

2 Peter - Commentaries by Charles Henry Mackintosh

Papers on the Lord's Coming, Double Bearing of the Fact, The

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Having, as we trust, fully established the fact of the Lord's coming, we have now to place before the reader the double bearing of that fact—its bearing upon the Lord's people, and its bearing upon the world. The former is presented, in the New Testament, as the coming of Christ to receive His people to Himself; the latter is spoken of as "the day of the Lord"—a term of frequent use also in Old Testament Scriptures.

These things are never confounded in Scripture, as we shall see when we come to look at the various passages. Christians do confound them, and hence it is that we often find "that blessed hope" overcast with heavy clouds, and associated in the mind with circumstances of terror, wrath, and judgment, which have nothing whatever to do with the coming of Christ for His people, but are intimately bound up with "the day of the Lord."

Let the Christian reader, then, have it settled in his heart, on the clear authority of holy Scripture, that the grand and specific hope for him ever to cherish is the coming of Christ for His people. This hope may be realized this very night. There is nothing whatever to wait for—no events to transpire amongst the nations—nothing to occur in the history of Israel—nothing in God's government of the world—nothing, in short, in any shape or form whatsoever, to intervene between the heart of the true believer and his heavenly hope. Christ may come for His people tonight. There is actually nothing to hinder. No one can tell when He will come; but we can joyfully say that, at any moment, He may come. And, blessed be His name, when He does come for us, it will not be with the accompanying circumstances of terror, wrath, and judgment. It will not be with blackness and darkness and tempest. These things will accompany "the day of the Lord," as the Apostle Peter plainly tells the Jews in his first great sermon, on the day of Pentecost, in which he quotes the following words from the solemn prophecy of Joel, "And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before"—what? the coming of the Lord for His people? Nay; but before "that great and notable day of the Lord come."

When our Lord shall come to receive His people to Himself no eye shall see Him, no ear shall hear His voice, save His own redeemed and beloved people. Let us remember the words of the angelic witnesses in the first of Acts. Who saw the blessed One ascending into the heavens? None but His own. Well, "He shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." As was the going, so shall be the coming, if we are to bow to Scripture. To confound the day of the Lord with His coming for His Church is to overlook the plainest teachings of Scripture, and to rob the believer of his own true and proper hope.

And here perhaps we cannot do better than to call attention to a very important and interesting passage in the Second Epistle of Peter: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with Him in the holy mount. We have also the word of prophecy more sure [or confirmed], whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts" (chap. 1:16-19). This passage demands the reader's most attentive consideration. It sets forth, in the clearest possible manner, the distinction between "the word of prophecy" and the proper hope of the Christian, namely, "the morning star." We must remember that the great subject of prophecy is God's government of the world in connection with the seed of Abraham. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance" (Deut. 32:8-9).

Here then is the scope and theme of prophecy—Israel and the nations. A child can understand this. If we range through the prophets, from the opening of Isaiah to the close of Malachi, we shall not find so much as a single line about the Church of God—its position, its portion, or its prospects. No doubt the word of prophecy is deeply interesting, and most profitable for the Christian to study; but it will be all this just in proportion as he understands its proper scope and object, and sees how it stands in contrast with his own special hope. We may fearlessly assert that it is as utterly impossible for any one to study the Old Testament prophecies aright who does not clearly see the true place of the Church.

We cannot attempt to enter upon the subject of the Church in this brief paper. It has been repeatedly referred to and unfolded elsewhere, and we can now merely ask the reader to weigh and examine the statement which we here deliberately make, namely, that there is not so much as a single syllable about the Church of God, the body of Christ, from cover to cover of the Old Testament. Types, shadows, illustrations, there are, which, now that we have the full-orbed light of the New Testament, we can see, understand, and appreciate. But it was not possible for any Old Testament believer to see the great mystery of Christ and the Church, inasmuch as it was not revealed. The inspired apostle expressly tells us that it was "hid," not in the Old Testament Scriptures, but "in God," as we read in Ephesians 3, "And to make all men see what is the fellowship [or rather the administration] of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (verse 9). So also in Colossians we read, "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints" (chap. 1:26).

