

The Book of the Prophet Zechariah (4)

—H. Rossier

Fifth Vision — Chapter 4

Prerequisites for Insight in God's Plans

In Zechariah 3 God addressed Joshua, the high priest. The fourth chapter deals with the king, in the person of Zerubbabel, for priesthood and kingship will characterize Christ in His glory during the Millennium. The prophet saw a vision as if he had been "wakened out of sleep." Though he could describe it, he did not understand it at all. *"He said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I see, and behold, a lamp-stand all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and its seven lamps thereon, seven lamps and seven pipes to the lamps, which are upon the top thereof and two olive-trees beside it, one on the right of the bowl, and the other on the left of it. And I answered and spoke to the Angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my Lord? And the Angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these are? And I said, No, my Lord" (vv. 2-5).*

We already drew attention to it that the book contains many questions. The prophet could not understand anything without the Angel explaining it to him. This kept him humble when he had to acknowledge: "No, my Lord" in response to the: "Knowest thou not...?" of his companion. We, too, need to feel ourselves ignorant before God if we want to understand the truths contained in God's Word. The Scriptures give many obvious details which can be understood, even by unbelievers, but the deeper sense will always escape the natural man. To grasp the hidden significance we need the Spirit of God (1 Ki. 2:10-14), but even more, we must know Christ, who Himself is the key to the Word.

The Candlestick

Zechariah saw a golden candlestick with a bowl of oil above it. Exodus 25 tells us about the candlestick, which was meant to give light in the holy place. Like every object of the tabernacle or the temple, it portrayed one of Christ's glories. Just as the candlestick in this chapter portrayed Christ, its light was *the testimony of Christ*.

But the symbol of the candlestick is not just applicable to Christ. In Revelation the seven golden lamps are the seven assemblies. If, on the other hand, light is mentioned, the Lord Jesus did not only say: "I am the light of the world," but He also said to His own, "Ye are the light of the world" (Jn. 9:5; Mt. 5:14); thus they were Christ's testimony toward the world. But light needs oil. To be able to be a testimony one needs the Holy Spirit, and throughout Scripture the oil is a picture of this.

Summarizing therefore, the golden candlestick in the temple is a picture of Christ who, on the one hand, is alone able to give full light, and who, on the other hand, shines His light through the witnesses which He has chosen for this purpose. Zechariah did not see the candlestick in the temple, for its foundations had hardly been laid. The candlestick did not shed its light in a restricted space but *toward the outside*. It had a bowl of oil at its top feeding the lamps. And to avoid this reservoir from ever becoming empty, two olive trees caused the golden yellow oil to flow through ducts into it.

Although the testimony of the Holy Spirit also can also be applied to our days, in Zechariah it is seen prophetically. In the future there will be a time of blessing and glory in which the Divine light will shine in the person of Him who will be the eternal bearer of it and in His witnesses, the core of the future nation Israel. To us this seems to be the intent of this portion.

As far as we Christians are concerned, we ought not to forget that the Assembly is called to testify before the days come, in which God will once more take up His dealings with His old nation. When the Lord Jesus, the true light of the world, was rejected, He left us behind in His place to let this light shine and to testify of it.

In Revelation 2 we see that the assembly at Ephesus, as representative of the entire Assembly, had left its first love; thereby it had simultaneously lost the privilege to be a testimony of Christ. It is therefore said to her: "I will remove thy lamp out of its place." The lamp of the assembly, as a responsible body, will be removed from its place and in a future day be entrusted to others. Zechariah speaks of this future testimony. However, before it will shine in all its glory, it will, as we

see in Revelation 11, be given into the hands of two Jewish witnesses. Of these it says: "These are the two olive trees and the two lamps which stand before the Lord of the earth" (Rev. 11:4). It will be a testimony that during Israel's Great Tribulation will be given at Jerusalem, but not worldwide. God will acknowledge it, for "at the mouth of two or three witnesses every matter shall be established" (Dt. 19:15). It will not be a full testimony, as was Zechariah's, for instead of seven, there will only be two lamps. These two witnesses will also be the two olive trees (Rev. 11:4) as we are told at the end of the chapter: These are the two sons of oil, that stand before the Lord of the whole earth" (Zech. 4:14). They will be the two olive trees from which the testimony of the Holy Spirit will flow. Their light will support the weak remnant that will still be dwelling in the midst of Jerusalem before Christ's reign.

