

Vessels

Readings with G. Davison extracted from "Precious Things" 1956-1990

Vessels of Ministry: Exodus 40: 1-17; Hebrews 9: 21.

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It is clear that the "vessels of the ministry" referred to in the 9th chapter of Hebrews are the vessels we read of in Exodus 40, where we find them assembled in the dwelling-place of God. We might enquire together as to what these vessels were, and the use to which they were put, and seek to see the spiritual answer to them today. Spiritual ability had been given in particular to Bezaleel and Aholiab in order to produce these vessels according to the mind of God; and the moment had come when the vessels, having been formed according to the divine pattern, were put into their respective places by the mediator of the system, Moses, with a view to the service of God being carried on for His pleasure.

We have here a suggestion of something entirely new, "On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the Tabernacle", or the "Tent of Meeting". It seems to be a new beginning of the divine service that was to be rendered to God, and every detail was to be under divine control.

The object of all true service is epitomised at the end of verse 13 in connection with Aaron, "that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office"; and in verse 15 in relation to Aaron's sons, "That they may minister unto Me". There must be an aspect of service manward, but the grand end is that God Himself is served.

In verse 3 we see that before reference is made to the vessels, the *ark* is put into its place.

Is there a spiritual structure in mind in which there are vessels, anti-typically the saints, in which God would secure everything for His own glory, for the blessing of the saints, and for the blessing of the universe? Is all that in view in these vessels?

Perhaps we could keep those three thoughts in mind during this reading; vessels committed to the service of God first for His glory, then for the blessing of His people, and also the eventual blessing of the whole universe.

I suppose we gather from the first few verses here that the order is complete from the divine side. We have the Ark itself, and then these vessels, all connected with the service of God today.

The first vessel mentioned is the "Ark of the Testimony", the name given to the Ark in the book of Exodus. The testimony was in the Ark, the two Tables of the Covenant which are called the two Tables of Testimony. Thus in these verses we see first of all Christ as the One Who maintains every feature of the will and glory of God; then that which the Spirit maintains in the service of God, and finally the foundation of it all in the Altar of Burnt Offering.

"And thou shalt put therein the Ark of the Testimony". Whilst this speaks of Christ personally, it is obviously God's intention that there should be formed in the saints an appreciation of all that Christ is as bringing to us the revelation of God. The Hebrew epistle commences with the thought of God speaking in the Son, and if there is to be any response for the gratification of the heart of God, it must

spring from an appreciation of Christ as the One Who makes Him known. Hence Hebrews 1 leads up to Hebrews 10, "Let us draw near"; we draw near in appreciation of the way in which God has been revealed in the true Ark of the Testimony.

Would the Ark of the Testimony speak of what is seen personally in Christ in relation to the will of God, that which eventually will be seen in display in the universe?

I think it would!

What is the thought in the Ark being covered with the veil?

It suggests that it was kept in the secret of God's own presence where, as you know, Aaron entered but once a year. Would not Hebrews 10 give us some light as to that? It speaks of our approach to God through the veil, "that is to say, His flesh". The glory of God is centred in Christ, but it could only come to light in His incarnation. God has come out in Christ, and we go in to God through Him. These things are not yet in public display.

We need to ever maintain in our thoughts and affections a sense of the outstanding uniqueness of the holiness of the Person of Christ. The incarnation of Christ is not a subject for discussion; we accept He is God, and we accept He is Man; we accept all that Scripture says, and refuse the intrusion of the thoughts of man. It is a subject for worship, not for discussion.

The next vessel is the Table, "And thou shalt bring in the Table". The three vessels in the Holy Place indicate food, light and priestly intercession, and all are seen in function today as in the hands of Christ as the Minister of the Sanctuary. This is the first mention of a Table in Scripture, and it would bring before us the thought of fellowship, a fellowship sustained in the Holy Place. The twelve loaves were placed on this Table, speaking of a company which, by the Spirit, is maintained in nearness to God in a spiritual fellowship based upon the revelation of God in Christ.

We then read "and set in order the things that are to be set in order upon it". There is a divine order connected with this Table.

What is the anti-type to the Table and the order connected with it?

We know from the epistles that if saints are to move together in the enjoyment of this holy fellowship, there are divinely given instructions which have to be observed. The Corinthians had drifted away from divine order, and had to be adjusted in their *practice*; the Galatians had also drifted away, and they needed adjustment in *doctrine*.

In 1 Corinthians 1: 9, we have two remarkable things connected with the fellowship; the fellowship of "His Son", which would carry the thought of all that is involved in Christ as the Ark of the Testimony. Then we read "Jesus Christ our Lord", and it is the acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ which produces order according to God, ruling out the will of man.

There is no instruction given as to setting the Ark *itself* in order, but all else is relative to it, hence the need for all to be set in order.

Is there some connection between the ordering of the Table, and the shining of the Lamp?

Its light is over against Itself. The service of the Holy Place is to go on, and hence the light of the Spirit of God is shed upon it all.

Do you think that, as helped of God, we are justified in refusing anything but this order?

We walk into disorder if we do not! There is light given for every movement in the divine service, and

if we want to move in that service we must move in accord with the light. If we *do* depart from the order that is set before us here, God will not depart from it; He will maintain it. We may be set aside, but God will support those who maintain things in accordance with His will.

Along with the Lampstand are the Lamps. Are not these the vessels through whom the Spirit of God is shining that light today?

They would be the saints of God who are under the headship of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit of God. These are they whom the Spirit can use today to maintain this light in the Holy Place. If we are in the good of the truth of this dispensation, then the light shining from us should be a light far exceeding the dim light of the past dispensation.

We have now to consider the Altar of Gold, or the Altar of Incense. It indicates the priestly intercession that is constantly going on. It was not in the *Court*; it was in the *Holy Place*. Christ is available as Saviour to the cry of any sinner in the whole wide world — we all are a witness to the truth of that — but the Golden Altar speaks of the constant intercession of Christ in the Holy Place. It was "before the Ark of the Testimony"; certainly the Veil was in between the two, but it would seem to be set with its bearing towards the Ark of the Testimony.

Your thought then is that the intercession in regard to our need should move us in our affections toward the Holy of Holies.

I think so! "Before the Ark of the Testimony" seems to indicate that the intercessory service of Christ is in view of sustaining the service of God in the midst of the saints.

In verse 6 we have the Altar of Burnt Offering, which is said to be, "before the door of the Tabernacle of the Tent of the Congregation". the Golden Altar is said to be before the Ark, and we now find this Altar before the door, that is before the entrance. If anyone is to enter that door, or enter through that Veil, it can only be upon the basis of what Christ has accomplished as the true Burnt Offering. It is Christ as wholly devoted to the accomplishment of the will of God. It was impossible for anyone to enter through that door until the claims of that Altar had been met.

Then, as we know, God has connected acceptance with the Burnt Offering, not with the Sin Offering. The greatest of all the Offerings was on the great day of Atonement, but there is that in the Burnt Offering which goes further, in that it brings us into divine favour; not only does it give God a righteous basis on which to bless us, but it brings us into the very place that the Son has Himself.

The Door of the Tabernacle stood to the eastward, when the sun arose it shone upon it.

Very good! It suggests the appearing of the glory.

The next vessel in verse 7 is the Laver. The Altar of Burnt Offering was toward the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, but the Laver appears to have stood between the Tent of the Congregation and the Altar. "And shalt put water therein". If cleansing by blood and acceptance in the Beloved is suggested in the Altar of Burnt Offering, the need of *moral* cleansing before we can enter the presence of God is typified in the Laver.

The reference to the exact place in which each vessel was to be put would remind us again of the necessity of holding the truth in its right order in our minds and in our affections.

If we are to enjoy our place of nearness to God it is vital that we should have an appreciation of what the Laver suggests.

The remarkable thing is that this Laver was related to men who were active in the service of God; they

were not busy with the depraved conditions outside, yet *they* needed this moral cleansing, indeed, they needed it more than anyone else. "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD".

The nearer we are to the service of God, the more we need the moral cleansing of the water.

"And thou shalt take the Anointing Oil, and anoint the Tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the vessels thereof; and it shall be holy". We have all noticed the mention in John's first epistle of the three witnesses — the water, the blood and the Spirit. We need judicial cleansing; we also need moral cleansing, but even so there could be no power in the service apart from the Spirit of God; hence we have the Anointing.

Along with the anointing of the Tabernacle and its vessels, Aaron and his sons are also anointed. In our dispensation it would suggest that the Spirit of God has taken us up *in association with Christ* in view of the service of God.

Has the servant himself to be in moral accord with his service?

That is the whole point!

It is important to see that Aaron was morally clean in himself before his priestly garments were put on; what we are outwardly in our service ought to be a reflection of what we are morally.

Is that what the apostle had in mind when he said to Timothy, "Take heed unto *thyself*, and unto the doctrine"?

Yes! Very good!

The anointing is an empowering. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zechariah 4: 6). So that *divine service* is to be carried on by *divine power*. The Holy Spirit is operating in a realm where the glory of Christ alone is known, and persons are anointed to serve in relation to that anointed sphere.

Vessels of Ministry: Haggai 2: 1-9

We have considered the vessels of ministry set, according to the divine pattern, in the Tabernacle system, so acceptable to God that ultimately the cloud of glory filled the house; God had pleasure in dwelling amongst His people in the sphere which was in accord with His holy mind and will. Now in turning to Haggai we have in mind to see the other side of the truth; not now the house in its original order, but conditions of much weakness, sorrowful proof of the failure of God's people. And yet we see a remnant desirous of answering to God's mind. As they move together in relation to the service of God, we see the way God encouraged them in their desires.

Haggai was raised up of God to stir up the people who had made a good beginning, but had lapsed in their service in the house of the Lord; and as the fruit of the prophetic word of Haggai and of Zechariah, the people resumed their efforts and this prophecy was given to encourage them in the work of restoration. It may be that we too have known what it was to lapse in our service for the Lord; but wherever there is a true desire to take up afresh the work of the Lord we are assured He will give us every encouragement.

When there is breakdown there is no question that the *quality* of the service should be altered, or the standard reduced. We may have to be reduced in numbers, but there is no reason whatever that the *quality* of the service should be reduced. There may be restrictions and limitations, but what is done in those limitations must be according to the Word of God and in the power of the Spirit.

Haggai means "festive", suggesting that the prophet God had raised up at that time would encourage

the people in realizing that they were living in joyous days, if they had faith and energy to respond to God's Word, which came to them as we read "by the prophet Haggai".

