

Prophecy Spiritually Understood - Pt 1 'The Jewish Theory of Prophecy'

by Charles Alexander

The sermon emphasizes the importance of a correct principle of interpretation in understanding prophecy, highlighting the spiritual nature of the Kingdom of God and the Church's right to all the promises of God.

Scripture: Psalm 139:23

Topics: "Spiritual Interpretation", "Kingdom Of God"

Description

Charles D. Alexander preaches about the spiritual interpretation of Old Testament prophecies concerning the Kingdom of God, emphasizing that the Kingdom is within believers and not a physical, earthly dominion. He challenges literal interpretations of prophecy, highlighting the spiritual nature of the Church as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises. Through the teachings of Peter and James, he asserts that the prophecies point to the inclusion of Gentiles in the Kingdom and the spiritual restoration of Israel in Christ, rather than a future earthly restoration. The sermon underscores the importance of understanding prophecy through a spiritual lens to grasp the true essence of God's Kingdom and salvation.

Transcript

A REPLY TO RECENT BOOKS ON JEWISH RESTORATION

By: Charles D. Alexander

The discussion whether the Jewish people will be fully restored to the land of Palestine with all their ancient privileges, and there enter into divine blessings withheld from them for 2,000 years past, is worthwhile only for the bearing it may have upon godliness and the right interpretation and exposition of Holy Scripture.

Much of the discussion and the authorship stimulated by the Six Day War of 1967 (when the Jewish army recovered all the ancient territory of their forefathers up to the right bank of the Jordan) has little relevance to sanctification. Prophecy is not for curiosity but for godliness. Little attention is paid nowadays to that fundamental principle - THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS IS THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

(Revelation 19:10).

It is a disturbing feature of the general run of prophetic speculation that no clear and valid rule is laid down as a guide to the understanding of these portions of Scripture. It has become the practice to quote what is said to be the 'ancient canon', "Where a literal interpretation can be adopted, the furthest from the literal is commonly the worst."

It is will be part of our purpose to show that this principle was never intended by 'the ancients' to apply to prophecy, but had to do with that allegorical method of interpreting all Scripture, introduced largely by Origen.

The damage caused to prophetic research by the false application of this "rule", is incalculable, and the exceptions to it even in the writings of those who claim to adhere to it are a sufficient refutation of its validity.

Under the influence of this "rule" the interpretation of prophecy has become, not a science but a speculation. Worse, it has done untold harm to the exposition of Scripture as a whole, and has effectively sealed off from use of the Christian Church, great areas of the Divine Word.

We venture upon the task of trying to restore prophetic interpretation to its original sanctifying purpose, not just to refute a theory which for a long time has been to us tiresome and fallacious, but for the bearing it has upon the use and the exposition of the divine Word in a day when such a task has become more than a priority; it is essential to the preservation and the health of the Church.

THE RULE OF INTERPRETATION

At the outset of this exercise we would define the only valid rule for the understanding of prophecy.

It is THE NEW TESTAMENT USE OF THE SAME.

By this rule we hope to convince our readers by every possible New Testament example, that the descriptions of Messiah's Kingdom and Reign as foretold by the prophets, are invariable interpreted in the New Testament in spiritual and not a literal sense: that the great object of the vision of the Prophets is that Gospel Kingdom of Christ known as the Church.

In that connection we invite our readers to consider the inspired words of Peter, both in the Acts of the Apostles and in his first epistle, as governing the understanding the words of the prophets:

Acts 3:24: "All the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoke, have likewise foretold of these days."

1 Peter 1:10-12: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you which the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."

One other word of caution we feel it necessary to express: There is probably no subject which generates so much heat and prejudice among evangelical people, as prophetic interpretation. We have ourselves been bitterly assailed by those who have denounced us, consigned us to Satan, accused us of not

believing Holy Scripture, and ordered us to send them no more of our literature. The indication this gives of the closed mind and the prejudiced understanding is very sad. Truth can only flourish in an atmosphere of free discussion and freedom to dissent. For our own part we have listened patiently for forty years to prophetic speculations by good men whom we truly respect, but whose views of these matters appear to us fallacious, often grotesque, and subversive of the right use of Holy Scripture. We feel it is not asking too much that we in our turn be granted a patient hearing.

We are not pleading for an opinion but for a principle, and we hope to unfold some of the treasures of the inspired Word from which a false theory has for too long excluded the people of Christ.

TWO PAPERBACKS

We have before us as we write two paperbacks produced under the impulse of the recent violent events in Palestine. One is by the American writer and preacher Wilbur M. Smith and is entitled "Israeli-Arab Conflict and the Bible." Through the generosity of an anonymous donor it has been circulated free to ministers and others throughout Great Britain. In this book Mr. Smith has collected from the Old Testament all those prophecies which might be considered to have bearing upon the future of earthly Israel, presenting them in convenient grouping, threaded together by comments of an explanatory but by no means exegetical nature.

So effectively does Mr. Smith go to work that there is nothing left in O.T. prophecy for the Christian Church. One is left wondering how the Apostles proved their case from the Hebrew Bible against the Jews of their day.