Endowed with the Spirit of prophecy, they will act in the power of Elijah and of Moses, who represent the priesthood and the kingship during a time of ruin before both are united in the glorious person of Christ.¹

As mentioned, in Zechariah the testimony is complete; the person of the Lord Jesus is the center of it; His people will be united with Him in it. The oil, feeding the candlestick, is provided by the *two anointed ones*, the priesthood and the kingship, for both priests and kings are anointed with oil (Lev. 8:12; 1 Sam. 16:13). These two functions, in chapter 3 entirely separated, are here *linked* together, but not yet *united* in one person.

The Work of God's Spirit

In verse 6 of this chapter the person of the king comes to the fore in a very special way: "*This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts.*" As we saw in the previous chapter, cleansed from his defilement, Joshua typified Christ's priesthood. Chapter 4 shows us Zerubbabel, in his utter weakness, as typifying Christ, the King. Zerubbabel, the weak sprout of the royal family, humbled to the extreme, could not even carry the title of king. But the Lord addresses him with the words: "*Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit!*" What an encouragement it must be for a humbled man to hear that God does not desire mighty deeds from him, but that His Spirit was with him!

We may apply this word to ourselves in days like ours, which in more ways than one resemble those of Zechariah. "Thou hast little power," the Lord Jesus said to the assembly at Philadelphia. He encouraged His own in their condition of outward weakness, over against the pretensions to might and power of the religious world. He assures them that He is with them. They know that they can count on that promise, and that His power will be accomplished in their weakness.

"*Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel [thou dost become] a plain*" (4:7). Surely, the Lord Jesus intimated this verse when He said to His disciples, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say to this mountain, Be transported hence there, and it shall transport itself; and nothing shall be impossible to you" (Mt. 17:20).

In the days in which we live, the weakest faith causes all obstructions which Satan and the world put on our path to disappear. In the days of Zechariah all the power of the Gentiles could not oppose the working of God's Spirit toward the restoration of His people. The ways of the Lord *must* issue in the honour of Christ and the blessing of His people.

Christ — the Headstone

"*He shall bring forth the headstone with shoutings: Grace, grace unto it!*" (v. 7). In the previous chapter Christ was the cornerstone of the foundation. Here He is portrayed as the top, the keystone of the entire building. God had engraved seven eyes on the cornerstone; on the headstone one reads only one word: Grace! His praise, as being the bearer of God's *favour*, will be sung by all. All future blessings will depend on this grace of God displayed in the person of the King. When He came into this world, grace appeared in His person; out of this, faith received the fullness: "Grace upon grace" (Jn. 1:16). But His people did not receive Him and the world rejected Him. Then He finished the work of grace on the cross. One day He will appear in His kingdom as the bearer of God's favour and the dispenser of grace for Israel and for all nations.

"*And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, the hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; and his hands shall finish it: and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent Me unto you*" (vv. 8-9). With this Zechariah returns to the circumstances under which he prophesied. He announced that Zerubbabel would complete the house of which he had laid the foundation. History tells us that this has also come about. "*For who hath despised the day of small things?*" (4:10). It was a relatively modest task to rebuild the temple of those days. The people wept when they thought of

¹ *Elijah, the prophet was priest on Mount Carmel (1 Ki. 18); Moses is called "king in Jeshurun" (Dt. 33:5).*

the past glory of the temple. Yet, in the eye of God, this small beginning had nevertheless significance. He was well pleased with those who took the building of His house to heart.

So it is today. We, too, are called upon to gather the precious building materials for God's house: souls, who, as living stones, are built upon the foundation, which is Christ. It is sufficient when we do this with a heart that is entirely devoted to Him, for He does not despise the day of small things.

"They shall rejoice [even] those seven — and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel: these are the eyes of Jehovah, which run to and fro in the whole earth" (v. 10). The seven eyes of the Lord, that had been graven on the cornerstone of the temple, are now shown to us as running to and fro in the whole earth (cf. Rev. 5:6). The fullness of God's Spirit will rejoice when it sees the work at the Lord's temple completed, and the plummet in Zerubbabel's hand assuring the solidity of the entire building while the headstone is being placed. Little did it matter that the start seemed to be so weak: the work had been done for the Lord. This Spirit, who runs to and fro in the whole earth, will rejoice when He sees that all things are completed and set in order under the reign of the true King. Then will the temple of the Lord be the gathering place of all nations, the visible center of Christ's glorious reign.

Sixth Vision—Chapter 5:1-4

A Short review

For the proper understanding of chapter 5 we like to give here a short review of the history of the nations as described in the first four chapters.

