

*A Patristic Commentary*



# THE BOOK OF Zechariah

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# THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

By

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The Book of Zechariah with all what it contains of delightful visions that bring hope to the hearts and give strength to the hands for spiritual work; and what it includes of very elaborate prophecies concerning the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, has drawn the hearts of many of the fathers of the early church to interpret and meditate in it. I tried to introduce it as concise as possible, excluding the similar statements of the fathers, to make it easier for the reader to understand.

## **ZECHARIAH**

- 1- The word “Zechariah” in Hebrew means (Jehovah remembers), was a name very popular among the Jews; Thirty persons came carrying this name in the Holy Book. This name came very convenient to this book and its circumstances; to encourage the souls on the spiritual strife to build the temple of God in it. For God perpetually remembers to build this temple and to sanctify it himself. The Psalmist says: *“Yet I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer; O my Lord, do not delay”* (Psalm 40: 17); which indicates that God cares to establish His kingdom in us, not by words but by work; through the descent of the Only begotten Son to the cross, and bringing the Holy Spirit into us in the worthiness of the Precious blood.

- 2- It so seems that Zechariah was born in the land of the Babylonian captivity; then, as a child, came back home with his grandfather “Edo” among those who returned with “Zerubbabel” from captivity (Nehemiah 12: 1, 4, 7); his grandfather was well known among the people, as the chief of a priestly family; while his father most probably died young before returning from captivity.
- 3- Zechariah started his prophecy in the second year of the reign of Darius Histasis in the year 520 BC. The last date that came in this book was 518 BC, the fourth year of king Darius (Zechariah 7: 1). According to many scholars, the last part of the book (Chapter 9-14) was written in the prophet’s old age, 30 or 40 years after writing the first part (Chapters 1 - ). Anyway Zachariah was a contemporary of Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the high priest, and the prophet Haggai (Zechariah 3: 1; 4: 6; 6: 11; Ezra 5: 1-2); who was his companion in strife, carried the same mission; and were both, so closely connected with deep love; that, according to the Jewish tradition, Zechariah was buried beside Haggai in the same place.

### **THE HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES:**

“Cyrus” king of Persia, issued a decree in the year 538 BC, encouraging those among the Jews who wish to go back home to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36: 22, 23; Ezra 1: 1-4). And as the majority of the Jews were then well off, it was difficult for them to return to start their life anew in their country that was ravaged by the Gentiles; despite their feeling of humiliation as captives, and their deprivation of their temple and worship. Only 50,000 returned, who were considered as the relatively elite, whose life was kindled with jealousy to rebuild the temple of the Lord.

In the second month of the year 536 BC, they laid the foundation (Ezra 3: 11- 13); but owing to the opposition of the Samaritans, the work stopped for 15 years; until King Darius came in the year 521 BC, when the two prophets Haggai and Zechariah were encouraged to provoke the people to resume work under the guidance of Zerubbabel

the governor and Joshua the high priest. Then Tattenai the Persian governor of the Western Euphrates attempted to stop the work again through a message he sent to the king, who responded by confirming the old decree; because of his sympathy to the Jewish case, his belief in the principle of worshipping One God; seeking to offer a fragrance of pleasure to Him; and raising prayers for his own sake and that of his children (Ezra 6: 6-12).

The outer opposition ceased, for a greater and more bitter one to appear which is the appearance of a controversial tendency among the people, and a great lukewarm tendency in the work; on account of their belief that ceasing the work for so long was a sign of God's displeasure; and taking into consideration that every one of them got preoccupied with working for his own sake; something that God rebuked them for by the prophet Haggai; saying: *"Is it a time for you, yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?"* (Haggai 1: 4)

### **THE UNITY OF THE BOOK:**

Concerning the first eight chapters, there is a general consent among the researchers that their author is the prophet Zechariah. Whereas, concerning the rest of the book (Chapters 9 to 14); there is great controversy among the critics. According to some they were written in separate intervals before the captivation of Israel; or between the captivation of Israel and that of Judah; while, according to others, they were written after the return from captivity. In order not to enter into the debates; we shall summarize the views as follows:

- (1) Some critics depended on the clear difference in the style of writing between the first part of the book (chapters 1 to 8) and its second part (chapter 9 – 14), the most important of which are:

- 1- The first part bears clear historical references; while the second part, any reference of the sort – in case there are – are vague.

- 2- He first part concentrates on the rebuilding of the temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua; while the second part does not refer to this work
- 3- In using text in a longhand in the first part, he seems to follow the style of the prophet Ezekiel; while in the second part, in using a simplified poetic way, he is influenced by that followed in the book of Deuteronomy, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Job, etc
- 4- In the first part, the Messianic era, concentrates on Jerusalem as its center, and on the revival of the city of David. While in the second part, it cares for Judah as its center; and if Jerusalem and the house of David are mentioned they come by the way.

To respond to those who have such a view, we say that the difference in style does not mean a different author; but could be referred to a difference in the goal intended; which, in the first part was to encourage the people to rebuild the temple; whereas in the second, it was to confirm the blessing of the Lord on them, particularly in the Messianic era; together with prophesying the work of God with them along the eras after they build the temple.

There is another reason for the difference in style; which is that the author of the first part was the young man Zechariah, whereas the author of the second part was the elderly Zechariah.

(2) In his book "Introductions of the Old Testament", 'Raven' summarized the views of the critics who, depend upon evidences inside the book to prove that Zechariah was not the author of the second part of the book, as follows:

- a- According to some critics like Bandissin, Strack, chapters (9-11) are precedent to the captivation of Israel (and probably chapters 13: 7-9 as well); and chapters (12-14; except for 13: 7-9), were written in the days of Jehoiakim, Jehoiakin, and Zedekiah, namely precedent to the captivation of Judah. We shall deal with their reasons and respond to them in our

interpretation.

- b- According to other critics, like Driver, Newack, that whole part (9-14) was written after the return from captivity; because it records certain events which took place then; Their proofs against those of the first view came very strong, but we shall not enter into their details now. Considering that the events recorded in the book describe the eras after Zechariah, does not mean that Zechariah is not the author of the book, which he wrote with the spirit of prophecy about the future; and not as a historian writing about contemporary events. That is what made many confirm the unity of the book, and accept the Jewish and the ecclesiastical tradition that Zechariah was the sole author of the book.

## **THE FEATURES OF THE BOOK:**

- 1- This book is considered a strong support for the frail soul; bearing the language of hope to a people that lived for 70 years under captivity, denied of the temple and offerings; and even after their return to rebuild the temple, they remained 15 years unable to work. This book, therefore came to stir-up the frail energy; as in it we find no tune of threats or strong rebuke.
- 2- The first six chapters bring to us nine visions; and in some of its part it used symbolism.
- 3- Concentrating upon the Messianic era; while supporting them to rebuild the temple, the author reveals to them the temple of the Savior Messiah in the church of the New Covenant; introducing clear prophecies concerning the Person of the Lord Christ, like His royal entrance into Jerusalem (9: 9); being delivered for thirty pieces of silver (11: 2); His wounds (13: 6); being pierced (12: 10); being the suffering Shepherd (13: 7); His kingdom opened before all (9-10); beside including some thoughts and expressions bound to the New

Covenant, like the four horsemen (1: 7 etc.; Revelation 6; !-8); measuring the holy city (1: 16; Revelation 11; 1-2); the two lampstands and the two olive trees (4: 1-3, 11-14; Revelation 11: 4-11); the scattering of the sheep (13: 7; Matthew 26: 31 etc.).

According to Mckenzie, about the Messianic era, as it came in the book of Zechariah: [The Messianism is the prevailing tune in the book of Zechariah (Chapters 1-8); revealing to us about the appearance of a new National Messianic religious congregation, which will have its center in Jerusalem. According to the prophet Zechariah, it was high time to realize the salvation by the Messiah; and that the rebuilding of the temple is a sign and a beginning of His coming. In the Messianic era, the Gentiles will be defeated (2: 1-4; 10: 13); the temple will be rebuilt (1-16); and Jerusalem (8: 3); Jehovah will come to dwell among His people (2: 14; 8: 3); the captives will gather together; the Gentiles will worship Jehovah (2: 15; 8: 20-23); peace and joy will dwell (3: 10; 8: 12); and sin will be uprooted (3: 9; 5: 1-11)..... Messianism, according to Zechariah, is not just nationalism, but it rather refers to a purification of the congregation of those who care for being united to Jehovah]. Mackenzie also says: [Messianism is the prevailing tune In the book of Zechariah (Chapters 9-14); but here it appears more strongly visionary; salvation will be realized at the end of days .....And that the most prominent Messianic feature is the appearance of the Messiah of the poor (9: 9).

- 4- Having been a priest, Zechariah's heart longed for the priestly ministry, of which he and his fathers were denied for a long time. His prophecy came as a ritual prophet, to proclaim God who works in the spiritual rite, presenting the Lord Christ as a Priest who takes away from us our dirty attire, and grants us the adorned attire and the pure turban (Chapter 3); and grants us through His priestly ministry the fellowship of glorified heavenly crown (Chapter 6).

