

*NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON THE SECOND
COMING OF CHRIST.*

I. PREPARATORY: THE OLD TESTAMENT, AND THE
BOOK OF ENOCH.

IN this series of papers I shall endeavour to reproduce the teaching of the various writers of the New Testament about the Second Coming of Christ, noting the agreement and difference of different writers. I shall also endeavour to grasp the significance, and estimate the value, of this teaching, and to indicate its practical bearing on the spiritual life of men to-day. For this inquiry I shall in this paper prepare a way by discussing certain teaching and phraseology in the Old Testament which sheds light on that of the New. This I shall supplement by referring to other teaching in an important work which is in some sense a bridge, in date and in modes of thought, between the Eschatology of the Old Testament and that of the New, viz. the Book of Enoch.

Joel begins his prophecy by announcing a calamity about to overwhelm, in consequence of their sins, the people of Judah and Jerusalem. This calamity he compares to the approach of an irresistible army consuming everything in its path; and the time of its approach he speaks of as the "day of Jehovah." So Joel i. 15, "Alas for the day: for near is the day of Jehovah, and as destruction from the Almighty it will come"; and chap. ii. 1, 2, "Blow a trumpet in Zion, sound alarm in My holy mountain, let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for there cometh the day of Jehovah, for it is near; a day of darkness and gloom, a day of cloud and thick darkness." Then follows a description of the invading army, concluding, in verses 10, 11, thus: "before it earth trembleth and heaven shaketh, sun and moon

have become dark, and stars have withdrawn their shining ; and Jehovah hath uttered His voice before His army ; for very great is His camp, for strong is that which doeth His word, for great is the day of Jehovah and very terrible ; who shall endure it ? ” Then follows an exhortation to repentance, and encouragement to return to Jehovah, the God of Israel.

In chapter ii. 28 (chap. iii. 1 in the Hebrew Bible) the prophet looks beyond the temporal deliverance which will follow repentance to still greater blessings in the future. The dissolution of nature, which in chapter ii. 10 was threatened as following the calamity announced by the prophet, is here placed in connection with the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh at the coming of the terrible day of Jehovah.

The usual rendering of לפני בוא יום יהוה suggests (compare Genesis xiii. 10, Deut. xxxiii. 1, 1 Samuel ix. 15, and the same words as here in Malachi iv. 5) that the dissolution of nature is to precede, and thus be distinguished from, the great day of Jehovah : and this is the express rendering of the LXX. But the word לפני is also frequently used in the sense of “ in the presence of,” without reference to time. Literally the words here used mean “ at the presence of the coming of the day of Jehovah.” Now we cannot conceive of the darkening of the sun as merely preceding this great and terrible day. It must be itself a visible announcement that the day has come. I therefore venture to suggest that Joel ii. 3 (Engl.) would be better translated “ at the coming of the day of Jehovah.” The word לפני seems to me to note here merely coincidence of time. Had מפני stood, it would have suggested that the dissolution of nature was *caused by* the coming of the great day.

Similar language is found again in Joel iii. 14, 15, Engl. : “ Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of Decision : for near is the day of Jehovah in the valley of Decision. Sun and

moon have become dark, and stars have withdrawn their shining." The prophecy closes with an announcement of abiding blessing for Zion, and Jerusalem, and Judah; and of desolation for their enemies.

The occurrence of the phrase "Day of Jehovah" five times in the short book of Joel gives to this phrase marked prominence. Evidently the prophet looked forward to a definite time of conspicuous punishment inflicted on the wicked, accompanied or followed by conspicuous blessing for the righteous.

The same phrase occurs three times in Amos v. 18-20, evidently describing a time when God will inflict punishment. "The day of Jehovah is darkness and not light."

In Isaiah ii. 11 we read, "The lofty looks of man shall be brought low, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day. For there shall be a day for Jehovah of hosts upon all that is proud and high, and upon all that is lifted up, and it shall be brought low. . . . And Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day."

In Isaiah xiii. 6, in a prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, Joel i. 15 is repeated almost word for word: "Howl ye; for near is the day of Jehovah, as destruction from the Almighty it will come." The prophet continues in verse 9 in language very similar to Joel ii. 1-11, "Behold the day of Jehovah cometh, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger; to make the land a desolation, and to destroy its sinners out of it. For the stars of the heaven and their constellations shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause its light to shine. And I will punish the world for evil, and wicked ones for their guilt."

Similar thought and language are found in Obadiah 15, in a denunciation of Edom: "For near is the Day of Jehovah upon all the heathen. According as thou hast

done, it shall be done to thee ; thy recompense shall return upon thy own head."

In Zephaniah i. 7-16, after announcing a great destruction for the idolaters in Judah and Jerusalem, the prophet continues : " Be silent in the presence of the Lord Jehovah ; for near is the day of Jehovah, for Jehovah hath prepared a sacrifice, He hath sanctified His guests. And it shall be, in the day of Jehovah's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes and the king's sons and all that are clothed with foreign clothing. . . . Near is the day of Jehovah, the great day, near and hastening greatly, the sound of the day of Jehovah. . . . That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of waste and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of cloud and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm, against the fenced cities and against the high battlements."