In chapter 1 we see Judah and Jerusalem trodden down by the nations, yet comforted and encouraged by the announcement of their future blessings and the destruction of their oppressors. In chapter 2 it is more than "comforting words": God remembers Jerusalem to lead it forever into the blessings of the Millennium. In chapter 3 we read what has to take place first: Jerusalem needs to be cleansed, the unrighteousness of Judah removed, and the nation be clothed with the garment of righteousness and holiness. In chapter 4 the prophet sees the nation as returned out of captivity. It is the day of small things, but the Lord does not despise these. At that time God's testimony will be represented by Joshua and Zerubbabel. God values this testimony. But in the last days it will reappear and be counted as sufficient, although it will only be represented by two witnesses in the midst of the nation that has sunk into unbelief. About a hundred years after the return out of captivity the prophet Malachi, observing the moral condition of the nation, saw only a complete ruin among them that called for the final judgment of God. Four centuries later, Judah filled up its unrighteousness by killing the Messiah. Then God once more scattered the people among all nations; and this is how things still stand today. But once this unbelieving nation will have returned to its land, would God be able to acknowledge and approve of anything in the midst of this apostate nation except a small remnant?

In chapter 5 the two visions of the prophet answer this question. These visions seem hard to understand, but in reality they are simple as long as we allow ourselves to be taught by God's Spirit.

The Scroll

In chapter 5:2 it says that the prophet saw *"a flying roll: the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits."* This roll, a written book, came from the Lord; it flew, and that proves that it was alive. It went at its goal, and had special, very remarkable dimensions: a length of twenty and a width of ten cubits. The most holy place of Solomon was *twenty* cubits long, wide, and high. In the place where the ark stood, the cherubim, who expressed God's judicial power in creation, spread out their wings so that the wing of the one cherub touched that of the other, and their others wings stretched to the walls of the sanctuary. Each cherub was *ten* cubits high and their wings together also *ten* cubits. The most holy place of the temple was thereby characterized by the numbers twenty and ten. From this we must conclude that the roll, the written word that proceeded from God was in accordance with the holiness of the place where God dwelled between the cherubim, and that it bore the character of that place. Judgments were written on both sides of the roll: "This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole land: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off according to it on this side; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off according to it on that side" (v. 2). This living, holy book pronounced curses. We ought not to forget that judgment is one of the characteristics of God's Word. When the world does not listen to the call of grace contained in this holy Book, it will have to come to know the Word in another character, that of the curse.

In God's Word the "roll" is shown us in three aspects. First in Psalm 40:6-8 and Hebrews 10:6-7: "Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of Me) to do, O God, Thy will." The main subject of this "Book," which is written over it as an epitaph, is the perfect obedience of Christ in completing God's counsels in the work of redemption. In short: "the grace which is in Jesus Christ."

Secondly, we find in Revelation 5: "On the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne a book, written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals." This is the book of God's counsels and plans regarding the earth. In it we are told along which ways He will execute them when He will establish the reign of His beloved Son. Only Christ can cause them to be fulfilled by opening the seals of the book.

The Curse of God

Finally, the "roll of the book" reveals to us the spiritual condition of man, his responsibility toward God; and the judgments that flow from this. The rolls in Jeremiah 36, in Ezekiel 2:9-10, and in the portion we are now considering have this character. The two visions of Zechariah 5 show us the curse pronounced by God, first over the *moral* condition of the nation (vv. 1-4), and next over its *religious* condition (vv. 5-11).

Concerning the moral condition of the nation, for which it was responsible to God, the curse was on the one hand pronounced over the thief, and on the other hand over him who swore falsely by the name of the Lord. Such a restriction of the motives for the judgment many at first sight seem very strange. But when we give it some thought, we discover in these two words the characteristics of the sin of man. A thief is an evil one who deals unrighteously towards his neighbour; one who swears falsely makes God to be a liar by taking Him as a witness affirming his oath. Unrighteousness and despising God were the characteristics of this nation. Not even one century afterward Malachi would charge them with the same things (Mal. 3:5).

"I will cause it to go forth, saith Jehovah of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by My name; and it shall lodge in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof" (v. 4). Does this verse not remind us of the words of the Lord Jesus: "My house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of robbers" (Mt. 21:13), and: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Mt. 23:38), and also of: "Not a stone shall be left here upon a stone which shall not be thrown down" (Mt. 24:2)?

Seventh Vision—Chapter 5:5-11

The Woman in the Ephah

To understand this vision we must, in all simplicity, surrender ourselves to the direct instruction of God's Word. It is possible that our lack of spiritual insight may hinder us to understand all details of it. If so, let us remember that, when something remains dark to us, the problem lies with us. God has given these things for our learning and not to make things difficult for us through enigmas.