## **THE DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK:**

- |                                  |        |
|----------------------------------|--------|
| (1) The nine visions             | 1 - 6  |
| (2) Questions about fasting      | 7 - 8  |
| (3) Israel and the Messianic era | 9 – 14 |

# **THE FIRST DIVISION**

## **THE NINE VISIONS**

(Chapters 1 to 6)



Vision 1: The rider of the red horse	1
Vision 2: The four horns	1
Vision 3: Measuring the holy city	2
Vision 4: Joshua the high priest	3
Vision 5: The golden lampstand	4
Vision 6: The flying scroll	5
Vision 7: The woman in a basket	5
Vision 8: The chariots	6
Vision 9: A crown for Joshua	6

## THE NINE VISIONS

After opening the book with a call to repentance, the prophet Zechariah provides us with the nine visions he saw; which, as a whole, are joyful evangelic visions, that support the people in his time to rebuild the temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest; and support every soul in every era to enjoy the rebuilding of the inner temple as a center for Christ, the King and the Highest Priest. The visions which came serial and bound together, start by the preparation for the coming of the Messiah the Builder of the inner house; the proclamation of His gospel that will break down every spiritual opposition against the holy building; the revelation of the same building in us (our inner Jerusalem), receiving His work as a High Priest; and sending His Holy Spirit to enlighten His sanctuary in us. After all these good aspects, He warns us against sin once and twice; and finally proclaims the ultimate coming of the Lord to condemn evil, and to crown those who walk in His righteousness.

Vision 1: The rider of the red horse:	Preparation for the coming of the Messiah
Vision 2: The four horns:	The four gospels destroy the evil of the world
Vision 3: Measuring the holy city:	The Lord sets His sanctuary in us.
Vision 4: Joshua the Great Priest:	The Lord is our Highest Priest
Vision 5: The golden lampstand:	The Holy Spirit, Grantor of enlightenment.
Vision 6: The flying (sickle) scroll:	A warning against slothfulness
Vision 7: The woman in a basket:	Repeating the warning
Vision 8: The chariots:	An eternal condemnation of evil.
Vision 9: A crown for Joshua:	Our eternal coronation is In him

# CHAPTER 1

## THE FIRST TWO VISIONS

### THE HORSES AND THE FOUR HORNS

After opening the book with a call for repentance with words full of compassion toward the people humiliated with captivity, the present chapter provide us with two joyful visions concerning the setting of the temple of the Lord in us,

- |    |                                  |         |
|----|----------------------------------|---------|
| 2- | The vision of the horses         | 7 - 11  |
| 3- | The Lord's jealousy on His house | 12 - 17 |
| 4- | The vision of the four horns     | 18 – 21 |

# **1- A CALL TO REPENTANCE:**

*“In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying.....”*  
(1)

The prophet fixed his prophecy with the eighth month in the second year of Darius (520 BC). And he mentions his name and those of his father and grandfather . Mentioning his grandfather Edo is because he is the one who raised him after his father died; and because he was famous among those who returned from captivity (Nehemiah 12: 1, 4, 7).

The call of the Lord to them was: *‘The LORD has been very angry with your fathers. [3] Therefore say to them, Thus says the LORD of hosts; Return to Me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts’* (2,3)

Here it is noticed:

- (1) In this call, God did not mention the sins of their fathers; for He did not wish to hurt their feelings while they were joyful for coming back from the humiliation of captivity .....but even while exhorting them to repentance, to support, He encourages them, and lifts up their morale.
- (2) By their fathers, he probably meant here the past generations who, did not listen to the true prophets, but to the false ones, and ended up, Israel falling into captivity, followed by Judah. Or he probably meant those who returned from captivity 15 years ago, who were slothful to rebuild the temple, and got

preoccupied with their earthly pleasures (Haggai 1).. Those who with zeal returned from captivity to Jerusalem together with Zerubbabel; but, having not returned with their hearts to the Lord, the work stopped, and they lost their spiritual life.. That is why the Lord confirms to them: *“Return to me; ..... and I shall return to you”*. Before the return to the place, the Lord seeks the return of the heart to Him. On His part, He is ready, and even longs to return to us to build His spiritual temple in us. This is His perpetual call to us. According to St. Augustine: [In His longsuffering, God waits for the sinner, saying: *“Return to Me, and I shall return to you”*]. And he says: [By our complete return to God we shall find Him always at hand, according to the prophet: *“As surely as the sun rises, He will appear”* (Hosea 6: 3 – the Septuagint version). God is never absent; He is present everywhere, but we, in our perversion, loses Him; for it is said: *“He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him”* (John 1: 10). He was in the world, but the world did not recognize Him, because of the impurity of our hearts we cannot see Him] And he says: [God forsook you, because you are the one who forsook Him. You let Him down; but He will never let you down].

The return to God, therefore is not by changing the place, namely by forsaking Babylon and going to Jerusalem, but by changing the position of the soul as far as God is concerned; Instead of giving Him the back by our evil doings, give Him the face, spiritually approaching Him. As according to St. Dedymus the blind: [This approach and separation should not be understood as changing the place, but the position and readiness of the spirit].

- (3) He asked them to learn from the example of what happened to their fathers, saying: *“Your fathers, where are they; and the prophets, do they live forever?”* (5). He probably meant how He has warned their fathers by the prophets, but for some time; and how, having rejected the warning, they perished and lost the prophets. .According to St. Dedymus the blind, by the prophets He means the false prophets who deceived their fathers by saying: *“Peace, peace, they*

*say, when there is no peace”* (Jeremiah 8: 11) [Together with the false prophets who deceived them, they perished. Both the deceivers and the deceived disappeared with the false prophecies].

(4) In His call for them to return, God is called “*The Lord of Hosts*”; repeating it three times in one verse (3). On one aspect, God approaches them as “The Lord of Hosts”, to proclaim His responsibility for the work, to provoke them not to fear the opponents, for He is capable to consummate the work by them, if they submit to Him like spiritual soldiers to their Leader. Repeating the Expression “The Lord of hosts three times when He calls to repentance, is a confirmation of the work of the Holy Trinity in their life. Man cannot return to God, unless he experience the giving love of the Father; and the grace of the only-begotten Son through the cross; and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the Grantor of forgiveness.

(5) This book confirms the important principle previously proclaimed by God in the books of the prophets before the captivity; that what would dwell upon them is a chastisement from the Lord; but, at the same time is nothing but the natural fruit of sin: “*The Lord Almighty has done to us what our ways and practices deserve, just as He determined to do*” (6)

(6) If their fathers perished because of their attachment to evil, Whoever attaches himself to vanity will become vanity. The only way then, is to be attached to the Truth to live eternally. So God presented to us His Word, namely ‘The ‘Truth’ to attach ourselves to Him and not die: “*The Lord says: ‘did not My words and My decrees, which I commanded My servants the prophets overtake your forefathers?. And according to the prophet Isaiah: “The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever”* (Isaiah 40: 7).

## 2- THE VISION OF HORSES:

It happened three months after the start of his prophecies, in the month of Shebat in which the myrtle trees give flowers with their sweet fragrance filling the air. The prophet probably used to spend the whole days falling on his knees underneath the shadows of those trees with unceasing tears, crying: *“Lord Almighty, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and from the towns of Judah”* (12) In the midst of his wailing, his heart looked with longing toward the temple which became ruins, and with sorrow toward the people who came to Jerusalem fifteen years ago to rebuild the temple, but everyone got preoccupied with his own affairs and personal interests.. Being a priest, the prophet longed to return to the temple with its spiritual rites which he never had the chance to practice since he was born. That is why, God granted him this vision: *“There before me was a man riding a red horse, he was standing among the myrtle trees, and in a ravine behind him were red, brown, and white horses. I asked: ‘What are these my Lord?’. The angel who was talking to me answered: I will show you what they are’. .Then the man standing among the myrtle trees explained: They are the ones the Lord has sent to go throughout the earth. And they reported to the angel of the Lord who was standing among the myrtle trees: ‘We have gone throughout the earth and found the whole world at rest and in peace’”* (8-11).

By this vision the Lord proclaims his intention to save, and His care for this spiritual house of His, by giving him an angel to talk to him, to accompany him in all his visions, to enter into debates with him, and to interpret all what he did not understand. God intended to confirm the support of heaven to him and the ministry of the angels to men (Hebrew 1: 14).

Now! Who is that Rider on the red horse, who was standing among the myrtle trees, in the shadow, who was called: ‘The angel of the Lord?’

The expression “the angel of the Lord” most probably refers to God Himself; appearing as an angel, a messenger, for the sake of man. For the word ‘angel’ means ‘a

messenger'. In the Babylonian Talmud it came: 'That man was no one but the Blessed Holy One', as it is written: "The Lord is a Man of War"; and according to St. Diodorus the blind: [The Rider on the red horse is the incarnate Savior; the red horse is the body by which He was clothed. The prophet saw him standing among the myrtle trees in the shadows, namely among the two shadowed mountains, which refer to the two Covenants: the Old and the New; fertile mountains and shadowed because of the richness of thoughts, and the multitudes of references pertaining to the incarnate God.

