

PLAIN PAPERS ON THE LORD'S SECOND COMING

by

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We must now draw this series of papers to a close; and it is with a strong feeling of reluctance that we do so. The theme is intensely interesting, deeply practical, and abundantly fruitful. Moreover, it is very suggestive, and opens up an extensive field of vision for the spiritual mind to range through with an interest that never flags, because the subject is inexhaustible.

However, we must, FOR THE PRESENT AT LEAST, close our meditations on this most marvelous line of truth; but ere doing so, we are anxious to call the reader's attention, as briefly as possible, to one or two things which have been barely hinted at in the progress of these papers. We deem them not only interesting, but of real practical value in helping to a clearer understanding of many branches of the great subject which has been engaging our attention.

The reader who has traveled in company with us through the various branches of our subject will remember a cursory reference to what we ventured to call "an unnoticed interval - break - or parenthesis" in the dealings of God with Israel and with the earth.

This is a point of the deepest interest; and we hope to be able to show the reader that it is not some curious question, a dark mysterious subject, or a favorite notion of some special school of prophetic interpretation. Quite the contrary. We consider it to be a point which throws a flood of light on very many branches of our general subject. Such we have found it for ourselves, and as such we desire to present it to our readers. Indeed we strongly question if anyone can rightly understand prophecy or his own true position and bearings, who does not see the unnoticed interval or break above referred to.

But let us turn directly to the Word, and open at chapter 9 of the book of Daniel.

The opening verses of this remarkable section show us the beloved servant of God in profound exercise of soul in reference to the sad condition of his much loved people Israel - a condition into which, through the Spirit of Christ, he most thoroughly enters. Though not having himself personally participated in these actings which had brought ruin upon the nation, yet he identifies himself, most completely, with the people, and makes their sins his own in confession and self-judgment before his God.

We cannot attempt to quote from Daniel's remarkable prayer and confession on this occasion; but the subject which immediately concerns us now is introduced in verse 20.

“And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. Seventy weeks are determined [or portioned out] upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.”

Now we cannot, in our limited space, enter upon any elaborate argument to prove that the **“seventy weeks,”** in the above quotation, mean really four hundred and ninety years. We assume this to be the fact. We believe that Gabriel was commissioned to instruct the beloved prophet, and to inform him of the fact that, from the going forth of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, a period of four hundred and ninety years was to elapse, and that then Israel would be brought into blessing.

This is as simple and definite as anything can be. We may assert, with all possible confidence, that it is not so certain that the sun shall rise, at the appointed moment, tomorrow morning, as that at the close of the period above named by the angelic messenger, Daniel's people shall be brought into blessing. It is as sure as the throne of God. Nothing can hinder. Not all the powers of earth and hell combined shall be allowed to stand in the way of the full and perfect accomplishment of the Word of God by the mouth of Gabriel. When the last sand of the four hundred and ninetieth year shall have run out of the glass, Israel shall enter upon the possession of all their destined pre-eminence and glory. It is impossible to read Daniel 9:24, and not see this.

But, it may be, the reader feels disposed to ask - and ask, too, with astonishment, “Have not the four hundred and ninety years expired long ago?” We reply, Certainly not. Had they done so, Israel would be now in their own land, under the blessed reign of their own loved Messiah. Scripture cannot be broken; nor can we play fast and loose with its statements, as though they might mean anything or everything, or nothing at all. The word is precise. **“Seventy weeks are portioned out upon thy people.”** Neither more nor less than seventy weeks. If this be taken to mean literal weeks, the passage has no sense or meaning whatever. It would be an insult to our readers to occupy time in combating such an absurdity as this.

But if, as we are most thoroughly persuaded, Gabriel meant seventy weeks of years, then have we a period most distinct and definite before us - a period extending from the moment in which Cyrus issued his decree to restore Jerusalem, to the moment of Israel's restoration. Still, however, the reader may feel led to ask, “How can these things be? It is very much more than four hundred and ninety years, four times told, since the king of Persia issued his decree, and yet there is no sign of Israel's restoration. There must surely be some other mode of interpreting the seventy weeks.”

