crown on Christ's Work*

After the prophet has described this event, he added to it: *"And Jehovah my God shall come, and all the holy ones with thee" (v. 5).* All that is revealed in this chapter is as a prelude to this great fact: the Lord, the God of the prophets, will come. The Word of God presents the coming of the Lord to us from various points of view. After His first coming to earth as Man, He will come from heaven as the Morning Star to take His own to Himself. After that He will come from heaven

with His hosts to destroy the beast and the false prophet. Next, His coming on the Mount of Olives, where He will be seen by all His own, to deliver them from the Assyrian. Finally Zechariah 14 mentions His coming in glory with all the saints to establish His kingdom and to lay the foundation of His reign. This will be the moment at which He will set Himself on the throne of His glory and all the nations will be gathered before Him to be rewarded or judged according to His righteous retribution (Mt. 25:31-46).

Zechariah 14 shows that the kingdom will be established after the deliverance of Jerusalem, not at the same moment, but when the glory of the Lord will appear on the Mount of Olives. Then all hindrances that prevented His assuming His reign will have vanished. We already drew attention to the fact that Zechariah linked all future blessings with the fate of Jerusalem, which, with Judah, formed the center from which the prophet viewed the coming events. His prophetic vision agrees with what we read in Psalm 132:13-18: "For Jehovah hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for his dwelling. This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her needy ones with bread; and I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There will I cause the horn of David to bud forth; I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame; but upon himself shall his crown flourish."

### *Once More, a Review*

Having arrived at this point, it is important to look back once more and give a summary of what has been taught us in the prophecy of Zechariah about the person of the Lord, seen from various points of view. In the first chapter He is presented as the Angel of the Lord, who under a still veiled form directs all the events on earth, so as to cause them to facilitate the establishing of His realm, with Jerusalem as center, to the glory of His people. In the third chapter we see Him as the true High Priest, surrounded by those whom He has made His companions. At the same time, He is the basis of all God's counsels, the One upon whom God will build the future temple.

In chapter 4 we find Him as the true King, the Lord of the whole earth, and the head- or keystone, who will appear with shouts of joy and upon whom God's favour will be engraved forever. In the sixth chapter we see that the kingship and priesthood will be united in His person and that He is crowned and seated on His throne.

In chapter 9 it says that He will bring salvation to Jerusalem as King of righteousness and King of peace. In the eleventh chapter He is presented to Israel as its Shepherd, rejected and sold for thirty pieces of silver, but acknowledged by the poor of the flock.

In chapter 12 He is presented as the Messiah who will be seen by them who have pierced Him.

In the thirteenth chapter His entire course here on earth, from cradle to cross, is described. On the basis of His sacrifice He will be able to say to "Lo-Ammi" (not My people): This is My people, and His people will be able to say: The Lord is my God.

Finally we see in the fourteenth chapter that He will appear in person to deliver Jerusalem and to rule as the Lord, the God of Israel, surrounded by all His holy ones.

Isn't this a most beautiful scene, worthy of our admiration? It is the eternal center of all blessings! And yet these are not yet all the qualities of Christ. Read the first chapter of the Gospel of John and in it you will find how His glory multiplies itself infinitely. But also this chapter with its incomparable rich contents does not contain all. Read the Epistle to the Ephesians in which you will find Him as the center of God's counsels, the glorified Head in heaven, whose body, the Assembly, is still on earth, but united with her Head through the Holy Spirit. In the same Epistle you will also find Christ as the Bridegroom who loved His bride and who will set her before Himself holy and without spot in glory.

Let us bow ourselves before Him and sing the new song: "Thou art worthy." Yes, "the Lamb that was slain, is worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing!"

### *Living Waters our of Jerusalem*

On the day in which the Lord will reveal Himself to deliver His beloved city, when He will cause the Mount of Olives to split in two, even other wonderful signs will take place.

*"And it shall come to pass in that day, that there shall not be light; the shining shall be obscured. And it shall be one day which is known to Jehovah, not day, and not night; and it shall come to pass, at eventide it shall be light" (vv. 6-7).*

This day causes us to think of the day on which the Lord hung on the cross and darkness came over the whole land. But here it says that light will shine at eventide, at an hour when normally deep darkness envelopes the earth. "At eventide" will be the moment at which terror and alarm will grip the many nations, because the Lord will punish them, and ere the morning dawns they will no longer be found (see Isa. 17:12-14). At that moment the day will dawn for the beloved city.