These two passages establish the truth of our statement beyond all question, for those who are willing to be governed absolutely by the authority of holy Scripture; they teach us that the great mystery—Christ and the Church—is not to be found in the Old Testament. Where

have we in the Old Testament a word about Jews and Gentiles forming one body, and being united by the Holy Ghost to a living Head in Heaven? How could such a thing possibly be, so long as "the middle wall of partition" stood as an insuperable barrier between the circumcised and the uncircumcised? If one were asked to name a special feature of the old economy he would at once reply, "The rigid separation of Jew and Gentile." On the other hand, if he were asked to name a special feature of the Church, or Christianity, he would as readily reply, "The intimate union of Jew and Gentile in one body." In short, the two conditions stand in vivid contrast, and it was wholly impossible that both could hold good at the same time. So long as the middle wall of partition stood, the truth of the Church could not be revealed; but the death of Christ having thrown down that wall, the Holy Ghost descended from Heaven to form the one body, and link it, by His presence and indwelling, to the risen and glorified Head in the heavens. Such is the great mystery of Christ and the Church, for which there could be no less a basis than accomplished redemption.

Now we entreat the reader to examine this matter for himself. Let him search the Scriptures to see if these things be indeed true. This is the only way to get at the truth. We must lay aside all our own thoughts and reasonings, our prejudices and predilections, and come like a little child, to the holy Scriptures. In this way we shall learn the mind of God on this most precious and interesting subject. We shall find that the Church of God, the body of Christ, did not exist, as a fact, until after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and the consequent descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. And further, we shall find that the full and glorious doctrine of the Church was not brought out until the days of the apostle Paul. (Compare Rom. 16: 25, 26; Eph. 1-3; Col. 1:25-29.) Finally, we shall see that the actual and unmistakable boundary lines of the Church's earthly history are Pentecost (Acts 2) and the

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hence it is that so very few Christians have really Scriptural thoughts about the coming of their Lord. They are looking into prophecy for the Church's hope—they confound "the Sun of righteousness" with "the morning Star"—they mix up the coming of Christ for His people, and His coming with them—they make His "coming" or "state of presence" to be identical with His "appearing" or "manifestation."

All this is a most serious mistake, against which we desire to warn our readers. When Christ comes with His people, "every eye shall see Him." When He is manifested, His people will be manifested also. "When Christ our life shall appear [or be manifested], then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4). When Christ comes to execute judgment, His saints come with Him. "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all" (Jude 14-15). So also in Revelation 19, the rider on the white horse is followed by the armies in Heaven upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. These armies are not angels, but saints; for we do not read of angels being clothed in white linen, which is expressly declared, in this very chapter to be "the righteousness of saints" (ver. 8).

Now, it is most evident that, if the saints accompany their Lord when He comes in judgment, they must be with Him previously. The fact of their going to Him is not presented in the book of Revelation, unless it be involved—as we doubt not it is—in the catching up of the man child, in chapter 12. The man child is, most surely, Christ; and inasmuch as Christ and His people are indissolubly joined in one, they are most completely identified with Him; blessed for ever be His holy and precious name!

But, clearly, it does not at all lie within the scope of the book of Revelation to give us the coming of Christ for His people, or their being caught up to meet Him in the air, or their return to the Father's house. For these blessed events or facts, we must look elsewhere, as, for example, in John 14:3; 1 Corinthians 15:23,51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17. Let the reader ponder these three passages. Let him drink into his very soul their clear and precious teaching. There is nothing difficult about them, no obscurity, no mist or vagueness whatever. A babe in Christ can understand them. They set forth in the clearest and simplest possible manner, the true Christian hope, which—we repeat it emphatically, and urge it upon the reader as the direct and positive teaching of holy Scripture—is the coming of Christ to receive His people, all His people, to Himself, to take them back with Him to His Father's house, there to remain with Him, while God deals governmentally with Israel and the nations, and prepares the way, by His judicial actings, for bringing in the First-begotten into the world.

