

“Consider Your Ways!”

Minor Prophets: Message 15

March 7, 2010

Haggai

Find Haggai in your Old Testament; it is the third book to the left of Matthew.

After a two-month interlude, we will resume our series of messages on the Minor Prophets with the last of the OT prophets, viz. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

John the Baptist was, in fact, the last OT prophet, but he left no writings of his own. Jesus said, “For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist ...” Luke 7:28

Although I have studied and taught verse by verse through the Minor Prophets at least three times over the past 40 years, on this pass, I became more aware than ever of how important it is to understand the historical setting of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi as being post-exilic prophets.

These last three prophets are in a way “synoptic prophets.” Synoptic means “seen together.” Just as the first three gospels; Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the Synoptic Gospels, or the “seen together” gospels, i.e. giving the same view, so do these last three prophets give the same view.

The fourth gospel of John gives a different view of Christ. By different I do not imply any contradictions with the first three gospels, just a view of Christ from almost a generation later than the first three gospels, when the deity of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ was under strong attack.

The Synoptic Gospels, while certainly declaring the deity of Jesus Christ, focus more on His works of healing and compassion. John’s Gospel is mainly about the Sent One of God, the Word made flesh, God Incarnate!

And even though the prophecy of Malachi comes nearly 90 years after Haggai and Zechariah, who were contemporaries in 520 B.C., the theme of these three post-exilic prophets is to prepare the people for Messiah; the promise that the Seed of the woman will bruise the head of the seed of the serpent is near to fulfillment.

Millennia have passed since God spoke that prophetic word of promise to the serpent in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve standing close by.

Genesis 3:14-15

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent:

"Because you have done this,
You *are* cursed more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you shall go,
And you shall eat dust
All the days of your life.

¹⁵ And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel."

And now it is only a few centuries until the fulness of time will have arrived. So it is my belief that these last three prophets should be "seen together," as synoptic prophets.

History and dates are better understood when you read them in a book and can look back at the dates rather than have a speaker rattling off dates. However, a brief summary of the history of Judah is necessary if we are to correctly understand these last three prophets.

After Solomon, the kingdom of Judah was divided into a northern kingdom known as Israel and a southern kingdom that remained known as Judah.

In 722 B.C. the northern kingdom of Israel was invaded by Assyria and the people were dispersed throughout the empire never to be brought home again.

After the Assyrian empire fell to Babylon in 612 B.C. it was not long before the southern kingdom of Judah was overrun by the Babylonians and in 586 B.C. Jerusalem and the temple was destroyed, and the Jews lived in captivity for 70 years. The practice of the Babylonians was different from the Assyrians in that the captives were gathered in communities and they kept their identity as Jews.

Then in 539 B.C. the Persians rose to world power with Cyrus as the emperor. It was Cyrus that allowed Ezra to return from Babylon to Judah.

Cyrus was killed in 530 B.C. and his son Cambyses became king. Then while Cambyses was in a war campaign in Egypt and there was a military coup led by Gaumata who claimed to be Cambyses' brother. Cambyses died on the way home from Egypt and a general named Darius gained control of the empire from Gaumata in 522 B.C.

Thus, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are post-exilic prophets; i.e. they were sent by God to Judah after the seventy years of Babylonian captivity. A remnant of the Jews was allowed, even encouraged, to leave Babylon and go to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple and re-establish the system of sacrificial worship.

By the time of the return there were not very many Jews still alive in Babylon who had lived in Jerusalem who had seen the glory of the first temple that was built by Solomon. Anyone who had lived in Jerusalem before the Babylonian captivity and was old enough at the time to remember the beauty of the first temple would now be in their eighties.

Before the Babylonian captivity the worship of Jehovah, following God's word to Moses, was centered, first on the tabernacle, and then on the temple. Worship was focused on the **sacrifice, the altar, and the priests**. But during the seventy years of captivity there was no temple and the people were in a far away land.

It is important for you to keep **sacrifice, the altar, and the priests** in your thoughts as we unfold this prophecy.

It was during the Babylonian captivity that the synagogues were instituted as an alternative to sacrificial worship in the temple.

Now the Babylonian captivity is over!

A remnant, estimated at about 50,000 of the Jews came to Jerusalem!

Ezra and Nehemiah were the first men charged with rebuilding Jerusalem, the temple, and the wall, and Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were the prophets.

The message of these last three prophets, in fact, the focus all of the OT prophets was about Christ.

Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Rev 19:10

As Mr. Charles Alexander said, "Jesus walks among the prophets." By that he meant that all that Jesus said and did was in some way fulfilling OT prophecy. If we don't see Christ as preeminent in the prophets we have simply misunderstood the prophets.

We will add more details as we work through these last three prophets but as a "sampler" I will give you a few examples of how they each point to Christ.

1) **Haggai** understands that the second temple is not as glorious outwardly as the first temple built by Solomon but "the glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts." Haggai 2:9

The reason that the glory of this latter temple will be greater than the former temple is because the Lord Jesus Christ will come to this temple; first as a boy who will astonish the rabbis with His questions, His understanding, and His answers.

Also keep the emphasis on this temple in your thoughts.

Luke 2:41-50

⁴¹ His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. ⁴³ When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know *it*; ⁴⁴ but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among *their* relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵ So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. ⁴⁶ Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. ⁴⁸ So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."

⁴⁹ And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

Who told Jesus that God was His Father?

Later Jesus will to show His authority as the Son of God!

Jesus will cleanse this temple of the merchandisers, He will give sight to the man born blind, and He will prophesy that He is the temple, the place where God is worshipped.

2) **Zechariah** is the most quoted OT prophet in the NT.

There are no less than 393 references or allusions to Zechariah in the NT. My reference is The Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament, by Beale and Carson.

Let's take a couple of examples of Zechariah's prophecy of Christ in the NT.

There are about 30 references to Zechariah 9:9 in the NT.

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your King is coming to you;
He *is* just and having salvation,
Lowly and riding on a donkey,
A colt, the foal of a donkey.

This prophecy of Zechariah is directly fulfilled when Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem a week before He was crucified.

John 12:12-16

¹² The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out:

"Hosanna!

'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'

The King of Israel!"

¹⁴ Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written:

¹⁵ *"Fear not, daughter of Zion;
Behold, your King is coming,
Sitting on a donkey's colt."*

And then there are also about 30 references to Zechariah 12:10 in the NT.

"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only *son*, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

3) **Malachi** Who will not recognise that the prophecy of Malachi is referring to John the Baptist as the forerunner of Christ?

Malachi 3:1

"Behold, I send My messenger,
And he will prepare the way before Me.
And the Lord, whom you seek,
Will suddenly come to His temple,
Even the Messenger of the covenant,
In whom you delight.
Behold, He is coming,"
Says the LORD of hosts.

What I mean to do is to call your attention to the relative urgency of these three prophets as they speak of Christ and His coming into the world. After millennia of waiting only less than five centuries remain until the "Hinge of History" B.C. & A.D. comes into the world!

With that as an introduction to these three prophets we will take them separately.

Haggai

Haggai's name in Hebrew means "My Feast" or "Festal."

As you know the names given to the people in the Old Testament often had great significance and we shall see that Haggai, or "My Feast," has much to do with the feasts of the LORD, viz. the "New Moon" and the Feast of the Tabernacles.

We will look first at the immediate historical setting for Haggai; then give a spiritual interpretation as to how the prophecy applies to Christ and His Church; and also make some application of the prophet's words to our own time.