Two things which our readers may consider to be of some significance concerning Mr. Smith's book are:

1. He quotes JEWISH writers to show they are of the same mind as himself in the literal interpretation of the promises of Jewish restoration;
2. He does not, so far as we can ascertain, lay down any principle of interpretation.

MR. HULSE'S BOOK

Of much greater interest to our readers is another book from much nearer home - that by Mr. Errol Hulse, pastor of Cuckfield, Sussex, under the title "The Restoration of Israel". Mr. Hulse has written with moderation and sobriety on the subject, and his little book has already exhausted its first printing. We congratulate the excellent pastor of Cuckfield on this success, though we may find it hard to congratulate him on anything else.

Nor will he get many congratulations from other of the "literal" school, for Mr. Hulse accepts a 'spiritual' interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48 (the so-called Millennial Temple), denies that the Jew is destined to occupy a place of special privilege and holds that the Church is the whole body of the redeemed from the beginning to the end of time.

With all this we heartily agree, but cannot see the logic of Mr. Hulse's apparent concern to get the Jew back to Palestine in order to complete a destiny which he regards as purely spiritual. There are many Jews converted now, and all Mr. Hulse expects, in his 'restoration' is a sufficient number of Jews converted to make it appear to the general public that the nation as a whole has become nominally Christian. He even ventures a modest estimate of, say, ten percent of Jews actually converted, as being

sufficient for the purpose, and at no time, not even in the millennium, does he expect all Jews on the earth to be converted.

His expectation of an actual regathering of the Jewish people into Palestine (at the moment there are far more Jews in the U.S.A. than in Palestine) is unquestioned, if the cover of his little book has any significance. A Jewish soldier is there portrayed, complete with automatic rifle, reverently caressing the stones of the Wailing Wall, under the general title, "Restoration of Israel." Indeed the book itself takes its occasion from the Six-Day-War, and the author cannot escape the implication that his thesis about the Restoration of Israel combines the spiritual with the territorial.

Yet in view of our author's concession that the only distinction accorded to the Jews as a result of his "restoration" will be that which is available to all Christians, namely, "the honour of faithful service" one wonders why Mr. Hulse sets so much store on events in Palestine.

NO RULE OF INTERPRETATION

We are disappointed to find that our author does not set down any principle of prophetic interpretation. In this he falls in the same category as Mr. Smith. One would have thought that Mr. Hulse in so momentous a matter would have made this his first and most important task. He avoids the duty by telling us, "It is not possible here to outline the principles of prophecy in detail" (p.18) and refers the reader to Patrick Fairbairn (1805-1874) to find out for himself.

This is not good enough. The excellent pastor of Cuckfield must not put himself into the category of those other prophetic speculators who habitually neglect this task. He must not use Fairbairn as a proxy, for many if not most of the readers of a popular paperback such as he has produced, will not have Fairbairn beside them and are not likely to go the trouble of finding him.

A principle of interpretation which cannot be mastered without reading Fairbairn does not strike us as being within the range of the average reader. We have grave doubts about any principle which cannot be stated in a few words.

It is a major defect in Mr. Hulse's book that it gives the reader no clear guidance on how O.T. prophecy is to be used, and we hope that in any future edition he will consider repairing this omission.

Without a settled and logical principle of understanding anyone can make anything of O.T. prophecy - which is exactly what is happening.

Few average readers are able to read a book critically; they tend to assume that a writer's case is proved without being aware that the thesis is built on a false premise - or on no premise at all.

Mr. Hulse has not seen fit to tell us on what premise if any, he works.

WHERE OUR INTEREST LIES

Before proceeding to a more detailed examination, we wish to restate where our interest lies.

We venture into this territory of prophetic interpretation not to overthrow one theory and set up another, but solely to establish the right of the Christian Church in all ages to free and unobstructed and unqualified access to every part of Holy Scripture, especially those parts which particularly describe the glories, the privileges, and the holy experiences of THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

The discussion as to whether the Jewish people will be restored to Palestine and there enter into divine blessings from which their unbelief has excluded them for 2,000 years past, is not worthwhile except for the bearing it has upon godliness and the present experience and travail of the believer. Much of the writing now attempted by enthusiasts for the Jewish interpretation of prophecy (let him that reads understand!) has in it about as much spiritual value as the weekly lists of market prices in the secular press. God's Word may not be so used. Its design is the healing and sanctification of the soul. "He sent His Word and healed them". "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth".

THE RENT VEIL REPLACED IN MILLENNIAL TEMPLE

What is at stake in this controversy is not just the interesting question whether a Millennium is just about due, or the settling of the issue between the jarring Millennial fractions. Some of these would people the renovated earth with intermingled mortals remaining over from the preceding catastrophes, and immortalized saints descending from Paradise to occupy once again the earth, wherein they must encounter (by any theory) the scenes of sin and death (see Zechariah 14:9-19) with which they were all too familiar in the days of their pilgrimage here below. We leave our Millennial friends to fight it out between themselves as to whether there is to be a rebuilt Temple at Jerusalem in the days of their Millennium, whether Christ shall be there in Person or not, whether bloody altars shall reek once more with sacrifices for sin (Ezekiel 40:39) on the holy Temple Mount in the very presence of Him who died to extinguish once and for all those ritual fires. We leave to our friends also the awful question as to whether the Temple veil once rent to give free access to the believing worshipper into the holy presence of God will be set up again in more permanent form - a pair of solid carved doors (Ezekiel 41:23-24). Upon which William Kelly comments, "For Israel, though surely redeemed, the barrier will be set up again."