It is a very blessed thing that in a day of darkness and departure there is still the Word of Jehovah to His people. If the exercise of these meetings produces vessels morally capacitated to receive a word from the Lord in the broken conditions in which we live, we shall have had a profitable time together.

"Speak now to Zerubbabel" — he was the Governor — "and to Joshua the son of Josedech" — he was the High Priest. It is important to notice that the Governor is addressed first, and then the High Priest. Zerubbabel would represent the *kingdom* aspect of things; Joshua would represent the *House*; not one of us can function aright in relation to the House of God if we are not moving in accord with the principles of the Kingdom of God. If we are subject to the authority of God, we can be sure that the privileges of the House will be enjoyed, and that in conditions in which we can answer to them.

Shealtiel means "Asked of the Lord", and Josedech means "The righteousness of God". So that in a day of brokenness what we have before us is that God will maintain His own standard of righteousness, and He will be enquired of.

Does the "former glory" bear on the thought of the right standard.

Yes! The *former* glory; and then God speaks of the smallness of what was present, but refers also to the "latter glory" which was to come in.

There is only one house?

Yes! That is important to notice. It would be well to point out that the right translation of verse 9 is "The latter glory of *this house* shall be greater than the former". Whatever the prevailing conditions we should be governed by the truth of the House of God; if defection has come in it is due to lack of obedience to the truth, the truth itself is unaltered.

In verse 2 we have, in addition to the Governor and the High Priest, the "residue of the people". What does that convey?

One of the things we discern in reading the epistles is that the gifts are still in the Assembly today. We might have thought that in Haggai's day there would be no Governor or Priest left, but they were still there. And today we can thank God that there are men who take the lead amongst the saints, and as found amongst the "residue" who appreciate such a lead we can enter into the present joy of the things of God, and be found responsive to Him.

Would you think that those responsible for the lead might answer to the angel of the Assembly in the addresses to the churches in Revelation, and the "residue" or remnant be suggestive of the overcomers?

That is very good! Once we disregard what the Lord has established by way of lead amongst His people, we shall be losers, and may soon be marked by disintegration.

Lead amongst the saints of God consists in the communicating of the Word of the Lord by those who are themselves governed by it in a practical way. It involves the living expression of the Truth.

We could not have a better demonstration of that than Haggai 1: 13, "Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message".

Do we need, in a moral sense, to see the former glory of the house?

We see it in the opening chapters of the Acts and we should allow the truth of what is seen there, before the ruin came in, to govern us in our day. That is why we considered Exodus 40 first.

"Is it not as nothing in your eyes?" is the solemn question asked in reference to the former glory of the house. We might challenge ourselves as to what we really think of that which was set up in the power of the Spirit in the beginning of the Acts; is it nothing to us? Or is it something that has a dynamic effect upon our lives, something which has been manifested here in the power of the Spirit in which the interests of Christ are enshrined? That is where our interests should be today.

The first word of encouragement given to them is, "Be strong" (verse 4). When things appear to be "as nothing" — be strong because, thank God, that which is outwardly small and weak has, in the Spirit, the power of God Himself.

On the divine side things today are as filled with joy and power as they were in Acts 2. There has been no diminishing on the divine side, a divine Person is in charge, and if the Spirit of God is still in charge then morally things must be just as great as they ever were.

If we view it rightly, the distress of the old men and the rejoicing of the young men were both right according to their particular outlook.

Why does Haggai, in speaking the Word of the Lord, repeat this word "Be strong" to Zerubbabel, to the High Priest and to the people in the land?

He looks at them as in the exercise together. One was not to be more strong than another. The thrice repeated word, "Be strong", would really put them in fellowship, especially as he adds the exhortation "and work; for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts".

Is that the way in which the house would be rebuilt?

They had resumed the building, but were looking at it and might have paused and said, "Is this worthwhile?". When we find ourselves in very small meetings we may be inclined to say, "I wonder if the thing is worth going on with". If we think like that we shall be marked by defeatism, but if I am able to say "The *Lord* has put me here, this is my place, divine resources are available, and with the help of God I desire to go on", then I shall know the blessedness of the exhortation "be strong".

Having completed, so to speak, those exhortations he then proceeds to add the most definite encouragement. Sometimes we miss out the gem of these encouragements; we quote "The word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remaineth among you", but we perhaps overlook that He says first, "I am with you". What encouragement there is in that! He is with us.

"I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts", but He is with them now on precisely the same conditions as He was at the beginning. God does not change, nor does His work change; God had spoken to them in covenant when He brought them out of Egypt, and His word abides. The word that governed them originally has to govern them still.

Does this mean then that the word which governed the Assembly at the outset has to govern the Assembly now?

There is nothing else! If we do not act according to that word, where are we going to find other instructions? It is all we have, and it is all we need.

Anything not in the Word that was covenanted is a spurious matter, and carries no weight. All the innovations that man brings in to help, as he thinks, the service of God are but a hindrance. It is tantamount to saying that what God has covenanted for the maintenance of His testimony is not sufficient, and we must add something to it. It is a very serious matter.

We have first the word of the Lord which is unalterable, "The word that I covenanted with you when ye

came out of Egypt", and allied to that we have "My Spirit remaineth among you".

The Word of God is available to us today and if there is a desire to walk as subject to that Word, then in the Spirit we have the necessary power to do so.

If we know what it is to have the living Word of God in our hearts, then we shall experience the power of the Spirit; the Holy Spirit will never attach Himself to man's word, He will always support what is of God amongst the saints.

Another rather interesting matter is seen in verse 6, particularly applicable in the day in which Haggai prophesied, but of equal importance today. "For thus saith the Lord of Hosts" — a sentence appearing many times in this book — "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land". The people had been subjected to the decrees of one who had seized the kingdom by subtlety, pretending to be the rightful king; but in relation to these external conditions the Lord of Hosts makes known that He is in full control of them all.

God would assure us that every adverse power in the heavens, the earth, the sea or the land will one day be shaken, for He has them all under control.

If the moral power of that holds us it will set us completely free of a system which God will entirely overthrow, and we shall not be interested in man's schemes to put the world right. In verse 7 we read "I will shake all nations and the desire of all nations shall come". It might read "the desirable Object of all nations shall come". We know the blessedness of this now, for we know the glorious Person who will reign in all His splendour in the world-to-come.

The verse goes on to say, "and I will fill this house with glory". We could not say exactly that the nations are looking for Christ to come and fill the scene with God's glory, they are looking for the thing itself in an abstract way; but thank God we have the knowledge that God will establish it all in relation to Christ.

Was it not very gracious of God to say "and I will fill this house with glory"? It was a small thing in the eyes of men, but God says, "I will fill this house with glory". We have to own the smallness of things today, just a few brethren meeting together; but as seeking to make room for Christ in our midst, what blessing is possible! Thus the exercise was to *bring wood*; "wood" in Scripture speaks of manhood, and it is a blessed occupation to bring in amongst the saints of God the features of Christ.

That "wood" would stand in contrast to the silver and gold of verse 8, "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts". Why did He not give it to them? He could have given to them all the gold of Solomon again if He had so desired. Why are we not restored to where the brethren were a hundred years ago? It is not God's present thought. If the power of those days is not seen now, it is not because God could not bring it in, He could at any moment; but if God wants us to go on with what is outwardly small, be assured He will support us, and we shall discover the preciousness of the present position as making room for Christ.

It is good to think that a few faithful hearts, with everything against them, would nevertheless build a House for God; Solomon had an abundance of material in his day, but the probability is that there was more pleasure for God in the devotion of these few faithful hearts than in the days of Solomon's temple.

Would you suggest that we today, in all our weakness, can hold to divine principles, and can come together as having the Lord before us, and with our hearts truly stirred?

It is that which is real and true which God values, rather than that which is outwardly great.

Lastly, we read in verse 9 "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of Hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of Hosts" (New Trans.). Peace can be brought in on a righteous basis only, and in accordance with the mind of God. From this verse we see that all will be to His glory, and in absolute accord with His holy mind, and hence peace will characterize the whole scene.

Vessels of Mercy: Isaiah 6: 1-8; Romans 9: 23.

In the present reading we have before us the thought of "Vessels of Mercy", and with a desire to learn how God can produce these vessels we have turned to the prophet Isaiah, where, in seeing God's dealings with the prophet we shall see certain divine principles that mark God's dealings with us who find ourselves today, through the goodness of God, "Vessels of Mercy fitted for glory".

The prophet Isaiah, whose name means "the salvation of Jah", in the Scripture we have read is being prepared for service in righteousness and in holiness in a typical way, showing that if one is to be usable, prophet though he may be, he must pass through this process of judicial cleansing ere being fitted to take up the service of God.

Would it not help each one of us, as taking up any service for God, to have a deep sense of what Paul could say, "the Lord had mercy on *me*"? Paul never forgot that he was a subject of the mercy of God.

Would you say that Isaiah's prophecy brings in the thought of mercy?

It was bound to, as leading on to the truth of the salvation of Jehovah. The only ground upon which God brings in salvation is that of mercy, "Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2: 9).

There is something very blessed in the fact that before the display of mercy seen in verse 7, we have the threefold exclamation as to the holiness of God. Mercy is dispensed on a solid basis since the holiness of God has been fully maintained. The cross is the witness that the holiness of God has been upheld, and it is through the work of Calvary that mercy can be dispensed.

The Seraphim are the witnesses of the holiness of God, whereas the Cherubim speak of His righteous claims. Both have been met in the work of Christ, and God is free to move in sovereign mercy. The first time the Cherubim are mentioned is in the Garden of Eden, and as far as I know they are not seen again until the setting up of the Tabernacle. The Seraphim are mentioned here only. In Revelation 4 both Cherubic and Seraphic features appear to be combined in the Living Creatures.

Why do you think the Seraphim come in here when what is in view is the moving of a *man* into the service of God?

As already mentioned the Seraphim have to do with the maintaining of the holy claims of God, and if a man is to serve God not only is he to be marked by righteousness, but he must also function in that service in accord with the *holiness* of God.

We may sometimes be in danger of losing a real sense of the holiness of God. It is easy to slip into the use of irreverent phrases, and perhaps to adopt irreverent attitudes. We need to feel more the holiness of the presence of God. A real sense of the holiness of God is a very salutary matter for every one of us.