We can say that the prophet saw that vision "during the night" (8); namely through the Old Covenant, as the Lord Christ – the Sun of Righteousness – who turned the night into daylight did not yet appear. He saw Him through the "shadows" of the prophecies, as a Rider on a red horse, incarnate as a Man, who approaches us by His divine work through the cross, on which He shed His precious blood. About whom the Prophet Isaiah said: " *Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with His garment stained crimson?.....Why are Your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with Me*" (Isaiah 63: 1-3).

Behind the Lord Christ the prophet saw red, brown, and white horses; about whom the Lord said: "*They are the ones the Lord has sent to go throughout the earth*" (10). By the coming of the Lord Christ to us with salvation, heaven opened up, and "*the angels, the ministering spirits were sent to serve those who will inherit salvation*" (Hebrew 1: 14).

Those whom the Lord sent to go throughout the earth were probably men of the Old Covenant to prepare the earth to receive the incarnate Word through their teachings and prophecies; those who, even though preceded Him, yet they now stand behind their Lord and Savior.. Their response saying: "*We have gone throughout the earth and found the whole world at rest and in peace*", refers to that the earth was then, well prepared, the road well paved, and the time convenient to receive the Savior Messiah.

If the Rider on red horse symbolized the incarnate Word of God, those horses with different colors probably symbolize the divine works. The prophet proclaims to the Jewish people at that time that, since God has presented diverse works, and provided them in several ways, with an atmosphere of rest and peace; no opponents, and no one setting snares for them, they should hasten to rebuild the house of the Lord. In the same meaning we can say that the prophet proclaims that the Lord Christ, sending to them His red, brown, and white horses, granted us every heavenly talent and divine gift to make our earth, namely our bodies at rest and in peace, do not oppose the Spirit, but works together with her for the sake of the glory of God. .It is the time to work; in which it is befitting of us to dedicate all our spiritual, as well as our physical energies, for the spiritual building in our heavenly Jerusalem.

That was the first vision which lifted Zechariah up from his daily tears, in the valley of the myrtle trees, underneath the shadows, to bring him forth into the valley of the work of God proclaimed through the incarnation and crucifixion.; by which Zechariah was taken away from the anguish of his soul to the true peace and rest.

I wish we do not understand the phrase :”The earth was at rest and in peace” in the meaning of slothfulness, but in that of the enjoyment of the exalted peace of God. According to St. Dedymus the blind:[The prudent spirit bears an energy that moves it in continuous activity; but, working for the sake of goodness, it remains in a state of rest and peace, with no disturbance, enjoying the inner peace provided by the fear of God..... As is written: *”Whoever listens to me will live in safety, and be at ease, without fear of harm”* (Proverb 1: 33).

In our Lord Jesus Christ, our souls, as well as our bodies, namely, our inner heavens and earth, are at rest; being sanctified by Him, and joyful, in spite of bearing His cross, and entering together with Him into his grave,

### **3- THE LORD’S JEALOUSY TOWARD HIS HOUSE:**



If Zechariah spent years mourning the ruins of the temple; and with tears that would never dry, asking the Lord for the sake of rebuilding the temple; It is our Lord Jesus Christ who, alone, is the atonement Intercessor, who cries out with His precious blood for the sake of setting His sanctuaries in humanity; being said: *"Then the angel of the Lord said, 'Lord Almighty, how long will You withhold mercy from Jerusalem and from the towns of Judah, which You have been angry with these seventy years?'"*. Humanity has fallen under the captivity of the devil all those years, and no one could intercede for her, except Him who presented His precious blood as atonement for our sins; bringing forth the divine mercy through paying the debt of divine justice by the cross. His intercession was not by mere words, but by work, active and full of love, by which he could take away from the believers the divine anger, and bring them forth into the mercies of God, to set in them His heavenly Holy Temple. Those were the good words of comfort proclaimed by the angel accompanying the prophet (13)

By the cross the Lord says: *"I am very jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion, but I am very angry for the nations that feel secure. I was only a little angry, but they added to the calamity. Therefore this is what the Lord says: 'I will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and there my house will be rebuilt; and the measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem, declares the Lord Almighty. Proclaim further: 'That is what the Lord Almighty says: My towns will again overflow with prosperity, and the Lord will again comfort Zion and chose Jerusalem'"* (14 – 17).

On the historical aspect, that was literally fulfilled. After 70 years of captivity, God declared His jealousy for His city and His people; and while the nations were feeling at peace, having utterly humiliated the people of God, destroyed the promised land, and ruined the Holy temple; whether actively like the Babylonians, or by help and support like the Edomites, or by gloating .....but while feeling secure, God returned to Jerusalem to rebuild His house anew, and to stretch the measuring line, not for destruction, like at captivity, but to rebuild . That is how God overflowed His goodness over His people, and proclaimed His love and care.

That was literally fulfilled in the sixth century BC; but in a perfect and deeper way in the Messianic era, when the Lord ascended on His cross, stretched His hands with blessing on humanity, destroyed the captivation of the devil, and granted the true goodness to those who believed in Him. According to the apostle Paul: *“He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all – how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?”* (Romans 8: 32).. He returned back to us with his mercies to set His temple in us, saying: *“The Kingdom of God is within you”* . He stretched His hands with the measuring line to build, and to grow our inner life, to overflow with the fruit of His Holy Spirit, blessings and comforts (John 15: 26); This reveals how He chose our inner Jerusalem a bride for himself.

What is that house that preoccupied the heart of God?

- (1) The church set by the Lord as His bride; to which the apostle Paul refers by saying to his disciple Timothy: *“If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth”* (1 Timothy 3: 14)
- (2) According to St. Diodorus, that house is the human body of our Lord Jesus Christ which He received as His dwelling place, together with the Godhead with no mixture nor separation; about which He said: *“Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days..... but the temple He has spoken of was His body”* (John 2: 19, 21). That house about which it was proclaimed in the book of Proverbs: *“Wisdom has built her house”* (Proverbs 9: 1).
- (3) St. Diodorus ends his talk about that house by saying: [We should add that every believer, as well, is a house built to become a temple for God. The Holy Scripture says: *“Do not you know that you yourselves are God’s temple, and that God’s Spirit lives in you?”* (1 Corinthians 3: 16). And the Savior Himself clearly says: *“If*

*anyone loves Me he will obey my teachings. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14: 23).*

#### **4- THE VISION OF THE FOUR HORNS:**

According to the Jewish tradition, the second chapter of the present book starts by this vision concerning the appearance of the four horns that scattered Judah and Israel, , *“so that no one could raise his head”* (21); then *“the appearance of four craftsmen”* who *came to terrify them and to throw down these horns of the nations who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter its people”(21).*

The prophet Zechariah in his seclusion probably was looking everywhere of the universe, to see the nations striking Jerusalem with their horns, unceasingly and with no mercy. The Jews who used to raise sheep perceived how the wild oxen with their horns kill and scatter their herds of sheep; hence the psalmist says: *“Rescue me from the mouth of the lions, and save me from the horns of the wild oxen”* (Psalm 22: 21). And the prophet Daniel talks about *“the horn who fought against the saints and defeated them, until the ancient of days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints”* (Daniel 7: 21, 22).. The horns also came to refer to the power and authority; as according to the Lord in Micah: *“Rise and Thresh, O daughter of Zion; for I will give you horns of iron; I will give you hooves of bronze; and you will break to pieces many nations; you will devote their ill-gotten gains to the Lord; their wealth to the Lord of all the earth”* (Micah 4: 13).

In this vision concerning the four horns it is noticed:

- (1) According to some, these four horns refer to the kingdoms that humiliated the people of God; namely, the kingdom of Assyria and Babylon; the kingdom of Persia and Made; the kingdom of the Chaldeans; and the kingdom of the Romans. To each of those kingdoms God sent a “craftsman” to scatter and to humiliate it. There you are, those four kingdoms are utterly devastated, their

horns destroyed, and the work of God remained fruitful. The psalmist says: *"Why do the nations rage, and the people plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against His anointed One?".... The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them* (Psalm 2: 1, 2, 4). Those kingdoms were referred to by the four and the four metals and the four great beasts that came out from the one sea, one after the other, in the vision seen by the prophet Daniel

(2) According to the scholar Origen, to St. Augustine, and to many fathers of the church, the figure 4 refers to the four directions of the earth, namely to the love of the world; and refers as well to the body, being the dust of this world. It is as though those four horns that scattered :Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem" (19) that *"no one could raise his head"* (21), refer to the love of the world and to the evil pleasures of the body, that destroyed Judah, namely our union with the Lord Christ who came from the tribe of Judah; destroyed the new Israel, namely our inner membership in the church, and the purity of our heart ,by which we could see God; by which man cannot raise his head up, but bows down to bury his soul in the dust, like what happened to the servant with the one talent (Matthew 25: 18). And instead of having his body raised up to heaven, he bows with his evil desires down to earth.

(3) As the devil stirred four horns against Jerusalem, God sent four "craftsmen" to confront them. Namely, God supports His children as much as they enter in temptations and tribulations. The stronger is the war brought up by the devil, the more help God sends to His children.. That was the work of God all along the eras: To the arrogant heretic Pharaoh, God sent Moses; .....To the evil Ahab God sent Elijah.....and when the heretic Arius was stirred up against the church, God prepared Athanasius, and so on. And what happened on the level of the old Covenant and what happen, and still happens on that of the New Covenant, is realized every day in the life of each one of us.

