

## The Gentiles in relation to the Coming of the Lord.

Deut. 32: 8.

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Lecture 3 of 'The Second Coming and Kingdom of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This remarkable Scripture establishes a truth of the highest importance, often forgotten now, but continually assumed throughout the great mass of the prophecies of God. The people of Israel are the necessary centre in God's plan for dealing with the nations of the earth. It is a thought not a little humbling and offensive to the Gentile mind; for men evince, even to this hour, in spite of many opposing tendencies in the days in which we live, the latent contempt and natural scorn which the Gentile has for the Jew. Nevertheless, God, in all that He regulated or permitted, kept before His own eye the great governing thought, that all other peoples must find their place according to this plan. To the tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, must come the first dominion. For Israel His choicest earthly blessing is reserved, though it will flow far and wide to the nations. For the time being, their grievous presumption, as well as insubjection to God, has frustrated all; but by-and-by mercy will triumph, when the day comes for God to prove what He is for Israel, in spite of what Israel has been against Himself. This, however, is but one form in which God gives us His mind touching the nations.

We find a change of immense import which came in at a subsequent date; and God has not left us without explaining the grounds and results of this great event. But the truth here revealed looks up to the earliest formation of nations, and peoples, and tongues after the flood. In Genesis 10 we hear of their first fathers or founders. One name of very solemn import comes before us from the very first — the name of Babel. Not merely does it appear from this division of the rising nations into their separate languages and distinct bounds of habitation, but it reappears when that vast change I have alluded to comes to pass. It will be found of much interest, and even importance, for the believer rightly to apprehend the original constitution of the nations as circling round Israel, as well as the new arrangement according to God's sovereign will when Israel publicly forfeited their central place. First, nothing can be plainer than the way in which the scriptures account for that which is otherwise perfectly inexplicable. You are aware that men are now searching with diligence, and sometimes applauding each other upon the very scanty measure of success with which they trace out, these different nationalities. The word of God has laid it all open to those who believe. He that searches the Scriptures has a clear, comprehensive, and perfectly intelligible account, he sees in it not accident, but the mighty and wise design of God — His judgment too, in humbling the pride of man, which renewed its tendency from the flood, as at the first. That principle, on which men so pique themselves at the present hour, the power of union, was attempted directly after the flood; and men gathered together to build a conspicuous and permanent testimony to human greatness and an uniting bond for mankind, otherwise in danger of dispersion. But the tower which man built, in his pride and self-confidence, as a means of unity, was the ground on which God brought in confusion. Because they built a tower that they might remain together as one race, God broke them up into that division of languages, and tribes, and tongues according to the several lands which He arranged in His own mind for them; and the main substantial landmarks of the mighty judgment of God abide to our day, and shall abide till the Lord Jesus Christ comes, yea, till the new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Now, in this dispersion to which God sentenced the race, Israel was the central thought; and therefore it is that we find in Genesis 10 the Mosaic account of these different families according to the

three sons of Noah. In Genesis 11 follows the key or hidden reason why God so dealt with man; for it was a new thing, an utterly unprecedented change, which has left results that unbelieving man cannot yet divine, but only speculate upon and lose himself in wandering mazes. For God it was no mere dealing with man's presumption, however surely this was checked. There was also the gracious intention of making Israel the means of blessedness for these dispersed nations of the earth. Accordingly Genesis 12 shows us the root and stock of the promises to Israel. Thus there is a very manifest and beautiful divine order in the way in which these truths come before us. Here, then, stands clearly the moral sequence — the rise of tongues and nationalities as the consequence of a divine judgment, the explanation of that which drew down the judgment; next, the revelation of that astonishing principle of divine grace, whether for earth or heaven — God's call of man to Himself. Abraham accordingly becomes the great witness of the call of God, the father of Israel, in due time to be called out also They were called out of Egypt; but at Sinai they preferred to trust themselves rather than God. They forgot His promises to the fathers, or at least their principle; they accepted terms of their own obedience, *i.e.* really of their own goodness; and thus, as ever, their history became the constant evident proof of their entire badness. It is the moral tale of every heart; it is what we all prove till grace humbles the soul and brings us to God through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus. As it was with Israel, so is it with every child of man now who essays to enter into covenant with God, till self is judged, and the heart, purified by faith, finds its rest and strength in another, even Christ.

It is not my purpose to follow the history of Israel, but just to show in a prefatory way the place in which the nations are first viewed in the word of God, as circulating round Israel, where God was pleased to manifest His presence as far as was consistent with His counsels as then revealed. The Shechinah of glory was in their midst, hidden, it is true, behind a veil; but still such a manifestation of divine glory as no other people had. God dwelt in darkness; still it was God who dwelt there; and this of all their national privileges was surely inferior to none. God was in the midst of Israel; but they preferred other gods. They abandoned shamefully, shamelessly, the living God who deigned to be there, their God. There was not a vile idol of the nations to which they did not bow down, none, according to the expressive figure of Scripture, with which they did not commit adultery. The consequence was, that God began to deal with the larger portion of the nation which had already rejected their king. Having proved themselves rebellious to the royal house that God had Himself chosen for them, they consummated that rebellion by apostasy from God, who, after slighted warnings, swept away the ten tribes of Israel first, as a most solemn lesson to those who remained. But Judah was deaf and blind to that which God was pointing out through guilty Israel; and when not only they, but the king of David's line, seemed only to vie with each other who would be foremost in the invention of idolatry, and in the debasing imitation of the nations whose false gods they set up, the true God, after reiterated summons and threats, allowed Babel to come forth once more. It was that same system of confusion; but now in a new form. Babylon, the mother of old Testament abominations, the inventress of idols, — Babylon must be the instrument of executing judgment on idolatrous Judah! It was a strange sight to see at first; but there was the deep wisdom of God in the choice. Thus the God of heaven singled out Babylon of all the powers of the earth to have a new character of dominion never possessed before. Up to this epoch, Israel and Judah had been patiently waited on by the Lord of the whole earth, who had vouchsafed His presence, as we have seen, in their midst. There was a long course of long-suffering on the part of God, if peradventure the people would repent; but they became more and more guilty, and even apostate, yea, and their king. All hope was gone. Then the God of heaven in His sovereignty raised up the very worst of the Gentiles. The old seat of man — idolatrous, self-exalting, and concentrating in contempt of God, now a young, vigorous power, that lately rebelled against the Assyrian, and was the active means of overthrowing that old overthrower of Israel —

Babylon, was summoned of God to the place of imperial power of a world-empire.