Now, if it be asked, "Why have we not the coming of Christ for His people in the book of Revelation?" Because that book is pre-eminently a book of judgment—a governmental, judicial book, at least chapter 1 to 20. Hence even the Church is presented as under judgment. We do not see the Church in chapters 2 and 3 as the body or the bride of Christ; but as a responsible witness on the earth, whose condition is being carefully examined and rigidly judged by Him who walks amongst the candlesticks.

It would not, therefore, comport with the character or object of this book to introduce, directly, the rapture of the saints. It shows us the Church on the earth, in the place of responsibility. This it gives us, in chapters 2 and 3, under the head of "the things that are." But from that to chapter 19, there is not a single syllable about the Church on earth. The plain fact is, the Church will not be on earth during that solemn period. She will be with her Head and Lord, in the divine retirement of the Father's house. The redeemed are seen in Heaven, under the title of the twenty-four crowned elders, in chapters 4 and 5. There, blessed be God, they will be, while the seals are being opened, the trumpets sounded, and the vials poured out. To think of the Church as being on the earth, from Revelation 6-18—to place her amid the apocalyptic judgments—to pass her through "the great tribulation"—to subject her to "the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth"—would be to falsify her position, to rob her of her chartered privileges, and to contradict the clear and positive promise of her Lord.¹

No, no, beloved Christian reader; let no man deceive you, by any means. The Church is seen on earth in Revelation 2 and 3. She is seen in Heaven, together with the Old Testament saints, in chapters 4 and 5. We are not told, in the Revelation, how she gets there; but we see her there, in high communion and holy worship; and then, in chapter 19, the rider on the white horse comes forth, with His saints, to execute judgment upon the beast and the false prophet—to put down every enemy and every evil, and to reign over the whole earth for the blissful period of a thousand years.

Such is the plain teaching of the New Testament, to which we earnestly invite the attention of our readers. And let no one suppose that our object is to find an easy path for Christians in thus teaching, as we do most emphatically, that the Church will not be in "the great tribulation"—will not come into "the hour of temptation." Nothing of the kind. The fact is, the true and normal condition of the Church, and therefore of the individual Christian, in this world, is tribulation. So says our Lord: "In the world ye shall have tribulation." And again, "We glory in tribulation."

It cannot, therefore, be a question of avoiding that which is our appointed portion in this world, if only we are true to Christ. But the fact is, that the entire truth of the Church's position and prospect is involved in this question, and this is our reason for urging it so upon the prayerful attention of our readers.

The great object of the enemy is to drag down the Church of God to an earthly level—to set Christians entirely astray as to their divinely appointed hope—to lead them to confound things which God has made to differ, to occupy them with earthly things—to cause them to so mix up the coming of Christ for His people with His appearing in judgment upon the world, that they may not be able to cultivate those bridal affections and heavenly aspirations which become them as members of the body of Christ. He would fain have them looking out for various earthly events to come between them and their own proper hope, in order that they may not be—as God would have them—ever on the very tiptoe of expectation, looking out, with ardent desire, for the appearing of "the bright and morning Star."

Well does the enemy know what he is about; and surely we ought not to be ignorant of his devices, but rather give ourselves to the study of the Word of God, and thus learn, as we most surely shall, "the double bearing" of the glorious fact of the Lord's coming.

Handfuls of Pasture: Volume 1, Self-Control

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The word "temperance," in 2 Pet. 1:6, means a great deal more than what is usually understood by that term. It is customary to apply the expression "temperance" to a habit of moderation in reference to eating and drinking. No doubt it fully involves this, but it involves very much more. Indeed, the Greek word used by the inspired apostle, may, with strict propriety, be rendered "self-control." It gives the idea of one who has self habitually well reined in.

This is a rare and admirable grace, diffusing its hallowed influence over the entire course, character, and conduct. It not only bears directly upon one, or two, or twenty selfish habits, but upon self in all the length and breadth of that comprehensive and most odious term. Many a one who would look, with proud disdain, upon a glutton or a drunkard, may himself fail, every hour, in exhibiting the grace of self-control. True it is that gluttony and drunkenness should be ranged with the very vilest and most demoralizing forms of selfishness. They must be regarded as amongst the most bitter clusters that grow on that wide-spreading tree. But, then, self is a tree, and not a mere branch of a tree, or a cluster on a branch; and we should not only judge self when it works, but control it that it may not work.