Something of the majesty and of the mystery of divine dealings is seen in the movements of the Seraphim. There is that which even they do not understand, and as being in the very presence of divine glory, they themselves needed a covering. There is a contrast to be noticed in the dispensation in which we are living. We read in verse 2, "Each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face". Now in 1 Timothy 3: 16 we read, "God was manifest in the flesh . . . *seen of angels*"; suggesting that the wings are

now off their faces. "With twain he covered his feet". The purpose of God was unknown to them; they were swift to carry out His will, but they knew nothing of His purpose. In this dispensation they now see the demonstration of the ways of God, and His all-variegated wisdom as coming to light in the Assembly. The wings are off *their feet*. "With twain he did fly". In Hebrews 12: 22 we read of "myriads of angels, the universal gathering" (New Trans.); but the world-to-come is subject to a blessed Man and no longer to angels, and as looking on to the world-to-come their wings for flying are no longer needed. These are but suggestive thoughts.

Is there a moral challenge in the conversation of the Seraphim? If these mighty creatures, who have never been the subjects of mercy, converse one with another as to the holiness and the glory of God, how well it becomes us who *are* the Vessels of Mercy to be engaged in *our* conversation with such matters!

Would not the heart be the governing factor in these thins?

It certainly ought to be! But we need intelligence together with affection. Certainly our affections ought to be in accord with the holiness of God, but we need also to be divinely instructed as to these things. If we are so instructed, and in heart are set to answer that instruction, all will be well.

In verse 4 we read, "The foundations of the thresholds shook . . . and the house was filled with smoke" (New Trans.). The other reference to smoke filling the temple is in the 15th chapter of Revelation, where the righteous and holy claims of God are about to be vindicated, and the seven angels are seen with the seven last plagues. No approach to God at that moment could be made, for He was acting in a judicial character. It is, therefore, a striking thing that as smoke filled the house, that is, God seen in a judicial character because of His holiness, it had the right effect upon Isaiah. There should always be with us a sense of reverential awe as we come into the presence of God, but here it seems to be the sense of his own sinful state as in the presence of the majesty of God.

I was thinking, by way of contrast, of Sinai. There was a sense of awe there, but it is difficult to say whether they got as far as Isaiah did here.

It is proper that the sense of holy awe in the presence of God should continue with us.

"Jehovah is in His holy Temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him!" (Habakkuk 2: 20 New Trans.).

That is the reverential attitude that should mark every creature.

If God was about to dispense mercy, why is this judicial matter of the shaking and the smoke brought in? We read in Romans 2: 4, "The *goodness* of God leadeth thee to repentance."

One comforting thought derived from that is, that when God moved toward us in mercy in order to bless us, He did it without surrendering one iota of His holy claims. Had God lowered His standard in order to bless us we might well have felt insecure, for Satan would quickly have found that loophole.

Holiness is connected with the nature of God. It has been said that an appreciation of righteousness would *hinder* me from doing wrong, whereas holiness would give me the *desire* not to do it.

There is a very close link between the thought of holiness and the thought of love, both relate to the nature of God.

In Psalm 24 we read, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in His holy place?" The stipulation is that he must have "clean hands" — that infers righteousness; and "a pure heart" — which indicates holiness. The pure heart governs the movements of the clean hands.

So that when God says in His Word, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" He is speaking to our hearts.

The effect of the vision upon Isaiah is that he says, "Woe is me! for I am undone", or it might read "I am put to silence". "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips". But what has brought about this confession? "For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts".

Why are the lips mentioned specifically?

That was the very part of the vessel God had it in mind to use, "Go, and tell this people"; he was to use his lips, and hence they must be cleansed.

What is the meaning of this mediatorial action of the Seraphim?

If the Seraph in verse 6 was one of the Seraphim who cried "Holy, holy, holy", it is obvious that the feature of holiness must have been maintained in the cleansing of the prophet.

Why did he use the tongs to take the glowing coal from off the altar, and then apparently carried it in his hand?

These tongs were connected with the lampstand, it is the only place in which we find them. It would appear that the Seraph took the tongs from the lampstand, flew out with them to take that live coal, and then with his hand touched the lips of the prophet. Doubtless it was to bring him into line with the light that was shining in the Temple. Thus his prophesying would be in accord with the mind of God.

Is there any connection between the live coal and the smoke?

No! They do not appear to be connected. The glowing coal was outside, but the smoke was inside. We may just add a point here which may be helpful in the study of the types. Whenever the Golden Altar is in view, it is always so called, but when we have just the word "altar" it always refers to the *Brazen Altar*. There is a statement in Leviticus 16 — "The altar before the Lord" — and there is some question as to whether that is the Golden Altar or not, but when we have the term "altar" merely, it is always the *Brazen Altar*.

It was remarked that this experience was necessary to qualify the vessel for the service of God. No man who goes through an experience like the one through which Isaiah passed would ever again have high thoughts of himself.

What would characterize the speech of a man whose lips had been touched with a glowing coal? What kind of conversation, what kind of ministry would mark such a vessel, a man whose lips had been brought into line with what the altar would speak of?

In Galatians 2: 20 Paul, one of the greatest servants of the Lord said, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me".

How well the prophet used those lips! amongst other features of his ministry, he gave us that wonderful 53rd chapter, which speaks so wondrously of Christ Himself.

Who has the first claim over our lips?

The One Who died on the altar in order that they might be cleansed!

The word "purged" in verse 7 is the word used for atonement or covering, "Thy sin is covered".

I was thinking of that verse, the "fruit of your lips, giving thanks to His Name".

Then we read in verse 8, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord" (the word there is Adonai, not Jehovah of

Hosts), "saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? then said I, Here am I; send me". Mr. Darby points out that the emphasis is on the "send" not on the "me".

Why do you remind us that this is Adonai and not Jehovah?

Jehovah is the covenant name of God in His relationship with His people, but we understand the name Adonai is, "The Lord in blessing".

Does that mean that a service commissioned by Him carries blessing with it?

That is the point; as a matter of fact in almost every case in the prophecies of Isaiah, and of Jeremiah, where we get the term "Lord God" it is not Jehovah Elohim" but "Adonai Jehovah". These very prophets who are announcing the sins of the people show that the God from whom they receive their commission is yet ready to bless His people. A most remarkable matter in view of the message that Isaiah was to deliver to them.

One further word; before Jehovah says to him "Go and tell", Isaiah says "Here am I; send me". Does this show his willingness for the service?

Surely! He had been cleansed for it — the doctrine of which we see in the early chapters of Romans up to Romans 8; then Romans 12 raises the question of response.

Does John touch an important point in Isaiah's history when he says "These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him" (John 12: 41)?

That is important. "For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts". That is divine illumination, a most necessary equipment for the service of God.

Chosen Vessels: Jeremiah 1: 1-10, 17-19; Acts 9: 15.

From the verse read in Acts it will be seen that our subject for this reading is a "Chosen Vessel", and in the call and preparation of Jeremiah we see how the Lord deals with His servants in sovereign selection. The name Jeremiah suggests that which is established by God, and it was in the midst of a very broken state of things in Israel that this chosen vessel was raised up of God. He had probably one of the most difficult ministries ever committed to a servant of the Lord, and probably shed more tears than any other prophet.

In choosing this vessel God began a long way back, exactly as He did with Saul of Tarsus, as we see in Galatians 1. The choice of God in relation to His servants is not haphazard, nor is it determined by existing circumstances; the circumstances in which Jeremiah and Paul ministered occurred long after God had chosen them, but He chose them for those circumstances.

Jeremiah was actually chosen before his conception; which clearly shows the great importance of the sovereignty of God apart from every human agency. Not only are we Vessels of Mercy, but before we were the recipients of that mercy, and before we understood anything about it, God had His eye upon us in view of His service.

We cannot doubt that the circumstances surrounding our birth, and our growing up in those circumstances, have been ordained of God in view of the service into which He would call us, just as He did with Jeremiah.

This matter of the chosen vessel seems to have been of singular importance in the closing days of a dispensation; although attention has been drawn to Paul it comes to light also in Timothy in whom the lineage of faith is well traced. What will enable us to go on in face of opposition, similar to that which Jeremiah himself faced, is the sense that we have been chosen of God.

Why does the Holy Spirit tell us here that the words of Jeremiah continued "unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive"?

On the one hand it would show the refusal by the nation of the testimony that he bore, but on the other hand that he did not give up his testimony, he kept right on to the end. It was the Word of the Lord that was to continue, not so much Jeremiah personally, but what Jeremiah had committed to him — the Word of the Lord. The Lord could do very well without any one of us, but He pleases not to do without us, and if He entrusts us with His Word we should seek help to go on in spite of the captive condition of the testimony today.

Now we have Jeremiah's call in verse 4, where it says, "The Word of the Lord came unto me". There comes a time with every one of us when we have to move from the general to the particular, as having an appreciation of one's individual history with God Himself. Thus these things are to be *answered to*.

It would be an amazing thing to Jeremiah to know that God had him in mind before he was born; but what an encouragement it would also be to him!

What an encouragement too for us today, in the midst of present difficulties, to realize that before we were found in this world we were Chosen Vessels. It would encourage us to go on in spite of the weakness of the position. Whatever the day and the external circumstances may be, God is still calling and still fitting whom He will in order that His testimony might go on.

It is important to realize, in the secret of one's soul, that God has a communication for each one according to the service that He has in mind, and each of us must have to do with Him in particular if we are to be formed for that service.

That principle is seen in connection with Joshua before he went into the land, when he said, "What saith my Lord unto *His* servant?" (Joshua 5: 14).

It is important, too, to see that Jeremiah was known by God before he was appointed; God says, "I knew thee".

Jeremiah did not know that at first, but God knew it before he was born, and there came a moment when the Lord made it known to him.

It would perhaps be well for us to consider now what his ministry had in view potentially. We might take up verses 4, 5 and 6 in relation to *his call*; verses 7 and 8 in reference to *his commission*; and verse 9 in regard to *his consecration*. Then in verse 10 we see the *result of his service*. There must first of all be the clear apprehension of the call; not one of us can take up divine service unless we are absolutely sure God has called us to it. It can be embarrassing at times when brethren say, "I thought you would have been the very man to do that", when conscious that one is not the man to do that. There is considerable danger in thinking servants of the Lord can do everything. It would be well for each of us "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12: 3). If I think soberly in relation to God and to the call that He has given to me, I shall not be trying to do things for which I have no ability.

In that connection will you say a little regarding the word to Timothy, "Do the work of an evangelist"?

Well, I hope there is not one of us that is not prepared, if the opportunity arises, to do the work of an evangelist; but if we begin to think from that that we are evangelists, we might do a lot of harm.