STRIKE DOWN, O LORD THE UNHALLOWED HAND WHICH SETS UP AGAIN THAT WHICH THOU BY THY DEATH AND PASSION HAST RENT IN TWAIN!

We know on what side Mr. Hulse stands on this issue of course; the thought is as abhorrent to him as it is to us that a time should ever come when the people of God should build again that which has been destroyed and so make Christ the minister of sin (Galatians 2:17-18).

But Mr. Hulse only escapes from this predicament by dividing somewhere or other - he does not tell us where - between the literal and the spiritual interpretations. For the rest, our readers will be horrified at the lengths to which the literal and futuristic interpretations of the prophecies leads. They shall witness greater abominations than these.

We quote from a recent issue of "Lamp and Light", organ of that most useful and praiseworthy Society with exists for Distributing the Holy Scriptures to the Jews. The writer (Oct. - Dec. 1968, page 20) says, "Therefore in the Millennium worshippers will not have the same privilege and right of access into the holiest as believers in this Church age now enjoy".

The Lord preserve us from this millennium!

WHAT IS AT STAKE

Our readers will appreciate therefore our point, that what is at stake in all this is the validity of Christ's sacrifice and the true value of Holy Scripture in its unfolding of the grace of God in His Kingdom of Righteousness, Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost - that Kingdom upon which all His purposes are set and

over which Christ now reigns, and will continue to reign till all enemies are put under His feet. Is this the Kingdom which is to have no end, or is there another? Is the imagined Millennium, with its perpetuation of sin and earth and its frightful denouement in world-wide apostasy, to be enthusiastically anticipated as the complete vindication of God's holiness of earth, or is not the Cross that vindication, that Theodicy against which Satan dashes himself in vain?

Are we to be deprived, by this prophetic theory, of whole continents of Holy Scripture in order that Jewish farmers may be put into possession of their property and Jewish anglers fill their baskets at a literal river to flow between the Temple porch and the Dead Sea? (Ezekiel 47)

We refuse to admit that this is theology - unless it be the theology of Pandemonium. We refuse to surrender our spiritual heritage, in all the Scriptures for such impoverishment as this.

We know that the good pastor of Cuckfield stands at our side in this thing. Our only complaint is that his heart is better than his head, and the concessions he makes to Jewish interpretations open the door to consequences which cannot be contained but which must logically take control.

The issue is not just one of coming events but the entire structure of Old Testament meaning. If in fact an interpretation tells us the Gospel Age is NOT the chief thing in view in O.T. prophecy; that the Kingdom of Christ is an earthly thing after all, and NOT that Kingdom which is "within" and which does not come with observation; that an age is still due in which all the glorious triumphs of Christ during the last 2,000 years will be as next to nothing (Mr. Hulse describes it as 'life from the dead' as he robs the Jew of this phrase and gives it to the Gentile AFTER their fullness has been achieved) - if in fact this is what the Jewish interpretation does, it must surely be a call to arms for all those who defend the right of the Church to all that the prophets have spoken.

THE ISSUE IS NOT ONE OF DIVIDING BRETHREN, BUT OF WRONGLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF GOD AND SOME OF US FEEL WE MUST DEFEND BY ALL MEANS IN OUR POWER OUR RIGHT TO EVERY TEXT RELATING TO CHRIST'S KINGDOM FOR OTHERWISE WE HAVE NO RIGHT TO ANY.

Mr. Hulse tries to take a halfway position by saying that all that is due to take place is a broader access of Jewry into the Kingdom of God than has hitherto taken place, but in order to establish this he has to appropriate prophecies for the Jew which are the only support we have for the validity of gentile access to Christ on equal terms with earthly Israel. And we are back again to the Epistle to the Galatians and Paul's defense of Gentile privileges and rights.

Hence, our author, under the significant, even dogmatic heading, "How the Deliverer, through Zion, will revive Israel" (pg. 62) cites Ezekiel 37, Isaiah 11 and 49, Jeremiah 32 and Zechariah 12 and 13.

This is what Mr. Hulse says of the passage Zechariah 12 to 13, verse 6: "He (Zechariah) speaks of future blessings for Israel, God's protection of her against surrounding nations, and of her repentance and reformation." So away goes another portion of Scripture from the possession of the whole Church of Christ.

But why does Mr. Hulse in his quotation stop abruptly at verse 6? Why not include verse 7? Here it is: "Awake, O sword against my shepherd and against the man that is my fellow saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn my hand upon the little ones."

Is it because everyone knows that verse 7 was fulfilled at the crucifixion (Matthew 26:31)? And does this not fix the time of the prophetic fulfillment of all these chapters? How can this passage be wrested from the people of God in the last 2,000 years and given to the Jew without handing over with it every other passage of kindred nature on which the Church establishes her claim to be the Israel of God to whom the promises were made? (Galatians 6:16; 3:19)

WELL-CLEANED BONES

Mr. Hulse leaves nothing for the Gentile believer but well-cleaned bones.