At first the people who came from Babylon to Jerusalem are excited and they were eager to rebuild the temple so proper sacrificial worship can be resumed. But when Haggai preaches to them in 520 B.C. sixteen years have gone by and the people have lost interest in the LORD'S house and are busy with their own dwellings.

What had happened was that the importance of the temple was diminished in the minds of the people, most of whom had never even seen the first temple in all of its splendor. And another thing that may have influenced the people and lessened their enthusiasm was the Persian view that all religions were equal in value.

It looks like postmodern pluralism is not such a new idea after all. Modern pluralism says that all religions are equally valid, except that Christianity is disdained because of its exclusive claims for Jesus Christ.

I'm reminded of what Napoleon the Pig in Animal Farm said, "Some people are more equal than others."

Scholars differ as to whether Haggai was a young boy of about five years old at the time of the captivity, or if he was born in Babylon. If he was a young boy in 586 B.C. then he would have some remembrance of Solomon's temple.

Let's be reminded that Haggai is one of the three post-exilic prophets. The other two post-exilic prophets were Zechariah and Malachi. These three prophets ministered after the Babylonian captivity.

This is an important fact to keep in mind because the three post-exilic prophets did not prophesy about a future restoration of the Jews to the land of Palestine. The reason is because the restoration was then being accomplished, or as in the case of Malachi, it had been accomplished. The Jews, at least some of them, had moved from Babylon to Judea in the restoration.

We will have more to say about a "future," or third temple later.

Haggai and Zechariah are contemporary with Haggai beginning his ministry only two months before Zechariah.

Ezra puts Haggai and Zechariah together.

Ezra 5:1

Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who *were* in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, *who was* over them.

Ezra 6:14

So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished *it*, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

Then by comparing Haggai and Zechariah we get the exact dates of their ministry which is separated by only two months.

Haggai 1:1

In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, ²"Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: 'This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built.'""

Zechariah 1:1-2

In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, ²"The LORD has been very angry with your fathers.

The prophecies of Haggai come in five distinct messages delivered in just three months' time but Zechariah ministers for three years.

It is important to keep in mind the other players in this drama of God's providence at this juncture in time. There was Ezekiel, who was trained to be a priest in the temple, who is among the captives by the River Chebar and sees "visions of God" and prophesies about a new temple.

There is Daniel who is also one of the captives and in God's providence he becomes the Prime Minister of Babylon. We will look at Daniel's vision of the succession of world powers in Zechariah.

At first the people are enthusiastic and Psalm 126 reflects their joyful mood at their return from captivity.

Psalm 126

When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion, We were like those who dream.

² Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing.

Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."

³ The LORD has done great things for us, *And* we are glad.

⁴ Bring back our captivity, O LORD, As the streams in the South.

⁵ Those who sow in tears, Shall reap in joy.

⁶ He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing,

Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,

Bringing his sheaves *with him*.

Along with Haggai the other players in this drama are Zerubbabel and Joshua.

Zerubbabel is the governor, who is a Persian appointed by the Persians, but he is also a descendant of David.

Joshua is the high priest who was among the returnees.

Joshua is an important figure in Zechariah.

CONSIDER YOUR WAYS!

First Message: 1st day, 6th month: A Rebuke from the LORD [Haggai 1:1-11]

In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, ² "Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: 'This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built."'"

³ Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, ⁴ "*Is it* time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple *to lie* in ruins?" ⁵ Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways!"

Here is a commentary on materialism and the prosperity gospel:

⁶ "You have sown much, and bring in little;
You eat, but do not have enough;
You drink, but you are not filled with drink;
You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm;
And he who earns wages,
Earns wages *to put* into a bag with holes."

⁷ Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! ⁸ Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the LORD. ⁹ "You looked for much, but indeed *it came to* little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the LORD of hosts. "Because of My house that *is in* ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. ¹⁰ Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. ¹¹ For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of *your* hands."

The first day of the sixth month of the Hebrew calendar on our calendar is late August and early September. Under the Hebrew schedule of festivals this would be a "new moon" and there would be large crowds gathered at the temple site.

Although the temple was still in ruins the foundation and the altar had been rededicated upon the return from Babylon as recorded in Ezra 3. No doubt Haggai knew the people would be at the temple site for this festival and so he used this happy occasion to issue his rebuke.

The people have lost their enthusiasm and have given up on rebuilding the temple; they complain that it is not the right time to build [1:2]. The people were not refusing to rebuild the temple; it just wasn't the right time. After sixteen years of procrastination there would never be a "right time."

The people had found that it was the right time to build their own houses and they lived in fine solid structures while the temple remains in ruins. Haggai tells them that the failed harvests, the drought, and other calamities have been sent by the LORD because they have refused to work on the temple. They are encouraged to get to work on the temple. [1:7-11]

Many people today are like the Jews in Haggai's time who live in personal comfort when they should be giving more of their time and money to God's work.

They have time for lake houses and vacations, but a few hours on Sunday or mid-week is too bothersome. While they may have sufficient income, they give a relatively small amount to the church. Like these Jews, they are not given to crimes of violence, oppression, drunkenness, immorality; they are respectable moral, citizens. It's just that God doesn't have first place in their lives.

Economic hardship [1:6-11] can sometimes be the result of simply not having the right priorities. A person who “can’t afford” to give to God’s work will never be satisfied with what he does have, be it hundreds, thousands, or millions of dollars.

The subtlety of the “Prosperity Gospel” preached by the “most popular preacher in America” is that there is some truth in it. The idea that God wants you to be wealthy and the path to riches is for you to send your money to some false prophet on TV is a scam. But it is true that those who are generous and support their church usually have sufficient material wealth to be content. The difference is in your motive. If you “give to get” you are just trying to make bargains with God.

Second Message: 24th day, 6th month: Reassurance [Haggai 1:12-15]

“No prophet ever appeared at a more critical juncture in the history of the people, and no prophet was more immediately successful.” Marcus Dods

The reaction of the people to Haggai’s first message was immediate! Zerubbabel and Joshua and the remnant of the people knew it was the LORD speaking to them through the prophet [1:12].

Haggai 1:12-15

¹² Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him; and the people feared the presence of the LORD. ¹³ Then Haggai, the LORD’s messenger, spoke the LORD’s message to the people, saying, “I *am* with you, says the LORD.” ¹⁴ So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, ¹⁵ on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of King Darius.

This is godly fear, or reverence and repentance. Three weeks after the first message the people go to work because of the “fear the presence of the LORD.” This is not fear of punishment but reverence and reassurance, they revered Him anew. They were no longer indifferent.

Plans had to be recovered, materials acquired, and workmen recruited.

Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high priest, and all the remnant of the people are stirred up in spirit by the LORD and they got busy to the task.

Third Message: 21st day, 7th month: Comfort and Hope [Haggai 2:1-9]

Haggai 2:1-9

In the seventh *month*, on the twenty-first of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying: ²"Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying: ³'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, *is this* not in your eyes as nothing? ⁴Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the LORD; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the LORD, 'and work; for I *am* with you,' says the LORD of hosts. ⁵'*According to* the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!'

⁶"For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it *is* a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; ⁷and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts. ⁸'The silver *is* Mine, and the gold *is* Mine,' says the LORD of hosts. ⁹'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts."

This is the time of another feast, the Feast of the Tabernacles, when the people made brush arbors and recalled the time of the Hebrews wandering in the wilderness. When we come to this time in Zechariah we will see that Jesus Himself is the "Feast of the Tabernacles" as recorded in John Chapter 7.

As an example of interpretation of Scripture, here is a quote from the Narrated/Chronological Bible and you can see the writer's bias when he says, "perhaps" this passage is Messianic.