Some, however, may ask, "How can we control self?" The answer is blessedly simple: "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4.) Have we not gotten salvation in Christ? Yes, blessed be God, we have. And what does this wondrous word include? Is it mere deliverance from the wrath to come? Is it merely the pardon of our sins, and the assurance of exemption from the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone? It is far more than these, precious and priceless though they be. In a word, then, "salvation" implies a full and hearty acceptance of Christ as my "wisdom," to guide me out of folly's dark and devious paths, into paths of heavenly light and peace; as my "righteousness," to justify me in the sight of a holy God; as my "sanctification," to make me practically holy in all my ways; and as my "redemption," to give me final deliverance from all the power of death, and entrance upon the eternal fields of glory.

Hence, therefore, it is evident that "self-control" is included in the salvation which we have in Christ. It is a result of that practical sanctification with which divine grace has endowed us. We should carefully guard against the habit of taking a narrow view of salvation. We should seek to enter into all its fullness. It is a word which stretches from everlasting to everlasting, and takes in, in its mighty sweep, all the practical details of daily life. I have no right to talk of salvation, as regards my soul, in the future, while I refuse to know and exhibit its practical bearing upon my conduct, in the present. We are saved, not only from the guilt and condemnation of sin, but also, and as fully, from the power, the practice, and the love of it. These things should never be separated, nor will they by any one who has been divinely taught the meaning, the extent, and the power of that precious word "salvation."

Now, in presenting to my reader a few practical sentences on the subject of self-control, I shall contemplate it under the three following divisions, namely—the thoughts, the tongue, and the temper. I take it for granted that I am addressing a saved person. If my reader be not that, I can only direct him to the one true and living way, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16) Put your whole trust in Him, and you shall be as safe as He is Himself. This grand theme is largely dwelt upon, and variously illustrated, throughout the pages of this magazine, and to them I would refer the unconverted sinner, or the anxious inquirer, while I proceed to deal with the practical and much-needed subject of self-control.

I. And, first, as to our thoughts, and the habitual government thereof. I suppose there are few Christians who have not suffered from evil thoughts—those troublesome intruders upon our most profound retirement—those constant disturbers of our mental repose, that so frequently darken the atmosphere around us, and prevent us from getting a full, clear view upward into the bright heaven above. The Psalmist could say, "I hate vain thoughts." No wonder. They are truly hateful, and should be judged, condemned, and expelled. Some one, in speaking of the subject of evil thoughts, has said, "I cannot prevent birds from flying over me, but I can prevent their alighting upon me. In like manner, I cannot prevent evil thoughts being suggested to my mind, but I can refuse them a lodgment therein."

But how can we control our thoughts? No more than we could blot out our sins, or create a world. What are we to do? Look to Christ. This is the true secret of self-control. He can keep us, not only from the lodgment, but also from the suggestion of the evil thoughts. We could no more prevent the one than the other. He can prevent both. He can keep the vile intruders, not only from getting in, but even from knocking at the door. When the divine life is in energy—when the current of spiritual thought and feeling is deep and rapid—when the heart's affections are intensely occupied with the Person of Christ, vain thoughts do not trouble us. It is only when spiritual indolence creeps over us that evil thoughts—vile and horrible progeny!—come in upon us, like a flood; and then our only resource is to look straight to Jesus. We might as well attempt to cope with the marshaled hosts of hell, as with a horde of evil thoughts. Our refuge is in Christ. He is made unto us sanctification. We can do all things through Him. We have just to bring the name of Jesus to bear upon the flood of evil thoughts, and He will, most

assuredly, give full and immediate deliverance.

However, the more excellent way is, to be preserved from the suggestions of evil, by the power of pre-occupation with good. When the channel of thought is decidedly up-ward, when it is deep and well formed, free from all curves and indentations, then the current of imagination and feeling, as it gushes up from the deep fountains of the soul, will naturally flow onward in the bed of that channel. This, I repeat, is, unquestionably, the more excellent way. May we prove it in our own experience. " Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are venerable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." (Phil. 4:8, 9.) When the heart is fully engrossed with Christ, the living embodiment of all those things enumerated in verse 8, we enjoy profound peace, unruffled by evil thoughts. This is true self-control.