We can only repeat our statement, that the four hundred and ninety years are not out yet. There has been a break - a parenthesis, a long unnoticed interval.

Let the reader look closely at Daniel 9:25-26: “**Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks [49 years] and threescore and two weeks [434 years]; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times;**” or, as the margin reads it, “in strait of times,” that is, the street and the wall of Jerusalem were built in the shorter of the two periods named, or in forty-nine years. “**And after threescore and two weeks [434 years from the rebuilding of Jerusalem], shall Messiah be cut off.**”

Here then we reach the marked, memorable, and solemn epoch.

The Messiah, instead of being received, is cut off.

- In place of ascending the throne of David, He goes to the Cross.
- Instead of entering upon the possession of all the promises, He has nothing.

His only portion - so far as Israel and the earth were concerned - was the Cross, the vinegar, the spear, the borrowed grave.

Messiah was rejected, cut off, and had nothing. What then? God signified His sense of this act, by suspending for a time His dispensational dealings with Israel. The course of time is interrupted. There is a great gap.

Four hundred and eighty-three years are fulfilled; seven yet remain - a cancelled week, and all the time since the death of the Messiah has been an unnoticed interval - a break or parenthesis, during which Christ has been hidden in the heavens, and the Holy Ghost has been working on earth in forming the body of Christ, the Church, the heavenly bride.

When the last member shall have been incorporated into this body, the Lord Himself shall come and receive His people to Himself, to conduct them back to the Father's house, there to be with Him in the ineffable communion of that blessed home, while God will, by His governmental dealings, prepare Israel and the earth for the introduction of the First-begotten into the world.

Now as to this interval and all that was to occur therein, Gabriel maintains a profound reserve. Whether he understood aught of it is not the question. It is clear he was not commissioned to speak of it, inasmuch as the time was not come for so doing. He passes, with marvelous and mysterious abruptness, over ages and generations - steps from headland to headland of the prophetic chart, and dismisses in a short sentence or two, a lengthened period of nearly two thousand years.

The siege of Jerusalem by the Romans is thus briefly noticed, “**The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.**” Then, a period which has already lasted for eighteen centuries is thus disposed of, “**And the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.**”

Then, with intense rapidity, we are conducted on to the time of the end, when the last of the seventy weeks, the last seven of the four hundred and ninety years, shall be accomplished.

“And he [the Prince] shall confirm the covenant with many [of the Jews] for one week [seven years]; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

Here then we reach the end of the four hundred and ninety years which were determined or portioned out upon Daniel’s people.

To attempt to interpret this period without seeing the break and the long unnoticed interval, must of necessity plunge the mind in utter confusion. It cannot possibly be done. Numberless theories have been started; endless calculations and speculations have been attempted; but in vain. The four hundred and ninety years are not accomplished yet; nor will they have their accomplishment until the Church has left this scene altogether, and gone to be with her Lord in her bright heavenly home.

Revelation 4 and 5 show us the place which the heavenly saints shall occupy during the last of Daniel’s seventy weeks; while from Revelation 6-18 we have the various actings of God in government, preparing Israel and the earth for the bringing in of the First-begotten in the world. *

*** It is, we are aware, a question among the expositors, whether the events detailed in Revelation 6-18 will occupy a whole week or only a half. We do not here attempt to offer an opinion. Some consider that the public ministry of John the Baptist and that of our Lord occupied a week, or seven years, and that in consequence of Israel’s rejection of both, the week is cancelled, and remains yet to be fulfilled. It is an interesting question; but it in no wise affects the great principles which have been before us, or the interpretation of the book of Revelation. We may add that the expressions “forty and two months” - “twelve hundred and sixty days” - “time, times, and the dividing of time,” indicate the period of half a week, or three years and a half.**

We are very anxious to make these matters clear to the reader.

It has greatly helped us in the understanding of prophecy, and cleared away many difficulties. We feel thoroughly persuaded that no one can understand the book of Daniel, or indeed the general scope of prophecy, who does not see that the last of the seventy weeks remains to be fulfilled. Not one jot or tittle of God’s Word can ever pass away, and seeing He has declared that seventy weeks were portioned out upon Daniel’s people, and that at the close of that period they should be brought into blessing, it is plain that this period is not yet expired. But unless we see the break, and the dropping of time, consequent upon the rejection of the Messiah, we cannot possibly make out the fulfillment of Daniel’s seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years.