"A month later God asks Haggai to address the concerns of the older exiles, who had wept when the temple foundation was laid. Remembering the beauty of the great temple of Solomon, they know that its replacement will be smaller and less ornate. God's words of comfort are perhaps Messianic in nature. He promises that, even though the architectural appointments will not compare with those of Solomon's temple, God will one day fill this new temple with even greater glory.

Perhaps the message alludes symbolically to another temple, or possibly to the fact that the Messiah will personally walk through the very building they are now erecting." [Narrated/Chronological Bible]

Because of my own bias it is my understanding that this passage is not “perhaps” but is indeed Messianic in nature and that the first advent of the Lord Jesus Christ is the direct fulfillment of Haggai 2:6-9. **This temple!**

Let’s see if that view can be supported by the Scriptures.

In the Bible “shaking of the heavens and the earth” refers to upheavals of governments and empires.

... I will shake heaven and earth

1) The shaking of the heavens and the nations occurred when Christ came into the world. The message of the resurrection of Christ is what turned the world upside down. Cf. Acts 17:6

When Peter quotes Joel in Acts 2 the scene is an upheaval in the heavens.

The shaking of the heaven and earth occurred on Mount Sinai and again when Christ was born.

Hebrews 12:25-29

²⁵ See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven, ²⁶ whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “*Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.*” ²⁷ Now this, “*Yet once more,*” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

²⁹ For our God *is* a consuming fire.

... the Desire of All Nations

2) At least ten of the commentaries that I consulted are sure that the Desire of all nations [2:7] refers to Christ. They say things like, "It can be none other than Christ."

Mr. Charles D. Alexander who gave most of his ministry to the study of prophecy gives a different view. Alexander was almost always in the minority in his interpretation of prophecy.

If you are interested in prophecy I recommend that you go to Brother Walter's website, Allbygrace, and download Prophecy Spiritually Understood, by Charles D. Alexander.

Speaking of being in the minority, Brother Gables, it was the same with you in your search of about 30 of the commentaries on 1 Kings 19 that make out Elijah to be a coward when he flees from Jezebel into the wilderness. Jim, you clearly established that Elijah was in the will of God and that he was not a coward. So you hold to a minority view of the character of Elijah which I also strongly support.

It has been my experience that the majority opinion is rarely the measure of correctness. Jesus said something about the majority view.

Luke 6:26

Woe to you when all men speak well of you,
For so did their fathers to the false prophets.

The majority called for Jesus to be crucified. Now don't confuse the providence of God in overruling the intents of the hearts of those wicked men who crucified Christ as making their evil deeds correct.

Nor is this a matter of me taking a minority view or of being different for the sake of being sensational; it is my honest attempt to be faithful to the Scriptures.

Haggai 2:6-7

⁶"For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; ⁷and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts.

The question before us is, is this shaking of the heaven and the earth ... a lead-in to a great number of people coming to the “Desire of all nations,” and the “Desire” being Christ? Or, is the Hebrew word better translated into another English word?

According to the Hebrew scholar C. F. Kiel, it is not possible to translate the Hebrew word as a singular noun, e.g. “desire” because the verb is plural. If that is correct then “desire,” being singular, cannot be correct and therefore it cannot refer to a singular person, viz. Christ.

The Hebrew word *chemdah* is translated “desire” in KJV and NKJ.

There are 26 English translations of the Bible in my computer and here is the rendering of some of the better known translations.

Desire of all nations: singular - KJV & NKJV
Desired of all nations: singular -NIV

Wealth of all nations: plural – NASB & NASU
Treasures of all nations: plural – RSV & NRSV & ESV
Precious things: plural - ASV & AMP

Now if we take the view that this must be a plural noun and thus it cannot be Christ, then what does it mean?

Referring back to Mr. Alexander who says it is Christ speaking through the prophet Haggai. Christ is shaking the nations at His first coming and this *chemdah* is the harvest from among all nations, the Gentiles, the election of grace. The treasures of all nations are what God desires, the precious things to Him are His jewels.

Hold on to this thought because we will be reminded in a few minutes that Christ is the temple and the temple is the church, and the church is His body.

Glory

... and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts...

'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts.

The people were discouraged because this second temple was not as splendid as the first temple but the LORD of hosts says "the glory of this latter temple will be greater than the former."

Long before the destruction of the first temple the glory had departed. Read Ezekiel 8-10 for the sad story of idolatry in the temple itself.

Ezekiel 8:15-16

¹⁵ Then He said to me, "Have you seen *this*, O son of man? Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these." ¹⁶ So He brought me into the inner court of the LORD 's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the LORD , between the porch and the altar, *were* about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east.

Ezekiel 10:18

Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim.

The glory of Solomon's temple was the Shekinah.

But the LORD of hosts says:

"the glory of this latter temple will be greater than the former."

Once more I credit Mr. Charles Alexander for his insight into how the Old Testament is explained in the New Testament.

Was there glory when Jesus Christ was born?

We have already made some comments about the shaking of the heavens and the earth but there is more.

uke 2:8-14

⁸ Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. ¹⁰ Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. ¹¹ For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

Luke 2:25-32

²⁵ And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸ he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

²⁹ "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;
³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation
³¹ Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,
³² A light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel."

Glory! Glory! Glory!

"And glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's Land." Samuel Rutherford

Now what I learned next from Mr. Alexander about Haggai 2:7 thrilled my very soul!

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Greek word translated “dwelt” or “tabernacled” is *skeenee* and finds its root in the Hebrew word translated SHEKINAH: Shekinah is the visible manifestation of God's glory.

Haggai 2:9

'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts."

**The visible manifestation of God's glory;
the Shekinah of this temple is Jesus Christ!**

'And in this place I will give peace,'

And the peace of God in Christ Jesus came to this very temple.

Now I want to make a few comments about the notion of a third temple to be built in Jerusalem at some future time. Again I am in the minority because most Christians have been taught that there will be a third temple with an altar and sacrifices as a “memorial.”

It is my belief that there are only two temples and that there will be no third temple, at least not one fulfilling prophecy.

Very briefly here are my reasons:

Temple worship was focused on the sacrifice, the altar, and the priests.

The purpose of the temple and the system of worship was sacrifices offered by a priest. If there is to be a third temple where animal sacrifices are offered by a priest then the entire Gospel of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God goes away!

John 2:13-22

¹³ Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. ¹⁵ When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. ¹⁶ And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!"

¹⁷ Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "*Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.*"

¹⁸ So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?"

¹⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

²⁰ Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

²¹ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. ²² Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

Jesus said destroy this temple, i.e. the temple of Haggai and Zechariah, and a "temple" will be raised up. This temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. and the true temple of His body, the place of true worship, was raised up from the grave after three days and three nights, according to the Scriptures.

Don't look for a third temple of stone because we have our Temple and it is Christ Jesus! We have a temple and we have an altar upon which to make our sacrifices.

Hebrews 13:10-16

¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹ For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. ¹² Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. ¹³ Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. ¹⁴ For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. ¹⁵ Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name. ¹⁶ But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

We not only have a temple and an altar we have a High Priest.

If there is to be a literal third temple then there must be a high priest. The high priest must be of the Levitical heritage. And no one today or any day in the future can prove that he is a Jew. The lineage records were all destroyed in 70 A.D. The Jews have intermarried for centuries and there is just no way to establish that any one is a Jew. That means that there can be no legitimate high priest.

As for me I am satisfied with my High Priest.

Hebrews 6:19-20

¹⁹ This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil, ²⁰ where the forerunner has entered for us, *even Jesus*, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

If Jesus is High Priest forever, who is going to replace Him in that office?