It has sometimes been said that God can use any brother to give a prophetic word. He may use me to give such a word, but if from that there is the assumption of being a prophet, the next time I give a

word the saints may think it would have been well if I had held my tongue. Do not let us fall into the danger of transferring these things; a brother may have the gift of an evangelist, if so that is his work; but he should not think that that constitutes him a prophet. It is good to be kept in right balance.

When Jeremiah said "I cannot speak; for I am a child", was it humility or was it lack of faith?

I think it was humility!

The point is, that while the call had come to him, there may have been a moment similar to that in the history of Moses when he said "I am slow of speech". It may be with every one of us that when the call to service first reached us we felt immediately how far short we were of filling it out. But we do well to ponder the reply of the Lord to Moses, "Who hath made man's mouth?"

If I am conscious that God has called me, can I not be sure that He will commission me to that call?

Yes! And whatever we may realize as to the call, let us wait for the commissioning and above all, as we shall see, wait for the consecration too.

"Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold I cannot speak; for I am a child". That is the right attitude in which to respond to God's call, a sense of absolute inadequacy to answer to it in oneself. "But the Lord said to me, Say not, I am a child; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak". There is nothing more to be dreaded in the divine sphere than *self-confidence*. These are very testing matters. Some of us may have been ministering the word for many years, but if we rely upon our past service or our own ability, there is bound to be failure.

In the commission, where he was to go and all that he was to say was indicated by God, all was to be under divine direction.

Does this apply in the same measure to all of us? The servants we have mentioned were outstanding men with outstanding commissions and a particular work to do. How far does it apply to the everyday saint?

Divine principles never alter, and whilst we speak of these servants as being outstanding because of the public character of their service yet every service for God is outstanding even though much of it may be unseen by men. Men like the apostle Paul are not exactly duplicated; they had their own particular place, but the features which marked them must, in a lesser measure, mark us today. Whatever the service is, whether small or great, we are to be as fully commissioned by the Lord for the service He gives us as Jeremiah was.

Is there a little word of encouragement here in that he was a prophet to all nations? Looking at Jeremiah's circumstances, he seemed to be linked to a sinking ship, the nation was just at the point of being carried away captive, but evidently his links were not limited to Israel but the "nations" were in view. Is there not a certain amount of parallel with our own day? If we are but near enough to God there will certainly be an open door, and we need not be contracted in our horizon. The thought of all nations might have been a cheer to Jeremiah, and I think it could be a cheer to us as well.

There is that! Jeremiah, of course, had a distinctive service involving all nations; but from the verses before us we see how God prepares His chosen vessels.

Would there be a link with Acts 1: 8 where we read, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"? That would involve the thought of all nations, would it not?

It is good to see that in the commission not only is the servant under the hand of God but all the opposition too. God's hand is not only upon those who serve Him, but also upon every one who opposes. How plainly this is seen in the last few verses of Jeremiah 1.

Zedekiah is an outstanding example of that. He refused "the words of the LORD" (Jeremiah 36: 2). His two sons were slain before his eyes; his own eyes were put out, and he was carried away to Babylon. His name means, "The justice of Jehovah", and the justice of Jehovah fell upon him because he refused the word spoken by the prophet. It is an encouragement to us to see that if there is opposition to the truth, although we may not be able to deal with it, God can; He can hold the opposition in abeyance, and what is not held in abeyance He destroys.

Both Isaiah and Jeremiah were touched on the mouth; is there a moral link in the two incidents?

Isaiah's lips were cleansed, Jeremiah's were opened. The touch that Isaiah had was one of cleansing, whereas the touch that Jeremiah received was one of power, as verse 10 would indicate. The positive words of Jehovah were put into the mouth of Jeremiah; He definitely put His own words there. That is important. We might get help from a concordance; we might get help from written ministry, but that is not necessarily the Word of God put into one's mouth. We each need, as servants, to have a fresh word put into our mouth; it would thus be a *prophetic word*.

The touch of the Seraphim brought Isaiah into accord with the holiness of God, and linking again the two incidents we see how God can use a vessel like that and put His words into his mouth.

The point in mind is that this man was a prophet, and was to speak on behalf of God; that is why we venture to call verse 9 his consecration. Consecration means the "filling of the hands"; in other words it is divine equipment to carry on the service of God, and we each need to be so equipped. "Then the LORD put forth His hand, and touched my mouth"; but He touched his mouth with this objective in view, "And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put *My words* in thy mouth".

It is marvellous grace on the part of God that He should put His words into our mouths; but it is also a challenging matter. Peter refers to men speaking as "oracles of God"; and Isaiah says, "My word shall not return unto Me void". It does not say *our word*; it is God's own Word. We may be assured that if God has put *His Word* into our lips, and *His Word* is spoken, there will be results for His glory and for the blessing of the saints, for God has said it "shall *not* return unto Me void".

This would encourage us to read the Scriptures more so that we might get the Word of the Lord.

That is where the equipment lies no doubt, but one may have a good knowledge of the Scriptures and yet not have a specific word from the Lord. We have experienced that in meetings, and we do well when we bow to it and accept it. To speak for the sake of speaking can bring in a destructive element amongst the saints of God, and it is well when those features do not obtain. Waiting until one is conscious of a definite word from the Lord will result in an atmosphere of power and blessing.

It is apparent from verse 10 that the word of the Lord in Jeremiah's mouth was to have a twofold effect, "to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant". A merely destructive ministry we need to avoid. In his letter to the Galatian saints Paul spoke scathingly of Judaism — he was on the line of pulling down; but it was in view of building them up in the liberty of Christianity.

Even Peter came under the force of that. Paul said he withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed, but there must have been the feature, too, of building up because Peter said of Paul that he was a "beloved brother".

Would you say that the words of a prophet who had received his words from the Lord would be easy to understand?

That is not an easy question to answer! Much depends upon the state of those listening, as well as upon the word given. It is, of course, useless to get up and say a lot of things which no one can understand, but if the word is from the Lord then the Scripture in 1 Corinthians 2 would apply. There is a spiritual capacity formed in each one of us, and if that spiritual capacity is allowed to function, then spiritual things communicated by spiritual means would find a response.

Paul's instruction to Timothy is important. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed".

We see something of that here. If Jeremiah had sought popularity with men, he would not have gone on with a service which was completely opposed to the movements of the nation. Had he not desired "to show himself approved unto God" he would have given it up.

There was a way in which he could have been confounded before the people, and the way to avoid that was simply to "speak unto them all that I command thee". If our own thoughts are introduced into ministry, we must not be surprised at failure but if, in the power of the Spirit, God's own word is ministered He will stand by His own word.

When the Lord sent two disciples to bring the colt, they were to say certain things. When questioned they said exactly those words, neither adding nor subtracting, and the service was successfully completed.

If we underestimate the opposition, failure will result; but God is ready to strengthen His servant in furnishing him with the very words he should speak.

In verse 17 Jeremiah is told "Gird up thy loins". He had been fully commissioned, fully consecrated and furnished with the words of the Lord. Now, thus equipped his work was to commence.

In verse 5 we read that before he was born he was appointed to be a prophet; that was divine selection. Now in verse 18 we have the divine confirmation, "Behold, I appoint thee this day" (New Trans.). He was not only to know God's mind for him, but to have the power to fulfil his appointment.

What is the significance of the city, the iron pillar and the brazen walls?

They speak perhaps of the hardest things to be overcome. Iron is the strongest of all metals; brass is used in Scripture to denote divine righteousness. The prophet was called in relation to the preservation of the things of God in that city. The city speaks of administration, and we need to be strong in relation to administration; the pillar speaks of support, we need to be strong in support of all the interests of God. The walls speak of the exclusion of all that is contrary to the mind of God and the enclosing of all that is precious to Him. We need in ministry to be marked by strength in all these things.

In the last verse Jeremiah was warned, "They shall fight against thee". We may not be afraid of the difficulties that come across our paths, what we may be afraid of is our reaction to them.

In regard to our reactions, if we were established in the truth of what has come before us in this chapter, should we not be helped? How vitally necessary it is to have the certainty of our call, our commission and consecration. If there is deficiency in any one of these things we may very well weaken in our reaction to temptation and difficulty.

Earthen Vessels: Ezekiel 1: 1-14; 2 Timothy 2: 21.

In the beginning of this book Ezekiel is seen in a very difficult situation among captives, captives of

war, by the river Chebar; as to circumstances in the very worst place possible, and yet having this wonderful vision of the glory of God. All was in view of the prophetic word reaching these captives who had lost their right to the possession of the land because of their rebellion. In many ways the position in which Ezekiel was found is similar to that of John on Patmos in the book of the Revelation, hence the similarity between the two books; but whilst Ezekiel is seen under a Gentile power and in captivity as one of the people of God, yet the heavens were opened upon him.

The heavens being opened here would be in order that the prophet might get a vision of the glory of God. As an earthen vessel in all its weakness, Ezekiel must of necessity be strengthened by what he is shown. Hence the reason for the heavens being opened is given, "and I saw visions of God". They were opened so that a man on earth might see what was established in heaven.

Isaiah saw his vision in the temple; is there anything for us to learn in the place where Ezekiel saw his vision? It was not in Jerusalem nor in the land.

In Isaiah's day Jehovah was still connected with the people in the land, but in the book before us they had been publicly abandoned by Jehovah and were under the heel of a Gentile monarch.

Is there any significance in the fact that this vision was by the river Chebar?

That would perhaps connect with what John said of himself, "I John . . . was in the isle that is called Patmos". It refers to what we often speak of as "local conditions". Being by the river Chebar he was no longer in the land of Palestine; he was not by the river Jordan; he was by this Babylonish river amongst the captives. The position is mentioned several times in the book.

Do you think the dates here are significant?

There is a good deal of contention about these dates, but we are not so much occupied with the date of the prophecy as with the moral formation of the prophet himself as a vessel.

I was thinking of our own day; we have the light of the revival of the past century, but we are also found in present conditions of great weakness; if we can hold these two things in right balance, we shall perhaps get more benefit from this chapter.

We read in Proverbs 29: 18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish", and here where the people are in weakness we have visions of God brought into evidence. No help could be expected from the conditions obtaining amongst the people; the prophet was entirely dependent upon "visions of God".

We must remember that while God in His governmental dealings had allowed His people to go into captivity in Babylon, He still had universal supremacy.

Is that why Ezekiel was strengthened by seeing the throne?