II. And, now, as to the tongue, that influential member, so fruitful in good, so fruitful in evil-the instrument whereby we can either give forth accents of soft and soothing sympathy, or words of bitter sarcasm and burning indignation. How deeply important is the grace of self-control in its application to such a member! Mischief, which years cannot repair, may be done by the tongue in a moment. Words, which we would give the world, if we had it, to recall, may be uttered by the tongue in an unguarded hour. Hear what the inspired apostle saith on this subject: " If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasted great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind. But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." (Jas. 3:2-8.)

Who, then, can control the tongue? "No man" can do it; but Christ can; and we have only to look to Him, in simple faith which implies, at once, the sense of our own utter helplessness and His all-sufficiency. It is utterly impossible that we could control the tongue. As well might we attempt to stem the ocean's tide, the mountain torrent, or the Alpine avalanche. How often, when suffering under the effects of some egregious blunder of the tongue, have we resolved to command that unruly member somewhat better next time; but, alas! our resolution proved to be like the morning cloud that passeth away, and we had only to retire and weep over our lamentable failure in the matter of self-control. Now, why was this? Simply because we undertook the matter in our own strength, or, at least, without a sufficiently deep consciousness of our own weakness. This is the cause of constant failure. We must cling to Christ as the babe clings to its mother. Not that our clinging is of any value; still we must cling. Thus, and thus alone, can we successfully bridle the tongue. And oh! let us remember, at all times, the solemn searching words of the same apostle, James, " If any one (man, woman, or child) among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." (chap. 1: 26.) These are wholesome words for a day like the present, when there are so many unruly tongues abroad. May we have grace to attend to these words! May their holy influence appear in our ways!

III. The last point to be considered is the temper, which is intimately connected with both the tongue and the thoughts. Indeed, all three are very closely linked. When the spring of thought is spiritual, and the current heavenly, the tongue is only the active agent for good, and the temper is calm and unruffled. Christ dwelling in the heart by faith regulates everything. Without Him, all is worse than worthless. I may possess and exhibit the self-command of a Franklin or a Socrates, and, all the while, be wholly ignorant of the " self-control" of 2 Pet. 1:6. The latter is founded on " faith;" the former on philosophy, two totally different things. We must remember that the word is " Add to your faith." This puts faith first, as the only link to connect the heart with Christ, the living source of all power. Having Christ, and abiding in Him, we are enabled to add "courage, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity." Such are the precious fruits that now from abiding in Christ. But I can no more control my temper than my tongue or my thoughts; and if I set about it, I shall be sure to break down every hour. A mere philosopher, without Christ, may exhibit more self-control as to tongue and temper, than a Christian, if he abides not in Christ. This ought not to be, and would not be, if the Christian simply looked to Jesus. It is when he fails in this that the enemy gains the advantage. The philosopher, without Christ, seems to succeed in the great business of self-control, only that he may be the more effectually blinded as to the truth of his condition, and carried headlong to eternal ruin. But Satan delights to make a Christian stumble and fall, only that he may thereby blaspheme the precious name of Christ.

Christian reader, let us remember these things. Let us look to Christ to control our thoughts, our tongue, and our temper. Let us " give all diligence." Let us think how much is involved. " If these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." This is deeply solemn. How easy it is to drop into a state of spiritual blindness and forgetfulness! No amount of knowledge, either of doctrine or the letter of Scripture, will preserve the soul from this awful condition. Nothing but " the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ will avail; and this knowledge is to be increased in the soul by "giving all diligence to add to our faith" the various graces to which the apostle refers in the above eminently practical and soul-stirring passage. " Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

The Scriptures, Scriptures, The: Part 4

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Ever since the writings of Moses, God's people have recognized the divine authority of the written word. Besides the books of Moses, God has added to them from time to time by various instruments, and especially by prophets. They not only enforced the divine authority of what had been written, but also spoke authoritatively with "Thus saith the Lord," or "The word of the Lord came," etc. The future blessings of God's earthly people were spread out largely by them to cheer the faithful and to animate them with hope. Although those who were so employed

were men of like passions with ourselves, yet to assure us of the authentic character of their ministry and that they gave out the words of the Lord, we are told that "prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21. All the prophets call earnestly upon the people to be subject to the word of the Lord, for they declared that they spoke His words.