There was a definite grant of power on God's part to Babylon. The empire of Nebuchadnezzar had from God Himself a charter of universal dominion. He was the head of gold in the image he saw. The times of the Gentiles began.

This then is the great change to which I referred. For the first time in the world's history one king was permitted of God to be the undisputed monarch of the world. It is not a question of how far he pushed his conquests. Nebuchadnezzar was sufficiently active, we all know, in the East, and as far as Egypt and Palestine; but God gave him the place which others sought in vain. More than one had struggled for it: the various competitors for it failed one after another. God gave the world-power to the king of Babylon. The proofs of this will appear presently and abundantly, and I trust souls may see a little more clearly its importance. The first witness I would cite is Daniel 2. In the dream which God recalled to Nebuchadnezzar by the prophet, there was a great image. "This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." Happily there is no controversy worth talking about as to the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The prophet himself explains that the king of Babylon answers to the head of the image. That dynasty was followed by one inferior to it, not in extent of territory, but in the character of its power. Instead of having it direct from God, and using it as a solemn trust for His glory, you find a number of human counsellors interfering with and weakening the sense of a responsibility immediate to God. This was the Persian rule, the features of which appear in Daniel 6, Esther, and Ezra. Then you have the third empire of brass, the Macedonian kingdom, under the well-known Alexander the Great, where there was a still lower character of influence intercepting the sovereign will of him who had called himself to the throne: not grave senators, men accustomed to rule, but soldiers of fortune, who could not, however clever generals, be supposed to understand matters of state. Here it was evidently the predominance of the military element, not the patrician. Again, you have in the fourth empire that which is common enough in our days, sovereignty founded on the multitude, on the simple will of man, and of course therefore on a majority, who could be least able to weigh all the difficulties, the niceties, the conflicts of human interests — everything that is required in legislation or rule. So it was in the Roman empire, as we know, republican in its origin, and therefore farther and farther removed from the idea of God conferring sovereignty upon man.

Besides, we find the striking intimation that this picture of the last empire shows, particularly in the interpretation given by the prophet, a foreign element introduced into it. This certainly is of no small interest to us, inasmuch as the clay is precisely that which indicates the intermixture of our barbarian forefathers, the wild hordes that burst from the north-east of Europe, first upsetting the old Roman empire, and then gradually incorporated into it. They of course were not free from the violence proper to the uncivilized, with wild notions of human freedom, recklessness of rule, and the passionate rejection of almost every kind of restraint. Hence in due course, when toned down by civilization, the boasted principle of constitutionalism. Men have wondered whence it came; but it is all explained in the word of God. It is the foreign element that did not belong to the empire in its origin. Thus it is the introduction of the Teutonic element — these strangers from the north of Europe and Asia — into the old Roman empire, which formed the combination of the past with semi-barbarian wilfulness. This,

accordingly, led to a very important point that begins to appear in our chapter (Dan. 2) — the break up of the empire into a number of separate kingdoms. It is alluded to briefly; but we shall have it much more fully in Daniel 7. After describing the mixture of the miry clay with the iron of Rome, it is said, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." Your attention is particularly called to this: "In the days of these kings." What kings? The prophet had spoken about the image terminating in feet and toes; and, I think, there cannot be a doubt, more particularly by comparing this chapter with the seventh, that the toes of the image answer to the horns of the fourth beast. The proof of this will appear directly. Referring to the ten separate kingdoms, or their kings, Daniel says, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." There is no propriety in applying "these kings" to the four empires, because unquestionably the God of heaven sets up His kingdom, not during their course, but in the closing state of the fourth or last of the empires. Does not this fix the meaning to kings of the divided Roman empire in its last phase? It is impossible fairly to resist the conclusion.

I am aware that there are those who apply this portion of the interpretation to the introducing of Christianity into the earth. They conceive that such is the kingdom which the God of heaven set up. But a remark or two, I think, will disabuse any dispassionate mind here of such a thought. It is a very momentous subject to be clear upon, and a great many Christians are under the impression alluded to. Those who know better will bear with me for a moment, if I digress to dispose of a thought as injurious as it is popular. You will observe that the clay is supposed to have entered the image, and the division to have ensued, when we read, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." Was this the case when Christ was born? Was there anything correspondent when Christ died, rose again, went to heaven, and sent down the Holy Ghost? Was there any change answerable to the union of the miry clay with the iron of Rome? On the contrary, do we not know clearly from the Bible — and it is a great mercy we have not to travel farther than the Bible for proof of it — that there was but one head of the Roman empire then (Luke 2), that the realm was unbroken and the ruler a single individual, and consequently "the day of these kings" was not yet come? Thus it was iron, and nothing but iron, for many years after Christianity was set up. The importance of the remark, however simple, is this, — that one cannot anywhere introduce Christianity, or anything else that can answer to the setting up of the kingdom then.

The truth is that, though the foreign element predicted here be come in, this division is still future: for full proof of this, I must ask you to look with me into Daniel 7. I shall not go over the earlier verses that describe the other kingdoms; but in the 7th verse we read: "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things)." —