We see that God attaches His Name and His power to that which is true to Him. Whatever else there may be God does not attach His Name to it at all.

It is evident from this chapter that whilst things were in a deplorable condition, yet everything on earth was being controlled by heaven. The remarkable chapter gives us a vision of "the appearance of a man" in heaven, which is strictly a New Testament matter; and in relation to that "appearance of a man" all the conditions on earth, deplorable as they are, are seen to be under the control of God.

Is not that the vision we have today? A vision of Christ in glory?

Each Person of the Godhead is mentioned in this chapter; first the Spirit, then the Almighty, and lastly a Man; showing the governmental dealings of God amongst the nations and with His people. Today we

have been apprehended by something higher which is connected with the glory of a risen Christ, but God is still the Sovereign Ruler in the universe, and hence the value of our attention being called to the book of Revelation. We know that the major part of that book has to do with the nations on earth, but the *whole* book is written to the seven assemblies; and whilst we are not to be occupied with the politics of the world, God would assure us that He has everything under control with a view to sustaining the testimony until the day of display. The tendency with us is to pick up the newspaper and to find that this thing has collapsed, and the other thing has collapsed, and we are in danger of thinking that things are in the hands of men, whereas they are as much in the hands of God today as they have ever been. Let us thank God fervently that He has all in control, but do not let us get over-occupied with the conditions themselves.

In the midst of the chaotic conditions prevailing both in the professing church and in the nations of the world, we have the light of what God is doing for His own glory, and hence we can go on, strengthened with such a vision.

We have four things here — an open heaven, a vision of God, the Word of the Lord, and the hand of the Lord. All are available to this vessel in order to strengthen him in view of the testimony. The opened heavens would attract his attention and it is certain that God would have our attention centred upon heaven, and not upon the conditions around us. Anyone seeking to serve the Lord, and keeping his eye upon conditions on earth rather than having his eye fixed upon heaven, will very soon be in difficulties.

It is a principle from the very beginning that "the heavens do rule" (Dan. 4: 26). We cannot shape our course according to events upon earth, but must be controlled by events in heaven, and it is certain that God desires to attract our attention to the vision of an "opened heaven".

It is a principle of very wide application that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. God could say of Abraham, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Again, the young man who came to Elisha said to him., "Alas, my master! how shall we do?". Elisha, being in touch with heaven, could ask, "Lord . . . open his eyes, that he may see". His eyes were opened to see "the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire", the evidence that heaven was in control. There is nothing more calculated to strengthen our faith than "visions of God".

As a priest it must have been a very testing thing for Ezekiel to see the holy things of the service of God carried into captivity, but when looking through those opened heavens his faith would be renewed by the "visions of God". Then, too, we read "The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest". That would be preparation for his mind in view of what was to be communicated to him; and then in verse 3, "the hand of the Lord was there upon him". That would be for the encouragement of his heart. So that being encouraged and strengthened in faith, in mind and in heart, he was a vessel formed for the service which lay before him.

We are in the same circumstances in some measure; we have seen that which answers to the vessels of the sanctuary being carried into captivity; what Babylon speaks of has made havoc of the church in responsibility. This is seen right through the book of the Revelation until the false system is finally judged.

How blessed it is that there have been those who have been brought into the light, and have received "visions of God" which have sustained them in spite of every opposition and every break up. When we read church history and think of the saints of God in Spain during the Spanish inquisition and in similar difficult times, we hardly know what such days were like as compared with our present conditions, yet God maintained the vision right down. He may have enlarged it through men like J.N.D. and others, but

He has maintained it *right through*.

In Ezekiel 40, when carried by the hand of the Lord to "a very high mountain", the word to him was, "Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee". This is what God has in mind in the vision, that Ezekiel might be enabled to "declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel".

Why does God call Ezekiel "Son of man" so many times? Does that connect with the thought of the earthen vessel?

Perhaps it does in one way! On the other hand his link with the Gentile nation may be in view. The title "Son of man" is given to Ezekiel and Daniel as prophets, and both are seen in Gentile territory. Daniel is thus referred to once, Ezekiel many times.

We know also that it is the title of Christ in relation to His universal administration in the coming day. In that connection it is worth noting that both of those prophets are called "Son of man" without the article; they are never called "*the* Son of man"; that is a title reserved for Christ Himself.

In verse 3 Ezekiel is called "the priest", and whilst idolatry was rampant throughout the land, there had been a true seed preserved for God, priestly seed, men who had gone on with the service of God.

That would be confirmed in the 1st chapter of Luke where we see that the priesthood had been maintained, and a priest is seen serving "before God in the order of his course".

It is well to see that faithful men have been available in the service of God. We do not speak much of men like Luther, who was perhaps one of the most outstanding of these men, but if it had not been for the perseverance and faithfulness of such men, our present privileges would never have been known, nor should we have the divine enlightenment we enjoy. We need to be very humble as to our present position in the testimony, because if these men had not stood out in their day what should we have today?

Would you say that the vision given to Ezekiel in relation to the glory in the heavens was to have an effect upon him similar to what we read in the Corinthian epistle, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us?"

In the J.N.D. Translation the previous verse reads, "Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". The glory of the vision shone *into* Ezekiel for the *outshining* as a testimony to the people of God amongst whom he was found.

In the following verses the details of this vision are given to us, and they are calculated to help and to encourage us all. "And I looked, and behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself" (verse 4). These are but the externals of the visions that God was going to show to him. It is a whirlwind which is in view, a wind the direction of which it is difficult to follow. It seems to suggest circumstances so bad and so stormy that externally no one could quite see what was happening. Unless we were able to see the inside of that whirlwind we should be completely perplexed as to its object, and so we are dependent upon the unfolding of it. We in our day must avoid being governed by what is *external*; it is when we are enabled to see what God is doing at the centre of the matter that we are encouraged to move on in faith.

Actually this wind which "came out of the north" is a reference to the invasion by Nebuchadnezzar, resulting in the captivity of God's people and the carrying away of the holy vessels of the Sanctuary. *Externally* it appeared that God had been defeated.

There was something of a national disaster at this point, but the privilege of the priest is to get an *inside view* of what was really happening under the hand of God. Verse 27 shows us that above all circumstances is a blessed Man!

At times we may find ourselves liable to be controlled by external circumstances, perhaps even thinking that they are circumstances of which God has not the control, but He has the control of *everything*.

"Elisha *sat* in his house" (2 Kings 6: 32). He was not at that time perturbed about what was around him, even though the king sought to kill him.

The children of Israel witnessed God's acts, but Moses knew the *reason for them*. We may say, "why has God allowed this thing?" We may not get an answer to everything that is happening in the world, but we know that behind it all God is working out His sovereign mind and will.

It involves the formation in our hearts of the moral characteristics of the Man of God. God made known His ways to Moses; Moses was a Man of God. It is one thing to see the external elements of the vision, but we must wait for the vision to unfold itself, and that for us means the understanding that everything is secured in the hands of Christ.

We have often reminded ourselves that the Man of God comes to light in a crisis. There are twelve of them in the Old Testament but only one in the New — Timothy. Timothy would be an encouragement to the young men and women to acquaint themselves with the Word of God, that is the way the character of a Man of God is formed.

In Psalm 148: 8 we read, "Stormy wind fulfilling His Word", a truth which we need to be well established in today.

The word in verse 4, "Infolding itself", may have other meanings but it certainly suggests something within. It has sometimes been said that the world-to-come is within the infolding, and one of the simplest explanations of that was given by a brother who said, "In the word to come God will explain Himself", but the wonderful thing is that we can see what the inside is before it comes into display. That is in line with what Ezekiel sees here.

Something similar is seen in Daniel's prophecy regarding the Gentile powers. In the first six chapters these powers are viewed from man's point of view, whereas in the last six chapters they are viewed from God's point of view, and in the latter we are introduced to what is secret.

In verse 5 we read, "Out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures". The wind may blow as hard as it possibly can, but whilst those four living creatures are inside that whirlwind we can be absolutely sure that God is in supreme control.

What is the significance of the amber mentioned in verse 4?

There is some little doubt as to its exact meaning; it is said to be a kind of polished brass, which would indicate the righteous claims of God. The people had completely failed in their representation of God, and He had to come in in righteous judgment. Hence their captivity.

One of the features of Christianity to which we are said to have come, in Hebrews 12 is "God the Judge of all". It is well to be established in the knowledge that everything that is contrary to God will be brought into judgment, and the whole scene will be maintained according to the righteously accurate judgment of God.

In the history of the Church we hear the Lord saying to Ephesus, "I will come unto thee quickly, and

will remove thy candlestick" (Rev. 2: 5). Divine rights must be vindicated in regard to every public testimony in this world.

Before the varied details of the living creatures are referred to (verses 6 onwards), we have the general description that they had the appearance of a man (verse 5). Why is that?

It would seem that the reason the man is brought in is that these creatures are not only marked by power, but they are marked by intelligence too.

Is it to intensify the thought that the whole of God's resources are in a Man?

That is true today! But it is hardly the thought in this chapter. These living creatures would speak of the resources of God which are around the throne, but if there is the desire to relate these features to Christ, well. They are there, because He ever moved in the will of God.

We could not suggest that these four living creatures were typical of Christ personally, because the expanse was above them, whereas the man was above the expanse. "They had the likeness of a man", suggesting that they were intelligent beings.

It would not appear that we exactly have a figure of Christ in these verses, but what we do have figuratively are the powers that are under His control in order to effect the will of God.

Do I understand that the four living creatures are connected with the four standards mentioned in Numbers?

Yes. We have been told that! Four standards with three tribes under each standard. Ezekiel would therefore probably have some little understanding as to what they meant.

What is the meaning of "They went every one straight forward" (verse 9)?

Generals fighting a war would have what would be called "a major plan". If that failed, they would fall back on "a secondary plan"; but there is no secondary plan suggested here, "they went every one *straight forward*". God needs no secondary plan. They are invincible; they cannot be deflected or turned aside. Nebuchadnezzar with all his power could not turn them aside. He, himself, had to learn "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?".

What are we to learn from these four living creatures as to the formation of vessels today?

In 2 Corinthians 4: 7 we read, "But we have this treasure in *earthen vessels*" and what we have in view today is to see that we have light as to the glory of God, the government of God, the purpose of God, and the will of God in order that we may be strengthened to go on. We not only have the light of these things, but are quite assured of the power God has at His disposal, and so we can go steadfastly on in our service for God.

