

## PRISONERS DELIVERED

NO. 2883

A SERMON

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*“As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.”*  
*Zechariah 9:11, 12.*

THIS text primarily relates to Israel—to the Jews—and there can be no doubt whatever that there are great blessings in store for God's ancient people. Although blindness in part has happened unto Israel, yet, in due time, we know, from the Word of God, that the seed of Abraham will recognize our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as the long-promised Messiah. When that happy day comes, the Lord will give to the whole world times of amazing blessing. The fullness of the Gentiles also will then be experienced. Then, too, shall come the latter-day glory of Jerusalem, and all nations shall rejoice with her.

You notice that the text begins with the words, “As for you also,” which might be translated so as to run parallel with that pathetic exclamation of our Savior, when He wept over Jerusalem, and said, “If you had known, *even you*, at least in this your day; the things which belong unto your peace: but now they are hid from your eyes.” The Hebrew of our text might be rendered, “As for you, *even you*,” and the meaning of the expression is, “There is some very special blessing for you, O Jerusalem! It is not for the heathen; but, as for you, O Zion—you seed of Abraham according to the flesh—there is something special in store for you.” I think we ought to pray for the Jews more often than we do, and to look more hopefully upon the Jews than we usually do, and not to speak of them as an unbelieving race. The fact is, they have been, in some respects, too believing, for they have blindly clung to the old faith of their fathers, instead of going on to know the Lord Jesus Christ. When they do accept Him, that firm adherence, which they have shown to the traditions of their sires, will make them grandly strong in faith in the only true Messiah. I suppose, however, that we have no Jews with us here; so it is no use, just now, for me to address them, but I may use the text as a message to ourselves. While I do so, may the Holy Spirit bless it to us all! When we read in the Scriptures, concerning Israel, we may fairly translate it to mean, spiritually, the Church of God; for, as all who believe are the children of believing Abraham, so all who have been born-again, by the power of the Holy Spirit, belong to the chosen seed, and may be rightly called “Israel.” In this spiritual sense, how sweetly has our text been fulfilled in the experience of many of us, who are the true Israel of God, though Abraham is ignorant of us, and Sarah acknowledge us not!

What a wonderful history “the Church of the living God” has had! She has been, so Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.” I have sometimes seen, in Scotland, what they call vitrified forts, which have, evidently, passed through the fire to such an extent that the whole of the wall has become vitrified into one firmly united mass; and the Church of God seems to me to have been like those vitrified forts, for the fire has been concentrated upon her seven times hotter than anywhere else. Yet, to this day, the Church of Christ still firmly stands, the truth of God is still to the front, and the name of Jesus is still—

*“High over all,  
In hell, or earth, or sky,  
Angels and men before it fall;  
And devils fear and fly.”*

So shall it be even to the end. The 48<sup>th</sup> Psalm reminds us of the glory of the ancient “city of the great King,” and of the terror that fell upon her adversaries: “For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marveled; they were troubled, and hastened away. Fear took hold upon

them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail.” So shall it be with the present race of skeptics and rejecters of Christ. Hundreds of generations of skeptics have come and gone, like the sere leaves of autumn. They were fresh and green, for a little while, and then they professed to be a shade to the Church with their “philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ;” but, before long, they withered, and fell, and rotted into the soil from whence they sprang. Yet still the truth of God abides, and “the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth,” still stands fast, awaiting the grand consummation when the topstone shall be placed upon the glorious temple amid shouts of “Grace, grace unto it.”

Looking into this passage, we notice, first, that *there are some prisoners mentioned, and they are said to be in a terrible plight*. Then, in the second place, *there is an emancipation spoken of, and the cause of that emancipation is mentioned*.

**I. First, THERE ARE SOME PRISONERS MENTIONED, AND THEY ARE SAID TO BE IN A TERRIBLE PLIGHT.** We need not look long to find those prisoners, for some of them are here in our midst; and there are others here, who were once imprisoned thus, but they have been set free.