Another important fact for the reader to seize is this, the Church forms no part of the ways of God with Israel and the earth.

The Church does not belong to time, but to eternity. She is not earthly, but heavenly. She is called into existence during an unnoticed interval - a break or parenthesis consequent upon the cutting off of the Messiah. To speak after the manner of men, if Israel had received the Messiah, then the seventy weeks or four hundred and ninety years would have been fulfilled; but Israel rejected her King, and God has retired to His place until they acknowledge their iniquity. He has suspended His public dealings with Israel and the earth, though most surely controlling all things by His providence, and keeping His eye upon the seed of Abraham, ever beloved for the father's sake.

Meanwhile He is calling out from Jews and Gentiles that body called the Church, to be the companion of His Son in heavenly glory - to be thoroughly identified with Him in His present rejection from this earth, and to wait in holy patience for His glorious advent.

All this marks off the Christian's position in the most definite manner possible. His portion and his prospects, too, are thus defined with equal clearness. It is vain to look into the prophetic page in order to find the Church's position, her calling, or her hope. They are not there. It is entirely out of place for the Christian to be occupied with dates and historic events, as though he were in anywise involved therein.

No doubt, all these things have their proper place and their value, and their interest, as connected with God's dealings with Israel and with the earth. But the Christian must never lose sight of the fact that he belongs to Heaven, that he is inseparably linked with an earth-rejected, Heaven-accepted Christ - that his life is hid with Christ in God - that it is his holy privilege to be looking out, daily and hourly, for the coming of his Lord. There is nothing to hinder the realization of that blissful hope at any moment.

There is but one thing that causes the delay, and that is, "**the longsuffering of our Lord, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance**" - precious words these for a lost and guilty world!

The salvation is ready to be revealed; and God is ready to judge. There is nothing now to wait for but the gathering in of the last elect one, and then - oh! most blessed thought - our own dear and loving Saviour will come and receive us to Himself to be with Him where He is, and to go no more out forever.

Then when the Church has gone to be with her Lord in the heavenly home, God will resume His public actings with Israel. They will be brought into great tribulation, during the week already referred to. But at the close of that period of unexampled pressure and trial, their long-rejected Messiah will appear for their relief and deliverance. He will come forth as the rider on the white horse, accompanied by the heavenly saints. He will execute summary judgment upon His enemies, and take to Himself His great power and reign. The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. Satan shall be bound for a thousand years; and the whole universe shall repose beneath the blissful and benignant rule of the Prince of peace.

Finally, at the close of the thousand years, Satan shall be loosed, and permitted to make one more desperate effort - an effort issuing in his eternal defeat and consignment to the lake of fire, there to be tormented with the beast and the false prophet throughout the everlasting ages.

Then follows the resurrection and judgment of the wicked dead, and their consignment to the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone - tremendous and appalling thought! No heart can conceive - no tongue can tell - the horrors of that lake of fire.

But hardly is there a moment to dwell upon the dark and awful picture, ere the unutterable glories of the new heavens and the new earth burst upon the vision of the soul; the holy city is seen descending from Heaven, and these seraphic sounds fall upon the ear, "**Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne, said, Behold I make all things new.**"

O beloved Christian reader, what scenes are before us! What grand realities! What brilliant moral glories!

May we live in the light and power of these things! May we cherish that blessed hope of seeing the One who loved us and gave Himself for us - who would not enjoy His glory alone, but endured the wrath of God in order that He might link us with Himself, and share with us all His love and glory forever.

Oh! to live for Christ and wait for His appearing!

High in the Father's house above
My mansion is prepared;
There is the home, the rest I love,
And there my bright reward.

With Him I love, in spotless white,
In glory I shall shine;
His blissful presence my delight,
His love and glory mine.

All taint of sin shall be removed,
All evil done away;
And I shall dwell with God's Beloved,
Through God's eternal day.

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