There is nothing to feed the soul in the Jewish interpretations for which our friends enthusiastically contend. They forecast a time when we Christians (if we are in the earth at all after our resurrection in glory) will be compelled to leave paradise, to endure a second term in this scene of sin and death, where revolt slumbers in the hearts of the majority of earth's inhabitants, awaiting only the stinking breath of a suddenly revived devil to blow it into a world consuming flame. On the other hand, if we accept the view of the moderate school, we shall not be on earth at all and the Latter Day Glory (as described in the last sentence) will be no concern of ours.

What then is the ethical value to the Christian of these theories? What purpose of worship, adoration, and spiritual meat do these interpretations bring to the child of God today?

It is our belief, and our purpose (God helping us) to show in this series of articles, that there are riches of unmined truth available in the Word, but now sealed from us by a theory of interpretation which shuts out the believer from these territories. If it is true that "all that the prophets have spoken" belongs to us as of right, and not just as a concessionary privilege (a sort of 'lessons to be learned' scheme), some effort should be making right now to unlock the treasures of the Old Testament prophets and make them available for the saints of God today.

We would ask but one question here, of pastors and people who read these lines: How many of us really understand what we read when we conscientiously plough through the mysteries of the Minor Prophets? What do we get from Nahum, Obadiah, Zechariah, and the rest?

Is it right that our friends should hand over the 31st chapter of Jeremiah, with the glories of the New Covenant there displayed to a future generation of Jews probably not yet born, without first settling the question why that same chapter contains a mysterious prophecy of Rachel (mother of Joseph and Benjamin) weeping for her children, the one that was lost and the other for whose birth she gave her own life, and for Matthew to tell us this was fulfilled at the birth of Christ (Matthew 2:17-18)?

Won't some of our interpreters tell us why Rachel has to wait another 2,000 years before she gets restored to her a handful of children slain at Bethlehem? What is there in prophecy which our friends have not discovered yet?

PETER AND MR. WILBUR SMITH

It is easy indeed for Mr. Wilbur Smith to snatch every text from the prophets which might be a description of gospel times, and deny us the right to use it, when he is in the happy situation of being free to act without recourse to a settled and proven theory of interpretation; but will someone not rise up and tell us what portions of Scripture they were to which Peter was referring when he declared, "Every prophet from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days" (Acts

3:24)? Manifestly he was speaking of gospel times then newly begun. Will someone not tell us what there is in Amos, for example, to which Peter might have been referring, if it was not the prophecy of the 9th chapter, verses 11 to 15, portraying the restoration of the Davidic monarchy?

But our friends have already deprived us of this passage in Amos and there remains no more in the writings of those prophets to which Peter could be referring.

In short, the discussion of Mr. Smith's Millennium or Mr. Hulse's Latter Day Glory is premature until there is full and painstaking examination of the nature of prophecy and the rule for the understanding of it. Mr. Hulse challenges his opponents to give a verse-by-verse exposition of Romans 11. We have one already in typescript, but we would not be so unwise as to cast it upon the field of controversy until the signposts have been erected to show the readers the direction to be pursued. Mr. Hulse is not in the privileged position of being able to choose his own battlefield and dictate to his opponents their strategy.

We might just as well ask our friends to explain for the significance of the personal names in Zechariah 6:9-15: Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah, Helem, and Hen the son of Zephaniah, just to test how much they know and how far they have gone in prophetic lore.

Perhaps they will get to work on the problem while we proceed to our main task.

PROPHECY SPIRITUALLY UNDERSTOOD

Our thesis therefore is:

THE NEW TESTAMENT IN ITS USE OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES OF THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM INVARIABLY SPIRITUALIZES THEM AND SHOWS THAT THEY ARE FULFILLED IN THE GOSPEL ERA WHICH BEGAN AT PENTECOST.

We add the caution that those friends who, like Mr. Hulse, would say they have no fundamental disagreement with this thesis, except that they plead for a special fulfillment in the future for a Restored Israel (after the flesh), can only do so by, in fact, taking from Gentile believers the only Scriptures which legitimize our position outside the boundaries of a national Israel. And this is precisely what they do.

We bear in mind also that those who share Mr. Smith's position have no compunction whatever in excluding the New Testament Church totally from any claim to any O.T. prophecy. This is the logical end of the theories of the school of the Latter Day Glory also, no matter what they may think to the contrary.

We quote from the Prophetic News of January 1969:

"Recognize the Church of God as a mystery revealed only when this age began (Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:3-5; Col. 1:26). These passages teach us that we shall not find prophecies about the Church in the O.T. Much of the prediction in the gospels likewise does not apply to the Church.... The simple fact that it is a mystery first revealed in this age will keep us on a straight course in acquiring prophetic truths".

OLD MOTHER SHIPTON CONSULTED

Our readers will like to know also that this issue of "Prophetic News" opens with an alleged poem by Old Mother Shipton (15th century) who (we quote) "saw what was going to take place in the twentieth century".