These prisoners are said to be *in a pit*. It was a common custom, and still is, in the East, not to go to the expense of building prisons, but to make use of dry wells—and the authorities were not always very particular in seeing that they were dry—and they just let the prisoner down by a rope, which they pulled up, leaving him in what was, usually, a very secure prison indeed. No trouble was taken to fit up a proper cell; no money was expended upon ventilation, or anything of the kind. The pit was, usually, deep and dark, and a great stone was rolled over the mouth of it; and there the prisoner was left, in solitary confinement, often to die of hunger and thirst. If anyone thought or cared to bring him bread and water, it was well for him; but, in many cases, the prisoners were forgotten; and nobody ever heard of them anymore. In fact, they were buried alive; and that was, spiritually, our condition when we were in the pit wherein is no water.

I look back, twenty years or so ago, and see myself, as I then was, in that horrible pit—consciously in that pit. We were all there by nature, but we did not know it; but, at the time I am recalling, I did know it. The Lord had opened my eyes, and led me to see that I was in a deep, waterless pit by reason of the original sin in the fall of Adam. I saw that I was cast down into a deep pit from which I could not get out by my own exertions—with a nature averse to everything that was good—with a will that was strong for evil, but impotent for good—with a judgment that was out of gear—a taste that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter—a heart that had turned aside unto idols—with everything about me as wrong as wrong could be. I distinctly remember that I did not trouble so much about the original sin through the fall as I did about my own actual sins and transgressions. Oh, those dreadful walls of guilt that rose up all around me! Dense was the darkness in which I was enveloped, and the few gleams of light that ever pierced that darkness only made me see more clearly the huge black walls of my old sins; my youthful sins, not forgotten to this day, but remembered with deep regret—sins of thought, sins of imagination, sins of word, such sins as I was capable of committing at that period of my life. Well do I recollect that pit of actual sin. Perhaps some of you are in it at this moment. It is a horrible pit for anyone to be in, and it is peculiarly so to some men. If a man has lived for many years in sin, and only in his later life, perhaps when verging on old age, has begun to get enough light to show him what he really is in God’s sight, it is an awful thing for him to wake up, and find himself in the pit of condemnation as the result of both original and actual sin.

There was a man, once, who lay asleep, and, as he slept, he dreamt that he was in a gorgeous palace, with marble halls and gold and gems in the utmost profusion; but, as a matter of fact, he was all the while asleep in a loathsome hole where everything was polluted and foul. When he awoke, the gilded walls had all gone, and the marble halls had all vanished; and, realizing where he was, the fleeting pleasure of his dream was changed to the abiding misery of the actual facts of his sorrowful experience. Possibly I am addressing some who have just awakened out of their life’s dream, and have discovered where they are—where they are by nature, and where they are by practice, too—down, down, down, in a deep pit where there is no water. For, be it known to you that whenever a man finds himself lost by nature, and by practice, too, he very soon finds that he is also lost by the just condemnation of God, for the thrice-holy Jehovah cannot look upon a polluted heart without abhorrence. It is not possible for Him to see sin without being angry. Some people, in these degenerate days, have invented for themselves a god who equally loves all

men whatever their characters may be, and who looks upon loathsome imaginations and filthy thoughts with an altogether indifferent eye, and still goes on to bless, let men do what they may. But such a god as that is not the God revealed to us in this old-fashioned Book: nor is he my father's God, nor mine, nor yours; indeed, he is like the idols that are no gods at all. No, where there is sin, justice demands that there should be condemnation, and it also requires that there should be punishment as well; so this is the dreadful thing about our condition by nature that, when we were held in the bonds of sin, we were also condemned, and lay in the condemned cell, only awaiting the hour of execution. That was our condition, spiritually—like prisoners in a pit.

