

Sermon to the Saints which are at Topeka, Kansas, Sunday, February 21, 2016

Last week I brought to the table many preliminary discussions to help in properly framing the battle at Armageddon. A significant portion of that sermon introduced distinguishing thoughts about the separate event in eschatology; the siege of Jerusalem, which precedes the final battle where Christ takes possession of His earthly throne and begins His millennial reign. The distinction between the two is plainly viewed in this simple prophecy found in the book of Zechariah:

"Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people [i.e., 144,000] shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle." (Zechariah 14:1-3)

We will finish our view of the siege of Jerusalem today, and then take the Lord's Supper. I will then turn my attention more fully to the great battle of Armageddon next week. These will be introductory and structural treatments, because just as these matters occupied significant portions of the words from the prophets of old, they properly should occupy our minds and hearts. Christ plainly warned against a sleepy, inattentive disposition toward these great matters, in response to the apostle's inquiry regarding the signs of his coming -- through prophecy and parable. (Matthew 24-25)

Part of last week's discussion was a review of the two periods that will make up the seven-year dispensation. A little more focus on that junction between the periods will -- I think -- help solidify your view of these weighty matters.

Christ's return comes at the close of the Gentile church dispensation; the end of which is a most terrifying time of upheavals for the tender and peace-loving souls who are compacted into that final body of believers. A key component to that period -- as I explained with some comprehensive treatment for two sermons in September 2015 -- is the tormenting preachments of the two witnesses. If you will recall, one of the representations of those witnesses was the "ox" of Ezekiel 1 or the "calf" of Revelation 4. This beast of burden -- representing the patient constancy of the elders in treading out the corn and "feeding" or "ministering to" the saints under their watch -- is seen again in a prophecy that closes chapter 32 of Isaiah:

"Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass."
(Isaiah 32:20)

About which, Gill remarks: *"and the Jews themselves apply it to the times of the Messiah; and it undoubtedly points to Gospel times, and even to those times when the Jews shall be converted, and*

great numbers among the Gentiles also, who shall join together in spreading the Gospel, and in promoting the interest of Christ."

This view of the passage is altogether consistent with what I have presented in the first three and one half year period of this seven-year dispensation, as the 144,000 are called and are joined with the Gentile church in their ministrations during that violent sanctification of His people in the earth.

"And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." (Isaiah 11:12)

... answering to ...

"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, ... And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, ... Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." (Revelation 7:1-3)

Though we are speaking of two distinct periods (pre-advent and post-advent), the events on the ground will move seamlessly along and are intimately connected as part of the greater event of Christ's "coming out party". I will return to this event sequence after some more conceptual framework is put into place about the siege of Jerusalem.

The severity of this siege is a matter that bears consideration. In representative terms, we have expressions of that severity from the mouth of prophets ... including Christ. For example:

"[A]nd there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." (Daniel 12:1)

and

"But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us." (Luke 23:28-30)

However, there are other passages that give more detailed accounts of the nature of the violence that will come upon these unregenerate Jews who inhabit Jerusalem when this siege occurs. Here are some examples from major and minor prophets:

"For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will bring up a company upon them, and will give them to be removed and spoiled. And the company shall stone them with stones, and dispatch them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire." (Ezekiel 23:46-47)

and

"The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land." (Zephaniah 1:14-18)

and

"For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." (Malachi 4:1)

And we know that this is the work of the armies of all heathen nations that are appointed to do this work as these exemplary passages describe:

"Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel. ... And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision." (Isaiah 29:1-2, 7)

and

"Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion." (Micah 4:11)

A major portion of the prophecy of Amos identifies the nations that surround Jerusalem -- Syria, Gaza, Lebanon, Edom, Egypt, Ammon, and Moab -- and articulates the slaughter that will come to those nations for participating in the work determined upon Judah because she ***"despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked."*** (Amos 2:4) Similarly, the prophecies of Ezekiel enumerate the punishments that

will fall upon those nations for their participation. The nations are going to march on modern day Israel, as it is positioned when that great day of the wrath of the Lamb comes upon them.

It bears mention here that the Israel which the prophets of old traversed was not the Israel of today. The concentration of population was far less. The advancements in structures and technology clearly make it an entirely different reality than would have been known to the average citizen in those times. But please do not imagine that a true and accurate view of how Israel ... Judah ... Jerusalem would be when these prophesied horrors come upon them was beyond the view of the prophets. I don't think it would be responsible to do so, as it would shorten the hand of God to suppose He had any lack of knowledge in that regard, and what limit would there be to His ability to show it to His servants the prophets?

In fact, except that we would be given clearer eyes to see and prophesy, we have no real understanding of how that place will look when Antichrist is loosed upon the globe. We must speak of these things based upon what Scripture instructs, without burdening those words with suppositions driven from our temporal understandings of places, people, and events.