It is headed, "One of the World's Most Wonderful Poems" and we know not what to wonder at most, the fact that Old Mother Shipton apparently wrote her poem in 20th century English, or the perspicacity of the Editor in publishing it as a genuine 15th century article. Another wonder is what purpose it serves in view of the fact that the "prophecy" is only about the horseless carriage, submarines and aeroplanes, of which we have more than enough knowledge already, and are looking for something out of this world altogether. If it is meant to be a warning that it is all a token of the imminent blowing of "Gabriel's wondrous horn", that remains to be seen, though we do not seem to recollect a scripture which tells us it is Gabriel who will sound the "Last Trump".

We mention this matter in case any of our readers consider it sufficient commentary upon the editor's views of the prophetic irrelevance of Christ's Church .

THE KINGDOM SPIRITUALISED BY THE SAVIOUR

Our fundamental proposition therefore is, that the Kingdom of God, by which we understand the Church of the New Testament (Romans 14:17) is the burden of Old Testament prophecy, and not the earthly Israel. We advance the following:

The Saviour lays down the fundamental principle by which the nature of His Kingdom is to be understood, in Luke 17:20-21.

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

In this statement, made to correct the fatal Jewish error regarding the earthly glory of the kingdom of Messiah and the exaltation of the Jewish nation, the Saviour clearly and unequivocally declares that the Kingdom He came to establish and for which He shed His blood, was invisible and not localised anywhere on earth. It was unlike any other kingdom the world had ever seen or heard of. It was neither here nor there; it was not a thing of observation. It was a thing of the spirit, within and not without.

If there is such a thing as a rule of prophetic interpretation this is it, expressed in the very words of the Eternal Word. Is it not passing strange that if there is to be such a thing as "Latter Day Glory" when the kingdom of God shall dominate all visible objects and the Jewish people inherit VISIBLY all the earthly glory which our friends suppose it promised them in the O.T. prophecies - that Christ should not say one word about it here? If the Pharisees were right after all, and the kingdom of God would eventually be primarily a Jewish thing with a reconstituted monarchy at Jerusalem - how was it possible for the Saviour dogmatically to declare to them that His kingdom should be neither here nor there, neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem, neither in Utah nor in Britain, but be an invisible entity known only to God and to those who were its favored citizens?

If there was to be any alteration in the course of the ages, and the time was to come when the Sadducean and Pharisaic expectation was to be realized after all, was this not the place for the Saviour to say that all in due time the invisible would become the visible, that which was within would become without, and that which had no center but in heaven would be localized and territorialized on earth?

We have been challenged to give a verse-by-verse exposition of Romans 11 - and this we shall do; nay we have done, and will produce it at the right time. We challenge our friends to give us an exposition of the

Savior's definition of the kingdom of God in Luke 17 and relate it to their theory of Latter Day Glory.

It is our purpose to show that the Saviour throughout His entire earthly ministry presented the kingdom in the same spiritual terms; and if we wanted any justification for 'spiritualizing' the prophecies we surely have it in His words.

Before His own ministry actually commenced He sent the Baptist as His forerunner declaring, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). John warned his hearers that a Jewish passport was not enough to qualify them for that kingdom. They must repent. "Think not", he continued, "To say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matthew 3:9).

Our Lord began His ministry on the same note (Matthew 4:17 - compare Mark 1:15, showing that the terms kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God are interchangeable and refer to the same thing).

From the beginning the Lord presented his kingdom as the fulfillment of the promises made through the prophets and throughout, He 'spiritualizes' those promises.

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) is an exposition of the doctrine of repentance as the key to the kingdom. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven".

In this great Sermon Christ formally and with great, almost royal deliberation (see Matthew 5:1), introduces the kingdom He came to establish. It is unthinkable that Christ should have been sent by the Father into the world to proclaim something of which the O.T. was silent. That would have been to justify Jewish unbelief indeed, as no Jew could be held blameworthy for not believing something which Moses and the prophets did NOT say should come to pass.

Yet the editor of Prophetic News assures us that the Church is not found in O.T. prophecy, and Mr. Wilbur Smith, whatever his private opinions, leaves the Church not one prophecy for herself, but gives all to the Jew.

Even Mr. Hulse, who gives us the awkward impression of one who is riding two horses in opposite directions at the same time, has to prove his theory of Jewish enlargement in the time of Latter Day Glory by treating the O.T. is precisely the same way as Mr. Smith, the Editor of P.N. and Dr. Scofield, - that is, he teaches that the terms Israel and Judah in the prophecies mean earthly Israel and Judah, even to the extent to giving Jeremiah 31 and the New Covenant to the earthly people. So he leaves no prophecy for the Church.

The offense of the Jew lay in this very fact, that when the fulfillment of prophecy came and the Deliverer appeared who was promised from the foundation of the earth (see the original promise from which all prophecy springs, Genesis 3:15) - his mind, blinded by sin and carnal pride, was incapable of recognizing that Kingdom of God which cometh not with observation (Luke 17:20). He read the Scriptures of the O.T. only to be filled with the false expectation of Jewish hegemony over the nations, to which he was destined by his mere possession of a Jewish birth certificate.

This is precisely the belief of pious gentiles who now write books about Jewish restoration and exaltation, unaware that they are interpreting the Scriptures in the same way as the Pharisees and Sadducees, and 2,000 years of Jewish history have already proved that interpretation false and devilish.