So we don't need a third temple of stone, or an altar, or a high priest from among sinners. We have Jesus Christ who is Himself our temple, our altar, and our High Priest and if that is not what you want, you have believed "another gospel."

Fourth Message: 24th day, 9th month: Cleansing and Blessing [Haggai 2:10-19]

Haggai 2:10-19

¹⁰ On the twenty-fourth *day* of the ninth *month*, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, ¹¹ "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Now, ask the priests *concerning the law*, saying, ¹² "If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?'"

Then the priests answered and said, "No."

¹³ And Haggai said, "If *one who is unclean because* of a dead body touches any of these, will it be unclean?"

So the priests answered and said, "It shall be unclean."

¹⁴ Then Haggai answered and said, "'So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,' says the LORD, 'and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.

¹⁵ 'And now, carefully consider from this day forward: from before stone was laid upon stone in the temple of the LORD — ¹⁶ since those *days*, when *one* came to a heap of twenty ephahs, there were *but* ten; when *one* came to the wine vat to draw out fifty baths from the press, there were *but* twenty. ¹⁷ I struck you with blight and mildew and hail in all the labors of your hands; yet you did not *turn* to Me,' says the LORD. ¹⁸ 'Consider now from this day forward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, from the day that the foundation of the LORD 's temple was laid — consider it: ¹⁹ Is the seed still in the barn? As yet the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have not yielded *fruit*. *But* from this day I will bless *you*.'"

At the end of the following month (the month after Zechariah speaks) Haggai continues Zechariah's theme. Haggai contends that the temple workers cannot claim to be righteous simply because they are working on the house of the LORD.

In fact, if their personal lives are not holy, their involvement in the temple's construction will actually desecrate the holy sanctuary.

A preacher whose personal life is ungodly is an abomination to God!

Haggai brings his lessons in the form of two hypothetical questions to the priests.

It is true that while evil, or corruption, is contagious, good is not.

Disease can be transferred by contact, but health cannot. You can catch a cold from someone who has a cold but you can't get rid of your cold by touching who doesn't have a cold. One rotten apple can spoil a basket full of good ones, but a basket of good apples cannot make a bad one better.

The former attitude of the people towards the LORD and His house had polluted their own labor and as a result the LORD's blessing was withheld. The situation is now changed. The impurity has been removed and their fields will be fruitful once more.

Fifth Message: 24th day, 9th month: Security [Haggai 2:20-23]

Haggai 2:20-23

²⁰ And again the word of the LORD came to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying, ²¹ "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying:

'I will shake heaven and earth.

²² I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms;

I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms.

I will overthrow the chariots

And those who ride in them;

The horses and their riders shall come down,

Every one by the sword of his brother.

²³ 'In that day,' says the LORD of hosts, 'I will take you, Zerubbabel My servant, the son of Shealtiel,' says the LORD, 'and will make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you,' says the LORD of hosts."

The last message by Haggai is given on the same day as the previous one. Zerubbabel, the governor, is assured of the LORD'S blessing; the strength of the heathen will be broken; God will show mercy to His people.

“God brings a special message, ostensibly for Zerubbabel the governor. However, there is reason to believe that Zerubbabel himself is not referred to in the prophetic wording, but rather to another leader of God’s people—the coming Messiah.

“Though Zerubbabel was rewarded personally, he probably represents all God’s faithful people. Moreover, he was an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the promise to him foreshadows the later promise that “the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.” (Cf. Luke 1:32)

In Haggai 2:23 the LORD speaks to Zerubbabel and says that he will be as a signet. A signet is a sign of a king. It is a fact that there was no king in Judah after the Babylonian captivity and the fulfillment is in Jesus Christ.

Luke 1:26-33

²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"

²⁹ But when she saw *him*,* she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³ And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

“The work on the temple now fully underway, Haggai slips from further notice in the historical record. Brief as his recorded ministry may have been, it has filled a most significant need in the restoration of the nation and its religious life.”

[Narrated/Chronological Bible]

The great lesson of Haggai is that it is not how you start, but how you finish.

May it please our merciful God that you have seen a little of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ as He is spoken of in the prophets.

Jesus is our Temple, Jesus is our altar, Jesus is our sacrifice, and Jesus is our High Priest! Are you like John the Baptist: Do we look for another?

Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Rev 19:10

Amen.

Appended: “No Third Temple” by Charles D. Alexander

Serial Number: 041-6

PROPHECY
SPRITUALLY
UNDERSTOOD

NO THIRD TEMPLE

(Part Six of The Six-Day War and The Future of Israel)

By: Charles D. Alexander

NO THIRD TEMPLE

Ezekiel's ministry closes with his vision of the new temple, occupying the last nine chapters of the book. Fourteen years after the temple at Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and in the 25th year of his own exile, Ezekiel is given this assurance that in the course of time there would be another temple in which the purposes of God would be perfectly fulfilled.

It is agreed by all that this promise was not fulfilled in the temple built of Ezra in the days of the return of the captive Jews under the decree of Cyrus, King of Persia.

It was Ezra's temple which was destroyed by the Romans 40 years after the crucifixion of Christ and for the last 2,000 years there has been no temple at Jerusalem. The site has been occupied for the last 1,000 years by a Moslem mosque and to that extent Jerusalem is still, with its very large Arab population, dominated by the great Mosque of El Aksah, still "trodden down of the gentiles" despite the present Jewish occupation.

At the time of Ezekiel's closing vision there was neither temple, priesthood, nor monarchy in Israel, nor do these vital elements of Jewish national life exist there today.

The vision of Ezekiel supplies all three and if ever we were in the realm of the spirit and not of the flesh it is here, for the coming of Christ 2,000 years ago abolished temple, priesthood, and earthly monarchy. He was Himself the promised "King of the Jews" as Pilate, under divine compulsion, insisted on inscribing upon His cross, but His kingdom being not of this world, He reigns in resurrection glory at the right hand of the Father – and will continue to reign till His foes are made His footstool.

There can never be a THIRD TEMPLE at Jerusalem for several good reasons:

1. A temple requires a sacrifice (around which the temple is built), and a priesthood. By his death Christ has abolished both. He is Himself the temple, the altar, the sacrifices, and the Priest. His priesthood, like His sacrifice of Himself for our sins, is eternal and unchangeable. Only by the abolition of the New Covenant,

which He established by His death and resurrection, can there be any alteration of the divine arrangements or any room for a THIRD TEMPLE.

2. The prophecy of Haggai proves that it was the SECOND TEMPLE which was to see the establishment of all God's purposes in Christ.

Here are the words from Haggai 2:6-9:

Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; And I will shake all nations and the desires of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord of Hosts, and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

Haggai was prophesying at the dedication of the SECOND TEMPLE built by Ezra and his companions who returned from the great captivity. He was declaring that despite the poor appearance of that temple in comparison with the magnificence of the first, or Solomon's temple, this SECOND TEMPLE would be more glorious than the first because to it the Lord Himself would come. During the existence of the SECOND TEMPLE God would do that work which would shake all nations, the earth and the heavens, the sea and the dry land – figures always used in prophecy to denote the passing of an old order and the beginning of a new.

We are to recognize that this event must long since have taken place since that house ceased to exist 2,000 years ago and has no successor.

Therefore, Haggai's prophecy could only have been fulfilled in Christ's first advent when the Lord "suddenly came to his temple" (Malachi 3:1).

The shaking of heaven and earth denotes the passing of the Old Covenant and the establishment of the New.

