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The message of God since the world began

"And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began," Luke 1:69-70.

"Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began," Acts 3:21.

This morning I read Luke 1:39-80 as part of my daily reading. I follow 'Robert Murray M'Cheyne's Bible Reading Calendar', which I highly commend to all my readers.

When I read the verse 70, I recalled that Peter used similar words to those spoken here by Zacharias the father of John the Baptist. He was speaking under the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, verse 67, as was Peter on the Day of Pentecost.

In these two verses you have the very heart, the essence, of the message of ALL the prophets.

Consider just some matters that arise from this truth.

1. The two advents of the Lord Jesus lie at the heart of the gospel message.
2. Both these truths have been known by the people of God since the dawn of time.
3. If we would have a truly Biblical ministry, then we must centre our preaching on these two vital truths.

1. THE TWO ADVENTS OF THE LORD JESUS LIE AT THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE.

Also in my Bible reading today, I noted what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:1-2.

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

As he went amongst the heathen people of Asia and then into Europe, Paul's theme was the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus.

It has to be said that he 'introduced' that truth in his preaching by relating how the Jewish prophets of old had spoken of His coming and His death. This is evidenced by what he wrote in the opening verses of his epistle to the Romans.

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," Romans 1:1-4.

The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus was featured in the earliest prophecies. The earliest prophecy is that recorded by Moses in Genesis 3:15. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." These are the words spoken by God to the devil.

That was most appropriate for from the very beginning the devil was made to know that his rebellion was doomed to failure, and that at the hands of the promised 'Seed', the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ did indeed descend from Eve by way of the house of David. "Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" John 7:42. "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel," 2 Timothy 2:8.

In that first prophecy there was a mention made of the Saviour's suffering, death but also His ultimate



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triumph over the devil. The Lord Jesus would suffer at the hands of the devil's agents but the evil work of 'bruising the Saviour's heel' was credited to the devil. He was told: "thou shalt bruise his heel." But before his bruising of Christ was mentioned, God made known first to the devil just what would be the outcome of his attack on Christ. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head . . ."

There is a great difference between the 'bruising of the head and that of the bruising of the heel. The word 'bruise' means 'to break, to crush'. The 'crushing' of the heel is severe but the 'crushing' of the head is fatal, terminal for the human being! It was also a blow from which the devil would never recover! The Saviour's death at the cross sealed the devil's eternal fate. "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," 1 John 3:8.

So, in the very first prophecy there was a reference, though somewhat inexplicit in comparison to the subsequent prophecies of this subject, but nevertheless clear, to the death and ultimate victory of the Saviour over the devil.

The ultimate outworkings of Calvary's victory lies in the future. "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever," Revelation 20:10.

Here then is the conclusion of the devil's rebellion. He and his chief minions in his dreadful and futile rebellion against the Lord of Glory are cast into a place of everlasting torment where they "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

We must stress that these three are not the only occupants of the 'lake of fire'! No. The words of the Lord Jesus clearly tell us in Matthew 25:41 the unspeakably dreadful end of the wicked. "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, (the 'goats', or the unconverted mere professors of Christianity) Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Those who believe the devil's lie and share in his rebellion against God and His truth will share in the devil's torments in the place "prepared for the devil and his angels."

How solemnly horrifying this is!

2. BOTH THESE TRUTHS HAVE BEEN KNOWN BY THE PEOPLE OF GOD SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME.

The prophets progressively were enabled by God to speak more definitively and explicitly of the Saviour's death and resurrection and glorious second coming. God's revelation of the truths of the gospel was progressive. From the somewhat inexplicit terminology of Genesis 3:15 we progress to the much more explicit words of Isaiah, some 3300 years after that prophecy given in the Garden of Eden and some 700 years before the first coming of Christ.

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong



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his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities," Isaiah 53:3-11.