(4) According to some fathers, the four horns were the wars of the devil on all sides, about which the apostle Paul says; *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"* (Ephesians 6: 12). The church was in need of the four gospels, being the "craftsmen" who corrupt the work of the devil with his four horns. Yes indeed, the devil caused a ferocious war by his four horns; but the four gospels presented to us a new "craft" to overcome the devil, namely the way of love and meekness. The fire by which the devil ignites the hearts of men against the believers, is quenched by love. As according to St. Augustine: [Fire is not quenched by fire, but by water; Evil is not overcome by evil, but by goodness]. It is amazing that, despite that the four "craftsmen" are characterized by meekness, the four horns were terrified before them. like when Herod, the one with authority was terrified before the barely clothed St. John the Baptist (Mark 6: 20); and when the governor Felix was terrified before St. Paul, the captive whom he tried (Acts 24: 25).

# CHAPTER 2

## MEASURING THE NEW JERUSALEM

If in the first vision the Savior appeared in the shadows to prepare the way to salvation for the believers; In the second vision, the gospel of Christ appeared like four “craftsmen” to destroy the hosts of evil; and In the third vision, He reveals to us his plan for the salvation from the true captivity, by setting the new free Jerusalem, in spiritual dimensions that bear the features of the One who dwells in it “the incarnate God”/

1- Measuring Jerusalem and her glory	1 - 5
2- Fleeing from Babylon	6 - 9
3- Jerusalem and the incarnation	10 – 13

### 1- MEASURING JERUSALEM AND HER GLORY:

The Lord Christ Himself comes forth as a man with a measurement line in His hand, to build His house in us by His Holy Spirit, to conform to His heavenly house seen by the Evangelist St. John – the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 11: 1, 2; 21: 15 etc.).

The prophet says: *“Then I raised my eyes and looked, .....”*, and repeats this expression in more than one place (1: 18; 2: 1;; 5: 1; 6:1). As this book proclaims the evangelic thought pertaining to the salvation of the world, it was not possible for the prophet Zechariah to perceive it unless he raises his inner eyes up by the spirit of prophecy to see and to perceive the thought of God toward man. This is a call directed to us all, to raise our eyes by the Holy Spirit, so that our perceptions would not stop at the limit of the letter, but enters into the life-giving secrets of God, to watch His salvation works; things not perceived by eyes covered by the dust of this world. *“behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand(1)*. This man is most probably the Word of God who, for our sake became Man. The same One, the prophet previously saw as a Rider

on a red horse, standing in the shadow among the myrtle trees (1: 8), came now to set the building plan of His holy church. St. Dedymus the blind says: [It is the Savior Lord to whom the prophet Zechariah refers by saying: "*Here is the Man whose name is the Branch, and He will branch out from His place and build the temple of the Lord*" (6: 12 – the Septuagint version). He is the true Light about whom St. John the Baptist says "*This was He of whom I said: 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because He was before me'*" (John 1: 15). He is the Builder of Jerusalem, who laid the foundation as a divine Architect. Jerusalem which was destroyed by the enemies who put her under siege; Here He comes to measure her length and width to lay the foundations on which the walls are to be set, in order and harmony. On this city which was anticipated by all who pleased God by their faith, the apostle Paul says: "*The city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God*" (Hebrew 11: 10); and also according to the prophet Ezekiel: "*I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze, He was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring rod in His hand*" (Ezekiel 40: 3)

In the book of Revelation we see the holy temple and the altar measured by "*a reed like a measuring rod.....And the angel said, 'Rise and measure the temple of God.....; but leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it'*" (Revelation 11: 1, 2). By this, our Lord Jesus intends to confirm to us that the true children of God who are sanctified to Him, are kept by Him and known to Him ; whereas those outside faith, are left out and are not measured, because they are not worthy of being known by Him.....; hence He rebukes them, saying: "*I tell you, I do not know you, where you are from*" (Luke 13: 27).

"*The measuring reed*" is golden (Revelation 21: 15); namely heavenly; for the spiritual and heavenly things would not be measured except by what is spiritual.

What is the spiritual "measuring line" or "measuring reed", held by our divine Architect to build the holy Jerusalem, but the holy cross formed of two boards: one vertical and the other horizontal. By this cross He measures the dimensions of His holy city in us.

....."*He said to me, 'To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is*

*its length.*” (2). On the horizontal board of the cross, the Lord Christ spread His hands to embrace the Jews by one, and the Gentiles by the other; to bring all together as one in Him.. According to St. Erinaos: [He, in whom all are gathered, was hanged on a tree]. And according to St. Athanasius: [It was befitting of the Lord to spread His hands, to embrace by one the old people, and the Gentiles by the other, to unify them together in Him].. This is the “width of the New Jerusalem”. It is befitting of the believer to bear the feature of his crucified Savior, and to spread his hands by love to embrace all mankind as his brethren. On the vertical board, the body of the Lord was nailed above the earth, to fulfill His promise: *“If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all peoples to Myself”* (John 12: 32), to reconcile God the Father with man in His crucified body. According to St. Hippoleetus: [The cross is Jacob’s ladder. That tree with its heavenly dimensions: which was lifted up from the earth to reach heaven; has set itself eternally between heaven and earth, to lift the world up]. This is the length of the new Jerusalem; where it is befitting of us to be nailed together with Him on the tree to receive the opening of heaven to the earth, and the lifting up of the earth to heaven. The dimensions of our new Jerusalem: Its width, is opening our hearts wide for everyone; and its length is opening it on heaven. In other words, it is the practice of the commandment of love in our Lord Jesus Christ, love for all mankind in the heavenly God.

Zechariah continues his talk by saying: *“And there was the angel who talked with me, going out; and another angel was coming out to meet him, who said to him, ‘Run, speak to this young man, saying: ‘Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. For I,’ says the Lord, ‘will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.’”* (3-5).



How a joyful vision to the heart, that reveals the work of God with us:

- (1) Sending the angels; one after the other; who talk about our Jerusalem; the dwelling place of God with men. In the book of Revelation we see the angels in continuous movement, proclaiming their longing for the ultimate day, the day of the harvest of the earth (Revelation 14: 15-20); longing to see the bride, crowned with glory with her Groom.

The first angel probably refers to the heavenly creatures, anticipating the fulfillment of the prophecies to rejoice in the salvation of man, and his return to their fellowship in their liturgies and songs of praise to God. The second angel refers to them, coming out in the new covenant, rejoicing in the fulfillment of what they have anticipated.

- (2) By “the young man” here, he most probably refers to the prophet Zechariah, or to the believer in a general way. To partake of humanity, the Lord Jesus became a fetus, a child, a young man, then a grown-up man; but not an old man according to the flesh; to keep His bride (the church) perpetually in a renewable spiritual youth, without getting into the frailty and weakness of old age; so that everyone of its members would sing saying: *“Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day”* (2 Corinthians 4: 16); *“But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint”* (Isaiah 40: 31); and, *“Your youth is renewed like the eagle’s”* (Psalm 103: 5).

According to St. Dedymus the blind: [The godly man, in the sight of angels of God, is a “young man”, particularly when he puts on the new man, “for

*even a child is known by his deeds, whether what he does is pure and right*” (Proverb 20: 11); and according to John: *“I have written to you young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you; and you have overcome the wicked one”* (1 John 2: 14). Whoever is a young man in spirit would receive the teachings of the angel who is sent to reveal to him the proclamations we see in the rest of the prophecy.

(3) He reveals to us the dimensions of the new church, saying: *“Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it”* (4); It will be without a material wall; for it is the city of love without limit, in which the soul bears the kingdom of God wide with love for all with an inner glorious joy. The multitude of men and livestock in it refers to the sanctification of the soul with limitless energies, and the sanctification of the body that was carnal, with limitless new possibilities. *Our inner Jerusalem will be wide enough to accommodate all men, through the sanctification of the soul and the body together, with all their possibilities and talents.*

(4) If our inner Jerusalem is like a town without material walls; but it has a unique wall: *“For I, says the Lord, will be a wall of fire all around her”* (5); the wall of fire that

was sent by the Only begotten Son from God the Father, after His ascension; to dwell upon the disciples in the form of tongues of fire on the day of the Pentecost, to

surround the church on all sides, to keep her safe against every evil arrow, and to ignite her with the continuous warmth of the Spirit ; hence the believer would sing:

*“By my God I can leap over a wall”* (Psalm 18: 29); *“The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?”* (Psalm 27: 1). According to St. Jerome: [The

enemies put me under siege; they aimed their fiery arrows toward my heart; but the divine wall of fire that surround me will devour and quench the fire of evil; the

way Moses' rod that became a serpent that devoured the serpents of the magicians. Therefore, instead of the deadly fire of evil, our heart will be ignited by the holy

divine fire (Ezekiel 38- 11, 12)..