On the day of Pentecost Peter quoted a similar prophecy from Joel to prove the same thing:

"I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the

moon into blood before the great and notable day of the Lord com; and it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Acts 2:19-21

The first advent of Christ, therefore, with all the consequences which ensued – His atoning death and glorious exaltation, with the outcome in the redemption of His people and the calling of the gentile – fulfilled the prophecies of Haggai and Joel.

Paul in Hebrews employs Haggai’s prophecy also to show that it relates to the setting up of the gospel kingdom on the ruins of the Old Covenant.

“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” See Hebrews 12:26-29.

The Old Covenant from Sinai is referred to in that Hebrews passage in the words: “Whose voice then shook the earth”.

The word of the New Covenant, says Paul, shakes heaven as well as earth – “but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not earth only but also heaven” (that is the Haggai quotation proving that Haggai’s prophecy has to do with the gospel as contrasted with the law).

All Fulfilled in Second Temple

The Second Temple therefore was to see God’s purposes fully realized in Christ. This took place historically at the Incarnation and the Crucifixion. Thereafter, following a divine probation of 40 years during which God permitted the second temple to remain standing while the gospel was being preached “to the Jew first”, the judgment of God in the Roman war abolished temple, priesthood and sacrifice, monarchy and covenant, nation and privilege, in one awful overthrow.

The Epistle to the Hebrews settles for ever the question whether there ever can be a setting up again of what God has cast down. The temple is shown in that epistle to be the apparatus of the Old Covenant.

There never can be another temple, therefore, without abolishing the New Covenant in Christ, destroying the gospel and reversing all history.

Paul clearly perceived that the second temple, still standing at the time of writing, was about to pass away along with the Covenant to which it was attached:

“Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away”
(Hebrews 8:13)

Those who perceive these things along with us may think that no Christian would dare to advocate or attempt the setting up again of the old to the confounding of the new had better be warned. An investigation of contemporary evangelical writings and theories shows very disturbing (and sometimes very fraudulent) tendencies. Our friends will find that not only is a THIRD TEMPLE confidently expected, but there are those who believe our Lord’s Second Advent is held up till that temple is built. They use Malachi’s prophecy (quoted above) as relating not to Christ’s first coming but to His Second Coming, as though Christ cannot return till there is a temple in which He may appear.

The appalling lengths to which this error may be carried are illustrated in the writings of that excellent man, Mr. William Kelly, a leading figure among the earthly “Brethren”. Mr. Kelly, who believed in the literal construction of a THIRD TEMPLE according to Ezekiel’s specification, taught that the temple veil would be re-erected in more permanent form (wood instead of the tapestry rent by the death of Christ). His words are:

“For Israel, though surely redeemed, the barrier will be set up again”.

Admirers of the Scofield Reference Bible will find the doctrine of a THIRD TEMPLE, complete with sacrificing priests, is standardized in the comments on Ezekiel’s vision.

THIRD TEMPLE FRAUD

The error is enforced from time to time by deliberate and fraudulent invention as the following reveals:

Following the Six Day War of 1967, there appeared in the now defunct Billy Graham newspaper, “The Christian”, published in London, a report, presented in full banner headlines, purporting to show that enormous quantities of finest prepared stone from quarries in Bedford (USA) was being dispatched from a New

York pier (Pier 26, it was categorically stated) to Israel for the construction of the THIRD TEMPLE.

The headlines were:

“ERECTION OF JERUSALEM TEMPLE IMMINENT”

“Israeli Government representatives have ordered 60,000 tons of finest Bedford stone from Bedford, Indiana to be used in the erection of Jerusalem temple”.

These headlines were followed by a report as follows:

Five hundred railcar loads of stone from Bedford, considered to be among the finest building stone in the world, is being freighted pre-cut to exact specifications, and one consignment has already been dispatched to Israel. Shipments are being handled by Pier 26 in New York.

This report, received from authoritative sources in Sellersburg, Indiana, said cornerstones for the third Jerusalem Temple are already in Israel. Materials for this Temple have been secretly in preparation for seven years, the report went on, and it is believed American Jews are mainly responsible for financially undergirding the whole project.

Strong rumors from other usually reliable circles say the two freestanding pillars for the new Temple have already been cast in bronze. If the pattern of Solomon’s Temple is followed, the twin hollow columns may be named Jachin and Boaz. The meaning of these names, ‘Jehovah will establish,’ and ‘In Him is strength’, symbolizing the continuity and power of the Davidic dynasty founded upon God’s great Covenant with David. (1 Samuel 7:8-17).

The article enthusiastically went on to say:

“This THIRD TEMPLE must be built to fulfill Biblical prophecy: thus is passed out of the realm of political probability into the sphere of divine appointment...

“The Church, as God’s spiritual temple during the present time, must give way to a material temple in the next movement of God’s plan for Israel and the nations”.

There was even more dramatic sequel to this tragically fraudulent report, but unfortunately the editor of the now deceased “Christian” did not see fit to give it equal publicity, the truth never being so attractive as the lie.

Under the insignificant heading “Jerusalem Temple” there appeared in “The Christian” some six weeks later the following letter from the Jewish Ambassador in London:

“Allow me to refer to a story appearing in a recent issue of your publication, concerning the shipping of stones from the U.S.A. for the alleged purpose of rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem. I would like to point out that this story is an absolute and complete fabrication, in all its aspects. There are no plans for the re-building of the Temple, no shipments for such a purpose have been made from the U.S.A. or elsewhere, and the matter has not been considered either in secrecy (as the report alleges) or openly.

In view of the fact that the Temple area is now occupied by shrines of other faiths, both Christian and Moslem, and we would never touch these, the entire story must be considered an invention.”

M. H. Sharon
Counselor (Press)
Embassy of Israel London, W.8.

There is another angle to this story which possibly the editor knew nothing about at the time, and it is that a well-known British evangelist and pastor, now in New York (a man favorable to the THIRD TEMPLE theory) was asked by friends in Great Britain to investigate. He did. He found on inquiry at New York harbor that there was no such pier as that named, no such embarkation of stone, not a word of truth in the whole wicked fabrication.

Yet if we doubt not, the story is still going round the earth for in this sinful world, one can never overtake a lie once it has been let loose.

We ask no pardon for mentioning these things. We would be sinning against God and truth if we maintained silence or failed to register our sense of outrage at news so blasphemous and subversive of the gospel and lying reports so wickedly conceived and enthusiastically welcomed.

The recent fire at the Moslem Mosque on the temple site at Jerusalem is another instance of evangelical superstition, for the poor man who did the deed was a member of a “fringe” evangelical sect who believed he was hastening the coming of the Lord by destroying the Mosque so as to make way for Ezekiel’s temple.

THE “THIRD TEMPLE” IS CHRIST

We now give our clear reasons for believing that the temple vision in Ezekiel is not of an earthly sanctuary of stone and lime, but represents the spiritual realities of Christ’s mediatorial work in the gospel in accord with His own statement:

“Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up: but he spoke of the temple of his body”. John 2:19-22

If we prove our point we have reached the end of the road in this controversy over the alleged Restoration of Israel, because if Ezekiel’s temple is the gospel temple of Christ’s body, the Church, then the city where it is built is the Mount Zion of the gospel (Hebrews 12:22) located in heavenly places not in Palestine, and the land too is spiritual country. Therefore, there is not other temple to be built, no future for the earthly Mount Zion, nor is the land to be divided among the twelve tribes, and we now know the meaning of the very last word of Ezekiel’s prophecy:

“The name of the city from that day shall be, the Lord is there (Jehovah Shammah)” Ezekiel 48:35.