"And the Angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And He said, This is the ephah that goeth forth. And He said, This is their resemblance in all the land. And behold, there was lifted up a round plate of lead; and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. And He said, This is Wickedness: and He cast her into the midst of the ephah; and He cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof" (vv. 5-8).

The ephah generally represents the largest measure of contents, for the cor or homer, with a larger content is nothing else but a tenfold ephah. In the midst of that ephah sat a woman, that is to say, she had established herself there. Subsequently the Angel cast her into the ephah, as a picture of judgment. He closed the ephah with a lead lid to indicate that the judgment had been irrevocably sealed. This woman was called Wickedness, in the sense of unrighteousness. She possessed a nature that did not subject itself to a higher will, but acted according to its own will. She felt herself totally independent from God, and did acknowledge no other law than her own (1 Jn. 3:4). Therefore the woman in the ephah portrays the independency of man toward God. She had filled up the measure and was therefore judged in this irrevocable manner.

Idolatry

In God's Word the woman often is found to be the personification of a moral or religious principle. So we find, for instance in Proverbs a woman as symbol of wisdom, and a woman representing corruption. These principles are often portrayed by a nation or a city. Thus, in Revelation 12, the woman portrays a nation, the true Israel according to God's counsels, and in Revelation 17:3 the woman is an apostate, religious system, a city, Babylon the Great (cf. v. 9). Jerusalem too is repeatedly seen as a moral and religious system portrayed by the image of a woman.

We already saw that the woman in our chapter personified the ungodliness, the apostasy from God. In Judah and Jerusalem this reached its pinnacle, as the Lord said in Matthew 23:32: "And ye, fill ye up the measure of your fathers"! During the time of the Lord's walk on earth idolatry had not been seen since the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. The house had been swept clean and been adorned. To all appearances the people that had in earlier days committed such terrible idolatry, had been cleansed. But, though outwardly cleansed, it then rejected and crucified its King, and God once more scattered it among the nations, a condition that lasts till today. When, in the time of the end, Israel will have returned to its land, seven spirits more wicked than the first will again occupy the house and dwell in it (Mt. 12:43-45). This will be under the reign of the antichrist: idolatry will again overpower the nation, it will kneel for an idol and acknowledge Satan as its king.

If the final stage of Judah and Jerusalem is shown us here in a somewhat hidden manner, it is because this vision stretches itself beyond the boundaries of the Jewish nation and also relates to the nations that in the last days will be represented by the apostate Christendom: "This is their resemblance in all the land" (v. 6). Since this subject does not belong to the Old Testament, it could here only be presented in a dark form. But the New Testament gives us a clear and complete picture of it. We know that Christendom, having become apostate after the rapture of all true believers, will commit idolatry just as the Jewish nation. The latter will deny the Lord, the God of their fathers under the instigation of the antichrist. Under the influence of the same person, Christendom will deny the Father and the Son (1 Jn. 2:22). From that moment onward Judah will have made the measure of its unrighteousness full. So it will also be with Christendom; both will meet one another in a common idolatrous service. "The abomination" will stand in the temple at Jerusalem, and Christendom will drink with Jewry out of the same cup of poison.

Judgment

The ninth verse describes what will come over the woman that we have just viewed from both angles. *"And I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork; and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens. And I said to the Angel that talked with me, Whither do these carry the ephah? And He said unto me, To build it a house in the land of Shinar; and it shall be established, and set there upon its own base"* (vv. 9-11).

Is it perhaps due to this double-sided character that the ephah was carried away by two women? I couldn't say. We do see, however, that the circumstances are favourable for the development of the principles portrayed by them. "The wind was in their wings," and besides, "they had wings of a stork." Storks always return to their nests. The two women brought all this unrighteousness back to the place of origin, to the land of Shinar, that is to say, to Babylon, to the place where the old Babel lay destroyed forever. Babel is as it were the cradle of idolatry. The unrighteousness of the Jews will in the last days return openly to its place of origin. There the house will be established and placed on its foundation. The same will take place with apostate Christendom. In Revelation 17:5 Great Babylon is called, the mother of the harlots, and of the abominations of the earth. According to verse 11 she will remain in Shinar. But in that condition the judgment will come over apostasy, both over its Jewish and over its Christian form.

The words "to go forth" that are so often repeated in this chapter, always refer to the judgment. The roll, the curse, went forth; the angel went forth, the ephah went forth, as did the women. They took the ephah away, little realizing that what they put in its place would soon be destroyed. Will there in the midst of all this unrighteousness remain any testimony for Christ? Certainly, for in the previous chapter we saw a faithful remnant. Similarly a remnant is found in today's Christendom: Philadelphia. That of Judah will become the kernel of future Israel, more numerous than the stars of the heavens and the sand on the shore of the seas. It will enjoy all the blessings of the Millennium after the apostate Jews and apostate Christendom have been remembered before God, and Babylon, the great city, will have been cast into the sea to be found no more at all!