We are also told, in our text, *there was no water*. Now, generally, in a pit, you do find some water; it drops from the clouds, if it comes from nowhere else. When Jeremiah was let down, with cords, into the dungeon of Malchiah, we read that “in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sank in the mire.” It is only natural that, in deep holes sunk in the earth, the water should stand in a pool at the bottom. But this pit, of which our text speaks, has all the disadvantages, and none of the advantages, of an ordinary pit. It is called, as though with an emphasis, “*the pit wherein is no water;*” and there are some ungodly men who are in just such a pit as that. There are others who are up to their armpits in water—very muddy stuff it is—I should not like to drink it, yet they seem able to quench their thirst with it. They are the men who take pleasure in sin and enjoy iniquity; but brethren, when God means to save a man, He makes him realize, that he is in a pit in which there is no water. When a man has reached that point, all “the pleasures of sin” have vanished. He finds that he cannot any longer be pleased with that which once used to afford him great delight. Some of you know what this strange experience means—that the very things you used to crave have become most loathsome to you. Your soul lusted after them, and you said, in your youth, “If I could only have these things, I would be the happiest mortal on the earth.” Well, you have had your fill of them, and you do not want any more. You are sick of them, as one may eat honey till he loathes the very sight of it. I have heard of a poor flower girl, in the streets of London, who used to sell violets all day long, taking home at night those she had left. Having them always about her, she said that she hated the smell of violets; and God can make men hate the smell of their sweetest sins, and flee from them with disgust; He can turn their sweet wine into the most sour vinegar, so that they will be as glad to get away from it as they once were fond of running to it.

When a soul is in this condition, in the pit wherein is no water, it often happens that even the lawful comforts of earth lose their usual comforting force. Well do I recollect the time when I was in this waterless pit. It mattered very little to me what I ate or drank. It made but a slight difference to me whether it was day or night; for, by day, I dreaded the wrath of God, and if I fell asleep at night, I dreamt of it, and wondered, when I awoke, that I was not already in hell. Even those youthful games, and those lawful amusements, into which, as a lad, I entered, lost all charm for me. If you have read John Bunyan's “Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners,” you know that at the time when he was under conviction of sin, nothing comforted him at all. There seemed, to him, to be no brightness in the sky, no flowers on the earth, and no melody in the sweetest songs of the birds. Well, if it is so with any of you, dear friends; if you are in a pit wherein is no water—none whatever—I hope my text applies to you, and that you belong to the special class of prisoners to whom the Lord thus speaks: “As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.” The Lord is speaking of those who secretly belong to the covenant race of Israel, His own chosen and redeemed ones. Though you know it not as yet, your name is recorded in the Lamb's book of life. Though His love has not, as yet, been fully made known to you, He has ordained you unto everlasting life; and, therefore, though you are at present in the pit, you cannot die there, and you cannot always lie there; though you are at present without water, you shall never perish of thirst. You may be brought to dire distress, but you shall then prove that man's extremity is God's opportunity. As the Lord lives, who chose you by His grace, long before He made the heavens and the earth, He will bring you, as His prisoners, out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, set your feet upon a rock, and establish your goings.

That is the first thing mentioned in the text—prisoners in a very terrible plight.

**II.** Secondly, THE TEXT SPEAKS ABOUT EMANCIPATION, AND THE CAUSE OF THAT EMANCIPATION IS MENTIONED: “By the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.”

Delivered from that horrible pit! How did they get out? The text tells us that *God sent them out of it*. Oh, that awful pit of natural depravity—that dreadful pit of actual sin—that fearful pit of just damnation! Nobody ever yet came out of that pit except by divine power; nor need anybody ever wish to escape by his own power, for if he did so escape, he might be dragged back again into the dungeon. If a prisoner is released by the king himself, who will dare to re-arrest him? If the Lord Himself delivers us, where is the power that can put us back into the pit again? It is Jehovah who says, “I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.” Some of us recollect the time when the Lord did thus send us forth. None but He could have done it; but He did it, and did it thoroughly; He snapped every fetter that was upon us, lifted us right up out of the abyss, and fully and forever emancipated us—all glory to His ever-blessed name!