PROVING THE SPIRITUAL VIEW

Here are our reasons for the spiritual understanding of Ezekiel’s temple: -

1. Ezekiel 40:2-4 requires an idealistic interpretation. The vision speaks of a “very high mountain” and “as the frame of a city on the south.” These words are in the language of prophetic vision, denoting a meaning beyond the natural. The instruction to the prophet to behold – hear - set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee” indicates there is a meaning which will be misinterpreted unless

special care is exercised. Most of the prophetic writings of our friends do not bear these marks of careful and painstaking examination.

2. Ezekiel 43 requires a spiritual interpretation because the visionary temple, by the time this stage of the vision is reached, has been “measured” and the prophet sees the glory of the Lord entering the building, and from it Jehovah speaks to Ezekiel telling him that the object of the vision was to show the perfect holiness of the Lord, by which the people of Israel might measure the extent of their iniquities (verses 10-12).

3. The offering of “sin-offerings” upon the altar as well as other offerings indicates that this cannot be an actual temple to be constructed in Jerusalem. If it were so, then farewell to the gospel, tear out the Epistle to the Hebrews, roll up the New Covenant – it has decayed and waxed old and is ready to vanish away. Take down that Cross of Christ. Re-hang the veil that was rent. The agony of the Son of God and his atoning death were all in vain, for His mediatorial work, is only a temporary expedient till this temple arrives. Invalidate Christ’s eternal priesthood for the sons of Zadok have the last word over Melchizedek and Aaron’s priesthood will prevail at last over Christ’s (43:18-27).

Dr. Scofield, and those who side with him, defend themselves against this blasphemy by alleging that these blood sacrifices are “memorial” offerings pointing back to the death of Christ.

But this is sheer invention – a doctrine of convenience, to save its advocates from the serious charge of destroying the one true sacrifice of Christ. There is not a line in Ezekiel’s prophecy to suggest that the sacrifices are “memorial rites”. Three times in this passage the sin offering is mentioned without qualifications.

Those friends who like to tell us that their “rule of interpretation” is the ambiguous formula: “The Bible means what it says”, had better look to themselves, for unless they spiritualize the sacrifices of Ezekiel they have no alternative but to bring back the Law and circumcision, and priest craft and ritual diet – the essential elements of Judaism.

CIRCUMCISION RE-ESTABLISHED

If Ezekiel’s temple is to be interpreted literally, we must accept from Ezekiel 44:9 that circumcision must be re-established as a requirement of access to God. And

away goes grace, by which the gentiles are saved under the gospel. Away goes Paul and the Epistle to the Galatians. Away goes the Epistle to the Ephesians with its vision of the New Testament temple and the holy sacrifice of Christ by which Jew and gentile are made one and the middle wall of partition between them broken down.

For (and mark this well, dear reader) there can be no nonsense about Ezekiel's words in chapters 44-49 – no playing about with his reference to the rite of circumcision – no confining it to the “circumcision of the heart”, for he mentions specifically

“No stranger (i.e. gentile) uncircumcised in heart nor uncircumcised in flesh shall enter into my sanctuary”.

Now our readers will see what we mean when we assert that modern evangelical prophetism is a noxious growth springing from the schools of the rabbis, and must be destroyed at all costs, if true Biblicism is to be preserved.

If Ezekiel's temple is not in its entirety to be spiritually understood of the Church of the New Testament, then the glory of Christ fades and gentile hope is darkened.

If Paul found it necessary to withstand Peter to the face on this very subject of the return of circumcision and its imposition upon the Church, we must not be considered disturbers of the peace when we likewise withstand to the bitter end this modern conspiracy to destroy evangelical theology by making it an interim scheme to be abolished as soon as the Jew and Judaism and circumcision are ready to take over. We refuse to be silenced though all men should rise up against us.

4. The opening verses of chapter 43 require a spiritual interpretation. They describe the majesty of the Lord's presence coming “from the East”, lightening the earth with His glory, and entering into the temple to take up residence there. Brethren, the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands. God does not, cannot, and never will live in a house in Jerusalem. Yet this preposterous thing is required by our friends if they insist on literalizing Ezekiel's temple.

PRIESTS WHO MUST NOT SWEAT

5. Chapter 44 requires a spiritual interpretation, because the New Testament forbids us to consider the re-establishment of a Levitical priesthood which Paul in

Hebrews tells us has been abolished for ever. We do not, cannot, and will not believe that the Lord is telling us there are to be priests in a future temple at Jerusalem who will be required to avoid woolen undergarments in case they sweat (verse 18), or that their hair-trim should conform to a certain specification (v.20) or that their worship will be invalidated by contact with dead bodies, or that they should get “the first of the dough” so that they might bestow a sacerdotal blessing (v.30).

And if this is a description of what takes place in a future millennium (as our friends contend) how do they reconcile the continuance of death (vs.25) with that golden time?

Is it true indeed that sin, suffering and death still flourish in that millennial time when Jehovah reigns personally in glory and power from a house in Jerusalem?

Alas, yes! Deathbed scenes, anguish and sorrow, funeral corteges, sighs, mourning and tears are all there to mock at the theory of our friends that “this is the first resurrection”.

Will someone, somewhere, not arise and tell us where they are wrong? We have correspondents who denounce us, indignantly tell us to send them no more of our writings, ignorant of the fact that we are fighting FOR them, not against them. Will any of our opponents please tell us if they still believe in an earthly millennium, with temple, sacrifices, priests, circumcision, the law, death and the grave?

6. The 45th and 46th chapters continue the details of temple worship, even to the batteries of meat boilers, chapter 46:19-24.

FISH OR THE SOULS OF MEN?

7. The climax of the temple vision is in chapter 47 – the vision of the living waters rising inside the temple and issuing from the threshold. This vision surely requires a spiritual interpretation.

The river flows down from the temple, getting ever deeper and wider in its course, sweeping across the country till it empties itself into the Dead Sea where it heals the waters, everything springing to life where it flows. Fishermen stand upon its banks and fill their baskets and spread their nets, trees of paradise flourish on

either bank yielding a continuous harvest of fruit and yielding their leaves as healing medicine – and we find ourselves truly in the paradise of Revelation 22.

Who cannot see that this is a description of the gospel river of grace? A more perfect poetic metaphor of the evangelical faith could not possibly be imagined and the entire picture is so taken by John in the Book of Revelation, and exalted there to describe the eternal state of the people of God.

To do our opponents justice, they are adept at spiritualizing this chapter themselves, with glorious inconsistency. Our only quarrel with them in their spiritualizing is that even in that region they show a strange ineptitude, for their spiritualizing of Ezekiel's river invariably becomes a device for advancing their peculiar views on personal holiness. Convention speakers are very prone to this doctrine of convenience, showing that the dispensationalist is not to be trusted anywhere in the vital field of exposition.

Ezekiel's river is a picture of the progress of the gospel in the world, from its first rise in Christ who is the true temple of God (John 2:21) to its rapid and spreading course throughout the world, ever deepening and widening in its life giving flow to the end of time. The fishermen are the preachers of the gospel and fish are the souls of men delivered from sin and curse and death by the grace of Christ in accord with the Savior's own words: "I will make you fishers of men."

Our readers may compare this with the only alternative – a literal river, magically appearing in the interior of a literal temple and serving no spiritual purpose whatever, but just to irrigate the land and provide full baskets for Jewish anglers.

Our readers must make their choice between the two – and may the Lord have mercy on our souls.