*"And it shall come to pass in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the Eastern Sea, and half of them toward the Hinder Sea: in summer and in winter shall it be" (v. 8).*

See here another extraordinary phenomenon, both of a symbolic as well as of a natural character. It seems that in our chapter the geographic changes, which refer mainly to the natural phenomena that will take place after the appearance of the Lord, will accompany the establishment of His reign to increase its beauty.

Here we read that living waters will flow out from Jerusalem, the special subject of Zechariah's prophecy. Ezekiel 47 presents that waters will flow from under the threshold of the house, the sanctuary, and stream toward the East, into the Dead Sea, which they will heal (giving life). Ezekiel did not mention the place to which the second arm of the double river will empty itself. In Zechariah we read in which direction it will flow. The river will flow right through Jerusalem (for from Ezekiel we know that the temple will be separate from the city itself), half of it will go to the easterly sea, the Dead Sea, the other half to the westerly sea, the Mediterranean. In Jerusalem itself "the streams [will] make glad the city of God, the sanctuary of the habitations of the Most High" (Ps. 46:4).

Symbolically these streams speak of the Spirit of God as a life-giving power, making all along its course fertile (Jn. 7:38-39; 4:14). With the same significance Revelation shows us the river of water of life which will flow from the throne of God and the Lamb in the New Jerusalem, which will bring the life-giving and divine blessings to all. In Zechariah, where the symbolical significance is not lacking either, we see that life follows upon the light that has appeared at eventide.

*"And Jehovah shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Jehovah, and His name One" (v. 9).* "In the day" — for the prophet did not so much speak about the *order* of events, as about the various aspects of the last day — the Lord, the God of Israel, the Christ, will be King. But this King will be *He* who in verse 5 is called "My God." He will be King, not just over His people, but over *the whole earth*. The nations will acknowledge Israel's God as "the only God." God is One according to the Jewish revelation (Dt. 6:4; Mk. 12:29,32), One also according to the Christian revelation (1 Tim. 2:5). But the general religion of the future will be linked to the oneness of the God of Israel, revealed as such in the person of Christ.

### *Jerusalem Exalted*

*All the land from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem shall be turned as the Arabah; and Jerusalem shall be lifted up, and shall dwell in her own place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner-gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses" (v. 10).* We find here a fourth phenomenon concluding the series of wondrous events that will occur in the land of Israel. Everyone knows that a deep, low plain through which the Jordan flows stretches from the sea of Genesareth to the Dead Sea. It is the most remarkable low-lying plain known in the whole world. The sea of Genesareth, through which the Jordan flows first, lies 208 meters, and the Salt Sea (or Dead Sea) 394 meters below the level of the Mediterranean. In earlier days this valley was often called Aruba, which means "Plain," as witnessed in the following Scriptures: Deuteronomy 1:7; 3:17; 4:49; Joshua 3:16; 8:14; 11:2; 12:1,3,8; and many others besides. In our time the portion of this valley stretching from the Dead Sea to the easterly arm of the Red Sea (called Acaba) has retained the name Araba, but it has no link to the passage in Zechariah. Geba was a city of Benjamin to the north of Jerusalem, about at the height of Jericho at the Jordan; Rimmon was a city of the tribe of Simeon, lying more southerly to the west of the Dead Sea. It seems therefore that the entire land between Geba and Rimmon will be changed and come to lie on the same elevation as the Aruba, which is to say: the Jordan valley. The result of this extraordinary phenomenon will be that Jerusalem, which "shall dwell in her own place," will be raised before the eyes of all in the midst of the land of Israel. It will rise above the entire country and will be able to be seen from far, this city of the great King! All tribes, all nations, will go up to the mountain of the Lord's house to worship: "But it shall come to pass in the end of days that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and the peoples shall flow unto it. And many nations shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and Jehovah's word from Jerusalem" (Mic. 4:1-2).