You see, every different passage communicates some further truth from God. We had a division in chapter 2; we have here not only that division still more clearly shown, but also another personage quite distinct from those kings, whose conduct brings judgment not only on himself; but on all his associates. All I would first press is, that you have here the fourth beast, or imperial power; and, besides, separate horns pertaining to that beast. This denotes the peculiar features of the beast at the close. The ten horns are not successive but contemporaneous kings. Upon another occasion we may hope to dwell on the last king a little more fully. What can be plainer than that we have here the Spirit of God tracing from beginning to end the course of world-empire - that so many powers should rise

and no more? It is a well-known fact — nobody disputes it — that these great imperial powers have arisen, and that none has been established since. What does the word of God declare to be the end? "A little stone cut without hands" is the figure of God's kingdom used in Daniel 2. The Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven is that which corresponds with it in chapter 7. Remark the action of the little stone. It falls upon the iron-clay feet of the image. This is its first operation. There is no working to transform the image-power; there is no introduction of new principles or moral influence, so as to effect a change in its character. On the contrary a blow falls — a sudden decisive stroke. The inference would be natural and necessary for an unprejudiced mind, even if the word of God did not explain it, that the blow means judgment by divine intervention — the destruction and sweeping away of the last imperial power then subsisting in the world, with all the remains of the empires which had preceded it. Can an event of such a character as this be considered secondary? Is it not an intimation of the utmost possible weight for any soul to contemplate as at hand? Undoubtedly we who believe are by grace called to bright hopes; and God has opened heaven to us, showing us our portion in Christ at His right hand. But He has been also pleased to give us the lamp of prophecy to shine distinctly upon that which is about to take place in the world. This demonstrates that He will ere long raise the question of the earth; nay, more, — that His hands must soon be lifted up to strike; for He must execute judgment if way is to be made for blessing. But His judgment will be destruction, not merely of wicked individuals here and there, but a public conclusive act of divine judgment, which shall take effect upon those that are highest in the world and all their adherents. So, in the vision of Daniel 2, "was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." What God does now in His kingdom, where there is faith or even outward Christian profession, finds no expression here. Daniel speaks exclusively of the manifested kingdom of God which expands over all the earth, when His judgment, executed by the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, has smitten the Roman empire in its final condition. So, in chap. 7, "because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame." It is the execution of God's vengeance on the Roman empire and its several kings, because of the blasphemous lawlessness of the little horn or its last chief. The kingdom of the Son of man, of which the prophet speaks, is established for ever, and displayed when judgment has cleared the scene of its horrors.

Once the mind of the believer submits to this revealed yet simple fact, what a flood of light is cast upon all that is at work in the world and that awaits it! How it harmonizes with the great mass of scriptures that otherwise the eye might pass lightly over! We have in the word of God frequent declarations of the blessing God has in store for the world. One of the earliest of these is in the Book of Numbers, where He swears solemnly that He will fill the earth with His glory. I press this. Let no one, then; suppose that we are merely looking at the dark side of that which God is going to bring about. The scripture referred to is in Numbers 14: 19-23: "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And Jehovah said, I have pardoned according to thy word: but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it." The reader can hardly fail to observe that the very same text which presents Jehovah filling the earth with His glory, puts it in immediate connection with the execution of judgment upon sinful men. Look again at Isaiah 11: 4-9. If we have another declaration of glory for the earth, we have the same solemn association of divine judgment with it: "In righteousness

shall he [the Messiah, who is evidently the person spoken of — the branch of David] judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." Then follows the assured blessing of the earth in the richest terms, wound up with the promise that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea." If we turn, moreover, to Habakkuk 2: 13, 14, the connection is, if possible, still clearer. "Behold, is it not of Jehovah of hosts that the people[s] shall labour in the very fire, and the people[s] shall weary themselves for very vanity?" (How just a description of that which occupies men laboriously but in vain!) "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea." But in the immediate neighbourhood we have woes pronounced, the unequivocal intimation of divine judgment.

Thus the order in which Scripture presents the dark and the bright for the earth is abundantly plain. God means to bless the world, and fill it with His glory: there is no doubt of it whatever. But has He not also shown us how the blessing is to be effected? As little does He leave us in doubt as to the answer; and this on moral grounds. For the Gentiles will have proved themselves to be as thoroughly lawless, false, and apostate, judged according to their responsibility, as we saw Israel to be, measured by the standard God applies to them. It is remarkable, too, that this is what occupies the mind of the Spirit of God between the two chapters which furnish the prophetic account of the four empires (Daniel 2 and 7), as has often been remarked, though it may be well to repeat it briefly now. The departure of the Gentiles was immediate, and the history that follows soon cut off all hope of real improvement, *i.e.* of repentance. What is the very next scene to the setting of Nebuchadnezzar in his place of undisputed power as the governor of the world? We have him at once erecting a golden image, and sending out a mandate, in which, on pain of a most cruel death, he insisted that the inhabitants of his vast dominions, congregated there at least representatively, should bow down and worship, at a given signal, the idol that he had just set up. In a word, the Gentile used his power (it is the very first occasion which Scripture records) to compel his subjects to idolatry under penalty of death. Is the Gentile any better in the other chapters (Dan. 4-6)? He is seen attributing all his grandeur to his own skill: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" Entirely forgetful of the grant of God, Nebuchadnezzar is thereon made an example of by divine power; his heart is changed from man's, and a beast's heart given him, till "seven times" passed over him (which, no doubt, furnished the reason for the empires being designated "beasts" in chapter 7). Then comes, in Daniel 5, dissolute pride, and desecration of God in His holy things, in order to vaunt the false gods of the nations. Judgment falls upon Babylon at once. Finally, in chapter 6, the head of the new imperial power, King Darius, forbids the offering of any worship, for a certain time, save to himself. How evident a type of the self-deifying end of the Gentile power! Thus God's word, from the very first, stamps upon the Gentile empires their character and their judgment. Their history and end were all spread out from the beginning. Between the visions of the second and of the seventh chapters, we have their moral course which necessitated such a doom. The character may not have been manifested to its full extent, but it is the same principle; there may be outward difference and large development, but God marked it all from the very first, and the scriptures of truth show us that so it will be at the last. And what then? God judges the Gentiles, and sets up His own kingdom under the Son of man. "And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages [not a mere election out of them — as now], should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

But where is the gospel all the while? In this prophecy totally unnoticed. And why so? Because the gospel is not a system of power, however glorious, that puts down rebellious nations, but a display of grace which unites all who receive it, whether Jew or Gentile, to Christ at the right hand of God.