The last chapter of Ezekiel describes the apportionment of the land among the twelve tribes in symmetrical pattern related to the central feature of the whole – the temple and city of Jerusalem.

The figure is taken over by John in the 21st chapter of Revelation and given a spiritual – even a paradisiacal – meaning.

That the interpretation is a spiritual one, is clear from the last sentence of the Book – “The name of the city from that day shall be Jehovah Shammah (the Lord is there)”.

The literal view requires that personal presence of Christ come down from the throne of the majesty in the heavens to occupy a visible couch in a visible house in a visible city on earth, presiding over a scene of continued sin and death, tears and graves and to give the approval of His own Presence (and even participate) to a bloody altar, boiler houses, priest craft and Judaistic rites, which He died once and for all to abolish.

WE RETURN THE CHALLENGE

We are challenged to prove our spiritual interpretation by showing how we related all the detailed measurements and arrangements of Ezekiel’s temple to a gospel and spiritual picture.

Those who think they are prescribing for us an impossible task must have very feeble memories. The thing is done for us very competently by Dr. Scofield himself in the Book of Exodus. See there his typology of the tabernacle, fully related to gospel and spiritual meaning. Our friends of the Brethren have earned for themselves an unchallenged reputation for their ability and ingenuity in giving gospel meaning to every rope, pin, stake, thread and ornament of that O.T. tabernacle which is the forerunner and pattern of Solomon’s temple, Ezra’s temple and Ezekiel’s temple. They even transport from town and town elaborate models of the tabernacle and explain in marvelous detail how all is a picture of the gospel.

After performing this feat in relation to the Tabernacle, they would find it child’s play to do the same with Ezekiel’s temple.

That the typology of the tabernacle (and therefore of the temple which is only the tabernacle in more permanent form) is a divine exercise fully authorized by the New Testament, is proved from the Epistle to the Hebrews, notably in chapter 9.

To this chapter we refer our readers and beg of them particularly to note the words which tell us that the tabernacle (and of necessity, therefore, the temple) is only a pattern of heavenly things and “figures of the true.”

If the tabernacle and its successor, the first and second temples were only patterns, types and figures of spiritual realities, by what rule do our literalists make out Ezekiel's temple to be an exception? By what rule do they make it a literal and terminal reality of the purposes of God even to the setting aside of the gospel, the reversal of the entire divine order, and the transfer of the spiritual realities of heaven itself to stone and plaster, blood and bones, anti-sweat garments and ecclesiastical tonsures?

The problem in theirs, not ours, and in all charity and concern for the welfare of Christ's flock we fix upon them the solemn responsibility of vindicating their interpretation, or acknowledging their error.

* * * * *

THE CHERUBIM CONSIDERED

EZEKIEL SEES THE DIVINE MAJESTY

The vision of the glory of the Lord seen by Ezekiel and described fully in his first and subsequent chapters is seldom considered in its true significance. To most Bible readers the living creatures, the wheels, the headlong flight, the burning throne – are all so mysterious that they either hurriedly pass over these parts of Holy Scripture, or clutch at guesses and fantasies.

But the vision is not so difficult of understanding as at first appears. What Ezekiel sees is the glory of the Lord departing from the temple at Jerusalem and sweeping down from the north (the traditional route between Palestine and Chaldea) to where he (born to be a priest of the temple but bereft of his destiny through exile) sits in melancholy mood on the banks of the Chebar river in the Euphrates valley.

God forsakes His holy temple because of the sins of the people and within a few years the temple, city and monarchy of Israel are destroyed.

But it is given to Ezekiel to see in this vision two things:

First, that the judgments of the Lord are right;

Second, that the glory of God is independent of earthly temple or priesthood, and the Lord travels on down the ages, regardless of change, and performs His sovereign will.

The “living creatures” are the cherubim, symbolic figures which symbolize the power and majesty of God, appearing first at the gateway of Eden to defend the holiness of God and forbid access to His presence (Genesis 3).

Their four-fold number and four-faced appearance (man, lion, ox and eagle) represent creation, of which the number four is the signature in the Bible (“the four corners of the earth”, “the four winds of heaven”, etc.).

The “Wheels” are the immense energies of the divine omnipresence, upholding His eternal throne, upon which He sits who bears “the appearance of a man above, upon it” – that is, the Only Begotten Son who deigned to take upon Himself the form and nature of man.

Covering all, the rainbow arch of the Covenant of Grace, the Eternal Covenant which spans the life of the Godhead and by which all God's actions are determined in time and eternity.

We make thereupon the following observations:

CREATION A LIVING THING

The four living creatures or cherubim are the living chariot on which God drives down the ages, fulfilling His purpose. They uphold the throne of His glory, and illustrate the fact that Creation is not some accidental and mechanical contrivance operating on laws of its own blind development, but a living thing, formed and continuing in all obedience to the holy laws of God who made all things as a means to His own glory and to the fulfillment of His own great destiny.

The wheels, or motive forces of the universe, are adorned with the eyes of the Creating Spirit, and ceaselessly pursue their revolutions in obedience to the divine wisdom which is reflected in all their operations. If the cherubim more properly represent the sentient part of creation, the wheels must represent those powers, laws and impulses, those fundamental energies, which are stored in every atom of inanimate nature.

The wheels in the midst of the wheels appear to be transverse wheels providing for the motion of the great Creator's chariot in whatsoever direction He may determine in His will. Precise mechanical principle is not to be looked for in the figure – it is the idea behind the figure that matters.

The spirit of life (verse 20, margin) is in the wheels, and creation cannot be understood apart from the ceaseless operation of the Spirit of Him who made all things for Himself and upholds all things by the word of His power.

The cherubim and the wheels go straight forward, and turn not to right or left in their going, and they perform their missions with a readiness and velocity which resemble the lighting flash – irresistible.

The firmament above the cherubim is the vault of heaven, associated in the Bible with the abode of God. He is the God of heaven, which means He is above and

beyond the powers and the understanding of men, uncreated, eternal, omnipotent, and only wise, asking counsel of none, and giving no account of His matters.

The noise of great water, the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host – this is Creation, and this is Redemption. The Creation is the product of Mind and of intelligence. Sounding and resounding throughout the great universe of being, visible, and invisible, is the voice of understanding, of praise, of judgment, of admiration, of unspeakable joy. Above all, there is the voice which speaks from the firmament which is above the throne.

If Creation speaks for God, if the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork; if day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge, so that there is no speech or language where their voice is not heard – what shall be said about THIS voice, which sounds from above the throne? This is the voice of the Word of God. This is Christ, and this is also that voice which speaks in the Written Word, for none of God's words must be lost. What He says must be preserved, loved, and received.

What will the voice of God speak about? It is about redemption and judgment. Here is the holy Law, perfect from the beginning – as changeless and as unalterable as that Law which binds the physical universe together. Take away that Law, and the fabric of creation would be unhinged and vast chaos would descend upon all things visible. Take away the moral Law; acquit sin on the score of a general benevolence, without providing for recompense and a guarantee for the holiness of the intelligent creation and there would be a moral chaos so complete that heaven itself would be turned into a hell, and the Throne of God would lose for ever its Tenant.

Here now is that Throne and its glorious Tenant, in the last phase of Ezekiel's vision – as though his prophetic eye had reverently traveled upwards from the lowest to the highest, comprehending first the more obvious symbols of Creation and the government thereof, before dwelling upon the actual Being of the Creator Himself.