*"And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; and Jerusalem shall dwell safely" (v. 11).* After so many curses and threatenings from God's side, after so much adversity, sieges, and pillage, the holy city will be at rest, a peaceful and secure refuge for its inhabitants. At that moment they will be forever delivered from the Assyrian, their eyes will see the King in all His beauty. Then it will be said: "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tent that shall not be removed, the stakes whereof shall never be pulled up, neither shall any of its cords be broken" (Isa. 33:16-20).

### *The Plague of all Nations*

Verses 12-20 speak about the plagues that will befall the nations, be it prior to or after the establishing of Christ's thousand year reign. It is good to remind ourselves that in the last three chapters of Zechariah "the last day" is treated as one whole, and that for this reason one should not seek for a chronological order in it. In verses 12-15 we find a description of the plague that will come over the nations gathered against Jerusalem, when Judah will take part in the battle, as we have seen earlier. Apart from the judgment that will befall them in the battle of which the remnant of Judah will at least in part be the instrument in God's hand, the Lord will smite all the nations who have fought against Jerusalem with a plague. Their flesh will consume, their eyes will sink in their sockets, their tongues will dry up in their mouths. Besides, they will rise up against each other to destroy one another. This we find also in Ezekiel in connection with the destruction of Gog, the King of the North (Ezek. 38:21-22). Even the animals will be slain and their plague will be the same as that of man, who had forgotten God and had no longer a spiritual connection with Him. In the judgment he will be put on the level of the brute beast, to whose level he had lowered himself.

### *Worship of the King by all Nations*

But there will be a remnant out of all the nations who have come up against Jerusalem, just as there will be remnants of Judah, Jerusalem, and Israel. From year to year, they who have been spared will go up to Jerusalem and the temple to bow themselves before the Lord and to celebrate the feast of booths, the feast that follows upon the grain and wine harvest. To Israel it spoke of the joy of a peaceful rest under the booths, in memory of their living in tents in the wilderness (Lev. 23:43). This memory was not combined with any sense of repentance or bitterness for the people, for it said: "Jehovah thy God will bless thee in all thy produce, and in all the work of thy hands, and thou shalt be wholly joyful" (Dt. 16:15). The times of judgment and humiliation will then have passed. For the faithful ones, the Day of Atonement, on which Israel humbled itself (Lev. 16:20,31), will take place during the great mourning of Jerusalem (ch. 12:11). Then they will look upon Him whom they have pierced, and who had once made atonement especially for their sins. After this, that day can never be repeated for God's people, neither can that of Pentecost, for Israel will have received the Holy Spirit once for all. Only the feast of booths will continue to exist together with the Passover, the memorial of the atonement and the finished redemption (Ezek. 45:21,25).

As mentioned before, the nations will share in the feast of booths. But, although a large crowd from among them will be saved (Rev. 7:9-12), they will not be saved as entire nations. They will have to subject themselves to the iron scepter of the Messiah or be dashed in pieces as a potter's vessel (Ps. 2:9). Here we see that they who will not go up to Jerusalem to the feast of booths to bow themselves before the King will be smitten with a plague. The blessing that should have made their land fertile will be kept from them. This will literally take place, just as all the facts mentioned in this chapter. But it is also a picture of the spiritual blessings of which those will be robbed who will not obey the Lord. That will be the punishment for their sin; it is a plague that will differ much from that which will befall the nations who will openly rebel against God and His Anointed.

### *God's Holiness*

The prophet adds to this that in that day every thing in Jerusalem (for he still had Jerusalem in view) will be holy and consecrated to the Lord, so that all pots in Jerusalem and in Judah will be just as fit for boiling the sacrifices as the pots of the house of the Lord (vv. 20-21). *"And in that day there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of Jehovah of hosts"* (v. 21), as had earlier been the case: "Let it suffice you of all your abominations, O house of Israel, in that ye have brought strangers, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary, to profane it, even My house, when ye offered My bread, the fat and the blood; and they have broken My covenant besides all your abominations. And ye have not kept the charge of My holy things, but have set keepers of My charge in My sanctuary for yourselves" (Ezek. 44:6-8).

Let us apply these words to ourselves. Is this not the crime of confessing Christendom in relation to the worship of our God? Do not the uncircumcised (those who do not believe) share in serving in the holy things? How humiliating for the people of God is such a mixing of the holy with the unholy, to allow the uncircumcised and the Canaanite to be in the house of God! What a dishonour to Him of whom it is said: "Holiness becometh Thy house, O Jehovah," for: "Holy is Jehovah our God" (Ps. 93:5; 99:3,5,9).