Eighth Vision—Chapter 6:1-8

The Four World Empires

In this portion we find the eighth and last vision of Zechariah. The four wagons are very clearly a picture of the four world empires so often spoken of under various pictures in the prophecies of the Old and New Testament. In the early pages of the Book Daniel, we see them as a great image, the figure of a man, a rational and responsible creature that has a moral relationship with God, to whom He has entrusted the world hegemony. These realms fall short in their responsibility. God will crush them all together by a stone cut out without hands to establish the world-encompassing kingdom of Christ, a large mountain, filling the entire earth. Further on, in Daniel 8, we see these four realms in the form of four beasts, that is to say, four beings that have no moral relationship with God. Revelation 13 describes the last of these beasts, namely the Roman Empire that will again be in existence at that time, encompassing the three preceding realms, and summarizing shortly their characteristics.

Zechariah refers three times to these realms. In chapter 1 they occur under the image of their three symbolical representatives, for Babylon, the first realm had already ceased to exist through the attacks of the Medes and the Persians. These realms enjoyed full rest after they had scattered the people of God. But no sooner has the last realm finished its course, or the moment has come for God to once again take up the cause of His people and to restore His dealings with them. In the end of Zechariah 1 the four horns portrayed four realms, four powers that are destroyed by God's servants, to bring the blessings of the last days to Jerusalem, as we read in chapter 3.

God's righteousness

"And I lifted up mine eyes again, and saw, and behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass" (v. 1). Here we find no horses, but four chariots drawn by horses, which in Scripture are a presentation of a royal army. The first-mentioned chariot typifies the mighty Chaldean realm. In the first chapter we already gave an explanation regarding the red horses. In chapter 6 they represent the judgment that Babel executed over Israel. Here the realms are not portrayed in the way they were in chapter 1, where God's Spirit took note of their condition. Now it speaks of the manner in which God directs them for the execution of His plans. Therefore the chariots are presented as *"the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth"* (v. 5; cf. Dan. 7:2). God is showing us that His providence had directed the course of these warring powers from the very beginning. For all appearances, each power had done whatever it wanted, following its own ways without taking account of God. In reality He stood behind the scenes, and the four spirits of the heavens stood before His face to lead the paths of the realms in the direction He desired them to take. God's purpose will only be fully achieved at the end of prophetic times, for the fourth or Roman empire must once more arise, as we read in Revelation. The four chariots went forth (came out), just as the roll and the ephah, because also here the issue is judgment. They came from between two mountains that formed as it were a pass they had to go over. In figurative language, a mountain always portrays a well-established power on earth. The mountains are brass. Here brass speaks of God's righteousness in its dealing with sin, whether it be for our redemption — the brazen altar, a figure of the cross — or for our cleansing — the brazen laver — or for the establishing of Christ's kingdom — the brazen pillars. His kingdom can only be established through judgment. And so we see here God's power, despite all, established as firm mountains to keep the realms from following another course than that indicated by God. This power directs them with the judgment of His people in view. But after they have destroyed each other, redemption will follow upon the judgment over Israel. In this way God's plans of grace toward this nation will be fulfilled.

The Three other Realms

"That in which are the black horses goeth forth into the North Country; and the white go forth after them" (v. 6). When the end of the captivity of the nation under Babel's yoke had drawn near, God intervened and sent the Medes and Persians — the chariot with the black horses — to the Northern Country, a name used for the region lying to the North of Jerusalem, namely Chaldea. The Medes and Persians were followed by the conquering power of Alexander — the chariot with the white horses — which destroyed the second realm, Persia, in the Northern Country. That explains the expression: "the white go forth after them."

"And the grizzled go forth towards the South Country; and the strong go forth, and seek to go that they may walk to and fro through the earth" (vv. 6-7). Here we see the fourth chariot, the Roman power, the chariot with the grizzled, strong horses. Rather than going against the Northern Country, they divided themselves, so to speak, into two groups. The grizzled went forth into the South Country, Egypt. Indeed, from the outset the Roman Empire did seek to establish its sovereignty over this country (cf. Dan. 11:30). Afterward, when the power of this Empire spread further and further, Rome — the strong horses — tried to traverse the whole world, that is to say: it sought to extend its sovereignty over the *entire* world.

"And He said, Go, walk to and fro through the earth. And they walked to and fro through the earth" (v. 7). It is God who under all circumstances, in all the stirrings of this world, is in complete control, He commands and directs all. And with how many ends in view! By one and the same event He judges, admonishes and warns, calls and delivers!