Similarly, in Ezekiel xiii. 5 we read, " Ye have not gone up into the gaps, or made up a fence for the house of Israel in the day of Jehovah." Also chapter xxx. 3, " Howl ye, alas for the day ; for near is a day, and near is a day for Jehovah, a day of cloud, a time of nations it will be. And there shall come a sword against Egypt, and there shall be anguish in Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt, and they shall take away her multitude and her foundations shall be overturned."

A marked feature of Zechariah xii.-xiv., some fifteen times, is the phrase " in that day," noting a definite time of retribution and blessing. This time is in Zechariah xiv. 1 referred to by the words " Behold a day comes for Jehovah . . . and I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem for war " ; recalling Isaiah ii. 12.

The Books of the Prophets conclude, in Malachi iv. 5 (English) with the words, " Behold I am sending to you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the day of Jehovah, the great and the terrible day " ; word for word as in Joel ii. 31.

In all these places, the day of Jehovah is a definite time of conspicuous execution of punishment against sin both in Israel and in the enemies of Israel. During long periods of forbearance, sinners seemed to have their day of high-handed rebellion. But the prophets foresaw that in His own time the unseen God would come forth from His hiding-place and vindicate the majesty of His forgotten authority. And this time, definite to their thought, they spoke of as Jehovah's day.

In many places in which the term "day of Jehovah" is not found, Old Testament prophecy culminates in complete victory of good over evil, manifesting itself in the punishment and downfall of sinners however mighty and in infinite blessing for the righteous. This latter is not unfrequently described in terms of loftiest grandeur. The deep faith in God thus revealed is a conspicuous difference between the Sacred Books of Israel and all contemporary literature.

Other prophetic teaching different from that quoted above both in phraseology and in modes of thought, yet in complete harmony with it, meets us in the Book of Daniel. The vision of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter ii. shows us a succession of empires culminating in, and overthrown by, one set up by God and never to be destroyed. In chapter vii., after a vision of four beasts successively rising from the sea, we read, in verse 13, "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of Heaven One like a son of man, and He came even to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom one which shall not be destroyed." We have here a final victory of Heaven over Earth, and judgment executed (see verse 10: "judgment was set, and

the books were opened") by One from heaven in human form.

In Daniel xii. 1, after various political convulsions, in a time of unparalleled trouble but of deliverance for those written in the book of God, we have a vision of "Michael, the great prince which standeth for the sons of thy people." The writer continues, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to eternal life, and some to shame and eternal contempt. And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." This can be no other than a general resurrection of the dead, good and bad. And this vision of judgment and of glory forms the distant horizon of the prophet's furthest vision.

The Book of Daniel differs somewhat from the other prophetic books of the Old Testament in that it takes us more definitely within the veil to an entirely new order of things; in that the kingdom which is to supersede all earthly kingdoms is given to One, who, though from heaven, yet wears a human form; and in that it announces clearly a resurrection of the dead and a final retribution of reward and punishment beyond the grave. But all the prophetic writers of the Old Testament agree to announce a kingdom of infinite glory to be set up more or less suddenly by power from heaven on the ruins of all earthly kingdoms, from which all evil and all sinners shall be excluded, the eternal home of the faithful servants of God.

Such, in scanty outline, were the thoughts of ancient Israel, at the close of the Canon, touching the furthest future within their view.

Any one who turns from the Old Testament Prophets, *e.g.* Joel or Isaiah, to the Eschatology of the New Testament becomes at once conscious of an immense gulf

passed. This gulf, the Book of Daniel does something to span, or at least it affords a starting-point for the transition. But even between the Book of Daniel and the eschatological teaching of the New Testament is a wide interval of thought. We look eagerly for anything which will help us to bridge it. Especially we greet any document which will make vocal the centuries of silence between the Old Testament and the New. Such help we find in the Book of Enoch.

The following quotations are taken from the admirable edition of Mr. R. H. Charles, M.A., just published by the Clarendon Press. The best earlier translation is that of Dillmann, published in A.D. 1853. Indeed to this scholar more than to any other we owe our knowledge of the Book of Enoch. But the forty years which have elapsed since his edition was published, and especially the British expedition to Abyssinia in 1861-2, have greatly increased the critical apparatus for the text of Enoch; and have enabled Mr. Charles to give us, in English, a much more reliable version of this ancient work.

The following quotations are taken from chapters xxxvii.-lxxi., which together form an integral part of the work, probably its latest part, written as Mr. Charles thinks some hundred years before the public ministry of Christ; and which certainly contain its most developed and interesting eschatological teaching. The quotations are only samples of the teaching of the entire section.