God is a wall of fire all around us, ignites our heart with the fire of love, to keep us from becoming like those about whom is said: *"The love of many will grow cold"*

(Matthew 24: 12)

By such a divine wall, therefore, *"You will say, 'I will go up against a land of un-walled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwell without*

*walls, and having neither bars nor gates' – to take plunder, and to take booty"*  
(Ezekiel 38: 11, 12)

- (1) *"For I, says the Lord, will be a wall of fire all around her"* (5). If the Lord Christ is the high-priced pearl which we acquire in us, His wall of fire all around us, will keep anyone from looking hard at this glittering pearl inside us, because of its exalted beauty and radiations; its splendor will be our splendor; its glory will be to our account; saying to us, as the Lord said to His bride: *"you were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you", says the Lord God"* (Ezekiel 16: 13, 14).

## **2- FLEEING FROM BABYLON:**

If God, by Himself, measured the city and surrounded it by His holy Spirit, as a wall of fire; and transfigured in it by His glory; He did all that to motivate it more to strive to

escape away from every offense, lest it would lose the work of God in it; hence he calls her, saying: *"Up, up, flee from the land of the north", says the Lord*" (6)

On the literal historical aspect, it is a divine call addressed to those who held fast to the land of captivity because of their personal interests; to flee from Babylon – the land of the north – to the promised land. Here He does not call them by name nor title; on account of that, by holding fast to life of humiliation, they became unworthy of being recognized by God; but on the spiritual aspect, the call is set and perpetual along the generation to every man. As to repeating the call, saying "Up, up", it refers to that the call is addressed to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles, to flee from the land of captivity by the devil, where the cold wind of the north blows (Wisdom of Joshua 43: 20), and quenches the flame of love in the heart; to go, not to another land, but to heaven -- the spirit -- through the fire of the Holy Spirit, that takes her away from the land of the north, and brings her from glory to glory, into the bosom of the Father in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a repeated call to the rich and the poor, to man and woman, to forsake the land of evil, its dust and mire, and return, by the Holy Spirit, to the divine sanctuaries; According to St. Dedymus the blind, it means: [Flee from evil; or *"Depart from evil and do good"* (Psalm 34: 14); and, *"Cease to do evil"* (Isaiah 1: 16); something that could be realized by following the counsel of the apostle Paul, saying: *"Test all things, hold fast what is good; abstain from every form of evil"* (1 Thessalonians 5: 21); for whoever holds fast to what is good, and intends to consummate it, would flee from evil.

For, if God has *'spread them abroad like the four winds of heaven', He calls them, saying: 'Up, up Zion, escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon'*" (6), because of their evil, He calls them now to forsake their places of dwelling, and to set forth to Zion, to enjoy salvation. Here, it is noticed:

- (1) God intends for us to set forth from Babylon, which means (confusion), to enter into Zion, where inner peace, and life of joy and songs of praise are. According to St. Dedymus the blind- [The place of salvation is the holy Zion, where those who used to dwell in the daughter of Babylon would be saved ..... The way the name 'Babylon' refers to confusion, whoever has his spirit confused and

disturbed, is a Babylonian, and would be committed to change his condition if he intends to return to Zion; for then, he would sing praises, and play on harps to honor God, according to what is written: *"Praise, is awaiting You, O God, in Zion; and to You the vow shall be performed"* (Psalm 65: 1); and, *"Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion; declare His deeds among the people"* (Psalm 9: 11). As it would be impossible for us to praise God and to play music to Him while still dwelling in the daughter of Babylon in the north; the Holy Spirit cries out loud: *"Up, up, escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon' to take refuge in Zion, where I would gather you together from the four winds of the earth'.*

Let us then flee from the confusion of sin, and take refuge in the peace of Zion, where the divine stronghold is, that our souls would be lifted up to enjoy the truth in the righteousness of God; as according to St. Jerome: [As long as we are in the condition of grace, our soul would be in peace; but, once we start to play around with sin, our soul would be in confusion, like a boat struck by the mighty waves].

- (2) What are the four winds, allowed to scatter them away from Jerusalem, but the evil spirits left by God to chasten whoever delivers himself by himself to them. The way the apostle Paul condemned the young man who committed evil with his step mother, to be *"delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"* (1 Corinthians 5: 5). If God's love protects us against the authority of the wicked one; yet, His care allows for us, sometimes, to be delivered to the bitterness of this enemy, to whom we delivered ourselves by ourselves, and received him as our father instead of God the Father (John 8: 44); For then we would, in bitterness, feel our need for the true fatherhood of God.

By the winds here he probably means the strange teachings that shake and destroy the soul; which were unable to shake St. John the Baptist; about whom the Lord Christ says: *"What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"* (Matthew 11: 7); on which St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers

comments, saying: [Did you go out to see someone with no knowledge of God, who responds to the breaths of every unclean spirits?]; or by St. Augustine, saying: [St. John, was certainly, not a reed shaken by the wind; for he did not respond to every teaching wind].; or according to St. Dedymus the blind, saying: [The four winds could be the diverse teaching currents; which could be translated in those who walk with unbefitting minds, into evil thoughts and vain deeds; as according to the apostle Paul: *“That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting”* (Ephesians 4: 14).

By the four winds he may also mean the temptations and tribulations that shake and destroy the souls built upon sand, and not upon rocks. Or it could also refer to the love of the world, and the evil desires of the body that would shake the soul; having known that the figure 4 may refer to these things, in our interpretation of the four horns.

- (3) It is not enough to flee from Babylon, but we are committed to set forth to Zion; namely, it is not enough to flee from the confusion of evil, but it is befitting of us to take refuge in Zion; namely in the righteousness of Christ our Lord. On the positive aspect, according to the apostle Paul: *“you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and the church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel”* (Hebrew 12: 22 – 24). Our Lord Jesus Christ, by His blood, will bring us forth into His Zion, to make us live on a heavenly level.

Finally, Having brought us forth from the captivity of the devil into His divine kingdom; He goes back to punish the devil who humiliated us; saying: *“For thus says the Lord of hosts: “He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.”<sup>9</sup> For surely I will shake My*

*hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me” (8, 9).*

In our study of some books of the prophets we noticed that God used the Gentiles to chastise His people; but once those are puffed up, He goes back to punish them.

By saying: “*after glory*”, he probably means (after the crucifixion), by which man is brought back from captivity, and God is glorified in him. At the same time, the devil who humiliated the children of God, by the Lord Christ, came to be humiliated without authority over them (Colossians 2: 14, 15).

By saying: “*touches the apple of my eye*”, he means that the devil who stretched his hand to us, and deprived us of our spiritual insight, his work will get back to him, and his blindness will increase day after day. It is as though, by his increasing evil, he touches the apple of his own eyes until the cup of his blindness is full. This applies as well to man; who, by doing evil against his neighbor, he touches the apple of his own eyes, to lose his spiritual insight. It is as though, while doing harm to his neighbor’s body, his possessions, or his reputation, he directs his strikes on his own inner eyes.

Evil is not confined to losing the inner insight, but extends to losing his whole being, according to the words of the Lord: “*they shall become spoil for their servants*”. While thinking that he plunders his neighbors, he, himself, will become spoil for his servants. Who are these servants but the senses and emotions of the body, which become out of control because of his evil, and makes him lose every blessing in him. That is what we practically notice; by being stirred up against our neighbors, the evil desires of our bodies are stirred up inside us, and we lose every control over our depths, and the grace of God that grants chastity and purity.

### **3- JERUSALEM AND THE INCARNATION:**

If this vision, in which the Lord Christ appears like a Man with a measuring line in his hand, by which to measure in us His new heavenly Jerusalem; fills the soul with gladness, the secret of the true joy is His dwelling in her; saying: *“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming, and I will dwell in your midst! says the Lord”* (10). According to Fr. John of Cronstadt: [While the feature of sin is disturbance and depression, the feature of the righteousness of Christ is the inner peace and joy].  
.....With grief filling their life, the Jews hung their harps upon the willows, and said: *“How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?”* (Psalm 137: 4); And by returning to Zion, they had their joy back, and their life turned into singing praise. According to St. Dedymus the blind: [While, in the time of captivity, the Hebrews were burdened with grief and wailing, on account of that they were forsaken by the Lord, Once they returned to Zion, their spiritual mother, the Lord commands them to sing and rejoice, for He came and dwelt in her midst, in the temple newly rebuilt. Enjoying security, the faithful captives will say: *“When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing”* (Psalm 26: 1). After moaning when they were separated from their homeland, and gone into captivity, it was natural for them to rejoice and exult when they come back, for the Lord, the fountain of joy and exultation came to dwell in their midst. According to St. Augustine, the singing here is not just by the tongue, but by the whole life of man.

Joy extends from him who returns from captivity, to his neighbors to draw them together with him to the kingdom of joy; as according to the prophet: *“Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and they shall become My people, and I shall dwell in their midst”* (11). Here he speaks about the return of the Gentiles to faith, and their enjoyment, together with the Jewish believers, of the dwelling of God in their midst.  
.....And lest the Jews would assume that the door of faith is closed before their face, he confirms to them: *“And the Lord will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem”* (12). Becoming the new Judah through belonging to Him who came out of the tribe of Judah; and the new Jerusalem, they become the inheritance of the Lord, and the location of His divine choice.