Isaiah said, "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read." On another occasion he said, Thus said the Lord, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." And again, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at His word." He also exultingly cried out in contrast with the frailty of man, "The word of our God shall stand forever." Besides this testimony to the truth of the words which he ministered as being the word of God, he reproves the wicked in Israel because they cast away the word of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. The prophet further assures them that "The Lord hath spoken." He said, "Hear the word of the Lord." "Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel." (Isa. 34:16; 66:2, 5; 40:8; 5:24; 1:2, 10, 24.)

Jeremiah was so sensitive to the divine authority of the words he communicated to the people, that we find him saying, "Thus saith the Lord," and "Hear the counsel of the Lord." So divinely true were the words to his own conscience that he calls them God's words. He says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." Again, we hear him saying, "The word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name. But His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." (Jer. 19:1; 49:20; 15:16; 20:8, 9.)

Ezekiel says, "the word of the Lord came unto me," and "the word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel," and "Again the word of the Lord came unto me." This is repeated many times in his prophecy and he was also commanded to write. The Lord said unto him, "Thou shalt speak My words unto them," and in a vision he saw "a roll... written within and without." So assured was he that what he declared was the word of God, that he said, "The word that I shall speak shall come to pass" and "the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God." (Ezek. 7:1; 1:3; 16:1; 2:7, 9, 10; 12:25, 28.)

No one can carefully consider the book of Psalms without seeing the value and authority of the Word of God frequently set forth. It opens by marking one point in the righteous man, being that he meditates in the law of God day and night. In Psa. 119 almost every verse speaks of the word, statutes, commandments, or law of the Lord. Not only does it speak of the purity of the word itself and its cleansing virtue, but its divine authenticity is so regarded that he says, "The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver," and "I love Thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold." David was one of those holy men of old who was moved to speak by the Holy Spirit. (Psa. 1:2; 119:9, 72, 127.)

Daniel owned the writings, or books of Jeremiah as "the word of the Lord," and also "the oath that is written in the Law of Moses the servant of God," and that God had confirmed His word which He spake against us "as it is written in the law of Moses." We know that the God of heaven made known and revealed wonderful things to Daniel, and used him to communicate His mind both concerning the times of the Gentiles and His own people. Some things concerning them have since been accomplished, and much remains to be fulfilled. (Dan. 9:2, 11, 13; 2:19, 28, 44.)

The other prophets generally ascribed the authenticity of their ministrations to God. In Hosea it is, "the word of the Lord that came unto Hosea." In Joel, "The word of the Lord that came to Joel." Amos said, "Thus saith the Lord." Obadiah said, "Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom." In Jonah it is twice said, "The word of the Lord came unto Jonah." Micah begins with, "The word of the Lord that came to Micah." Nahum says, "Thus saith the Lord." Habakkuk tells us, "The Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it." Zephaniah begins with, "The word of the Lord which came unto Zephaniah." (Hos. 1:1; Joel 1:1; Amos 1:3; Obad. 1:1; Jonah 1:1; 3:1; Mic. 1:1; Nah. 1:12; Hab. 2:2; Zeph. 1:1.)

The testimony of the prophets was nearly completed before the Jews were carried away into Babylon. We have only three post-captivity prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Haggai distinctly affirms that his word was "the word of the Lord," and that it came to him at different times. He announced it authoritatively with, "Thus saith the Lord." Hag. 1:1, 7; 2:1, 7, 20.

Zechariah also asserts the divine source of his solemn and beautiful utterances when he says, "The word of the Lord came unto Zechariah." Zech. 1:1, 7; 7:1; 8:1.

Malachi also introduces his testimony with, "The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi." It is well to observe that this last Old Testament prophet presses, in the Lord's name, the divine authority of the writings of Moses, saying, "Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." Mal. 1:1; 4:4.

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