Here we have the course of what was earthly judged when the heavens ruled; but the gospel has nothing to do with governing the powers of this world. What is it, then? Not a superior power from heaven putting down all antagonists, but grace gathering souls out of the earth to heaven, and forming them, by the Lord the Spirit, according to Christ as seen there. This is the gospel of the glory of Christ, founded no doubt, upon the cross — the glad tidings of grace which God can send forth to every creature, because of the precious blood of Jesus Christ. The object of the gospel is to set the soul perfectly free from all question of its guilt, to purge the conscience, to bring the heart and mind into communion with God's delight in His beloved Son. But then it is the revelation of Christ when He had finished the work of redemption upon earth, and taken His place in heaven. It is clearly, therefore, wholly distinct in source, character, and issues, from all that we trace out here. Yet men still assert that the kingdom which the God of heaven sets up, according to Daniel 2, is Christianity. Why is it that they "labour in the very fire," if one may so say, to press this vanity? The reason is obvious. Man likes to be energetic in the world, loves to have some great objects here, would prefer to have a religion that would suit and consort with the earth

Hence it is that the well-known system of Romanism so readily gains on natural minds of a certain religious character. Catholicism was before Romanism proper, but the Catholic principle of the early ages led to the Papacy of Rome, which found convenient for its purposes the current delusion as to the kingdom that the God of heaven would set up here. Why was it? In truth Christendom had long fallen from its heavenly enjoyment of, and testimony to, Christ. Hence it could look for an empire upon the earth. In this it was, ere long, gratified to the full. We all know that the Roman empire at length acknowledged Christ in an outward manner, and hearts too ready to believe what they liked supposed it to be the accomplishment of this and other prophecies of the sort. Thus men like Eusebius and others in no long time taught the notion that the vision of God's kingdom, according to Dan. 2, etc., began when Christ came to earth, and was completed, to a certain extent, when the Emperor Constantine and his successors authoritatively owned Christianity as the truth in the empire. Notwithstanding, the great revolution of that day, important as it was, is outside this Scripture, as the plainest reasons prove. Being an earthly view, it displaces heavenly grace from its power over the heart; and not being of God, it allows some idol connected with ourselves to be set up, instead of illustrating how all God's thoughts and purposes find their real application in the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth is, just as sin only betrayed its full character when Christ came, as the exceeding malignity of the flesh was only made manifest when He died and rose again, so also the world was then judged in principle. This is so important for the soul, that a mistake in these matters involves profoundly evil consequences. There may be piety and devotedness, as there has been, in men who conceive that the vision is accomplished in what is going on now, or in the past. But no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation: it cannot be rightly severed from being an item in the great sum which testifies of the coming kingdom of Christ. The inevitable effect is, that, as far as it goes, it turns away the heart from heaven to earth, and substitutes the creature in its littleness now for that mighty power of God which will work after a new fashion when the Lord Jesus reigns over the earth. It hinders all right moral feeling as to present things; for it refuses to regard the world as a condemned system on which judgment is ever suspended and about to fall.

But, on the contrary, if the kingdom of God, according to the prophecy, has been already introduced, then it becomes a question of faith to see the blessing that flows all around us, and of hope for the mountain to fill the whole earth, while those who cannot see it must be troublers of Israel — mere Ishmaelites, whose chief work is to make man uncomfortable, and pour contempt on the efforts of Christendom. But if it be true that the world- power has never yet been judged of God, as we have seen in Daniel 2 and 7; if it be allowed that Christianity is another thing, not found here, but fully and clearly

revealed in the New Testament (the proofs of which I hope to pursue on another occasion); if it be certain that God in this prophecy simply reveals the times of the Gentiles, put in a place of power, guilty from the very first, and pursuing their course of evil to the last, what a different aspect appears! It ought to be remembered, that there was no such thing as the division into ten kingdoms when Christ was born, or when Constantine and others professed Christianity. The hordes of barbarians from the north and east had not poured into the empire and broken it up. Certainly nothing since has answered to it, unless you imagine the Papacy to be the kingdom which the God of heaven sets up. But men ever so little imbued with the mind of God know well that not only is all grace centred in Christ, but that He alone is worthy to be entrusted with the execution of judgment. Everything, therefore, tends to fix the eye and the ear of the believer upon Him.

Be sure of this, that one never really gets hold of any truth of the Bible unless somehow or other we are enabled to see it as a reflection of Christ, or as something that contributes to manifest the power of God in Him. Consequently this ever ready and only sure test of the truth becomes invaluable when applied to our subject. Has Christ yet smitten the Roman empire as is here described? Instead of His acting as the victorious "Stone," instead of smiting it, the Roman empire smote Him. In the Christ of humiliation we see the very reverse of what is described here. The Roman empire smote Him, nay, had the guilt — not alone, it is true, but in conjunction with apostate Judaism — of crucifying the Lord of glory. The Lord, speaking of Himself as the Stone in Matthew 21, has perfectly and with divine clearness and brevity put the two cases. "Whosoever shall fall on this stone [as He was here in shame going to the cross] shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, [when He returns in power and glory,] it will grind him to powder." Manifestly there is no Stone of humiliation in the prophecy of Daniel. The first fact alleged of the Stone cut without hands, is not of unbelief stumbling over it as it was presented in lowly love, but that it falls and smites the great image of the world in its last phase of imperial power. It is not, as it were, a stone for man to tread and stumble on; it comes from above; it smites, overwhelms, and only then swells into a mountain and fills all the earth. In few words, then, a stumbling-stone is Christ in His humiliation; and those who stumble upon Him are broken. But what is it when presented afterwards? "Upon whomsoever it shall fall, they shall be ground to powder." The Lord refers in these last words, and in these only, to the statement of our prophet, who leaves out all question of stumbling. We have only the Stone falling and grinding to powder. We have not a Stone of stumbling in Daniel, but only the Stone of judgment from above, which, as its preliminary action, breaks the image to pieces; so that not only the clay and the iron, but even the brass, the silver, and the gold, all disappear. The iron and the clay mix for the last form of the fourth empire. The separate nations exist now; but there is no such thing as the beast revived, nor the final division either; for they all receive power for one hour. (Rev. 17: 12.) The beast is the uniting corporate bond and head which wields the force of the ten western kings. Much may be getting ready, everything in prospect of it; but there still lacks this bond of union under a chief of the west. It awaits the accomplishment of other purposes of God.