In chapter xlvi. 1-6 we read: "And there I saw One who had a head of days, and His head was white like wool, and with Him was another being whose countenance had the appearance of a man¹ and His face was full of graciousness, like one of the holy angels. And I asked the angel who went with me and showed me all the hidden things, concerning that Son of Man, who He was, and whence He

¹ Compare Daniel vii. 13, quoted above.

was, and why He went with the Head of Days? And he answered and said unto me, ' This is the Son of Man, who hath righteousness, with whom dwelleth righteousness, and who revealeth all the treasures of that which is hidden, because the Lord of Spirits hath chosen Him, and His lot before the Lord of Spirits hath surpassed everything in uprightness for ever. And this Son of Man whom thou hast seen will arouse the kings and the mighty ones from their couches and the strong from their thrones, and will loosen the reins of the strong and grind to powder the teeth of the sinners. And He will put down the kings from their thrones and kingdoms because they do not extol and praise Him, nor thankfully acknowledge whence the kingdom was bestowed upon them. And He will put down the countenance of the strong, and shame will cover them, darkness will be their dwelling and worms their bed, and they will have no hope of rising from their beds because they do not extol the name of the Lord of Spirits."

In chapter *xlvi*. 3, we read: " And in those days I saw the Head of Days when He had seated Himself on the throne of His glory, and the books of the living were opened before Him, and His whole host which is in heaven above and around Him stood before Him."

Also very interesting is chapter *xlvi*iii. 2-6: " And at that hour that the Son of Man was named in the presence of the Lord of Spirits, and His name before the Head of Days. And before the sun and the signs were created, before the stars of the heaven were made, His name was named before the Lord of Spirits. He will be a staff to the righteous on which they will support themselves and not fall, and He will be the light of the Gentiles and the hope of those who are troubled of heart. All who dwell on earth will fall down and bow the knee before Him, and will bless and laud and celebrate with song the Lord of Spirits." Lower down we read of the wicked, " they

have denied the Lord of Spirits and His Anointed." The writer continues in chapter xlix. 2-4, "For He is mighty in all the secrets of righteousness, and unrighteousness will disappear as a shadow, and have no continuance, because the Elect One standeth before the Lord of Spirits, and His glory is for ever and ever, and His might unto all generations. And in Him dwells the spirit of wisdom and the spirit of Him who gives knowledge, and the spirit of understanding, and of might, and the spirit of those who have fallen asleep in righteousness. And He will judge the secret things, and no one will be able to utter a lying word before Him; for He is the Elect One before the Lord of Spirits, according to His good pleasure."

In chapter li. 1-5 we have mention of a resurrection of body and soul followed by judgment. "And in those days will the earth also give back those who are treasured up within it, and Sheol also will give back that which it has received, and hell will give back that which it owes. And He will choose the righteous and holy from among them; for the day of their redemption has drawn nigh. And the Elect One will in those days sit on My throne, and all the secrets of wisdom will stream forth from the counsels of His mouth; for the Lord of Spirits hath given it to Him and hath glorified Him. And in those days will the mountains leap like rams and the hills will skip like lambs satisfied with milk, and they will all become angels in heaven. Their faces will be lighted up with joy because in those days the Elect One has appeared, and the earth will rejoice and the righteous will dwell upon it, and the elect will go to and fro upon it."

Again, in chapter lxii. 5-9 we read, "Pain will seize them when they see that Son of Man sitting on the throne of His glory. . . . For the Son of Man was hidden before Him and the Most High preserved Him in the presence of His might, and revealed Him to the elect.

. . . And all the kings and the mighty and the exalted and those that rule the earth will fall down on their faces before Him and worship, and set their hope upon that Son of Man, and will petition Him and supplicate for mercy at His hands."

In an earlier portion of the Book of Enoch, in chapters x. 6, 12, xix. 1, xxii. 4, 11, and in a fragment found only in the Greek we read of "the day of judgment" and "the great day of judgment," and the "day of their judgment," and "the great day of judgment and punishment and torture of the revilers for ever."

The chief value of the Book of Enoch is that it reveals the large place in the thought of the Jews in the century before Christ occupied by teaching found in the Old Testament only in a few passages in the Book of Daniel. In Daniel vii. 13 we see on the throne a person distinct from the Most High, and said to be "like a son of man." This we have also in the Book of Enoch. But the Judge is there frequently and definitely spoken of as "the Son of Man"; and we are told that, before the sun and stars were created, His name was named before the Lord of Spirits. We also read much more frequently and definitely than in the Old Testament of retribution beyond the grave in a day of universal judgment. Evidently, during the long and sad interval between the last of the Old Testament prophets and the rousing voice of the Baptist, the heart of Israel turned, amid surrounding gloom, to a life beyond the grave. And, while they did so, their hopes gathered round One whom they conceived as bearing a human form yet coming from heaven.

In my next paper we shall see how, a century probably after the latest part of the Book of Enoch was written, these hopes shaped themselves in the mind of an earnest Pharisee who had become a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth.

JOSEPH AGAR BEET.