In the Sermon on the Mount Christ shows that the citizens of this Kingdom must be persecuted for righteousness sake, reviled and ill-treated even as Israel after the flesh treated its prophets from the beginning to the end of their history. (Matthew 5:10-12).

And away goes the Jewish Millennium, for our friends assure us that when the Jew comes into his own it will be in such circumstances as make persecution and the carrying of the daily cross impossible, inasmuch as either all the inhabitants of the globe will be converted, or the dissenters, if any, will be suppressed by the iron rule of a personally reigning and glorifying Christ, with the devil in shackles.

The Kingdom Christ presented was far, far different from this theological fairyland. It was a Kingdom of grim reality, of pain and suffering, of sleepless nights and wearisome days; a Kingdom in a world where there would be poor persons in need of alms, where men would fast, and where they would require the exhortation to lay up treasure in heaven and not on hearth - not even the millennial earth where apparently moth and rust will continue to corrupt and thieves break through and steal. It would be a Kingdom whose citizens would need to beware of being anxious about tomorrow and reckon that sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

It would be a Kingdom where we would need to beware of casting to dogs that which is holy, where false prophets would abound and corrupt trees would bring forth their evil fruit; a Kingdom which could only be entered by a gate that was strait and a way that was narrow, while the majority of the earth's inhabitants, all unconverted, would continue to press through the wide gate and down the broad way which leads to destruction.

For that, dear reader is the description Christ gives of the Kingdom He came to establish. And that is the reason why the Jew rejected it because it bore not the faintest resemblance to what he anticipated through his literal and carnal interpretation of prophecy.

If anyone today believes there will ever come a time, Millennium or no Millennium, when conversion will be easier than it has been hitherto, when it will cease to make supreme demands on faith and patience, and when it will not mean taking up the cross daily and following Christ in the way He so clearly marked out for His people - if anyone, we say, imagines such a thing, it is only because he was fallen a victim to the same pharisaic and Sadducean notions which led to the destruction of Israel after the flesh. Their hideous history for two thousand years is the epitaph of a nation which refuses to repent and holds fast to its delusions of earthly and Latter Day Glory, to the bitter end.

NICODEMUS AND THE NEW BIRTH

In His encounter with Nicodemus, Christ insisted on the same spiritual interpretations of the prophecies concerning His Kingdom - "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God". (John 3:3 etc.) This was a shattering awakening for a ruler of the Jews, a Pharisee.

The citizens of this kingdom, O Nicodemus, will not cite their Abrahamic genealogy, for the wind blows where it lists; so are they who are born of the Spirit. That which is born of the flesh, O proud Pharisee, is but flesh, so boast not of thy Jewish birth; it is that which is born of the Spirit which enters into the Kingdom.

And thou poor woman of Samaria, lost in thy sins, yet with a superstitious regard which even the wicked have for allegedly holy places, know thou that neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem shall men

worship the Father, but the true worshippers shall worship in spirit and truth (John 4:21-23). And away goes Mr. Smith's Jewish Temple, and good Mr. Hulse breaths a sigh of relief that at any rate he did not commit himself THAT far, but had enough of sound theology in his head instinctively to reject any such notions.

Christ presented Himself as the Bread of Life which came down from heaven to give life TO THE WORLD - and not just to the Jewish fragment of it shortly to judge itself unworthy of everlasting life.

(John 6:33, etc.)

Thou poor Jew who imagined thyself to have a unique claim on the promises of God - those promises which always have to do with the Cross and Redemption and Forgiveness and new and eternal life, though thou knowest it not - thou poor Jew, see from this discourse of the One whom thou didst and dost still reject, that Christ abolishes the distinction between thy nation and the rest of the world, by declaring here that His atoning sacrifice is confined to no fragment or corner of this vast world of sinful men, even as it had already been declared earlier, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him...(John 3:16).

And thou poor evangelical expositor, with all thy well founded love for that saving grace which makes no distinction amongst the tribes of men, how dost thou still hold to the Jewish fable of a priority yet to be, for a people between whom and the rest of mankind Christ has already abolished the distinction? Will He set up that which He has destroyed, and in a wave of Latter Day Glory give again the priority to a nation which by the nature of the gospel itself has been disinherited?

But you say the nation has not been disinherited except temporarily. Did not Paul say, "beloved for the father's sake"? He did, but you take that description from the elect to whom it belongs (Romans 11:28) and give it to the unbelieving nation as a whole. Alas, we say, for a nation to be so beloved. Is this the love of God for "His people" that we see on the pages of the last 2,000 years of their history? It seems to us that our friends mistake wrath and judgment for love.

In His preaching of the kingdom He came to establish, we see that Christ judges the wicked nation and condemns them to die in their sins (John 8:21, 24), and takes out of their sinful lips their boast that they are the children of Abraham. He underlines what John the Baptist already had told them, that they had false views as to who were the children of Abraham. "If ye were the children of Abraham ye would do the works of Abraham... ye are of your father the devil..." (John 8:39-44).