Let us always keep the holiness of our God in mind! "As He who has called you is holy, be ye also holy in all your conversation" (1 Pet. 1:15). And if we, through the humbling circumstances of the present time, both as far as the Assembly and ourselves is concerned, have to conclude how much we have dishonoured the Lord, let us then raise our eyes onward to this glorious future scene in which all will be holy and consecrated to the Lord, and where He Himself will find His rest in all that is in agreement with His holiness and love!

*The End*

### **The Breaches In The Wall (3)**

**Isaiah 22: 5-14.**

—Hamilton Smith.

#### *Efforts To Heal The Breaches*

Like Israel of old many have fallen into the snare (that looks so commendable and plausible) of endeavouring to heal the breaches by human efforts and human expedients. These efforts have taken two forms. First, an effort has been made to heal the breaches by leaders in different sections of brethren conferring together in the hope of removing difficulties and coming to some understanding. Second, an effort has been made, and is still being made, on the part of more or less gifted individuals to bring about healing by ministering in meetings where they would not or could not break bread.

Both are the worldly methods adopted by the religious world with the hope of removing the scandal of the great religious sects, and of arriving at some form of religious unity. The one by ecclesiastical conferences and the other by exchange of pulpits. Seeing the true character of these methods, as being merely human expedients savouring of the world and its principles, there can be little wonder that both have signally failed. The reason of this failure is fairly obvious. As to the first method — the attempt to stop the breaches by way of conference — it must be clear that if any healing could be accomplished on the ground of a few leading brothers having settled their differences it could hardly be anything but an amalgamation of parties which would set aside the great principles of the Church of God, and leave the consciences of the mass totally unexercised. Moreover, such conferences have been almost wholly occupied with discussing details of doctrines and practices in the past which were believed to be the primary cause of these divisions. The inevitable result has been that each sought to justify his own position. In a word, these conferences were concerned with second causes rather than with the great first causes of division to which we have already referred. Occupied with second causes it is easy to find much that is right, and much that is wrong, on all sides. Occupied with first causes we should have found in our common failure a common ground of confession before the Lord.

As to the second method — certain brothers essaying to minister where they cannot break bread — it may well be advanced that to associate in preaching and ministry with those with whom I cannot identify myself in the breaking of bread in their community is to place the need of man, and the care of saints, on a higher plane than the glory of Christ. If some solemn matter has arisen which prevents my having fellowship with saints in the highest and holiest of Christian privileges, how can I consistently have fellowship with them in service? To ignore the higher claim while endeavouring to carry out the lower is surely putting a slight upon Christ. Moreover, those who act upon this principle are generally, sooner or later, drawn back into the great systems of men from which they formerly separated, under the plea of helping the Lord's people in these systems. They ask, "What harm is there in joining in the work of the Lord with those with whom we cannot break bread?" But it is not long before such reverse their question and, with every show of reason, ask, "Why not break bread with those with whom we work?" The result being that such slip back into the worldly religious systems from which they had nominally separated. They may plead it is a matter of service, and to their own Master they stand and fall. This may be said in all sincerity, but too often we fear, perhaps unconsciously, the Lord's holy name is being used to cover the solemn fact that they are doing what is right in their own eyes. Alas! how many names can be recalled of those who, under the plea of wider service and greater usefulness, have abandoned the path of separation and have been lured back into the great systems of corrupt Christendom, or into a wider and more conscienceless association with representatives of every system, while claiming that they do not belong to any. Such are now building again the things that once they destroyed. They little thought to go the lengths that they have gone, but, starting on an inclined plane they found circumstances too powerful for them. This is because such have confused "testimony" with "fellowship." It is indeed

our privilege to testify the truth to saints and sinners, but if we are to remain faithful to the truth and to the Lord, it must be apart from all fellowship with the systems in which many of the saints may be found; otherwise we shall drop into a form of "independency" and self-will which on the part of some even gifted men, has caused so much distress and confusion among the Lord's people.