Then our text tells us *how God did it*: “By the blood of your covenant.” Oh, what a grand way of deliverance this is! Do you know what this expression, “by the blood of your covenant,” means? There was a covenant, between God and His chosen people, made of old, before the day star had first cast his bright beams across the darkness. To make that covenant sure, God’s only-begotten and well-beloved Son had agreed with His Father that He would ratify it with His own blood; and, in due time, He came to this earth and fulfilled that covenant by offering up Himself as the God-appointed Victim in the stead of guilty men. Now, brethren, it is by that blood of the everlasting covenant, offered in our stead, that we were set free from the bondage of sin. I heard, the other day, that some wise man had said that if a preacher wanted to be popular—by which I suppose he meant, to draw many to hear the gospel—He must preach blood, and fire, and smoke! I do not know what the smoke has to do with it; but I do know that there is nothing that has such power as the precious blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin, and that, next to the blood of Jesus, there is nothing that has such power as the blessed fire which comes down from heaven, touches the preacher’s lips, and makes him speak, with fervor and enthusiasm, of that precious blood. There is no man, either living or dead, who was ever sent forth out of the pit of soul-despair except by the blood of the covenant. I can assure you of one thing—the man, who can do without the atoning sacrifice of Christ, has never known what true conviction of sin is. Men and women, who received their “religion” by natural descent, or who jumped into it in the excitement of a revival meeting, may, perhaps, be content to do without the blood; but, if the Lord has put you into the pit wherein there is no water, and brought you up out of it, you know that there was no deliverance for you until God, in human flesh, made atonement for your sin by His blood; and, to this hour, if ever you are disturbed and doubtful concerning your true position in God’s sight, you always come back to the blood of the everlasting covenant, offered upon Calvary’s cross, and you sing—

*“Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood  
Shall never lose its power,  
Till all the ransomed Church of God  
Is saved to sin no more.”*

If, sirs, you take away the atoning sacrifice, you make that blessed Book to be a mere husk from which the kernel has been withdrawn. If you take away expiation by the precious blood of Jesus, you tear away the sinner’s only ground of hope; indeed, his only hope; and you leave us of all men most miserable. I know that, when I understood that Jesus Christ bore, in my stead, all that I deserved to bear of the wrath of God—and that His death had made the law of God honorable, so that the Lord Jehovah could pardon me without doing an injustice to the rest of mankind, and without suffering the honor and glory of His righteous rule to be tarnished—I grasped it at once. It seemed, to me, to be far better than the balm of Gilead to my wounds when the great Physician laid His pierced hand upon me, and the blood of His covenant cleansed me from all guilt; and I pray that many others here may have the same experience. Of one thing I am sure, if you really grasp this truth, you will never let it go; you never can let it go. This precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, will be to you your hope, your rest, your joy, the seal of your covenant with God, and the cause of your walking at liberty forever, for if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

I should like to have said more upon this blessed theme, but time fails me, so I must only say, in passing—“Let every Christian remember that, if once he knows the power of the blood of Jesus, there is a covenant existing between him and his God, and he can say, with David, “He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” Believer, between your soul and the Maker of heaven



and earth, there is a compact which can never be broken. Though earth's huge pillars bow and break, this covenant stands forever sure. You being in Christ, and Christ being in you, you shall be saved, world without end, for God has declared it, and His truth stands fast forever.