"And He cried unto me, and spoke unto me, saying, See, these that go forth towards the North Country have quieted My Spirit in the North Country" (v. 8). Even in Zechariah's days, God's wrath had been kindled against Babel, the instrument of His judgment over Israel. But, like the Assyrian, it had exalted itself over against the hand who was using it, and it had quenched its thirst for revenge in its treatment of the people of God.

The Book of Visions Concluded—Chapter 6:9-15

The Link Between the two Parts of "Zechariah"

God's providential dealings had assigned a certain role to the world's realms: to chastise His people. This role and the final judgment over those realms were described in the eighth vision. The portion now demanding our attention presents to us the glorious result of all God's ways, and the fulfillment of His counsels. In the place of all the realms of the earth, He will establish the kingdom of Christ, a realm of peace that will never be shaken.

In this portion, a vision is not mentioned, but rather a fact that gave God's Spirit the opportunity to express itself about the reign of Christ.

"The word of Jehovah came unto me" (v. 9)

It is important to pay attention to these words. We have just seen that the conclusion of the book of visions is linked to all that precedes it, and that it, so to speak, is the crowning of it. But the words we have just quoted from verse 9 also link the book of visions with the two following chapters which belong to the book of the oracles of God. Indeed, the expression "the word of the Lord came to me" points as often as four times to new revelations (Ch. 7:4,8; 8:1,18). This obvious link between the two books of Zechariah destroys the claims of the so-called "higher critique," which suggest that in this prophetic book we encounter two books from the hand of different authors who have not a single connection to each other.

The Remnant's two Groups

"Take gifts of them of the captivity, of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, and come thou the same day, and enter into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, whither they are come from Babylon; yea, take silver and gold, and make crowns" (vv. 10-11).

Here three men are referred to from among those who had not gone with the nation from Babel to restore the temple and to rebuild the city. We don't know the reason why they remained in Babel, we see here that they came to Jerusalem to bring their gifts of silver and gold to the house of the Lord at a time when the temple had hardly risen above its foundations. Their deed was a silent judgment of the slackness of the people in rebuilding the temple. The significance of the names of these men is remarkable: Heldai — forbearing; Tobijah — the Lord is good; Jedaiah — the Lord knows. They came to lodge in the house of Josiah — the Lord supports — who was the son of Zephaniah — the Lord hides. Nearly all of them bore the name of the Lord and were thereby His witnesses. From this I conclude that they were a figure of the true remnant of Judah, be it outside of Judah or in Jerusalem. The Jews who had returned to Jerusalem under Cyrus could not be regarded as being the true remnant. That is sufficiently demonstrated at the end of this book and in the prophecy of Malachi. The true faithful ones were at that time still in Babel, but they were received and hidden in the house of another faithful one at Jerusalem. This description therefore seems to me a picture of the two groups of Judah's remnant in the last days. Through faith they saw the temple finished before it was finished; they saw the King on His throne, when in reality He was not yet manifested, and they brought Him their gifts. The prophet is told to make crowns from the silver and gold that these men had brought: *"Make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, saying, Behold a Man whose name is the Branch; and He shall grow up from His own place, and He shall build the temple of Jehovah: even He shall build the temple of Jehovah; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne" (vv. 11-13).* The word "crowns" has the significance of a double crown, a kind of tiara, similar to those worn by some Persian princes. Zechariah had to take these crowns and put them on the head of Joshua, the high priest.

Types of Christ

To clarify this act, let us summarize in a few words the account of Christ as it is presented in the previous chapters, just as we already did with the history of Judah and Jerusalem.

In chapter 3 Joshua, who was first a figure of the cleansed nation that stood before the Lord, is seen as a figure of *Christ as the future High Priest*. Afterward, God announced that He would cause, His Servant, *the Branch, Christ, the Son of David*, to come as *King*.

The foundation of the temple, laid by Joshua, is a type of *Christ as the cornerstone* on which the Lord will build His temple in a future day. In chapter 4 Zerubbabel is *the picture of Christ, the true King*. The top stone, the head or key stone of the entire building, which was laid before Zerubbabel, is once more a portrayal of *Christ*, this time as *the bearer of God's favour*.

In chapter 4 the kingship and priesthood — the two olive trees — are still separate, although they work together in feeding the light of testimony. Finally then, we find in this sixth chapter *the priesthood and the kingship united in one person*.