There is a restraint, as we know from 2 Thess. 2 Satan cannot bring his scheme to pass until the moment that is known in the mind of God. Nevertheless all ripens each day for it, and the desire of men for it is manifest, however great their wonder may be when it is realized. Ambition is not without aspirations after it. The converse of men shows a presentiment of it in their minds. The most careless are afraid of what looms upon the earth. Such is ever the case before some mighty catastrophe. Coming events cast their shadows before. This always has been, and always will be, till the Lord take the world under His own government. All this then goes on; yet there is a power that hinders its fulfilment, because God has other plans to consummate before He will allow the final climax of evil. But when the apostasy arrives and the man of sin is revealed and the beast emerges from the pit, the end of the age is

at hand. Divine power will act in judgment, and the kingdom of God appears.

Again, the symbolic expression of "a Stone cut without hands" in no way suits the gathering of believers which began at Pentecost. Individually considered, these may be, and are, viewed as living stones. (1 Peter 2) But, as a whole, they are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit; they are growing into an holy temple in the Lord; they are even now the temple of God, God's house, the assembly of the living God.

The "Stone" is appropriated to Christ in the law (Gen. 49.), as we have seen in the Psalms (118.) and in the prophets (Isa. 28); and it is clear to me, that our Lord, in Matt. 21: 42-44 already referred to, connects Daniel ii. with Psalm 118. I need not add other allusions to the same effect in the Acts and the Epistles but conclude that it means the kingdom of God and of heaven appearing in the person of the Lord Jesus, and this in judgment of the Roman empire. The point of contrast with the four image world-powers in Daniel 2 is its source above man, its immediate judicial overthrow of all existing empire with the relics of the past, its unprecedented expansion after the first destructive blow, and its perpetuity, instead of falling to others like its predecessors. Of a spiritual power dealing with hearts by faith, by heavenly aims, by divine principles, and thus spreading over humanity a regenerating influence, not a word appears here. The Stone has never yet smitten the Image, still less has it grown so as to fill the whole earth. Daniel 7 contrasts with the four beasts emerging from the mass of troubled waters one like a Son of man, invested by the Ancient of days with universal dominion. Put the two things together, and what can be simpler in itself? what sense more beautifully true? What more harmonizing with the general scope of the truth of God? Whatever form of existence the kingdom of God may have had in the world, the question here is one of the Lord's intervention in irresistible might, judgment, and destruction of the powers that be, and of His subsequent reign with His saints over the earth in power and glory

I may now briefly refer to a few more passages of Scripture to show, not merely the vast imperial system of Gentile power judged by the Lord, when He comes in the clouds of heaven, but that God has not given up His design of making Israel the centre of independent nations circling round that people. Nothing can be more striking than to see the admirable concord of the prophets, and indeed of all Scripture. In some, our Lord Jesus is referred to as the Son of David. It is His Messianic glory. Where this is the thought, Zion, (Jerusalem) is the revealed scene of His reign, and Israel the channel of the blessing that He will diffuse through the nations. Next, when the times of the Gentiles are introduced, as in Daniel, a farther scene opens. As God abandons for the time Israel as His pivot of blessing, as He raises up the great universal empire, so the Lord Jesus will have a sphere of dominion answering to these larger dealings of God. Hence, in Daniel 7, He is not as the Son of David, but "one like a Son of man" is seen. Why so? Because He receives an unlimited dominion over the children of men. "There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Thus the most perfect harmony reigns between the different portions of divine truth, even as the rejection of Christ in one glory led in God's wisdom to the unfolding of a still larger and higher. Let me turn now to some Scriptures of the prophets, which follow up what we have seen in Deuteronomy and Daniel. In Isaiah, in Jeremiah, in Ezekiel, as well as in the minor prophets and the Psalms, we have much confirmatory truth. As it is important to have distinct thoughts on that which God has revealed in relation to this subject, let me dwell for a short time upon some of the more salient points. In Jeremiah 3 we see that the Spirit of God cherishes the first thought alluded to. Israel are viewed as yet to be God's earthly centre for the blessing of the nations. "It shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and

increased in the land, in those days, saith Jehovah, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of Jehovah: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem." Does any fair (not to say instructed) person here believe that there has been the smallest approach to an accomplishment of this prophecy? Mark the time when God gave it — not before the days of David and Solomon, but after Israel had been broken up, and the great mass of the tribes had been carried away into captivity; when Judah, that still remained, was falling into the worst possible defection from God, being flooded with idols yet more than Israel. It was, therefore, after the developed evil of Israel, and of Judah too. The prediction supposes the fact of the Babylonish captivity that was then impending because of idolatry. Yet God predicts, through His servant, a time so glorious, that no period of glory in the past should be comparable to that which was coming. But I refer to this Scripture now to show, not the future blessing of Israel, but that the first view of the Gentiles I have sought to present tonight supposes Israel to be blessed, and disclaims all hope of a good time for the world at large, except through Israel restored and regenerate. Here, accordingly, it is said that Jerusalem shall be called "the throne of Jehovah, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it" Where has there been the smallest realization of this promise? If any nations were ever gathered to Jerusalem up to the present, it was to desolate and trample the Jews down of old, or to destroy one another since. Our Lord has Himself told us that Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. But here is the time of Israel; here Jerusalem's blessing comes, not the eking out of the sad days of Gentile supremacy. All the nations shall be gathered, not for vain contests between the Cross and the Crescent, but "to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem." It is not the gospel; for its direction is precisely the opposite. The message of grace is now being diffused to the Gentiles, to every nation throughout the world. Here it is the gathering of the nations to an earthly centre — to Jerusalem.