**III.** Thirdly, our text contains A RECOMMENDATION TO THOSE WHO ONCE WERE PRISONERS: "Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope." I thought, dear friends that you were pulled up out of the pit; *have you been made prisoners again?* If it is so, it is very sad, but you can never be imprisoned as you were before. Perhaps you have not been living as carefully as you ought; or, for some other reason, your faith has become weak, and so you have fallen into the pit again; but you are not now in prison as you were before; for, now, you believe you will get out again; no, better than that, you are sure that you will. Albeit that sometimes, Giant Despair tells you that you will die in the dungeons of Doubting Castle, you know that you have a key called "Promise" in your bosom; and though you have not used it as you should have done, you have the firm conviction that it will open any lock that old tyrant has made, and you hope, some day, to employ it to such good purpose that you will again be free. But, sirs, you had no business to get into that pit again. When the Lord once set you free, you should have taken good care not to go back again into bondage.

It is a great mercy that you can never go back to such bondage as you once experienced. You are prisoners, it is true; but *you are "prisoners of hope."* Therefore, take the good advice of the text: "Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope." That same Lord Jesus Christ, who, by His precious blood, once set you free, is still a refuge from every storm and every enemy; and if you are wise, you will cry to Him to deliver you this very hour. I address myself to every brother and every sister in Christ who has, in any sense, and to any degree, become a prisoner again. My dear friend, the Lord delivered you, years ago, did He not? Do you not recollect, with intense gratitude, what He did for you then? Well, He can deliver you again at this very moment. You remember how joyfully you sang—

*"He took my feet from the miry clay,  
And set me upon the King's Highway."*

Well, He can do the same thing again, and do it now. Go to Him at once. You do not need a better deliverer than the Lord who is "mighty to save," do you? And as He was able to deliver you when you were so far gone as you used to be, He can surely deliver you now. You say that you are so foolish, and so insensible, that you cannot make yourself enjoy the means of grace as you once did. It seems to you that, as you get older, you get more insensible. Well, but, my dear brethren, you are not spiritually dead, are you? And yet, when you were really dead in trespasses and sins, Christ quickened you; then, surely, He can bring you out of this state of torpor, and restore you from this strange swoon into which your soul has fallen. Return to Jesus now, just as you came to Him at the first. If you cannot come to Him as a saint, come as a sinner. Oh, the many hundreds of times that I have done that! And I expect to do it many more times before I get to heaven. "What!" asks someone, "do *you* have to do that, Mr. Spurgeon?" Oh, yes; that I do! The devil says to me, sometimes, "you are no child of God." It is no use to begin arguing with him about that matter; the best way to answer him is to say, "Well, Satan, if I am not a child of God, I soon will be, for I will receive Christ as my Savior, and that will make me God's child." "Then," says the devil, "you talk about your faith; but you have no faith to talk about." "Very well," I reply, "if I have not any, I soon will have some, for I will begin to believe in Jesus now." Then he says, "Your Christian experience, as you call it, is all a delusion." Well, I never argue with him about that, but I say, "Suppose it is a delusion; it is still true that 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' and He has promised to save all who trust in Him; so, here and now, I do trust Him, and I am saved." Satan is a very old lawyer. He has been in the profession for many centuries, and he knows how to raise all manner of quibbles and difficulties, and he can argue and reason in a very crafty fashion; so your best plan is not to answer him at all, except to say, "I have put my case into the hands of my great Advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have anything to say, you must say it to Him." That is my earnest advice, and it is the advice of the text, too, to all Christians who have, in any sense, come into bondage again: "Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope." If you do that, you shall soon come into light, and liberty, and joy, and peace once more.

**IV.** The last thing in our text is A DOUBLE BLESSING PROMISED: "Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you." If you turn to Christ, you shall get a double blessing. What does this part of the text mean?