We are not looking at these living creatures as vessels themselves; but as the resources that would strengthen the vessels.

In the 6th verse it speaks of their wings, and in the 14th verse we read that they ran.

It says of those wings in verse 9, "Their wings were joined one to another"; there was *concerted movement*, they were not flying off at tangents; they were not moving independently of one another; all was under the control of God Himself. As "joined one to another" nothing could come between them to disrupt their movements.

What are we to understand from the expression "Whither the spirit was to go they went" (verse 12)?

In that verse the Spirit would appear to be the subjective power in *control* of them; then in verse 24 we read, "And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty" — He was *commanding* them. Finally, the One Who had administration in hand is seen in verse 26, "the appearance of a man above upon it". So that while all springs from God Himself, administration is in the hands of Christ and the subjective power to affect all is the Spirit of God. These are truths which we have learned from the New Testament, and they give us a link with the vision that we have here.

Could we have a word as to the description of the faces in verse 10?

These would show the distinctive features of the living creatures; man the most *intelligent*, the lion the most *powerful*, the ox having the most *endurance*, and the eagle perhaps the *highest* or the *swiftest* amongst the birds. However intelligent the forces of opposition may be, these creatures can outwit them on every occasion. However strong the opposition may be, the lion would suggest that God would completely overcome it. However long the opposition may last, the steadfastness to endure is seen in the ox, and however tenacious the opposers may be in seeking their objectives, they will be outlasted. Finally, however far-reaching their schemes may be, what is typified in the eagles will outdistance them. There is complete supremacy over every opposing power. Whatever intelligence and power may mark men as actuated by Satan, God is supreme above all.

In Ezekiel 41, where the living creatures are seen again, two faces only are mentioned, the face of a man and the face of a lion. The face of the ox and the face of the eagle are not in view. It would perhaps suggest that God has reached His objective, and hence there is no longer need of patience, endurance or rapidity; but intelligence and power will abide and will be manifested in the world to come.

There are two things we need if we are going anywhere; we need intelligence to know where we are going, and also the ability to get there. We have both in the Spirit of God, He fully knows the way, and He has unbounded power to complete the journey.

Sanctified Vessels: Daniel 1: 1-21; 2 Timothy 2: 21.

We have considered the thought of Vessels of Mercy, Chosen Vessels and Earthen Vessels as seen in the three prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. There would seem to be a moral line connected with these prophets commencing with the thought of a Vessel of Mercy. As such, we see that we were in the mind of God as Chosen Vessels before time began, and with a view of fulfilling the particular service entrusted to us. Each in our measure has been given a vision of the glory. All these men were Vessels unto Honour, but the distinctive character that so obviously comes to light with Daniel was not only that he was a Vessel unto Honour, but also a Vessel "sanctified, and meet for the Master's use". It is this feature of sanctification, practical separation from all that is opposed to the will and to the claims of God, that we hope to consider together in this reading.

The prophet's name again gives us an indication of the general character of the book, "God is judge". The setting of the book is in the realm of the captivity, a distinctive realm from that of Jeremiah, but it is not with the prophecies themselves that we are now occupied, but rather the vessels whom God has used to give us these prophecies as seen in Daniel and his three companions — Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. They were all of the seed royal and had an outstanding place in the nation of Israel but were now, in the governmental ways of God, found as captives in Babylon. God having allowed this captivity is going to use it for His own glory, and ultimately for the blessing of His people, and we

should keep that thought in mind. Whenever darkness or difficulties have existed in the history of the Church of God, men and women have been needed to stand in relation to the testimony, and if we are to stand in our day the characteristics portrayed in this book are those we shall need.

Whilst these four men were actually in Shinar, it is obvious that they were not morally of it. The vessels had been brought in by Nebuchadnezzar to be used for the enrichment of his own treasures, but he could not find anything in these vessels that could be used for such purposes.

We see from the Scripture in Timothy that much of what is really divine property has been carried away by the stream of departure, but there is also the suggestion that vessels "unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use" are available.

We, of course, cannot bring about recovery. We can be assured that if God allowed these vessels to go into captivity (as when the Ark was captive in the Philistines' land), he could look after His own interests there; and so in our day God has the whole matter in hand. Our part is to seek to maintain what is due to God, and to stand against that which has caused God to move governmentally in the way that He has done.

Nebuchadnezzar was a mighty potentate, but there was something in these men that was morally greater than anything found in Nebuchadnezzar. We read of them in verse 4, "Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the King's palace". It is evident that there was moral formation in these men before they reached Babylon.

They are said to be "children of Israel", not of Jacob.

If we are to be usable by God in relation to His interests it is essential that this moral formation has its place in each one of us.

The circumstances actually brought to light the kind of vessels they were, and served to further the work of God in their souls, so that they were enabled to stand for God in those circumstances. The difficult circumstances that confront us in the testimony today really furnish an opportunity for the showing of what there is of God in the saints.

Having been appointed to the service of the king they later say "*Our God* whom we serve" (Dan. 3: 17); so that whilst as captives they were the servants of Nebuchadnezzar, they were in fact serving God.

They were determined from the very outset that they would not accept the king's meat. The determination of these men ought to be an encouragement to everyone of us.

They are introduced by their names *according to the stock of Israel*, not by the names given to them by the prince of the eunuchs. Hananiah means "the grace of God"; Mishael, "who is like God"; Azariah, "whom God supports". There is the secret! The realization of the grace of God, the conscious sense in spite of Nebuchadnezzar's power that there was no one like their God, and the known support of God Himself. They were true to their names; moral formation was in them, and we see the kind of material that can go into the fiery furnace, and in the fiery furnace find the presence of God with them.

Coming under the rule of this Gentile monarch, he gives them names relating to his own realm. We also have names by which we are known in this world, but we have names which are "written in heaven", and it is a challenge to us as to which are the more valued by us. If all our ambition centres around our names amongst men, we shall find no lasting satisfaction at the end.

It is striking that when they are numbered amongst those that stand before Nebuchadnezzar (verse 19), and the question of their moral superiority over all the king's magicians and astrologers is apparent, it is their names *according to Israel* that are given to them. It says, "And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore stood they before the king". As the king spoke to them, he would doubtless use the names given to them by the prince, but when the Spirit of God points out their superiority, *He* gives them their names according to the stock of Israel.

These men, whilst standing true to their names according to Israel, are yet actually found "*in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them*", to be "ten times better" than others. How important and challenging that is!

Further on in the book we find in relation to Daniel himself, that there was absolutely nothing in his administration that was hurtful to the king, all that the king put under Daniel's hand was perfectly safe; his enemies could find no occasion against him on that account. There is something sadly wrong with us as Christians if this is not true of us.

If we refer to the verse in Timothy, vessels which are "sanctified, and meet for the Master's use" would be those who are also marked by faithfulness in man's world.

It should be noticed that it was in "all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king inquired of them" that they excelled.

Now we might notice in verse 8 the stand these men took. In the later verses we see the way in which they are tested in relation to their stand. We see too the blessed result of it all in the end of the chapter.

The important thing to notice is the purpose of heart mentioned in verse 8. We shall not stand in relation to divine principles merely because we have read of them in ministry, or because the brethren talk about them in the meetings. It is as they have *the first place in our hearts* that we are fitted for the test that will surely come.

As marked by this "purpose of heart" we can be assured that nothing in the Babylonish Empire would move them.

We see that whilst this was Daniel's individual exercise, his three companions are brought into line with him. If we are set for His things God will show to us, as He did to Timothy, that there are others who will move in company with us.

In the second chapter we find Daniel sharing the exercise with his three companions, with the desire that the matter should be carried in prayer, and mercy sought from "the God of heaven". What power there would be in the prayers of such men!

We see the features of a Sanctified Vessel in Daniel's purpose of heart, and in his request to the prince of the eunuchs "that he might not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank".

A very beautiful feature comes to light in his attitude. He did not say he *would not* eat, he requested that he *might not*. It was not *will* but *conscience*. Sometimes we may approach such exercises with our wills at work, and have to experience the discipline of God; whereas if we approached them on the line of conscience God would stand by us. The matter in question was not necessarily one of evil, but something not consistent with their position as Israelites. In those eastern courts there were many evil practices, but it was not from such things they were seeking to be delivered; but from things which were not convenient to a Sanctified Vessel.

What is the application of these things to us today?

In our secular occupations, and perhaps in our family links there may be certain things which conscience tells us would hinder us from functioning as Sanctified Vessels meet for the Master's use. If so we have to refuse them as Daniel refused them in his day.

If the request had been refused would it have involved an absolute refusal to eat on Daniel's part?

It is certain that had the request been refused they still would not have eaten that meat; but we see in verse 9 that God had already moved providentially, "God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs". Daniel's heart was right before God, and God moved the eunuch's heart in relation to the protection of His servants.

It is important to see that although the request was made to the chief of the eunuchs, it was God who caused that request to be granted.

Proverbs 21: 1 says, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water; He turneth it whithersoever He will". Even Nebuchadnezzar himself had to experience that.

This exercise would relate to other things besides food for our bodies, and would raise the question as to what we are feeding upon for our souls.

If we are feeding on the things of this world, its amusements, politics, television, etc., our spiritual constitution will be impoverished.

We see in verse 12 that these men, these Sanctified Vessels, were prepared to face the test. "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days". There certainly was a venture in this. It says of Barnabas and Paul that they "hazarded their lives for the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 15: 26), and these men had sufficient courage and trust in God to make the venture. Give us ten days for the matter to be proved. They had wonderful faith in God. They were bold enough to propose the terms, and their terms were accepted.

Further, they were perfectly certain that the food they asked for would produce the right results. We need to take that to heart. They did not question what they should eat, but definitely said "Give us pulse to eat, and water to drink".

Food was needed if they were to say at the end of the ten days in which they had refused the king's meat, "Let our countenances be looked upon". For us the necessary food is the Word of God.

Feeding upon Christ in the power of the Spirit is what the pulse and the water would speak of, and whilst the food would appear to be the same day after day, yet we need never get weary of it. Christ assimilated by us in the power of the Spirit will produce that which is morally "ten times better" (v. 20) than anything the world can show.

Only the moral formation which results from purpose of heart and communion with God could give anyone of us an appetite for this kind of food, but it is the only food convenient to "sanctified vessels".

What do you mean by moral formation?

Our minds and affections are influenced by the things we feed upon, and there is a practical result seen in what we say and what we do. This is the way we can truly be "followers of God, as dear children", we are formed after Christ.