Does any one slight this as a low thought unworthy of God? Oh, what an abuse of heavenly blessing! Surely, to be blessed with Christ in heaven is infinitely higher, sweeter, lovelier, holier than any glory which concerns the earth. But am I, therefore, to deny the wonderful word of my God, that He means to bless this world? Am I to defraud of aught the Saviour that has died for us, brought us nigh to God, and that will have us in heaven along with Himself? Am I to say, that the will of the Father shall not be done on earth, as it is in heaven? Am I not to pray this prayer in spirit and understanding also, instead of reducing it to an unknown, unmeaning form? Every one virtually blots it out, or at least ignores its meaning, who denies that the earth is to be blessed, creation delivered from the curse it now groans under, the nations to have the glory of the Lord filling it and themselves, therefore, sharing these precious blessings with Israel. Jerusalem then is to be the throne of Jehovah. Ah! if it be worthy of God, suitable to His grace, and due to His Son, that He should show mercy to the vilest of sinners now, will it detract from His glory, or will it lessen His grace, if He pour out His mercy over the earth — if He yet make that guilty city to be a holy city, not in word only, but in deed and in truth? The time shall come when He who saw and wept over its growing iniquity, and was the herald of judgments to the Gentiles, will be the unhindered and eternal blessing of Jerusalem, that the nations may be blessed too. Is not this the comforting thought that is presented here? Is there not here predicted a full cup of joy for Jerusalem, that all the nations may share it? Not that they shall be on the same level, or enjoy the same measure of blessing; but certainly they shall be gathered to Jerusalem to be blessed there. (See Appendix.)

Again, without enlarging, on any one prophecy particularly tonight, let me refer to a very striking one in the prophecy of Ezekiel. We shall see that the elements needful for its accomplishment have been brought out by God most remarkably within the last two or three centuries. The Scripture in my

thought is Ezekiel 38, 39. Let me make, however, a remark, before we enter upon it. In Jeremiah and Ezekiel we have nothing at all about the new system of the great empires of the world. Jeremiah deals more particularly with the moral iniquity, the idolatry of Judah, and shows us also the final restoration of the people, and their blessing — particularly that which God will effect when He writes His laws on their hearts. Jeremiah passes over all that intervenes, as Ezekiel does in another way. The main difference is, that the latter does not make, first, the moral condition of the people, and then the spiritual blessing in the latter day, the great points, so to speak, of his prophecy. Ezekiel's main task is about the manifestation of God's glory in Israel. Hence he begins in the early chapters with the living creatures, which finally leave the temple, city, and the land. In the latter chapters they are seen returning to dwell there for ever, when Jerusalem shall be Jehovah-Shammah ("Jehovah is there"). In this prophet, therefore, we have the converse of the Book of Daniel, who gives us exactly what is between the two points. In the four successive imperial powers of the Gentiles there is no such fact as the governmental glory of God manifesting itself upon the earth. It had existed up to the time of the Babylonish captivity; it will be again, when Israel shall be restored to, and planted in, their own land once more. But between those distant points there intervene the times of the Gentiles, which still run on. Meanwhile Christianity also comes in; but this belongs to the New Testament: it is the mystery of Christ and the Church, and is hidden, as far as the Old Testament is concerned.

In Ezekiel 38, then, we have these words: "Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal." As Gog is the name of this destined leader of the Gentiles in the north and east and south, so we have his land described as the land of Magog. There is no doubt that this distant land means what the ancients used to call Scythia, what is now included under the vast European and Asiatic possessions of the Russian empire. But, moreover, there is confirmatory evidence in the names of various races, which fact is somewhat obscured in our version; for it is well to observe, that "the chief prince" should be the "prince of Rosh." The word h is not only an ordinary appellative, meaning head or chief, but the Hebrew proper name for Russia, or the Russians, in which sense the proper nouns following prove it should be here taken.\* Nor is this at all the mere resource of modern interpreters, after events pointed out the way. The oldest version of the Old Testament is the Septuagint, or Greek Bible of the Seventy, which affirms the sense just mentioned. This, it is well known, is the version which our Lord quoted and the apostles used very frequently. In this case the rendering is simple, natural, and clear. The bearing of the prophecy is, that a certain prince comes up under the name (perhaps the mystic name) of Gog, as to which no theory whatever is pressed or hazarded here. From the land of Magog, or old Scythia, comes this prince of certain races — the Russians (Rosh), the Muscovites (Meshech), and the inhabitants of Tobolsk (Tubal). This personage, actuated by territorial greed and especially of the Holy Land, is to lead countless forces of armed followers against the land of Israel in the last day, but to his own and their total destruction, under divine judgment. Now, what could be less looked for, if we turn back to Ezekiel's times, than the then delineation of such a power? And what can be of more profound interest to us now? There would not be, ought not, perhaps, to be, the same confidence, were this merely a discovery of the prophet's meaning confined to our own day. Not, of course, that this would falsify the prophecy; for his inspired words would be just as true, if no translator or interpreter had given the just sense before Russia began to develop and aspire. But when we see that such is the simple force of this Scripture, when we remember that the oldest version of the passage is the best (a version executed some 150 or 200 years before our Lord lived in the world), when we bear in mind that not only in the day of the prophet and of the Greek translators, but for a thousand years after the last, the races that now compose the properly Russian elements of the empire were hardly beyond wandering barbarians, is not the hand and mind of God most apparent? There was not the smallest appearance of the

emergence of the gigantic power that is continually absorbing in the East; that claims equality at least with the greatest powers of the Roman empire; that threatens, too, in connection with the Holy Land. For some two or three centuries we know that it has cherished, religiously and systematically, the scheme of unlimited aggression and progress; that its plans are formed upon the thought of possessing the East to itself, as well as of overawing the West; and that, being a power not less superstitious than aggressive, it is peculiarly desirous of gaining and propping up a sacred character by the acquisition of the land consecrated by our Lord's life and death. It were strange if all these considerations did not invest the prophecy and the races in question with exceeding gravity, more particularly as the days are at hand and the effect of every vision. That these thoughts are set forth as revealed truth, and I trust also in a plain manner, is not at all owing to any events that have of late transpired in the world. It is well known, that the very same truths have been held and taught long before there was the recent feud about the holy places or any fighting in the East. Still, no one can deny, nor do I wish to weaken, the confirmatory character of that which has been witnessed there.

\* See Appendix on the *Rosh* of Ezek. 38 and 39.