SUBSTITUTE

There we have an enlargement of the Saviour's substitutionary sufferings for sinful men. It must be noted that His sufferings were not merely those that arose from the devil's instigations at the hands of men but He was 'smitten of God,' 'it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.' This smiting by God was the Saviour's bearing the punishment due to us as Christ, the guilty sinner's substitute, took the place of His elect under the wrath of God. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . For the transgression of my people was he stricken."

Here is a very clear presentation of the meaning of Calvary, the pain and suffering the Saviour endured and His death as a sacrifice for His people but also His triumphant victory. "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."

I believe that the depths of the Saviour's sufferings at the cross, over which God drew a veil (Matthew 27:45) but we shall see and experience most wonderfully the eternal blessings and benefits that spring from that dark but glorious suffering!

The hope that springs from the the Saviour's victory at the cross has ever been the hope of God's people. "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." So said Job (19:25-27) some 1500 years before Christ's birth. This was his hope and comfort in the midst of his unparalleled afflictions.

Job was aware that he had a Redeemer already. He would fulfil His redemptive work on the earth and that one day in the distant future he would see Him, after he is raised from death and standing with Christ upon the earth.

Such was the common knowledge of the redeemed in those distant times!

3. IF PREACHERS WOULD HAVE A TRULY BIBLICAL MINISTRY, THEN THEY MUST CENTRE THEIR PREACHING ON THESE TWO VITAL TRUTHS.

We cannot follow in the footsteps of the faithful prophets if we do not preach both elements of the eternal Word which featured in their ministry. We must preach of the coming of Christ the 'horn of salvation' and also 'the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.'

I do not think that I am being unkind or censorious when I say that the latter truth is sadly neglected in many fundamentalist pulpits. The conclusion of all too many of God's flock in these days is that the matter is neglected!

Such sad indifference toward this increasingly important truth as the age nears its end has been prophesied. Maybe if the study of prophecy was not so neglected by many and grievously despised by some, this would not be! The Saviour spoke of a 'sleeping' church in the latter days. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the



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wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept," Matthew 25:1-5.

WATCH

Surely we can see the slumbering indifference to Christ, His truths, commands, His cause and His glorious coming again all around us!

This sleepiness is the result of a neglect of the Saviour's prophetic words and those of His apostles, regarding the last days in which He repeatedly calls upon us to 'WATCH', Matthew 24:42, 25:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:5-6, 1 Peter 4:7, Revelation 3:3. These verses are but a sample of the oft repeated challenge for the Christian to watch for the approach of the Day of the Lord.

There are signs abroad on every hand today for all to see and understand in the light of God's Word, but these very clear signs are misread by those who have neglected the study of the words of the prophets regarding the Saviour's return.

The world has indeed seen days of wickedness in the past and God's people have gone on to enjoy revival. But this must be noted about things today. There have indeed been times when every sin of today has been manifested but not to the DEGREE that they are today!

When did the professing Church of Christ ever sanction sodomy as many in it do today? When did that church ordain those who openly and wickedly boast of their perversions as we hear every day! When did governments, which have had the benefits of the light of the gospel, ever sanction sodomite marriage and legislate against and threaten with penalties and punishment any who dare criticise the abominable perversions of that evil-embracing community? When did we ever see professing 'evangelicals' endorsing and eulogising such perversions as those who plague society today? NEVER!

WAXING WORSE AND WORSE

But it is happening now and that is why we must see in the words of Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1-9 as applicable to THESE DAYS! Surely 'evil men' are waxing worse and worse! Will there not come a time when God has heard and seen enough of man's defiance as He did with the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah?

Yes there will. "Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south," Zechariah 14:3-4.

It is the solemn, urgent duty of God's servants today to acquaint themselves with the truths spoken by the prophets regarding the Day of the Lord and preach the truth to God's people that they might be prepared for the days that are about to break forth upon us.

So Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea and many other prophets warned the people of Jerusalem of the coming judgment of God upon Jerusalem for their sins and in like manner, it is the duty of God's servants today to warn the people of the day of judgment that will soon engulf this world.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short . . ." As never before we can say: "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh," James 5:8.

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