It is true that if we are not feeding on Christ we shall be attracted by the world. There is no vacuum; if we are not feeding on spiritual food, that is upon Christ, we shall be found feeding upon things in the

world and spiritual leanness will result. The substance formed in these men as the result of the food they fed on, was apparent to all around. If we are feeding on Christ not only will our spiritual growth be seen by our brethren, but our testimony to men in the world will be strengthened.

It is remarkable that this pulse was available in Babylon; and as we think of the condition of things in this world, and in Christendom particularly, how thankful we should be for the spiritual food which is available to us. A day will come in which there will be a famine of the Word of God, but today that precious Word can be our daily food. How good it is if we are found feeding upon it!

It is evident that during the ten days in which Daniel and his companions were being proved they would not be found seeking other food.

There is, in that connection, an important word for us in the book of Ruth, "Go not to glean in another field . . . at mealtime come thou hither" (Ruth 2: 8, 14).

In addition to the pulse, there was the water to drink. The food available to us, which is Christ as the Bread of Life, is ministered to us in the power of the Spirit of God.

With the manna the children of Israel were given also the springing well; both would be fresh morning by morning.

The ten days would suggest that the test in relation to what we are feeding upon would cover the whole period of our responsible history, so that it is a word for the oldest of us as well as those who are younger.

We see how these desires welded these men together and enabled them, as together, to stand firmly for God. And we see, too, how fully God answered them. "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom" (verse 17).

There is an important point in that verse. Whilst God gave this knowledge and skill to them all, in His sovereignty He specially endowed Daniel, "And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams".

For the testimony they had to render they were given the necessary qualifications; Daniel, who was to serve in a more prominent and larger sphere, was given this extra qualification.

As we are feeding on Christ, God will commit Himself to each of us, but He will reserve the right to give distinctive gifts to some.

It is apparent that the special wisdom given to Daniel was the means by which all their lives were preserved. Can we not thank God for those whom He has specially gifted, and through whose service and ministry we have been preserved from error and kept in the path of life?

Although Daniel had the more prominent place, when the test of the fiery furnace came his companions had to stand upon their own experience with God. Daniel was not actually with them. Doubtless he would be praying for them very earnestly, but they themselves had to stand before the monarch. They had probably learned much from Daniel, but it was the moral formation in *their own souls* which was being tested.

Referring again to verse 17 where we read that "Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams", it would seem that this special gift was to furnish him for his outstanding service for God in Babylon. He was the one vessel through whom God was going to bring matters into manifestation. He had, as his name signifies, the judgment of God as to things.

Would there be anything in our day which answers to the special gift which Daniel had? Joseph also had a somewhat similar gift.

Paul refers to something like this in 1 Corinthians 13. "Though I . . . understand all mysteries and all knowledge". He is speaking of it there negatively, but there is the suggestion of understanding "all mysteries". This would suggest a special gift for a particular service. Of course, Paul here shows the absolute overriding necessity for *love* in the exercise of gift, in which connection we might remark that Daniel himself was a man "greatly beloved" (Dan. 9: 23; Dan. 10: 19).

In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul says "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord". The effect upon him was "of *myself* I will not glory".

The result seen in verse 15 is that these men have the stamina necessary to face the tests ahead of them as truly Sanctified Vessels.

The verse that follows the one we have read in Timothy contains instruction in relation to a good deal of activity. Timothy was to flee certain things and he was to pursue certain things. Spiritual stamina is needed for this. We cannot flee from what is wrong, nor can we pursue what is right, unless we have the spiritual strength which results from a purpose of heart to refuse all that is not of Christ Himself. Paul could say "I have finished my course". And we read that "Daniel continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus" (verse 21), and in the last verse of the book it is said of him "thou. . shalt. . stand in thy lot at the end of the days".

Thus we see the true features of "Sanctified Vessels" — purpose of heart to refuse all that which would weaken them in their fidelity to God; the ready acceptance of the sustenance which would produce the moral strength and courage to successfully stand every test; and, as supported and blessed of God, to continue faithfully to the end of the pathway.

A Dispensational Vessel: Zechariah 6; Acts 10: 11.

We began these readings with the consideration of Vessels of the Sanctuary as seen in Exodus 40, and we saw in them typical features which are to characterize the saints as Vessels of Service today. Following that we saw in Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel the necessary formation in order that we ourselves might function worthily in the service of God. For this last reading we are to consider the *dispensational dealings of God*. In Acts 10, we see that the time had arrived for the gospel to go beyond the confines of Israel to every nation in the whole world; showing that, consequent upon the failure of Israel as recorded in Romans 11, God has a word in blessing for every nation, a testimony which is going out today in the gospel. In Zechariah we have an Old Testament picture which projects our minds on to the world to come. God has in mind to bless not Israel only but also the Gentiles, and we shall see in this chapter the thought of blessing in heaven and in earth, and also the manifestation of the glory of God in the world to come.

What is conveyed in the thought of "the world to come"?

The world to come is the day of display, called in the book of the Revelation, the thousand years reign of Christ. It is not the eternal state, which is the day of God; the world to come is in contrast to this present world where man's will is so apparent, but in the world to come there will be seen one will only, and that will be the will of God administered by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the day when the earth will "be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2: 14).

In the first eight verses of Zechariah 6 we have a prophetic picture of the four world empires of which we read in the prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel especially. It is the second half of the prophecy which we wish to consider, but we get a link in these first eight verses with that which came before us both in

Ezekiel and in Daniel that God, having given dominion into the hand of the Gentiles, is using these empires, has used them, and will use them, as having in view the establishment of His own will in a realm where Christ will reign supreme. If we are to serve God as "Sanctified Vessels" we must know what God is doing and what God intends to do, and hence the importance of this chapter.

In verses 2 and 3 we have the red horses, which refer to Babylon; the black horses to Persia; the white horses to Greece, and the grisled (or, bay) horses to Rome. It will be observed that two kinds of horses were in the last chariot. This would refer to the two phases of the Roman empire. That phase which the "grisled" speak of has gone; that to which the bay (or, "strong" as in the margin) refers is yet to be seen, that is the revived Roman empire.

The fourth empire, as to one phase of it, has ended but in its entirety it has not. J.N.D.'s Translation gives us the word "strong" in verses 3 and 7, showing that the revival of the Roman empire will be characterized by a greater strength than its previous phase.

The reason for suggesting reading the first half of the chapter is contained in verse 5, where we have the important word, "And the angel answered and said unto me, these are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before *the Lord of all the earth*". The word "standing" involves the thought of "presenting themselves" before God. When we see that these great spirits are obliged to present themselves before *the Lord of all the earth*, showing that the empires of men are made to further God's purpose in the earth, then we have no need to be anxious as to anything that is happening on the earth.

If we really see what the Holy Spirit is drawing attention to in these movements our spirits will be restful in God.

In Hebrews 2, we read "We see not yet all things put under Him, but we see Jesus". With the light we have in the New Testament we know that there is One Who will yet come out and will Himself rule over the whole universe for the pleasure of the Godhead.

As far as we can see from Scripture, neither the Father nor the Spirit will ever be visible to creatures, but the Son has become visible in Manhood, and He will be the visible link between the Godhead and the whole creation, and will sustain all for the pleasure of the Godhead for ever.

The first time we have the term, "The Lord of all the earth" would appear to be when the Ark crossed the Jordan. "The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the Earth", the intention being that God would take possession of the earth through Israel. Israel failed, but the One of whom the Ark speaks will not fail, and He will yet establish God's rights as the Lord of all the earth.

The patience of God in relation to that is wonderful. He has waited through the times of these four dominions; knowing the end from the beginning He knew they would fail, and not only fail but would be marked by opposition to Himself. He nevertheless waits in patience for the bringing in of the one Man who will establish everything for His glory.

The word used in verse 6 is Adon, the Master, or Controller, of all the earth. The same word is used in Joshua 3, which has already been referred to.

We have a similar thought at the end of Zechariah 14: 9, "The Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one LORD, and His name one".

Consequent upon the visions in the first half of his prophecy, Zechariah now has a divine communication of something he did not see in the visions. He is given to see by the word which comes to him in the movements of God in relation to these world empires. Should we ask ourselves — "Why

has God allowed these four empires to arise?"; "Why has He allowed some to fulfil their course, and yet another one is to fulfil its course later? We learn that all is for the purpose of God reaching the end which is in view from verse 8 to the end of the chapter. God ever has His own purpose in mind, a matter which the name of this prophet would confirm, "Jah remembers".

Certain men of the captivity apparently had visited Jerusalem and the word of the Lord is "Take of them of the captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon". Not only the empires themselves, but the people of God who stand related to those empires are in mind. Babylon as a kingdom had gone, and here were people who apparently had not yet availed themselves of the restoration by coming back to the land, but they pay a visit to Jerusalem and God takes the opportunity of giving Zechariah this communication.

What is the moral significance of taking gifts from those of the captivity? (v. 10 New Trans.).

We read in the last verse, "And they that are far off shall come". It doubtless looks on to the world to come, when the Jews will be free from captivity and will bring gifts; and along with that the Gentiles, as brought into blessing through the Jews, will also come with their gifts and will be found working in relation to the temple.

The gospel, as we see in Acts 10, shows the disposition of God to bless the Gentiles as well as the Jew. This was not obvious in the days when these prophecies were given, but that movement has already begun in the gospel, and so we read in Ephesians "Peace to you (Gentiles) which were afar off, and to them that were nigh". That is a quotation from Isaiah 57.

Was Simeon somewhat in the good of this in the beginning of Luke?

No doubt he was! And speaking by the Spirit he could say, "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel".

Is the statement in verse 11 something like Isaiah 60: 6, "they shall bring gold and incense"?

That is a picture of a future day! We have often compared that with Matthew 2, only there the myrrh is included. Today we can appreciate a little the meaning of the myrrh, but a day is coming when they will bring gold and incense without the myrrh; the days of suffering will be past.

Verse 11 reads, "Take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the High Priest". They are not set upon Zerubbabel the Governor, but upon Joshua the High Priest. The reason for this being clearly seen in the next few verses. Joshua the High Priest, as crowned, becomes a type of the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ in the coming day of glory.

In Zechariah 3 we see Joshua in festival garments, and the fair mitre on his head. In that chapter he is seen in relation to Jerusalem and its recovery in the world to come; here he stands as representative of Christ.