Let me please bring our discussion back to the analysis with which I began this sermon -- now that I've shared some additional information about the nature of, and participants in, this siege of Jerusalem that precedes the battle of Armageddon. I want to demonstrate, using another prophecy in Isaiah, how the prophets discussed these final world events as a whole picture -- moving fluidly back and forth through the various events.

The prophecy is found in the 33rd chapter of Isaiah -- directly after the verse previously discussed closes the previous chapter:

"Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass."
(Isaiah 32:20)

I will introduce and discuss the prophecy with framing or annotations to help with the fitting of that prophecy in the event-sequencing outline I have prepared for viewing the seven-year dispensation called The Day of the Lord:

"1 ¶ Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.

This opening salvo is a declaration of warning to those who have been most violently opposing the "**ox and the ass**", whose feet have been sent forth to sow (i.e., preach) to the convulsing inhabitants of the earth during the first three and one half year period. Those blessed souls have not returned in kind;

though their prayers to God have brought about many adumbrating horrors to the rebellious hordes (see Revelation 8:3-5). When the day that the spoiling God has sent forth -- including the slaughter of all the unregenerate Jews -- is complete, it will be given those (Jews in Zion; Gentiles from the heavenly Jerusalem above) to **"rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers:"** (Revelation 2:27)

2 O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.

The Jews, knowing what prophecies have been written about the coming tribulation for their brethren, lift up the terms of God's promise of grace to them when that hour comes very precipitously. While they are learning from the righteous Gentiles how to properly serve the King of Glory, they pray for God's strengthening and protective hand upon them while they usher in the coming change and tribulation.

3 At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered.

Being saturated with a knowledge of these coming things, the prophet leaps forward in his examination of the events -- to the great battle at the valley of Megiddo where the armies of the nations scatter at the sight of the armies of Christ in their terrible array and are put down (see Revelation 19:11-21). This scattering is described by this same prophet elsewhere as though great swaths of combatants are being wiped out by Christ, like a person swimming the breast stroke would do: **"And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim: and he shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands."** (Isaiah 25:11)

4 And your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them.

Keeping his focus on the latter end of the dispensational events, this verse describes the greatness of the spoil left behind from this great battle, and the taking of that spoil by the 144,000 righteous Jews who will then be put into possession of the land and all that therein lies. Here Isaiah references the earlier onslaught of the terrifying locusts (Revelation 9:3-4) to describe the energetic nature of those who will go forth to the spoil left by the armies of Antichrist.

5 The LORD is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.

6 And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure.

Here is the post-Armageddon view of the King of kings taking His throne and setting up His kingdom and rule -- distinguished by those perfections of monarchy: wisdom, knowledge, stability, strength, and fear.

7 Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without: the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.

Bringing the view of the case back to the time before Christ has returned, we see the laboring of the valiant and righteous Gentiles and Jews -- "**the ox and the ass**" -- as ambassadors, crying out to the people to be reconciled to Christ. This is the picture painted in Revelation 11:3, where the two witnesses "**prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.**"

8 The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man.

9 The earth mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down: Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits.

Waste of any gospel preaching! We are here coming to the close of the first three and one half year period. We are here coming to that place Daniel described: "**and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease**". (Daniel 9:27) Those represented here as the wayfaring man, who "**shall run to and fro,**" with the gospel have completed their course and have ceased their activities.

This is also Paul's description of the whole creation that "**groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.**" (Romans 8:22) The earth is heaving and convulsing with natural and hellish chaos, while the earth-dwellers feast on the vanity that their champion antichrist has rid the earth of God and Christ -- because they have put down the "**two prophets [who] tormented them that dwelt on the earth.**" (Revelation 11:10). This is nearly the picture that this present earth and its inhabitants paint, and that vexes our "**righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds**" (2 Peter 2:8).

10 Now will I rise, saith the LORD; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself.

Christ returns. Christ removes the Gentile Christians from the equation, placing the dead in Christ and those who are alive and remain safely out of the way -- putting them into possession of their glorified frames and estates. Christ takes the gathered Jewish elect "**into the wilderness, into her place [i.e., Zion per Revelation 14:1], where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.**" (Revelation 12:14)

11 Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you.

12 And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

13 ¶ Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might.

14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

These words are written to -- and about -- the unregenerate Jews. Isaiah is prophesying directly to the Jews in his generation -- as well as for the benefit of all those who would afterward read them with eyes to see ... those about which it is written: "**[T]hey are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.**" (1 Corinthians 10:11). But the pronouns in these verses "ye", "your", "you", "the people", "sinners in Zion", "hypocrites" and "us" all point to the unregenerate Jews. It is an expression of the severity of the coming siege and the hopelessness of the defiant, rebel Jews' traditions and expectations. Isaiah was -- by today's deceitful standards -- a raging anti-Semite!