He, whose name is the Branch, will be Priest upon His throne. It is this King-Priest, who in the person of Joshua — the Lord is Saviour — will be crowned. Christ, the true Melchizedek, will be declared as Priest as well as King of righteousness and King of peace. All God's ways of which the previous chapters have spoken, lead to Him and His kingdom. And in a remarkable way, as shown in Daniel 2:34-35, God's ways end with the destruction of the kingdoms that have been referred to in the beginning of chapter 6. When the Spirit of God has come at rest regarding them, God establishes in their stead the world-kingdom of David's Son, which will be a kingdom not to be moved.

Of Him it is said in verse 12: "*He shall grow up from His own place.*" "*His own place*" refers to Jerusalem, the city of His royal origin, for: "Jehovah will count, when He inscribeth the peoples, This man was born there" (Ps. 87:6). Then verse 12 and 13 continue: "*He shall build the temple of Jehovah: even He shall build the temple of Jehovah.*"

Who will Assist in Building the Temple?

Let us imagine the circumstances under which this event is announced. The people at Jerusalem had resumed the work, but the temple was far from finished when Heldai and his companions came to Jerusalem. Joshua was occupied with building, Zerubbabel helped along. But a moment would come that the King, the Son of David, who was one and the same as the crowned priest, would build the Lord's temple. This could, therefore, not be the then-existing temple, nor that of Herod, neither the one of the antichrist. Only one temple is indicated here, namely the one that the King-Priest will build. Verse 15 tells us who will assist in this work: "*And they that are far off shall come and build at the temple of Jehovah.*" That will be the exact opposite of what had taken place in the days of Ezra and Zechariah. Those who were from afar, the enemies of Judah, had said to Zerubbabel: "We would build with you." Zerubbabel and Joshua had answered: "Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house to our God, but we alone will build to Jehovah the God of Israel" (Ezra 4:2-3). But for the building of the future temple, which is spoken of here, the nations will add their share to it, just like in earlier days Hiram, the King of Tyre, had made labourers and materials available for the temple of Solomon.

Christ's Glory

"*And He shall bear the glory*" [or He shall be clothed with majesty] (v. 13). This glory is an immensely grandiose thing; it is the revelation of the whole Divine perfection: Majesty, righteousness, holiness, purity, power, wisdom, truth, goodness, and finally, grace and love. All these perfect virtues will be brought into full light in the person of the Messiah, the King of Israel. A Joshua in his filthy clothes, a Zerubbabel, weak and powerless, were far from able to display these characteristics. Even during the glorious reign of Solomon, when, in the king, one could see a certain reflection of God's wisdom, these traits were soon again lost, for Solomon never bore the glory in all its perfection. Only one Person will display it to the full and in its entirety, when the knowledge of the glory of God will shine in "the face of Jesus Christ." He will bear the glory; the Assembly, the New Jerusalem, will have her, possess her, for of her is it said: "having the glory of God" and "the glory of God has enlightened it" (Rev. 21:11,23).

He "*shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a Priest upon His throne*" (v. 13). This shows that there will be a throne upon which neither Joshua nor Zerubbabel will have claim. On that throne will sit a Priest; no longer will He stand, like Joshua, to act as mediator and to offer up sacrifices. With Him the priesthood of Aaron will have come to an end. A

King will sit, the true Melchizedek, the King of righteousness and King of peace, who will bless the people in the name of God, and God in the name of the people — the Mediator between heaven and earth. He will bear the full load of the world's reign, and in His hand the scepter will not fail for a moment. As the rising sun He will shine upon men and there will be healing in His wings. The double crown will adorn His head; to this end served the gifts which had been brought to the temple by a few faithful ones.

"The counsel of peace shall be between them both" (v. 13). The plans of the Lord and His Messiah, the Son of David, will then be entirely fulfilled for the earth: "On earth peace, good pleasure in men." These words will become reality when the King of peace will enter Jerusalem, His elected city, announcing peace to His people and the nations.

Wondrously beautiful as this may be, our future, the future of today's believers, is far more glorious. We don't have to wait for this future glory. We may even now taste the full enjoyment of the peace that is purposed in the eternal counsels of the Father and the Son, for we may already possess it through faith.

God Remembers and Rewards

"And the crowns shall be for Helem, and for Tobijah, and for Jedaiah, and for Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of Jehovah" (v. 14). How comforting is this thought in a time of general apostasy!