Because it may seem impossible in the eyes of many, that the door would be open before all the Gentiles, to enjoy the dwelling of the Lord in their midst ; he adds: "*Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord, for He is aroused from His holy habitation*" (14). Let every human tongue be silent in fear and awe; for God who proclaimed His care for all humanity along the generations, will do wonder by opening the door of faith before the Gentiles, to seem as though He is aroused to wake humanity up from their sleep.

# CHAPTER 3

## JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST

For the joy of the daughter of Zion to be realized, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself appeared, as Joshua, a High Priest in His temple, clothed with filthy garments on our behalf, the garments of captivity; to grant us Himself a garment of righteousness and a clean turban on His head.

1- Joshua and Satan	1 - 2
2- Joshua and the clean turban	3 - 5
3- Joshua, who works in the house of the Lord	6 - 10

### 1- JOSHUA AND SATAN:

*“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. And the Lord said to Satan: ‘The Lord rebuke you Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you; Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?’” (1, 2)*

What does this vision mean? The high priest, a symbol of the ministry in the temple, being captivated to Babylon, the whole ministry in the temple was destroyed. Yet, behind this, there is a hidden animosity, not between Babylon and the high priest, but between Satan and God. Satan stood at the right hand of Joshua to oppose him; but Joshua, perceiving that the war is actually against God Himself, said to Satan: *“The Lord rebuke you, Satan!”*.

*“The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you, Satan!”*; not because of any righteousness on her part, nor because she has suffered the bitterness of captivity, but because God has chosen her out of His love; according to the words of the Lord Christ

to His disciple: “*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you*” (John 15:16). He is jealous on us because of His love for us; particularly when He sees Satan “*a brand plucked of the fire*”, whose work is to cast himself in us, to turn us into an unquenchable furnace.

Who is ‘Joshua son of Jehozadek the high priest’? According to fathers, Joshua is a symbol of Jesus Christ the Highest Priest and Bishop of our souls. For the word ‘Jesus’ is an abbreviation of ‘Joshua’, namely, (Jehovah is salvation); while ‘Jehozadek’ means (God is Righteousness). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having come to us, being God our Savior and Righteousness; carrying our nature, Satan could not perceive who He is, but was in doubt, particularly when he saw Him hungry, thirsty, and suffering..... Standing at His right hand to oppose Him, the Lord overcame him to our account.

The Lord Christ fought against Satan who is “*a brand plucked from the fire*”, the destructive brand chosen by men for themselves, to ignite them by the deadly fire of evil desires..... St. Clement of Alexandria wonders why would men seek that deadly brand to die by it, when they could live honored by the Lord?]. According to St. Dedymus the blind:[Satan, being a brand plucked from the fire, God could let it burn off without plucking it; but He did not allow for him to be utterly punished now, but plucked him to use him in His divine purposes, yet without letting him give fruition, like a burnt branch that lost life.; the Lord uses him as a tool by which He would be glorified by the conquest of His children over him.

## **2- JOSHUA AND THE CLEAN TURBAN:**

We should not marvel to see Joshua clothed in filthy garments, standing before the angel of God to hear His command: “*Take away the filthy garment from him*”; For Joshua symbolizes the Lord Christ, the incarnate Word of God, who was clothed with our own filthy garment; so as, by His cross He would take away our sins, we would carry His righteousness, and be crowned.

According to St. Jerome: [Being clothed by those filthy garments, the Lord gave the enemy the chance to stand before Him to oppose Him]. And according to St. Dedymus

the blind: [After taking away from Him the filthy garment, they put a clean turban on His head, and clothed Him with clean garment. For the sake of re-establishing and rebuilding the city and the temple, the Head of the freed captives has to put on the garment of salvation and the attire of righteousness, to say: *"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall be joyful in my God, for He has clothed me with the garment of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness"* (Isaiah 61: 10). The filthy garments have to be taken away from Him, for He should not grieve any more, but rejoice and exult in the salvation of those who suffered captivity. ....Now, who are they who were commanded to take the garment of grief away from Him, described as being "filthy" ..... We could say that they are the angels surrounding those who fear God to protect them, and keep them from feeling grief and sorrow, caused by the temptations of life].

To Joshua is said: *"See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes"* (4). How could the Lord be addressed by saying: *"I have removed your iniquity from You"*. The **apostle Paul** says: *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Corinthians 5: 21); and, *"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; (for it is written: 'cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'); that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith"* (Galatians 3: 13, 14).. He carried our sins, so that by the cross He would take them away, to make us carry His righteousness.

*"The rich robes"* with which the Lord was clothed instead of the filthy garment, refer to His church, rich in a multitude of talents; as though it is the multicolored shirt given by Jacob to his son Joseph, in which everyone of us represents a thread, if taken away, the shirt would lose its beauty and strength; that is the robe by which the Lord transfigured, *"as white as the light"* (Matthew 17: 2). According to St. Augustine: [His garment is the church; which, unless he who puts it on, holds fast to it, it would fall off him. In such a robe, the apostle Paul represented just a 'hem', describing himself as *"the least of the apostles"* (1 Corinthians 15: 9)..... And the woman who suffered bleeding, when she touched the hem of the garment of the Lord Christ she was cured of

her ailment ( ). So was the church that came from the Gentiles became well through the teachings of the apostle Paul].

According to St. Gregory, bishop of Nyssa: [Taking away the filthy garment and putting on the rich robe, refer to taking off our old man and our enjoyment of the new man through the water of baptism. By this we learn in a symbolic way, that in the baptism of the Lord Christ, as we take off our sins as filthy and poor garment, we put on the holy and very befitting robe of renewal]. The clean turban is the crown by which we are crowned in the Holy Lord.

### **3- JOSHUA, WHO WORKS IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD:**

The commandment given to us was addressed to our head and Highest Priest Jesus Christ: *"Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'If You will walk in My ways, and if You will keep My command, then You shall also judge My house; and likewise have charge of My courts; I will give You places to walk among those who stand here'"* (7). The secret behind addressing the command to Him, is that we would not be able to keep it except through Him; and we would not be able to realize the rites of the Lord without His work in us.

If the church is the house of God, it will be our Lord Jesus who judges her; supports the upright, and lifts the fallen up; by which His children would be standing, namely set in Him; and He, Himself, would walk among them.

He finally ends this vision by revealing the Person of that High Priest, saying: *"For behold, I am bringing forth "MY SERVANT" the "BRANCH"; For behold the "STONE" that I have laid before Joshua, Upon the stone are seven eyes; Behold, I will engrave its inscription', says the Lord of hosts; and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, says the Lord of hosts, 'everyone will invite his neighbor, under his vine and under his fig tree'"* (8 – 10).

We can summarize his talk here concerning the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ as such:

- (1) He calls Him: “My Servant”, “the branch”, “the East”, and “the Stone”; every title consummates the rest of titles. For, through the incarnation, He became “A Servant”; *“Being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond-servant, and coming in the likeness of men”* (Philippians 2: 6, 7). And by belonging to David, He came out as “a Branch”, even though He is the Creator of the vine (Isaiah 11: 1, 2). Calling Him “the East”, refers to being “the Sun of Righteousness” who brings light upon those who sit in the darkness. Finally, He was called “the Stone”, rejected by the builders, to come to be the “Cornerstone”, who binds the Jews and the Gentiles together in the heavenly spiritual building, about which the apostle says: *“having been built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone”* (Ephesians 2: 20)
- (2) By saying: *“I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day”*, he refers to the day of the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, being “The Sun of Righteousness” that shone on us with no sunset; and turned our night into a day with no night, in which our iniquities are removed by the cross.
- (3) On that day, the day of the crucifixion, we were bonded together *“everyone will invite his neighbor under his fig tree”*; namely we are bonded together by love through His church, the holy vine, and the fruitful fig tree..... In our interpretation of the book of Joshua, we saw how *the vine refers to the suffering church, which goes through the winepress together with her Groom; and how the fig tree refers to the unity of the Holy Spirit, referred to as the outer cover of the fig that embraces inside a multitude of seeds, that would be worthless except through the unity of the Spirit.*

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# CHAPTER 4

## THE GOLDEN LAMPSTAND

After revealing the priestly role of the Lord Christ and His salvation work, he shows the role of His Holy Spirit in the enlightenment of His church. In the last chapter he encouraged Joshua the high priest to work; while here, He supports Zerubbabel the governor to work by the Spirit of God, and not by a human arm.

- 1- Wakening the prophet up                      1 - 6
- 2- The golden lampstand                      2 - 7
- 3- The consummation of the work      8 – 14

### 1- WAKENING THE PROPHET UP:

*“Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep” (1)*

The sleep of the prophet Zechariah probably reveals the anguish of Zerubbabel who faced a fierce opposition from outside and inside; and, unable to help him, the prophet Zechariah went to sleep; the way the disciples of the Lord did in the garden, when, not able to endure to hear about the coming events; on which the Lord admonished them by saying to the apostle Peter: *“Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation”* (Mark 14: 37, 38).