In verse 10 the crowns are put on the head of Joshua only, but later others are brought in to show that there will be those associated with Christ in the day to come. "And the crowns shall be to Helem and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen". The crowns are to them because they stand in relation to this crowned priest in the house of Zephaniah, and they represent that kingly priesthood which is typical of that into which we have been brought — "A kingdom, priests to His God" (Revelation 1: 6, New Trans.).

Would the fact that it speaks of the silver before the gold set forth the value of redemption?

Two things will come into manifestation in the world to come, the display of what God is Himself as

well as the redeemed sphere that Christ has recovered for His pleasure.

Whilst having the world to come in view, God would also give us to know what He is effecting in His dealings with men. We have no need to be agitated because of what is happening among the nations. Whatever the upheaval may be, empires rising or empires sinking, the Lord of all the Earth has all in control, and is using everything in view of carrying His own thoughts to completion.

Whilst God commences with the remnant from Babylon, has He not full recovery in mind?

The remnant of the Jewish nation today is in the church — Romans teaches that clearly. There is no remnant of Israel outside of the church today, but there will be after the church goes to heaven. For the moment Joshua becomes the type of what the Lord speaks of from verse 12, "And speak unto him saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts saying, Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH". Six times we have the BRANCH referred to in the prophets; Isaiah refers to it twice, chapters 4 and 11; Jeremiah refers to it twice, chapters 23 and 33; Zechariah refers to it twice, Zechariah 3 and Zechariah 6. Isaiah presents Him *officially* — the King; Jeremiah presents Him *morally* — the righteous BRANCH; and in Zechariah He is presented *personally* — "Whose name is the BRANCH". Only in this prophecy is it definitely said, "Whose name is the BRANCH".

What is the thought in the words, "He shall grow up out of his place" (verse 12)?

I think it would speak of the Manhood of Christ, and represents His rights as Messiah when He first came — which rights were refused!

It goes on to say, "He shall build the temple". But there is a tremendous break between the two happenings. He did not build a temple whilst He was here, but He will do so. There are two thousand years at least between those two statements.

Why is the temple brought into view before it speaks of ruling from the throne?

The temple has in view the display manward of the glory of God! And so the thought of building the temple looks on to the vessel through which the glory of God will radiate to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Why is it so importantly said, "He shall build the temple of the Lord: *Even He* shall build the temple of the Lord"? Why is it intensified?

It will no more be committed to human hands at all, but will be in the hands of One Who will do all for the pleasure of God!

What is this temple that the Lord is going to build?

Ezekiel gives us a description of it! We have often indicated that in the construction of the Tabernacle two builders are named — Bezaleel and Aholiab; in the construction of the Temple of Solomon only one builder is named — Hiram; but in the construction of Ezekiel's Temple not a single human builder is named.

Would you say in connection with this temple which we are considering that the materials will be stone, gold and silver, etc., but the heavenly temple, that which groweth "unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2), will be composed of living stones?

Yes! That is altogether spiritual, it is called a spiritual house.

There is an interesting point in Zechariah 3, where the Branch is mentioned, and then immediately the stone is referred to, "My servant the BRANCH. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua".

Why is mention made there of the stone and not in this chapter?

It would appear to be the foundation of the matter that is coming to light. Christ is both the Foundation Stone and the Headstone of the Corner, and when they bring the Headstone forth they cry, "Grace, grace unto it". The point is that He is going to grace the whole building and glorify it.

Whilst a material building is in view in our chapter, the glory stands related to a Person. Attention is called to the Person Who bears the glory, not exactly to a glory system (except as it reflects from Him), but to Himself in the glory of it. Hence we read in the last verse of Ezekiel, "The Lord is there".

Then we read, "And He shall be a priest upon His throne" (verse 13).

This, of course, refers to the Melchisedec order of priesthood. As priest He will sustain the whole scene, and as King He will control it. It is interesting and encouraging to see that not only is He capable of controlling the scene but He will also sustain it. It has been suggested that as Priest He will supply all the power and energy which is necessary to obey His dictates as King.

"He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne". It is not sitting upon the throne that *gives* Him the glory, the glory is *in the Person* and is spoken of before it says that He sits upon the throne. In earthly kingdoms when a man sits upon the throne it is that which gives him glory; but *Christ brings the glory to the throne*.

That is doubtless the reason why no Ark is mentioned in Ezekiel's temple — the Lord is there in Person.

What throne is in view here?

The throne of God in Israel!

In the temple?

Well, they are put together here, and I do not doubt it will be in the temple, as we see from the prophet Ezekiel. If the glory left this world by way of Bethany and the Mount of Olives, then it will return by the same way. Coming in through the East Gate of the court of the Temple, through the door of the Temple; and once more the cloud of glory will be at the centre of Israel. God will be upon the throne and Christ is the One Who will bring it all about.

Will you please say a word as to the difference between the administration by the Lord in the world to come through the Church, and the representative that is in Jerusalem, the Prince of the House of David?

There is no such term in Scripture as "the Prince of the house of David". There is mention of the *Prince*, and we do not doubt that he will be of the lineage of David. There will be an earthly representative, but there is something greater than that, for the glory of the Lord will fill the Temple. The Prince comes in to sit at the East Gate, but he is not allowed to go through it; One only will ever go through that gate — that is Jehovah Himself. Those doors open only to let in the Lord of Hosts.

Would it be one and the same Person that sits upon the throne and is priest?

It refers to the King-Priest, the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ; but Joshua is taken up at the moment to prefigure that, which suggests that priesthood is before kingship. Doubtless the reason is that while the rule of God is manward, priestly service is Godward, and hence it takes precedence here.

The Melchisedec order of priesthood is in view here. It has been pointed out that with Aaron there was an administration manward for succour, but all was with a view to what was for God. The Melchisedec priesthood is not exactly one of sympathy, succour and salvation; it brings in the blessings of "the Most

High God, the Possessor of heaven and earth". Melchisedec brings forth bread and wine. Bread is the result of the harvest, and wine is the result of the vintage. Both are seen in the book of Revelation, the harvest judgment and the vintage judgment, and then the blessing of God.

As Melchisedec then He is the great Blessor?

Yes! The first battle in Scripture is indicative of the last. There were five kings against four, and Abram is seen returning from the slaughter of the kings. It prefigures the day when Israel will be delivered from all their enemies. "Beloved for the fathers' sakes" (Romans 11: 28). God's covenant with Abraham will triumph at the end.

"And the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (v. 13). This would refer to Jehovah and the Branch?

Yes! If man is brought in here, there would be failure, but this counsel is between divine Persons, it *cannot* fail.

The "counsel of peace" would speak of that which existed between the Father and the Son and which has been made effectual through the Cross, so that the silver is mentioned as well as the gold. In the display of the world to come the whole recovered sphere is in view, "Having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself . . . whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Colossians 1: 20). Probably the silver refers to that.

Is not the Personal glory of Christ enhanced before us as we think of the wonderful counsel that existed between the Father and the Son, now maintained by Christ in Manhood?

It was one of the outstanding reasons for which He became Man.

Will you say something in regard to the memorial in the temple (v. 14)?

We are coming on to that. We have this wonderful Person, in the perfection of His Manhood, sustaining the counsel of peace between Himself and God. We are altogether on divine ground here; it is divine Persons and what they will do (verse 13). But how wonderful to see the two classes of people who are brought into the blessing of it. We read in verse 14, "And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the LORD". Perhaps the additional names in this verse might suggest the uniting of the two tribes and the ten. We know that as soon as the kingdom is established the rest of the ten tribes of Israel are going to be gathered.

Importance has been attached to the meaning of the names of these four men; the first one, Helem, is "the *Smiter*", and you get the whole twelve tribes taken up in the smiting of their enemies — Ammon, Moab and others. Then Tobijah — "*Distinguished*"; Jedaiah — "*the Praise of the Lord*"; and Hen, "*Grace*".

As having considered various features of "vessels", are we considering today their service in the world to come?

Yes! In this reading we come to the finality of that which we have before considered.

What is the connection of all this with the verse we read in Acts 10, "A certain vessel"?

It was a "great sheet knit at the four corners", which gives us the thought of what is universal. The "certain vessel" would attract Peter's attention to the fact that the gospel was to go out universally.

That vessel was received back into heaven?

Yes!

Revelation 21 tells us that "And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it".

If, as has been said, the four names in verse 14 are a picture of the twelve tribes in the coming day, what would the three names in verse 10 refer to, seeing that two of them are amongst the four in verse 14?

They are representative of the remnant that came out of Babylon in whom these things will first take shape. That is, Judah and Benjamin.

The remnant will come out of Judah and Benjamin, but what we have in verse 14 is not only their coming out as the remnant, but the kingdom established and the whole nation gathered together.

The memorial would suggest that they have a place constantly before God in the blessing into which God has brought them. We have been reminded that the name Zechariah means "whom Jah remembers", and there they are in continual remembrance before God.

In the last verse we read "And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD". This refers to the Gentiles, who are so spoken of in Ephesians 2, "You which were afar off", which is a quotation from Isaiah 57. They will "come and build in the temple of the LORD. This has its beginning in the gospel and today, whilst we must not confuse the earthly company with the heavenly yet today, God has in view blessing for the Gentile as we see in the chapter we have referred to in Acts.

While the Lord Himself is said to be the Builder, He very graciously brings others in in relation to it.

Referring again to the thought of obedience (verse 15), the Gentiles are being brought in as obedient to the gospel, and the Jew will be brought in as in subjection to Christ in the day to come.

In Psalm 110 (the Palm which speaks of the Melchisedec priesthood) we read "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power". It will be through the gospel of the kingdom that they will be brought in in the coming day.

When we speak of the gospel of the kingdom, we mean the Messianic kingdom in relation to the Son of David; the gospel of the kingdom is being preached today. We use that term in relation to Israel in the world to come, but Paul preached the gospel of the kingdom of God. What is really meant is the kingdom of their father David.

The word for "obey" is rendered in the New Translation as "diligently hearken to". The two words are brought together in 1 Samuel 15, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams".

As the Lord of Hosts He has every resource at His disposal for the carrying of all to completion, and He whose Name is the BRANCH will be the great Administrator of it all.

Zechariah, doubtless referring to himself, says, "And ye shall know that the Lord of Hosts hath sent me unto you"; but does it not also speak of what will be made known to the nation in a coming day? As they refused the word of Zechariah so they refused the word of the Lord, but in that day they will know without a shadow of a doubt that He was the sent One of the Father.

That is when they will use the words we have in Isaiah, chapter 53, and they will then be in the good and truth of it. they shall say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is the LORD; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25: 9).