The people who were then together at Jerusalem did in God's eye not have the character of the true remnant. A few men that came from Babylon were accepted by God just as those whom He had received in Jerusalem because they acknowledged the house of the Lord when it didn't as yet exist in the eyes of men. They saw it with the eye of faith and brought there their precious gifts which would serve to crown and glorify the true king. God kept these crowns in His temple as a memorial of their deed. They will also belong to them when Christ will enter into His glory. From then on the Lord acknowledged these faithful ones and gave new names to him who accompanied them and to him who received them. From now on Heldai was called Helem — power — and Josiah would be called Hen — grace! Thus, with these characteristics, God sees those who bore the Lord's name and who had a heart for the honour of His earthly house. True, those three men who had come from Babylon had little strength, but they had not denied the Lord's name. The Lord therefore establishes them as pillars in His temple (see Rev. 3:8,12). In their weak condition they had trusted in the Lord. God sees them in Christ as the pillar Boaz in Solomon's temple whose name means: "In him is strength." Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, who had received them, recognizing them as the Lord's servants, and valuing their gifts, and who kept them under his roof as a precious treasure in those days of decline, God called Hen. God saw grace, that other characteristic of Christ, in his person.

What is our position regarding these things? Are we satisfied to have a profession that does not affect our heart, a profession of which Zechariah will give us a picture in the following chapters, and about which the prophet Malachi will pronounce his disapproval? Or is the name "Christian" not a hollow sound for us, but do we display, like these men, something of the characteristics of Him whose name is pronounced over us? Do we acknowledge the Assembly of Christ, the temple and house of God, there where thus far only the foundation of it has been laid in the midst of general indifference and unfaithfulness? Have our gifts the building of God's house in view, or are they used for houses of our own invention, to which we better not refer by name? Let us not forget that all that we add to the house of God contributes to the glory of Christ, placing pearls on His crown. Our sacrifices must have the worship of Him in view and be brought to the place where He causes His name to dwell. God will only remember that which is done for His beloved Son. It matters little with what names the world scoffs at us, as long as we have the Lord's approbation. "Helem" and "Hen" — power and grace — are written on the white stone He will give to His faithful ones (Rev. 2:17)!

But there is more. The remembrance of what we have done for Him during a time in which faith alone could distinguish His Assembly and see the glory of His Person, will remain forever in His temple. Those who have not denied His name will have part in the crown with which their faithful hearts have adorned Christ's head. That crown is for them; He gives it to them, He will cause them to share in His glory. There will be a book of remembrance for them who fear the Lord and continue to await His coming. Just so, there will be a remembrance in His temple of those who in a time of humiliation and decline have acknowledged His sovereignty and bowed themselves before Him who by God is saluted as Priest in perpetuity, according to the order of Melchizedek.

To be cont'd

The Breaches In The Wall (1)

—Hamilton Smith.

Isaiah 22: 5-14.

This passage depicts a dark day in the history of Jerusalem. It was "a day of trouble" and "perplexity." "The enemy was at the gate" and "the walls of the city were broken down." The inhabitants of Jerusalem saw their choice valleys filled with chariots, and the horsemen of their enemy at the gate. To defend themselves they looked "to the armour of the house of the forest." They also saw "the breaches of the city of David," and made the most desperate efforts to stop the breaches, even breaking down the houses to fortify the walls. Alas, in the day of their trouble, they missed the mind of the Lord, and this in a threefold way.

First, they entirely failed to see that the "trouble" and "perplexity" — the enemy at the gate and the breaches in the wall — were "by" or "from the Lord God of hosts." They overlooked the first great cause of all their trouble and, looking merely at second causes, could only see that an enemy had made the breaches. They did not see that the Lord was behind all, and that, in His righteous judgment, He had allowed the enemies of Israel to make the breaches in the wall because of their sin and folly.

Secondly, though they made the most strenuous efforts to repair the breaches, yet, in their trouble and perplexity, they did not look to the Lord. The Lord has to say, "Thou didst look in that day to the armour... but ye have not looked unto the Maker thereof, neither had respect unto Him, that fashioned it long ago."

Thirdly, the Lord called "to weeping and to mourning," but instead they abandoned themselves to feasting and drinking, for they said, "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die." They pursued their course, as if all would be well, with utter indifference as to results and without a thought as to the future.

In this, the close of the Christian dispensation, the people of God again find themselves in "a day of trouble" and "perplexity," according to that word which tells us "in the last days difficult times shall come." We may truly say, The enemy is at the gate, ever seeking to break up and scatter the people of God, and our hands are weakened for resisting the enemy by reason of the breaches in the wall. Hence the words of the prophet still carry with them warning, as well as guidance, for those who are in a like condition, and who have ears to hear, for "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through endurance and encouragement of the Scriptures might have hope."

Before, however, we seek to apply the lessons of Isaiah 22, it may be well to take a general view of the condition in which the people of God find themselves today, and the distinct activities of the Spirit of God during the past four centuries.

To be cont'd