### 2- THE GOLDEN LAMPSTAND:

While the house of the Lord was rebuilt on the hand of Zerubbabel, the minds of the prophet and of all the faithful ministers of the Lord, soared up in the glory of the old house, and what it included of furniture, particularly the golden ones which God



commanded Moses to prepare, like the golden lampstand with seven lamps. In this vision God drew the heart of the prophet to see the return of the golden lampstand, that represents the enlightenment of the temple with the oil of the divine grace, and the work of the Holy Spirit. But the new lampstand differed in certain details from the old one (See Exodus 37: 17 – 24); in that it is surrounded by two olive trees; one at the right of the bowl, and the other at its left. In this lampstand it is noticed:

(1) The lampstand is golden ; namely, heavenly and spiritual; symbolizing the church (Revelation 1: 20). It bears the heavenly feature; and needs her heavenly Groom Himself, to help and to keep it. According to St. Dedymus the blind: {Saying that the lampstand is of sold gold (2), reveals to us that it, as a whole, is a spiritual and not a material lampstand. This golden lampstand represents the dwelling place and the temple of God, as it is written in the book of Revelation: “*The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches*” (Revelation 1: 20).

(2) He says: “*With a bowl on top of it*” (2). It is as though this lampstand represents the church enlightened by the Holy Spirit, likened by the Lord Christ to the five wise virgins who took oil in their vessels, and went out to receive the Groom (Matthew 25). According to St. Augustine, [this oil represents the love of God and of the neighbor, which the Holy Spirit pours into us with abundance. Whoever has the love of God, bears the divine light and enjoys the kingdom; whereas he who loses it, will be in darkness, unable to see God].

(3) “*And on the stand, seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps*”

(2).According to St. Dedymus the blind: [The bowl, as well as the seven

lamps are over the lampstand, to give light seven-fold. For, as the perfect enlightening knowledge was likened to seven eyes (10); and as the seven pillars carry the dwelling place of the wisdom *“Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out her seven pillars”* (Proverb 1: 9); so the lampstand carries seven lamps. Being of solid gold, the lampstand represents the Savior Lord, who *“committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth”* (1 Peter 2: 22).; and *“The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him; the Spirit of wisdom and understanding; the Spirit of counsel and might; the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord”* Isaiah 11: 2)

The church, as well, carrying the features of her Groom, and enjoying His righteousness, will come to be a golden lampstand, having no spot nor wrinkle (Ephesians 5: 27), her light is not her own, but is her Groom’s “the Sun of righteousness”, who perpetually shines; He who sent to her His Holy Spirit to give her light in this world. The seven tubes are the means of salvation through which the Holy Spirit works in the church, particularly in the seven sacraments. The essence of the vision is therefore: The confirmation of the work of the Holy Spirit in the church; saying: *“This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit; says the Lord of hosts. Who are you, O great mountains? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain”* (6, 7).

On a historical aspect, the opposition against Zerubbabel so represented a great mountain that no human arm could move; that Zerubbabel started to have doubt in the possibility of consummating the work; but the Lord confirmed to him that he will Himself do it. God transformed that great mountain to a plain. But on a spiritual aspect; as the disciples of the Lord Christ, were as well in need of the Holy Spirit to transform the great mountain of preaching into a plain; The Lord said to them: *“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem and in all Judah and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1: 4, 8).

If we would dare to say that preaching *Christ crucified, to the Jews is a stumbling block and to the Gentiles foolishness* (I Corinthians 1: 23), as though a great mountain, yet by the Holy Spirit, this mountain became before the apostles and the disciples a plain. Hence the Lord goes on to say: “*And He shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it’*” (7). The work of the Holy Spirit is to testify to the Lord Christ, the ‘Capstone’ or the ‘Cornerstone’, who bound the Jews to the Gentiles together, that all shout “Grace, grace to it”. Repeating the word twice refers to the people of two origins: the Jews and the Gentiles; as well as to the nature of love in the new people; for, according to St. Augustine, the figure 2 referring to love. No one could testify to the crucified and glorify Him, unless he bears in himself this loving nature.

According to St. Dedymus the blind: [Beside the interpretation we gave, there is another view that the mountain symbolizes the Virgin Mary, and the Stone coming out of it symbolizes the Christ she begat without human seed. The prophet Daniel teaches us these secrets by saying: “*You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces*” (Daniel 2: 34). He says that the stone that struck the diverse nations and the image they formed, was cut off from the mountain without hands (without marriage)...Only Christ was born by a virgin; so, before Zerubbabel, the stone was cut off the mountain without hands].

If that great mountain is the Virgin St. Mary who conceived the Lord Christ without a human seed, something that seemed impossible, yet was realized; it refers, likewise, to the soul that spiritually bears inside it the Lord Christ; for, according to St. Cyril the Great: [Through the Spirit, Christ is conformed in us, and print His features on us; by which the beauty of His divinity becomes alive anew in man].

- (4) “*Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left*”  
(3). These two olive trees probably refer to Zerubbabel and Joshua, being

*“the anointed ones”* to rebuild the temple (14); one for the material role, and the other for the spiritual one, with no duplication, each of them support and consummate the work of the other.

If the oil refers to the work of the Holy Spirit that enlightens the soul with the true knowledge; the olive tree on the right hand, according to St. Dedymus the blind, refers to the Theological knowledge; while the one on the left refers to the study of the world, its order and God's ordinance of it. St. Dedymus also believe that the two olive trees may refer to Moses and Elijah who appeared on the right and left hand of the Lord during His transfiguration (Luke 9: 30), the law and the prophets, both being spiritual; and both testify to the glory and Divinity of the Lord..... They probably refer, as well, to the Holy Book with its two Testaments, used by the Holy Spirit to enlighten our hearts with the light of knowledge, and the transfiguration of the Lord inside us.

### **3- THE CONSUMMATION OF THE WORK:**

This vision came to give Zerubbabel assurance concerning the following:

- (1) That the work is done, not by a human arm but by the Spirit of God (6, 7)
- (2) God confirms that the work will be consummated by the hand of Zerubbabel, even if it is delayed because of the opposition (9)
- (3) God rejoices in the work, despised by many, when compared to the earlier temple, and counted in their eyes as “small things” or even “nothing” (Haggai 2: 3). But God rejoices to see it by His eyes which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth, not to criticize and condemn, but *“to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him”* (2 Chronicles 16: 9). The eyes of the Lord see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel (10); namely see him holding the tool to measure the uprightness of the building.

# CHAPTER 5

## THE FLYING SCROLL

### AND

## THE BASKET GONE FORTH

In the previous five visions, God proclaimed His joyful work for the salvation of man, by setting His temple in him; and by giving him every exalted heavenly possibility ..... Now, He comes back to warn us against slothfulness with the sin, or making truce with it through the following two visions:

- |                          |        |
|--------------------------|--------|
| 1- The flying scroll     | 1 - 4  |
| 2- The basket gone forth | 5 – 11 |

#### 1- THE FLYING SCROLL:

*“Then I turned and raised my eyes and saw there a flying scroll”* (1); (Or “a flying sickle” according to the Septuagint version).

The “scroll”, most probably refers to the proclamation of Justice (Ezekiel 2: 9, 10; Revelation 5: 1; 10: 2). If the people of God, in the last vision, appeared as a lampstand of solid gold, that bears the light of Christ, by the oil of the Holy Spirit; yet her joy in this divine work should be taken cautiously against any sin or slothfulness. Being described as “flying”, is on account of that the evil we commit here on earth, ascends before God as an abhorrent smell; *“a curse that goes over the face of the whole earth”* (3). Here, God proclaims the responsibility of every believer, as a member in the human congregation; to react to it for blessing or for curse. What he does has its impact upon the life of all. ....Because of the righteous Joseph, the household of Potiphar was

blessed, and even the storehouses of Egypt; And because of Jonah's escape, the sea was stirred up and many lost their wealth.

It is amazing that the prophet saw evil like an open scroll, 20 cubits long and 10 cubits wide. On the earth it was closed shut, and no one knew its hidden secrets; but it will eventually be wide open for everyone to read. Its dimensions, conforming to those of the sanctuary, mean that what man commit will corrupt the sanctuaries of God in him.

In the Septuagint version, the prophet sees a "flying sickle" and according to St.

Dedymus the blind: [As the divine Judge separates the righteous from the wicked, and deals with each according to his deeds; the Holy Book calls the verdicts under which the oppressors and the wicked fall, sometimes as a "sword" or "arrows" (Deuteronomy 32: 42; 22: 23; Isaiah 34: 5; Amos 9: 10; Psalm 7: 12, 13; Jeremiah 47: 5, 6); and other times as an "ax" and a "sickle" .....by which "*every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire*" (Matthew 3: 10). The sickle, as well, is used to cut off those who produce corrupt fruition, about whom it is said: "*For their rock is not like our Rock; even our enemies themselves being judges. For their vine is of the vine of Sodom; and of the fields of Gomorrah; Their grapes are grapes of gall; their clusters are bitter. Their wine is the poison of serpents, and the cruel venom of cobras*"

(Deuteronomy 32: 31-33). So the wicked will is likened to a corrupt vine that produces bad fruition, and has to be cut off by a sharp sickle with all its clusters of grapes .....The prophet sees it, not as a regular sickle, but as a flying one, namely spiritual ..... according to the words of the Lord, saying: "*Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted, will be uprooted*" (Matthew 15: 13).