15 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;

16 He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.

17[a] Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty:

These can be none other than those who walk in the earth with "**the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:**" (Romans 3:22) -- which by definition excludes these works-righteous, apostate Jews who have yet to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is God and their Messiah. These are Jews who have come out from a most severe sect of human beings in their practice of "**hard speeches**" against Christ and His servants. These have great shame for their perpetual practices of gaining wealth through their oppressions and taking of bribes to shed innocent blood and commit the most extreme of evil practices.

When the prophet Micah takes up the discussion of the severity of these wicked Jews' conduct, he describes it thusly: "**They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us.**" (Micah 3:10-11).

Because these have forsaken all such -- having been sealed by the Holy Spirit -- they are given a place to dwell safely apart from what is coming upon their unregenerate kin, where they are fed as miraculously as the children of Israel coming out of Egypt ... with bread from heaven and sure waters from the Rock.

The first half of verse 17 -- crisply separated with a colon -- intimates a transition from what is taking place among those dwelling on high, in munitions of rocks, and what is going on below. The final, and most comforting aspect of these rejoicing Jews who have been called out is that they are indeed looking

upon the returned Saviour whose beauty is before them to perpetually behold, like we see in the opening of Revelation 14: ***"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand"***. (Revelation 14:1)

[17b T] *hey shall behold the land that is very far off.*

18 Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? where is the receiver? where is he that counted the towers?

For the filthy and abominable Jews beneath the secure mountain, the view is quite different ... quite horrifying. They can see the land where their redeemed brethren dwell -- but like the rich man who beholds Lazarus in Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:26), there is an impenetrable gulf fixed between these two sets of very good and very naughty figs (Jeremiah 24:2)!

Instead, it is Magormissabib for these proud ones. They see the terror coming from every quarter of mankind -- and they are perplexed by the utter failure of their vaunted defense systems. These inquiries listed in verse 18 are itemizing the offices that are to prepare the nation for defense -- and that have been utterly undone by the hand of a God that blessed these rebels with such defenses in His providence. Where are those powerful defense planners? Where are the funds needed to mount this defense? Where is the IDF? The Mossad?

19 Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand.

Righteous Jews on Mt. Zion are being assured that while those of the despoiled Jews will be run feverishly upon by armies of men who are bloodthirsty and speak strange languages in their shouts of terrifying triumph over them -- those who sit upon Mt. Zion with the Lamb shall not be exposed to such ferocious undoing.

Therefore, after being comforted with this assurance, they are encouraged to consider what peace will come when this displeasure of God has been vented against the rebellious Jews who committed so great whoredoms with the kings of the earth, to wit:

20 Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.

21 But there the glorious LORD will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.

22 For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.

23 Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey.

24 And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." (Isaiah 33:1-24)

The armies of Antichrist will be fully put down at Armageddon -- and Christ's righteous nation of Israel will be put into possession of their land, where they will dwell in physical and spiritual health and safety.

I recommend this process for "*lensing*", if you will, the prophetic writings. At first it can seem the prophets' words are dizzyingly arbitrary and for that reason you can be quickly frustrated. But please remember what Christ said when his apostles asked Him why He spoke in parables:

"He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." (Matthew 13:11)

This is our book -- our *love note* -- from our Father, and while the unregenerate of the Adamic race can read the book, they are left with an abysmal and dysfunctional confusion about the blessed words. They, as Christ plainly said, "***seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.***" (Matthew 13:13) We simply should not expect to hear edifying words out of those who hate Christ ... who refuse to "***have this man to reign over us***" (Luke 19:14) -- when it comes to parsing out the words of prophecy. They are too inclined to see their false doctrine in it ... too inclined to deceitfully give themselves power on matters of eternity; let us eschew all such evil!

"[Y]ea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." (Romans 3:4)

All of Scripture -- and indeed all of the history of this vain and deceived world -- has existed ... does exist ... and until that last assigned moment will exist for the sole purpose of fulfilling that covenanted event: "***The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him***". (Revelation 1:1) So, putting that lens onto every prophet's writings you can see how they were comfortable flowing seamlessly between past, present and future tense ... between short term and long term prophecy ... between history and eschatology. To their understanding -- as to the understanding of all His chosen ones -- God inhabits eternity and is not bound to the silly concept of time:

"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Peter 3:8)

Much, much more can be culled from these prophecies of the coming siege against the unrighteous Jews -- in the full and awful fulfillment of God's promise that they will not see His peace in keeping His

promise to their father Abraham. Remember that my purpose in this work is to give you help in understanding the proper place of that promise in the coming upheavals that will draw this whole creation to the Kingdom of Christ.

I am hopeful that next week I can bring into full view the most awful slaughter of mankind since the Flood of Noah. Every day I watch the march of the abomination that Noah and Lot witnessed surge across this dying globe ... every day I watch the spiritual darkness wax gross in the minds and hearts of those who pretend to Christianity ... I pray for better understanding of that day when Christ will return.

It is critically relevant, my dear friends, that we consider this as a distinct element of our observance of the Lord's Supper, as the Apostle has said:

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." (1 Corinthians 11:26)

Amen