But mark another thing. This is a power entirely outside the Roman empire, nay, outside all the ancient imperial powers. It is an empire entirely to itself, singularly blending barbarism with civilization, and rude force with subtle policy; beyond doubt, characterized by the lust of territorial aggrandizement, and panting above all for mastery in the Holy Land. Lapse of time only brings out features that fall in most distinctly with the prediction, and prepares the way for the final struggle, if men want confirmation of God's word in its clear, simple meaning. No dispassionate mind can say that this part of Ezekiel has been fulfilled as yet. Gog, his hosts and allies, come down when Israel (more or less represented) are in their land. The previous chapters (36, 37) also point to this distinctly. Thus Ezekiel 36 presents a view of Jehovah, not only bringing back His people to Palestine, but acting, graciously on their souls — according to the figure, sprinkling clean water upon them, exchanging their stony hearts for a heart of flesh, and putting His Spirit within them. The bearing of all this is unquestionable, or at least should not be questioned: God will restore Israel and convert them in the land. Next, in Ezekiel 37, we have a fresh picture of the power and goodness of God in their favour, under the figure of the valley of dry bones, and then under the two sticks emblematically joined in one. On the dry bones the Spirit breathed, so that flesh came, and breath subsequently, and they all stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army. This is divinely explained to mean the revival of the whole house of Israel, and their return into the land. But something more was necessary. What about the union of the long-divided people, the twelve-tribed nationality of Israel? The answer is given in the same chapter, under the symbol of the two sticks, henceforth united together. The Spirit of God leaves no room for doubt or speculation. The meaning is, Israel and Judah united as a people under one head, who is figuratively called "David," the beloved, their king. Is it not evident that all these chapters dovetail into the whole blessing of the latter day for Israel and the Gentiles, not the Church? They suppose a new action of God, for which the earth has yet to wait, in which He will bring back, then convert, and after that unite, the tribes of Israel as such under one beloved King, who will diffuse and secure divine blessing through His people, and, as we know from elsewhere, throughout all the nations of the earth. It would appear to be at the beginning of this very dealing of God, when Israel, in part at least, are in their land, that Gog comes down upon them, seeing the land unprotected by the ordinary munitions of war. He counts it the fairest opportunity for at last consummating his long-cherished plan. He has no faith in the reality of God's presence with, and protection of, His people. But he comes down to his own irreparable ruin. This is described most fully in the latter part of Ezekiel 38, as well as in the next chapter. We need not linger on the details. But as a further following up of the prophecy, and more for the purpose of leading persons to search the word of God than of saying much about it

now, I would refer to the weighty fact of the long-departed glory returning (Ezekiel 43, 44) to the earth, and resuming its place in Israel, only in an infinitely more blessed way. (Compare also Isaiah 4) All this furnishes the most evident proofs that a future time of blessedness is in view - often promised, but, when it comes, surpassing every expectation, if not also the very promises themselves.

Let me, before closing, touch on one prophecy more towards the conclusion of the Old Testament We have some points of remarkable interest in the latter part of Zechariah. In Zech. 11 is predicted the Saviour's rejection; and then, by one of those transitions so characteristic of Scripture, we have another, not the true Shepherd, but one designated the idol shepherd. "Lo," says Jehovah, "I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened." Who that reads the Scriptures with an intelligent eye, can fail to see that, as we had first Christ despised, so at last have we Antichrist? The Good Shepherd was refused — the evil shepherd is accepted. God thereon deals retributively with His guilty people. In the next chapter (Zech. 12) we have the nations gathering against Jerusalem. The reception of the Antichrist, as the sequel of rejecting the Christ, is the ground of God's terrible judgments. But it is added, "In that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people." If they assemble themselves, and God uses them for dealing with Jerusalem, He will turn His hand and use Jerusalem for dealing with the nations. The axe shall not boast against Him that hews with it. There is a double process going on. It is the time of universal judgment of the quick; but if He chastens the Jews, assuredly the nations shall not go unpunished: "for yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger, in their destruction." But Jerusalem's part is notable; for, clearly, it is not only a question of idolatry, but of Christ scorned and crucified. However, it was not merely the Jews who rejected Christ, but the nations too. So that there will be a double reason for the execution of Divine judgment in the last days — idolatry, and "not this man but" Antichrist. The Gentiles will share with Israel in both respects. There is some difference as to this with the nations, as indeed among the tribes of Israel, which we need not stop to discuss particularly now. Suffice it to say that all the nations are here gathered in hostility to Jerusalem; and this is the language in which the Spirit of God expresses it: "Jehovah shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. In that day shall Jehovah defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem." Has this, or anything like it, been accomplished yet? What has taken place since Zechariah? The defilement of Antiochus, the siege of Titus, and the like. In which of these, or, on what occasion since, was Jehovah saving Jerusalem and its inhabitants? There has never been the smallest approach to a fulfilment. Reading a little further, we are told that "it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all nations that come against Jerusalem." What then? lies the prophecy failed? Not for a moment. The prophecy supposes the Jews returned, and of course, therefore, is not yet accomplished. The conclusion is equally simple and certain; it must yet be fulfilled. Then mark further. It is not only that there is a great execution of divine judgment threatened on all nations, which has never yet been, but Jehovah here says (vv. 10, 11), "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." As yet, the very reverse of this has been true of Jerusalem and the Jews. It is a future scene in all its parts, and with genuine marks of singularity: for though that day is ushered in with clouds and darkness, none the less will there arise a Sun of glory that never sets. When that bright day comes - the day of Jehovah, and not of men — there will be a mighty action of the Holy

Ghost; and, as is always the case where God acts in men, it is not alone the heart that is moved, and the affections kindled towards Himself and all that is good; but, inasmuch as grace is dealing with sinful men, there will be true and deep repentance, a real ploughing up of the soul, an appropriation of sin: and wherever it is so, it is individually felt and confessed. Each is alone with God. If we assert the truth of God as to these magnificent scenes of the latter day, when God will deal with the Jews and the nations, let no one suppose for a moment that He will give up His personal claim upon the heart and conscience of man. There will be, no doubt, an universal dealing with Jews and Gentiles; yet, after all, how the mighty work of the Spirit of God individualizes, and necessarily so! For as we read, not only in that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, but it is added, "And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." The closest relationships will not interfere in the least degree with the call of God, when each soul, as it were, shall stand before Him in conscience; and, although they are brought into joy, it will be surely to rejoice with trembling. Such will, then, be the searching work of the Spirit in the Jews.