Well, it means that *God has such abundant grace to give that He will not only give you what you really need, but He will give you twice as much as that.* All the flowers in God's spiritual garden bloom double. There never was any mercy of His which had not many other mercies wrapped up in it. Every one of them contains far more blessing than we thought it did. Now, dear brother, can you open your mouth wide, and ask from God some great thing? If you do so, you shall receive from God twice as much as you asked for. Do you feel a great need within your soul—a need that is truly dreadful? It craves so much that it seems to be like the two daughters of the horseleech, crying, "Give, give." Well, God will give you so much that you shall have sufficient to satisfy that craving twice over. Have you had some very great trouble? Then believe in the Lord, and you shall have double as much joy. Have you had deep depression of spirit? You shall have double as much of holy exultation and delight. Has the Lord laid His rod very heavily upon you, and made you sorely smart? Then He will give you two kisses to every blow. Has He made you drink out of the bitter cup? Then He will bring you a double draught of the spiced wine of the juice of His pomegranate; two cups of that heavenly nectar for every cup of quassia that you have had. He will make you consolations to abound and super-abound far above all your tribulations.

"Well," you say, "I am expecting something very great from the Lord." I am glad of it, but you will receive twice as much. The Queen of Sheba expected a great deal when she went to see Solomon, yet she had to say, "The half was not told me." So shall you find it with God. I read, in the Scriptures, that God is love, but His love to me has been a thousand times better than I ever expected it would be. I thought that, when I came to trust under the shadow of His wings, that I should have mercy, and grace, and peace; but I never dreamt how much mercy, and grace, and peace I would have. And, brothers, I believe it is better than before and that there is something, yet to come, brighter and sweeter than anything I have ever known; and it shall be the same with you. The Lord will go on to double your blessings, and give you yet more and more, according to that blessed text, "Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace,"—grace upon grace.

I beg you especially to notice that *this is a present promise*: "Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you." Then, why should you not get some of this double joy this very moment? I know that you said, as you were coming to this service, "I do not think I ought to stop for the communion; I do not feel fit to go to the table of the Lord. I seem to be as lifeless as a log. If I go and sit there, it will merely be to eat the bread, and to drink the wine, but not to enjoy real fellowship with the Lord." Ah, my brother, my sister, if that is true concerning you it is to you that the text says, "Turn you to the stronghold." Turn to Christ as you did at the first; and, then, it may be that your fellowship with Him will be sweeter than even that which you enjoyed when first you came to His table. It is the Lord who says, "Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you." Plead the promise, in silent prayer, just now; if you do so in faith, I shall be surprised if you do not get a double blessing from the Lord very speedily.

Finally, *note how true the promise is.* When God says, "Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you," who among us dares to doubt His declaration? I have sometimes heard people say, when they have wanted to be believed, "I declare to you that it is so;" and you know that the law of the land now allows those of us, who object to the taking of an oath, to make an affirmation, and to say, "I do solemnly declare that such-and-such is the fact;" and, in that fashion, God says, "Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you." Well, then, take Him at His word, and "turn you to the stronghold." While you are sitting here, trust the Lord to give you the double blessing that He has promised. If you do that, you may each one say, as you go home, "'Before ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.' I had no idea, when I went into the house of prayer, that I could be so changed. I was singing, no, I mean, howling or growling—as I went up the steps—

*"Dear Lord, and shall I ever lie  
At this poor dying rate?  
My love so faint, so cold to You,  
And Yours to me so great?"*

yet, when I came out, I was able to sing, and almost to shout—

*"If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."*

God grant that this may be the happy experience of many of you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

### EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

**ZECHARIAH 9.**

**Verse 1.** *The burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach,—*

Or Syria—

**1, 2.** *And Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD. And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus,—*

That is, Tyre—

**2-4.** *And Zidon, though it is very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and He will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.*

This prophecy was literally fulfilled. Tyre was attacked by Alexander the Great, and after withstanding a long siege, was destroyed by him. The strength of the city lay in the fact that it was built right out into the sea, and that it was protected by a vast, massive mole. Also as a great trading center, it possessed enormous wealth, and so was able to hire mercenary soldiers. But all its power and its wealth could not preserve it from destruction; and although we read of Tyre in the New Testament, it is now only a place for the drying of the nets of a few poor fishermen, even as Ezekiel foretold that it would be (26:14). When God foretells destruction, it always comes; but, blessed be His holy name, when He promises blessing, that comes just as surely.