THE PARABLES

The parables of Christ, so completely misunderstood by the Jews, are for the most part directed to the same end. The parable of the sower shows that the Kingdom consists only of those who receive the Word into a repentant heart. The sermon on the little child was designed to teach likewise that only the converted, who became as little children would enter into that Kingdom. It was to be a hard thing indeed for the rich (those who like Israel thought they were rich in privilege) to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. When Christ spoke of the young man's riches he was not speaking primary of the money in his pocket but his boast of a LAW RIGHTEOUSNESS (see Phil.3:2-8).

Mysteriously Christ moved on to speak of the internal arrangement of that kingdom which comes not with observation. To apostles He said, "You who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man

shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" (Matthew 19:28).

Ah, thou unwary expositor. How readily dost thou spring to conclusion without seeing the depth of Christ's words. Perceivest thou not that here He speaks of the gospel kingdom over which now He reigns on the throne of His glory? Dost thou wait for Christ to mount that throne when He is already upon it? He ascended to the right hand of His Father and received from Him the kingdom. It is not written that He is going to reign when His foes are made His footstool, but He reigns now over all and must go on reigning UNTIL all enemies are put under Him. The prophecy of Psalm 110:1 is one of the most oft -quoted in the N.T. and always it puts Christ on the throne from which He now reigns not only over His people but over the nations of the world who are given into His hand to rule them with a rod of iron, dashing them in pieces (as He has done throughout the past 2,000 years of history) like a potter's vessel.

APOSTLES NOW ON THEIR THRONE

This is the Kingdom in which His viceroys, the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb, now sit on their twelve thrones ruling the twelve tribes of the Israel of God. This is the Kingdom which does not come with observation. The apostles now reign over the Israel of God for although they have long since departed in the flesh, their words still rule, for it is the apostolic doctrine we accept and the apostolic authority in the New Testament which alone we recognize and it is for this very reason we reject any word which comes from the Usurper on the Seven Hills.

Always Christ preaches the same doctrine of the spiritual nature of the Kingdom. The Jew who was first bidden, refuses to come to the marriage of the King's son, and the gentiles are gathered in from the highways and byways with the compulsion of a determinative decree promulgated before the foundation of the earth, and the false guest with no wedding garment is cast out. He blasts the Jewish fig tree and says, No fruit grow on thee for ever; and thus He withers the Jewish people from their boasted privileges never to be restored again - for the words 'for ever' mean what they say.

The wicked husbandmen slew the servants sent to them by the Lord of the property, and finally when the Son was sent to collect the fruits, they slew Him also. This parable is told against earthly Israel, to whom the edict was finally pronounced, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof." (See Matthew 21) The N.T. Church therefore is "a nation"... "the nation" in fact to whom the promises were made.

It is thus the Lord preached the Kingdom of God. That kingdom which has been taken from the Jews can never be given back - that is the force of the words of Him who is the Truth and the Life and the Way.

It will be our business in future chapters to show that there can be no spiritual future for the Jew, but let us in the meantime strive, to understand the words of the Word Himself who came to interpret that which by His Spirit He had caused holy men of old to write.

PROPHECY WAS ABOUT THE CHURCH, SAYS PETER

The same Peter whose words to the Jews of his day we have already quoted from Acts 3, (that all the prophets foretold of the gospel day), states that it was "of this salvation" that the prophets inquired and searched diligently, who did not themselves understand and deep hidden import of the words which they uttered. It was given to them to perceive that "not unto themselves but unto us" (that is, to us gospel

people on behalf of whom Peter spoke) - "to us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven".

(1 Peter 10-12)

Yet those friends, who court the good company of Old Mother Shipton, tell us there is no prophecy of the Church in the O.T. Scriptures. Oh thou blind evangelical. Wilt thou thus fight against thine own salvation and thine own gospel privilege and deprive Christ's heritage of the comfort and the food and the inspiration of an eternal Word which is the same the beginning.

Again our Peter stands up amongst the devoted company of the apostles on the day of Pentecost and inaugurates the N.T. manifestation of the Church with the conclusive. prophetic authority of Joel, telling us that the Pentecostal effusion was that which Joel foretold in his second chapter: "This is that..." declares our champion for the spiritual interpretation of prophecy, and let that word stand though the whole evangelical platform should shout with one voice, "This is NOT that...."

For that, dear reader is what they are doing today (with few exceptions). They know that if they give way to Peter on this point they have no longer an inch of ground on which to found their literal theories.

In vain they point to the words, "signs in heaven above and in the earth beneath, blood fire and vapor of smoke; the sun turned into darkness and the moon into blood before that great and notable day of the Lord come...." The next verse overthrows all their literal theories: "And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." That grand word "whosoever", with its rich comfort for deprived gentiles hitherto strangers to the covenant of promise, is the rock on which their literal theories split.

If our friends were as conversant with prophecy as they ought to be before they begin to write books, they would know that signs in heaven and earth, and the darkening of sun and moon are common prophetic figures for the passing away of empires, kingdoms and institutions and in this case we have a dramatic representation of the passing away of the Old Testament order, when the Jewish sun set in darkness and their mood vanished in blood. And thirty or forty years after this word was spoken in the Temple precincts by our Peter, Temple, Priest and altar went down in blood, and the outward form of that which had already been abolished by the death of Christ was rolled down in judgment from its privileged and historic eminences, to make way finally for that kingdom of which men should not say, Lo, here; or Lo, there - for it is within us and not on a mountain in Palestine. Thank God for that.

