

earthly kingdom with Jerusalem as its center. The rest of this chapter, when compared with Revelation 21 and 22, shows that this interpretation is faulty. Even in the prophetic language of the Old Testament, the reference is obviously to the end of all things and not to some period a thousand years before the end

Especially the last words of verse 5 remind us of the end. The coming of the Lord with his saints is not some coming long before the end, but at the very end. In 1 Thessalonians it is announced by the last trump, not a trump that will be followed by many others. In Jude it is part of his coming for final judgment ...

Christ's standing on the Mount of Olives, as so much of the book of Zechariah, is symbolic. The point is that through the coming of Christ, God's people will escape the judgment that is coming—a way of escape will be provided them, something like their escape from Egypt. The walls of the valley that is made between the two halves of the Mount of Olives will be on each side of them like the waters of the Red Sea, and the presence of the Lord will overshadow them as the pillar of cloud and fire did in the days of Moses. They will be protected on every side.

The Mount of Olives stands on the east side of the city of Jerusalem and guards the city on that side. It also, however, cuts off a quick escape from the city on the east, except that in this case God provides a way. The picture is of Jerusalem surrounded by enemies on the north, south, and west, but God opens a way through the mount so that his people are able to abandon the city and escape the city to the east, toward the rising sun.

The passage does not speak of the place to which they escape. The valley of the mountain is the valley that God makes through the Mount of Olives, part of the way of escape. That they escape to the east suggests that their refuge is finally heaven, for in the east the sun rises, and according to Malachi east is the direction from which Christ also comes as the rising Sun of righteousness.

Having escaped, they find their way back to Jerusalem, not Jerusalem as they knew it, nor Jerusalem as it once existed, nor Jerusalem as it comes under the judgment of God, but a Jerusalem that knows no night, from which flow living waters, a Jerusalem in which even the bells of the horses are holy, a new Jerusalem. The picture is somewhat confusing, but the reality is not. The message is the important thing. One must simply overlook the fact that having escaped Jerusalem they are found again in Jerusalem as a place of refuge. The truth is that, having escaped this world, they find their way to heaven" (*The Coming of Zion's Redeemer* [Jenison, MI: RFP, 2014], pp. 394-395).

This book is available from the CPRC Bookstore for £22 (inc. P&P in the UK) or from the RFP in the US.

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The Rock Whence We Are Hewn (1)

In the sixth century BC, Jerusalem was devastated by the Babylonians. Its temple, its palace, its houses, its city walls—all were reduced to rubble by the ungodly invaders. Along with that, there were very few people of God left. Many were slaughtered or died of famine or diseases. Others were scattered, never to return, and many apostatized.

It is harder for us to understand their deep grief at the physical desolation of Jerusalem, for many of us have never experienced anything like this; we probably have more of a sense of their hardship due to their fewness.

So what does Isaiah do, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to encourage God's small band of afflicted people? What does he draw upon from earlier biblical history? First, he has recourse to the Abrahamic covenant and the narrative concerning Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 11-25. Second, the prophet writes of Eden, the paradisaical garden of the Lord in Genesis 2-3.

This is what we read in Isaiah 51:1-3: "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."

The introductory address, "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness" (1), does not refer to those Israelites who sought after righteousness by works and who went about to establish their own righteousness. "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone" (Rom. 9:31-32; cf. 10:3).

Instead of self-righteous hypocrites, God is here speaking to the godly, those who fear the Lord and obey the voice of His servant, the Messiah (Isa. 50:10); those who know righteousness, those who have God's law in their heart (51:7).

The righteousness of these people is the imputed righteousness of justification (45:24-25). They are also righteous with the infused righteousness of sanctification so that they obey God's Word not to merit but out of gratitude. They "follow after righteousness" (51:1) by pursuing it diligently.

Let us earnestly follow after righteousness in God's way and "hearken" to the prophet in the next issue of the *News*.