Mark, again, how evidently this is a future scene. We, have David's family and Nathan's family apart. Who can tell the family of David? or the family of Nathan? It is the very thing the Jews cannot settle. Their genealogies are lost — these records exist not. They may form indistinct notions here and there, but they cannot know for certain. But this will be a day when from God secret things will reappear, as it is the day when man's conscience will be wrought upon by the Spirit of God. Is it not always the case where grace really works? But how wondrous the scene, when in the midst of that mighty work of deliverance God will deal with the conscience! There will be those that derive their lineage from the great king David, and others too who claim kin with the prophet who convicted David of his sin; but in that day, whether it be the family of the rebuked king, or that of the rebuking prophet, there will be no difference. The descendants of both will be there; but they are alike bowed down in the presence of God's grace and a pierced Messiah. Each confesses his sin. Whatever may have been the distinction in their forefathers in the wonderful scene of David and Nathan, there will be "no difference" in the future day as to their descendants; all feel their sin — each acknowledges his sin before God. Again, in the earliest hours of Israel's history, there was another scene, when two heads of houses or tribes of Israel joined together in a cruel vindication of their injured sister, and caused the name of Jacob to stink among the inhabitants of the land, instead of being an attractive light to the nations of the earth. In this day the sons of Shimei [Simeon] and the sons of Levi will be there; but there to give an account of their folly — to mourn and weep over their sins before the Lord — each apart, and their wives apart.

Is there a heart that would blot out this blessed and most touching witness of God's faithfulness to His people, and of the wonders His mercy will yet work for Israel? Do we think to enrich ourselves by taking it all from them for ourselves? In truth, where men do so, it is not merely stealing that which is God's own gift, pledged, so to speak, to Israel, but by a just retribution they hinder the blessing of the Gentiles also.

In Zech. 14 the nations re-appear once more, and Jehovah goes forth at the head of His people and overthrows them. The nations may seem at first to succeed. They take Jerusalem, and half of the city goes into captivity; but, nevertheless, the nations are discomfited for ever immediately after. When has there been the very faintest appearance of the accomplishment of this prophecy? But there is more than this. It is said, "In that day Jehovah shall come, and all his saints with him." Has this too been

fulfilled? Still more, as if to confront the thoughts of man, as if to stamp the dreams of rationalism with evident folly, God will not leave the mount of Olives without an everlasting token that the Maker of heaven and earth is that glorious One, whose feet stand there in that day. Is Olivet cloven now? Clearly not. What can you make of it by the so-called spiritual interpretation? Absolutely nothing. No matter who or what you are, sure I am that mysticism fails, and here, if anywhere, it ought to confess its fault with shame. The undivided mountain rises up to condemn those false interpretations, and is a silent standing witness that the prophecy is not yet accomplished; before God and man the fact declares that the prophecy awaits its fulfilment. When Jehovah does come to accomplish it, the mount will part asunder, and there shall be a very great valley between the northern and southern fragments. You who would unwittingly make this prophecy of private interpretation, weigh the fact now before us. Can you etherealize, so to speak, the mount of Olives? Can you turn it into a myth? Impossible! God condescends to map it out, so to speak, that there may be no mistake. He is pleased even to give the geographical position of it (v. 4), as if to expose and refute all such mysticism for ever. Then we have the effects of the appearing of the Lord on the mount of Olives. Not only are the nations defeated, but, besides, "It shall be one day which shall be known to Jehovah, not day nor night, but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light." Instead of day succeeding night, as has always been the case in the world's history before, when one might expect the night, it will still be the light of day. There will be an exceptional interruption of the ordinary change of day and night, marking the presence of the Lord God of the world. One feels how right it is that it should be so. How could the sun go down, so to speak, if the Lord be no longer hidden, but come in His glory? "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea; in summer and in winter shall it be." In this we have the sign of refreshing fertilizing power that goes out to the mass of people, even the most hopeless, and this, independently of times and seasons henceforth. "And Jehovah shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Jehovah, and His name one." There is also the witness of the authority of God in what He will do. He will judge the nations that do not come up to Jerusalem. (vv. 12-19.) If the world is to be blessed, it cannot be at the expense of His honour or His sovereign choice of Jerusalem as the earth's metropolis and sanctuary. (vv. 20, 21.) Jehovah accordingly shows the unmistakable tokens of His future day for the earth, a day without parallel. If it be perfectly certain that all this does not suit the time before or since Christ's first advent, is it not evident that it must refer to the age that follows His second? Further, is it not equally plain, that it cannot be the Lord God at the end destroying the earth and heavens that now are? Have we not seen that He is King in that day, and that blessings flow out from Jerusalem? Have we not even geographical signs as if to put to flight every tendency to a mysticising of Scripture? This is not a scene far away from this present creation; it is not possible to be said of the heavens, but only of the earth. It is admitted fully, that our place will be above with the Lord; but what reason is this against the Lord's having also the throne of His father David on the earth (Isaiah 9), or filling it with the knowledge of Jehovah's glory, as the waters cover the sea? (Isaiah 11) And so we find it here — "All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon." "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea." (vv. 10, 11) It is not the earth dissolved, it is not the elements melting with fervent heat, but the earth that now is blessed, as it has never been since the curse fell upon it. The language of Scripture is as precise as that of a chart. How evident that it is not the epoch of the burning up of all things, when every landmark necessarily disappears. The clean contrary is the case. The well-known spots that every Israelite treasures in his memory are found once more: only are gone the marks of desolation; no longer

the signs of Gentile oppression appear, but the blessing of the Lord God given to the people of His choice, the whole earth sharing the joy and peace of that day.

But no more on this subject, save to commend it to your attention. It necessarily involves appalling judgments on the Gentiles; but, as we have seen, Jehovah in the midst of judgment remembers mercy. He puts down evil solemnly, unsparingly in that day; but He also diffuses countless blessings for those that are spared on the earth, as He will have filled the heavens according to the counsels of His own will, and to the praise of His glory.