Peter laid down that day - the day of the Church's birth in the Upper Room, the day when her power and privilege were first made known to the world - our Peter laid down the true principle of prophetic interpretation and gave us to key to the understanding of all the O.T. mysteries.

PETER, JAMES, AND AMOS AGREED

Peter was at the first general council of the Church at Jerusalem when it was debated whether gentile salvation without the law was valid in the sight of God and His Word - that is the Old Testament, the New not having been written at that time (Acts 15). And Peter was on the side of the gentiles.

President James took up the theme and solemnly announced the judgment. Gentile salvation without any Jewish complications, without any deference to Jewish antiquities or Mosaic observation, we not only established, but it was proved and sanctified by a formidable quotation from the prophets. James goes to

Amos and says, "To this agree the words of the prophets" (note that plural, for James was quoting one prophet as the representative of all the prophets) - and proceeds to quote from Amos 9:11-12:

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom and of all the heathen which are called by my name, said the Lord that doeth this.

Reading that as it stands and applying to it the literal method so loved by our friends, we have what appears to be a prophecy of the reestablishing of the fallen dynasty of David and the rebuilding of his house (that is, the monarchy). There would ensue the subjugation of Edom and the gentile nations under David's scepter. But no! James spiritualizes it and tells us it is a prophecy of gentile salvation.

The difference in wording between the O.T. rendering and that used by James is accounted for by the fact that James, speaking in Greek, used the Greek Septuagint version, quoting freeing from it (Alford). The Septuagint was, in many places, intended to be paraphrastic and explanatory and the rendering of this passages from Amos has been sanctified by its use in the inspired utterance of James. There is, however, no real difference in meaning. Edom and Adam (or man) are related words in the Hebrew, the former meaning 'red' and the latter 'red earth'. The James quotation yields remarkable results. The word Edom is expanded into 'men' or mankind and means, as James' usage of it was intended to show, that the revival of the Davidic throne would issue in the calling of the gentiles, even of all those "upon whom the name of the Lord is called" - the is, the elect.

In other words, James is telling us that David's throne is already re-established in Christ as Christ affirmed before Pilate, when the governor asks, "Art thou a King then?" and the Saviour declared, "Thou sayest that I am a king" (that is, I am indeed a king, as thou sayest). Under a powerful impulse which came from God and which the governor could not resist, he wrote out the Saviour's accusation, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews", and defied the Jewish Council, when they protested that the statement should not be so worded and exhibited on the cross for all to see. Pilate's solemn reply is well-known, "What I have written, I have written."

Thank you Pilate. Thou wast nearer the truth than them all. For indeed this Christ was a King, great David's greater Son, and this was the manner of the Kingdom and of the restoration of David's house, let all; the world say what they will to the contrary.

And what do our friends desire other than this? Will they have Christ upon a trashy throne on earth, with its tarnished gold and its mouldering tapestries, or will they have the royal and eternal throne of the mystic David, the Shepherd of His people, always reigning at the right hand of power in the glory of the Godhead, until all His foes (and ours) are made His footstool?

"To the Son He saith, Thy throne O God is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom". Hebrews 1, verse 8

James, therefore, in the presence of the universal church, gives us the key to the understanding of the prophets, taking one passage from Amos as the representative of all that class of prophecy, and spiritualizing it.

In a woeful attempt to escape this conclusion some of our friends clutch at a straw. James says, 'After this I will return' whereas Amos in the O.T. version says, "In that day". Dr. Scofield speaks for them all by

saying - "after this" refers to "after the gentiles have been called out" and then comes "the final regathering of Israel".

And what were ye doing, O ye Judaizers, that you did not then and there pull James down from the rostrum for quoting on behalf of gentile salvation without the law a prophecy which has nothing to do with the question, but has to do only with the regathering of Israel? Was not this your opportunity to standardize for all time the meaning of prophecy as beyond to natural Israel and assert Jewish prerogatives?

But the Judaizers were silent, as were the pious Jews to whom Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. As they did not pull the skies down on Peter for quoting from Joel, a prophecy which our evangelical expositors today tell us really belongs to the RESORATION OF ISRAEL, so these were silenced by what the prophets, led by Amos, foretold of gentile conversion without law.

Brethren, the case is proved, on these two great pillars, Joel and Amos, as quoted by the inspired spokesmen of the Church, rests the rule of prophetic interpretation. The Kingdom of Christ was all along intended to be spiritually understood. Because the Jews did not perceive this in their blindness and hardness of heart, they rejected the King's Son and desired a murderer to be granted unto them; they paid His price, 30 pieces of silver as Zechariah had foretold they would - the contemptuous price of a menial servant (Ex. 21:32) - but He rose from the dead who is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, whose kingdom established on the ruins of the old order, shall have no end.

Let His name endure for ever and let His elect Israel flourish, His mystic Bride, whom He loved eternally, who is the Church of all ages, in which the identity of Jew and Gentile is lost for ever, for all are one in Him. For this is His Israel, His ransomed and redeemed host whom He brings to Zion from north south east and west, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.

"As the lily among thorns, so is my

love among the daughters".

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