Rev. Stewart

Interpreting Old Testament Prophecy (2)

A brother from continental Europe writes, “In a recent conversation, I was told that, when Jesus comes back, He will arrive on the earth on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4) and come through the Golden Gate. I found it a really strange and false idea, but I couldn’t think of a good argument against it. (Personally, I reckon it’s senseless to talk about the *place* of Christ’s return as, first, it shall be seen from each point of the earth, and also the earth and heavens shall be destroyed, and, second, we cannot imagine that event and the Bible also uses only pictures for illustrating it.) If you have a brief answer, that would be nice for me.”

I answered the question that is quoted above in the last *News* by addressing the issue of hermeneutics or the interpretation of Old Testament prophecy. Now I have two additional points that I would like to make, before presenting positively the meaning of Zechariah 14:4.

1) The first point is a question that arose out of what I wrote last time (it would be good if you would re-read that). That question is: Who are the true children of Abraham?

The premills and Baptists claim that the true children of Abraham are ethnic Jews. Their theology is based on this assumption, that Abraham is the father of Jews only.

The truth is that they are dead wrong. In fact, if a Baptist or premill can show me one passage anywhere in Scripture where the expression “seed of Abraham” or “children of Abraham” is used to refer to Jews only, I will publicly apologize in the *News*. I am convinced that the Bible never uses the expression “seed [or children] of Abraham” to refer to Jews only.

The expression is found early in sacred history. It is used in connection with the establishment of God’s covenant with Abraham. This important event is recorded for us in Genesis 17. There God tells Abraham, “I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee” (7).

God Himself explains what He means by “thy seed after thee.” He speaks of an “everlasting covenant.” It seems to me that this term does not and cannot mean, as Baptists insist, that God establishes a temporal covenant with Abraham. If such is the case, words no longer have meaning.

I know, the Baptists say that the word “everlasting” in Scripture sometimes means “temporal” or “a long time.” It is more than passing strange that those who are so insistent on interpreting Scripture literally, should suddenly want to interpret “everlasting” as “temporal.” Are they not being “hoisted on their own petard”?

But, if that is not enough, to God the question of who are true children of Abraham is so important that He even changed the patriarch’s name from Abram to Abraham to express in his name that Abraham is not, most emphatically not, the father of Jews only, but also of the Gentiles: “Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but

thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee” (5).

Paul underscores this truth in Romans 9:6-8: “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” What can be gained by denying this flat-out contradiction of the premill position?

Galatians 3:28-29 is also important in this connection: “There is neither Jew nor Greek ... And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

2) The second point that needs to be made is a refutation of the claim of the premills that they alone take Scripture literally.

I see no need to go into this in detail. The fact of the matter is that the premills themselves do not take Scripture literally and cannot do this. But what is more serious is that by their claim they make the Bible a rather dull book. They are forced to deny that Scripture has in it all kinds of figures of speech: metaphors, similes, apostrophes, symbols and many other sorts of figures. God’s Word is a beautiful book, even as a literary masterpiece. Figures of speech make the truths of Scripture come alive and these figures often carry us away with their pointed and sharp truth.

But, more importantly, by means of figures of speech, Scripture makes clear to us that this earthly (from which all figures of speech are taken) is created after the pattern of the heavenly; that the heavenly is the true reality, while the earthly is the shadow. And, at the same time, these figures of speech tell us to look ahead to that reality that is to come, when this earthly shall be redeemed by Christ and made like to the heavenly.

By rendering ineffective the many figures of speech, the premills also take away the rich, beautiful and important types in the old dispensation that pointed God’s people then, and point us now, to new dispensation realities. The whole subject of types is most interesting and enlightening. Study the subject.

Let us now have the text to which the brother refers, as well as the next verse, with which it is very closely associated, clearly set before us: “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east thereof and toward the west thereof, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall move toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee” (Zech. 14:4-5).

Below is the positive explanation of the passage given by my son, Pastor Ron Hanko, in his recent book *The Coming of Zion’s Redeemer*, a commentary on Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

“The literalists believe that Christ will actually stand on the Mount of Olives and that it will split in two when he returns a thousand years before the end to establish an

(continued on p. 4)