Thus we fear that both these efforts to stop the breaches have not only signally failed, but, worse, they have tended to further scatter the Lord's people, have accentuated their differences, and enlarged the very breaches that they desired to stop. Like Israel of old, they have broken down houses to build up breaches. If then all these efforts have failed, it may well be asked

#### *What Are We To Do In The Presence Of Divisions?*

In the first place we must ever remember that if "brethren" so-called had never divided, or if, by some miracle of grace, they were all together again, they would still be but a little remnant; the Church would still be broken and ruined. The mere coming together again of brethren would very well content many, but would it content the Lord? Viewing things from our standpoint our vision becomes contracted, our interests limited, and our affections cramped. Did we but see things from the Lord's standpoint we should feel more deeply the condition of the whole Church, and our part with it in all the evil and confusion that has come into the house of God through our failure in responsibility.

However, just as the remnant in Haggai's day, though forming part of all Israel, were distinguished from their brethren in captivity, and had special messages from the Lord, and were dealt with in a special way by the Lord, so may we not say that those in our day, who have received the light of the Church, and seek to walk according to this light, are in a place of special privilege with special responsibilities, though united with all Christians to form the house of God, and sharing in the ruin of that house?

With this reminder, let us confine our thoughts, for the moment, to the divisions among those called "Brethren." Again we ask, does Scripture give us any light as to what is the right course to pursue in the presence of these divisions? Doubtless many Scriptures contain principles that will guide us, and amongst others may we not say that the passage we have quoted from the prophet Isaiah, has great instruction for us in the presence of our failure, as indeed it had for Israel in the day of their failure?

We have seen that the prophet reproaches Israel in the day of their perplexity with not discerning the hand of the Lord in all their troubles. If the enemy was at the gate, if there were breaches in the walls, they failed to see that it was "by" or "from the Lord." First then, learning by their failure, let us unreservedly own that because of our folly the hand of the Lord is upon us in discipline. In the address to Laodicea, presenting the last phase of the professing Church on earth under the gaze of the Lord, He sees on the one hand the great mass of unreal profession which He is about to spue out of His mouth: on the other hand He sees His own — those whom He loves — and such He chastens. Has not the day come when we either belong to those who are loathed and spued out of His mouth, or to those who are loved and chastened by His hand? Looking beyond all second causes which may instrumentally have brought about division, let us see clearly, and definitely admit, that because of our failure these breaches are "from the Lord." It is not that, by so speaking, we charge the Lord with our sin and failure but behind all these troubles and because of our sin and failure, we see the hand of the Lord. No one would charge the Lord with the sin of stirring up strife among the Lord's people, and yet because of the low condition of the Ezra remnant the Lord says, "I set all men everyone against his neighbour" (Zech. 8: 9,10). Moreover, if we are broken and divided under the chastening of the Lord it behooves us to beware lest we "despise" the chastening of the Lord on the one hand, or "faint" under it on the other. To say, as some do, "Divisions are all wrong and therefore we ignore them, and minister, or even break bread, wherever we can" is to ignore the fact that divisions exist under the chastening of the Lord, in a word, to despise His chastening — an intensely solemn thing. On the other hand to surrender divine principles and abandon the path of separation because of our failure, is to "faint" under the chastening of the Lord. We have been too apt to view division in relation to our brethren and the way they have treated us, or we have treated them, rather than view them in relation to the Lord and the way we have treated Him. We have said, "We are divided because so-and-so did a wrong act or propounded a wrong doctrine," instead of saying, "We are divided because we have failed to give Christ His place as Head in whom is all the fullness of the Godhead, all power and all wisdom for every possible difficulty that could arise in the history of the Church." The Lord has allowed us to discover that it is much easier to divide than to come together again.

Secondly, we have seen that in the day of Israel's trouble and perplexity they made efforts to stop the breaches, and they looked to their armour, but they did not look unto the Lord. Here surely we have another great lesson — not only let us own that all that has come upon us is "from the Lord," but, abandoning our own puny efforts to stop the breaches, let us wholeheartedly turn to the Lord. The point of departure must of necessity be the point of recovery. As we have seen, "Not

holding the Head" was the point of departure, to turn to the Head, as our all-sufficient resource is the way of recovery. It should deeply touch us that the very One we have so deeply wronged — whom we have slighted and grieved — is the only One to whom we can turn in our sin and shame. It is far easier to set to work to repair the breaches than to bow before the Lord in confession of the sin.

*The End*