**5.** *Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.*

When Alexander invaded the country, the Philistines expected that he would be hindered by the Tyrians; but, when Tyre fell, the Philistines were easily conquered. That shows you the meaning of the prophecy, and how literally it was fulfilled.

**6.** *And a bastard—*

Or, stranger—

**6, 7.** *Shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth,—*

That is, the prey that he had caught: “I will snatch it out of his mouth,”—

**7.** *And his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remains, even he shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.*

There is no doubt that, after the days of Alexander, many Philistines became proselytes to the faith of the Jews, and were absorbed into the Jewish nation, so that an Ekronite became like an Israelite; and this is a symbol of what God is doing all the world over. He takes men, who are strangers and foreigners to the citizenship of Zion, and puts them among His people, and treats the Ekronite as a Jerusalemite. Blessed be His name for this great act of sovereign grace.

**8.** *And I will encamp about My house because of the army, because of him that passes by, and because of him that returns: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with My eyes.*

And so it was. Alexander went to Jerusalem, after destroying Tyre, but he did not attack the city. There was a strange restraint resting upon him, which prevented him from touching the house of the living God. I need not repeat the well-known story of how he was met by the high priest, whom he recognized as the man whom he had seen in a dream, and so, though he smote Tyre and Philistia, he suffered the people of God to go free.

But, after that time, something better happened. That great event is marked off by a new paragraph in our Bible, and well it may be:—

**9.** *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you:—*

Not Alexander the Great, but “your King.” “Your King comes unto you:”—

**9.** *He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.*

What a beautiful and faithful description of our Lord Jesus Christ! We wonder that Israel cannot see the Messiah here. Had this verse been written after the coming of Christ, it could not more accurately have described the blessed person and character of our Lord Jesus. His very riding into Jerusalem upon an ass, with her colt trotting by her side, is most plainly foretold here.

**10.** *And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.*

This is our glorious King—the King whose conquests are not achieved by horses, and chariots, and battle-bows, but by the more powerful panoply of truth and love. Blessed are all who dwell beneath the rule of such a King as He is.

**11, 12.** *As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you;*

Christ has come to set the prisoners free, and to be the stronghold of His people. Therefore turn to Him, and all manner of precious blessings shall be yours.

**13.** *When I have bent Judah for Me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and made you as the sword of a mighty man.*

This is a truly wonderful passage, setting forth how God is going to use His people as the weapons by which He will conquer the world. He will bend Judah, and make her into a bow, and take Ephraim, and make her into an arrow; and then he will shoot His strangely-fashioned shaft against His adversaries and ours! What does this mean but that He is going to use those of us, who are His own saved ones, that He may conquer the world by us? And what a blessed battle this is! “Your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece;”—the simple believer against the cultured man of reason without faith—the humble truster in the Lord Jesus Christ against the man who proudly boasts of his own learning and eloquence! How will this battle end? We know which side will win, for “the Lord of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

**14.** *And the Lord shall be seen over them,*  
As He has in the midst of His people of old.

**14.** *And His arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.*

Here you have a foresight of Pentecost, and the grand era which succeeded the outpouring of the Spirit. Oh, that we might once again prove what God’s Almighty Spirit can do!

**15.** *The LORD of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.*

You remember that the mockers said, on the day of Pentecost, “These men are full of new wine.” They were not; as Peter plainly declared, “these are not drunken, as you suppose;” neither does this prophecy mean that they would be so; but that the Spirit of God should fall so copiously upon them as to fill them, like bowls brimming over with precious liquid, or like the corners of the altar drenched for Elijah’s sacrifice. It is a grand thing when believers in Christ are thus filled to overflowing with the Spirit of God, and energy divine; they are the men who will win the battle for the cause of God and truth.

**16, 17.** *And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of His people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land. For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.*

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