AN EXAMPLE OF TRUE INSPIRATION

And here is true inspiration. What imagery would a man use wherewith to describe God, living as he did in such a period of universal idolatry as that which reigned when Ezekiel sat and brooded on the banks of the river Chebar? What

childishness, what superstition may we not expect from such a time and such a situation? But behold! As his awestruck and reverent eye travels upward through the symbolism of God's rule in a living Creation permeated throughout by the Eternal Spirit, he sees first of all, not a throne, but "the likeness" of a throne. His inspiration carefully guards against any materialization of what is essentially inwards and spiritual. This throne is erected above and beyond all Creation. It is above the heads of the cherubim, above the symbolic vault of heaven itself, and its appearance is that of the dazzling whiteness of the sapphire. This reference to the sapphire is not arbitrary – not invented in the brain of the prophet, but is in accord with the earlier inspiration of the Divine Word, in Exodus 24:10 where the throne of God is seen as a pavement of sapphire "as the body of heaven in its clearness". Those who, as Ezekiel, feed upon the Divine Word, see clearly in its terms. The Spirit is consistent with Himself in the slow, age long development of that body of inspiration which was finally to be spoken and completed in the New Testament revelation of Christ. The throne of the Universe is of the fiery and dazzling whiteness of God's holiness, purity, and unchallengeable wisdom and truth.

MAN, THE HIGHEST POINT

The prophet dares, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, to lift his awestruck eyes higher yet, and there he sees upon the throne, "the likeness" of a man. Let it be observed that it is but the appearance, the shimmering suggestion, of a human form which he sees, and not the actuality, anymore than Moses and the elders of Israel saw the actual form of Him whom inspiration leads us to believe is without body, parts or passions. But consistent with the inspired account of creation wherein we are taught that man was made in the holy image of God, so here God appears in the form of man. And what other imagery could inspiration have used?

Is not man the highest point of creative wisdom? Is there not concentrated in man the grandest, greatest, and most complete effort of divine wisdom, showing forth the character and the glory of God? And is it not in the understanding of this that we can arrive at a true valuation of what sin is – that debauching, defiling and fatal offence which, by denying the image of God, brings upon our race its present depravity, ruin, vanity, guilt, and condemnation? See from what heights we have fallen – and to what heights we are beckoned to return – and what provision God has made to carry out this total work of restoration.

From the dazzling splendor of the eternal throne, man, the Son of God by creation, falls into the lowest trough of shame and condemnation, deprived of his rights and

his dignity and his destiny, and seeking to fill up the vanity of his few and fleeting days with that which can never satisfy a nature made originally for heaven and for rule and for holiness. Without God and without hope!

He devises in his brain gods of his own making – gods who are suspiciously like himself, only worse, fickle, capricious, arbitrary, inconsistent, and immoral. Wearying of them at length he becomes an atheist and a materialist, trying to persuade himself that man has no intelligent origin, embodies no wise purpose or meaning and has no future but the mouldering rottenness of the grave. Only an animal himself, without soul, origin, or destiny, he seeks his origin in the brute, and his destiny in the same decay and forgetfulness of the grave, and so ceases to be, and nothing matters now but to eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow he must die. So he lives consistent with his creed, except for the sharp reminders of conscience, that inward monitor which, however overclouded by ignorance, continues to witness against his atheism by raising within him a recognition of standards of good and evil, and rousing him with those intimations of immorality which cause him to dread death and its consequence.

Thank God for an inspired Word. Thank God for those men who in the darkness of human sin and ignorance were raised up as the mouthpiece of God to restore hope and light and truth, and prepare the way for that gospel word by which man can be born again, redeemed, and delivered.

Here is the significance of Ezekiel's vision of the eternal throne and its glorious Occupant. "The likeness of a man upon it". Oh, glorious light and glorious hope! He whose delights were always with the sons of men, determines to be the Son of Man, and gives prior intimation of this to Ezekiel by immediately, and for the first time in the long history of man, addressing Himself to man under this title: "And he said unto me, 'Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak upon thee'". (Ezekiel 2:1).

MERCY AND SEVERITY

Ezekiel notices something further about the figure on the throne; the form shone with the brightness of fire. The upper part of the figure was bright as burnished brass, and the lower part as the blinding flame of the furnace. Perhaps the twofold presentation of God in mercy and in severity is intended, as Paul in Romans 11: 22. Of all the word pictures which have ever been given of God none has ever been so effective as that which conceives Him to be a Being of Light and Power,

blinding and brilliant light, and burning and devouring flame. God is Light and in Him is not darkness at all, says John. Our God is a consuming fire, declares Paul.

The vision is completed by a halo of light surrounding the whole, and this halo is the appearance of the bow in the cloud in the day of rain. We all know what this rainbow portends. God has girt Himself about with Covenant obligations. He has bound Himself in an Eternal Covenant with the Son, and to His people in Christ, for their redemption, preservations, and final deliverance.

The entire vision was no light or puny representation. It filled the entire horizon of inspiration. Greatness is in every detail thereof. Majesty and omnipotent power are projected in every aspect. The vision comes with the roar of whirlwind. A divine tornado of wrath breaks upon the placid scene. A great cloud darkens the light of day. Lightnings play around the blackness, and thunders roll. All the terrifying might of nature is let loose. At the height of this vast physical disturbance, the internal powers of nature disclose themselves. Traveling headlong in undeviating flight come the cherubim whom no power can turn aside as they fulfill their mission of bearing up the glory of God. The noise of their wings is like the tumult of a primeval ocean rushing down upon the plains to inundate all by irresistible force. Vast wheels appear, brilliant and terrible with encircling and all-seeing eyes – the wheels of divine providence and foreknowledge, traveling on their predestined course, high and terrible. Their axle is as the hub of some great solar system, and their rim revolves in the very limits of space. A Spirit of resistless might and fathomless wisdom and splendor animates this vehicle of God's purposes. The vault of heaven is above: and above that again, the godlike form of humanity, fiery, majestic, pure, holy, omnipotent, just, on the everlasting throne, riding down the ages; the purpose is the declaration of God's perfection, and the destruction of all that evil which sin has brought into His Creation.

SPECIAL NOTICES

RABBINICAL LITERATURE, THE LATTER-DAY GLORY, AND THE FUTURE MILLENIUM

The Augsburg Confession (1530) condemns those 'who scatter Jewish opinions that, before the resurrection of the dead (and Last Judgment), the godly shall occupy the kingdom of the world'; the Second Helvetic Confession (1566) says 'we condemn that Jewish dream that before the Day of Judgment there will be golden age of earth and the godly shall possess the kingdom of the world'. Yet

from about 1560 onwards there was in the Reformed Churches a growing interest in the future of Jews in God's purposes. From this developed firstly, the doctrine of the latter-day glory of the Church, and secondly, the doctrine of the reign of Christ and saints. Both these doctrines included the restoration of the Jews to Palestine. Perhaps the most important factor causing this change of opinion was the study of rabbinical literature (Targums, etc) which were increasingly available from the printing presses. From this source for example came the hermeneutical principle that a day in prophecy equals a year in real terms (Ezekiel 4:6), the doctrine of the restoration of the Jews in Palestine (Isaiah 60:12-22, Ezekiel 40-48) and the belief that the 'Day of Jehovah' was in fact 'a long day' of 1,000 years.

The following was left in for your interest.
Remember that this article was issued over 30 years ago.

For details on this development see Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel (Jas. Clarke, 27/-) written by Peter Toon and available from him for 21/6 post free. For John Owen's eschatology see John Owen (Jas. Clark, 30/-) by P. Toon and available from him for 25/- post free. His address is Edge Hill College, Ormskirk, and Lancs.