In a commentary on that sharp sickle, St. John Chrysostom says: [Man may probably be able to flee from a flying sword, but from a sickle that falls on his neck and wraps around it like a rope, he would not be able to flee. And to add wings to that sickle, what would be his chances to be saved?]; and he adds: [It is flying, a reference to the close coming of revenge; and its large dimensions, refer to intensity of tribulation. Flying from heaven means that the revenge comes down from the throne of judgment up high, in

the form of a sickle referring to the inevitable judgment. As the sickle that falls on the neck will never fail to cut off the head, so will the revenge be, cruel and sure]

The prophet goes on to say: *“This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth: ‘Every thief shall be expelled, according to this side of the scroll; and every perjurer shall be expelled, according to that side of it. I will send out the curse, says the Lord of hosts; it shall enter the house of the thief, and the house of the one who swears falsely by my name. It shall remain in the midst of his house, and consume it, with its timber and stones”* (3, 4).

The Mosaic covenant bore with it a curse that would dwell upon the disobedient (Deuteronomy 27: 15-26; 28: 15-68), a curse that flies in space and threatens the inhabitants of the earth, who received the covenant, but did not keep it, and even betrayed it. Here, he concentrated on two sins: theft and perjury. By the former, man robs his neighbor, and by the later he despises God; the two sins represent breaking the whole law: an offense against God and the neighbor. The former commandment came in the middle of the second tablet; and that of perjury came in the middle of the first one; meaning that man breaks the two tablets in their depths.

Although the curse goes out over the face of the whole earth, yet while flying, it aims its arrow toward the house of the sinner, there to abide, and to consume it with its timber and stones; by which he earns the natural fruition of his work. According to St. Dedymus the blind: [Swiftly flying over the earth, that sickle will strike, not only the sinners on earth, but those in the air (the demons), and the wicked wherever they are. It destroys what is in the middle of the house, namely, the heart and mind; and everything in man, like the sword that has split open the middle of judge of Israel, burnt with the evil desire for the righteous Susanna: Daniel said: *“The angel of God has received the sentence from God, and will immediately cut you in two”* (Susanna 1: 55). Commenting on the destruction of the house of the wicked, St. John Chrysostom says: [his house will be a heap of ruins, for everyone who passes by to see, and knowing the reason, to heed the lesson\.

## 2- THE BASKET GONE FORTH:

Once again, God warns us against sin, by letting the prophet see “a basket that goes forth” (6) The “basket” is the largest measuring unit of volume used by the Jews. Being described as “gone forth” refers to corrupt measures; namely “corrupt discernment”.

The prophet saw: *“a basket gone forth; .....here is a lead disc lifted up, and this is a woman sitting inside the basket. Then he said: This is wickedness! And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth”* (6 – 8).

Sin is likened to lead that weighs the soul down to the depth of the pit. As it came in the song of praise uttered by Moses: *“They sank like lead in mighty waters”* (Exodus 15: 10). According to the scholar Origen:[About the wicked it is said that they sank like lead in mighty waters; .....but the saints will never sink but will even walk on the water; ..... for they are not weighed down by sin]. And according to St. Gregory, bishop of Nyssa: [Everyone goes according to his own status: one walks light, and the other sinks in the mighty water. Virtue is so light to float; those who live it, according to the prophet Isaiah, fly like cloud and dove (9: 8); whereas sin is heavy and weighs man down like lead]. And according to St. John Chrysostom: [Nothing will give man wings, like the enjoyment of righteousness and virtue].

The prophet saw the lead disc lifted up; namely saw how sin was exposed before all; and evil appeared like a woman sitting in a basket gone forth. Commenting on likening wickedness, as well as virtue to a woman, St. Dedymus the blind says: [It is not strange that the Holy Book calls the bad nature, the corrupt mind, and the vicious power, by the name “woman”; and in the book of proverbs he calls “foolishness” by the same name. Teaching his disciple, the wise man says: *“My son, pay attention to my wisdom, lend your ear to my understanding, that you may preserve discretion, and your lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of the immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil. But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps lay hold of hell”* (Proverb 5: 1-5). In the same book of proverbs, filthy conduct is likened to “a woman” (Proverbs 7: 7 – 27). ...But as the



iniquities are likened to a woman, so are the virtues: For, about wisdom, the wise man says: *"I loved her and desired to take her for my bride"* (Wisdom 8: 2).

Getting back to the vision, we find that the weight of lead was cast into the mouth of the woman; for sin most probably concentrates in the mouth; that man would have a tongue heavy on the soul, by which he destroys himself and reproaches the others; contrary to the righteous man about whom is said: *"The tongue of the righteous is choice silver"* (Proverb 10: 20). It is as though the wicked bears in his mouth a tongue of lead that utters wickedness; whereas the righteous bears a tongue of pure silver that utters *"the pure words of the Lord, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times"* (Psalm 12: 6).

The prophet goes on to say: *"Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were two women, coming with the wind in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between earth and heaven"* (9).

The two women here, probably refer to the two iniquities: robbery and vain swearing (perjury), as we saw in the last vision; namely, robbing God and the neighbors. Saying *"with the wind in their wings"*, namely their wings are full of wind or of the spirit spoken of by the apostle, saying: *"the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience"* (Ephesians 2: 2); the unclean spirit about which the Lord Christ says that, when driven out of someone, will come back to find the place from which he was driven out, swept and put in order; then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first (Luke 11: 26).

And lest it would be thought that the two women set forth up to heaven, he confirms that their wings are like those of the stork, and not like those of the dove. For according to St. Dedymous the blind: [The stork, according to the law is an unclean bird (Leviticus 12: 19; Deuteronomy 14: 18), has her home in the fir trees (Psalm 104: 17); a migratory bird (Jeremiah 8: 7); of two kinds: the white stork 'Ciconia alba' that spend the winter in

middle and south Africa; and migrate in spring in huge swarms to Europe, Palestine, and north Syria.; and the black stork 'Ciconia nigra', that are found in Palestine, common in the region of the Dead Sea, feed on frogs and little reptiles; and if not found, on dead corpses and filth. On that, St. Dedymus the blind comments saying: [the two women, representing wickedness and symbolizing the devil, the antichrist, and the words of the heretics, live near tombs to feed on dead corpses; to be like the whitewashed tombs which appear beautiful outwardly, while inside they are full of the bones of the dead and all uncleanness (Matthew 23: 27). Making its nest in unclean places, the young of the stork come out in the same filthy atmosphere. So it is for those who walk in wickedness and live in the corrupt interests of the body; they have the wings of the stork, will be drawn to the tombs and uncleanness, contrary to those who have the wings of a dove; namely, the work of the Holy Spirit who appeared in the form of a dove during the epiphany of the Lord; as according to St. Dedymus the blind: [who is this blessed man who bears the wings of a dove that raises him above this world?]

Saying that "the two women went to build a house for it in Shinar (bound to Babylon – see Genesis 10: 10), refers to their intention to settle down in the location where evil in the old was stirred up against God Himself by people; whom He confused their tongues, and caused them to have internal disturbance.

I wish we bear the wings of a turtle dove, and not those of a stork, to flee from Babylon (Isaiah 48: 20) where evil is, to find our comfort in the Lord Himself, and to dwell in His eternal bosoms.

# CHAPTER 6

## THE CHARIOTS AND THE CORONATION OF JOSHUA

The prophet ends the division concerning the visions by these eighth and ninth visions; one, concerning the four chariots reveals the judgment of evil; and the other, concerns the coronation of Joshua, namely the righteousness in Christ Jesus

- 1- The vision of the four chariots
- 2- The vision of the coronation of Joshua

### 1- THE VISION OF THE FOUR CHARIOTS:

It so seems that this vision is an extension of the first vision that came in the first chapter; when the prophet saw a rider on a red horse among the myrtle trees in the hollow, and behind him were horses red, sorrel, and white. While here, he saw: *“four chariots coming from between two mountains of bronze. With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot were black horses; with the third chariot white horses; and with the fourth chariot dappled horses – strong steeds”* (1-3). The first vision concerns the salvation plan of God by the incarnation of the Word coming riding on a red horse, after the rest of the horses prepared the way for Him. Here, the vision refers to God’s plan to chastise evil outside Jerusalem, and His support of the believers against the devil and his wars.

He saw four chariots coming out from between two mountains; most probably the Moriah mountain and the Olive mountain; As though the four chariots came out to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, meaning (the Valley of the Judgment of Jehovah), where the Lord gathers all nations together to judge them, because of humiliating His people (Joel 3: 2). Those four divine chariots are: *“four spirits from heaven who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth”* (5), to realize the judgment plan of God outside

Jerusalem; so that the wicked would not see the glory of Jerusalem, nor enter into it, but are chastised out of it – in this world – or are eternally denied Jerusalem; while the children of God enjoy the inner eternal glory. For this same reason, the Lord of glory, will most probably come in the last day on the clouds; when the wicked will not encounter Him in His glory, but see Him fearful and awesome; whereas the righteous will enter together with Him into the eternal wedding.

The two mountains around the valley are “of bronze” (1), from which no one could escape. About the Lord Christ it is said: “*His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace*” (Revelation 1: 15); whoever hides in Him and unite with Him will tread the earth under his feet, and its thorns and thistles would not touch him (Genesis 3: 18), destroying the curse under him by our Lord Jesus Christ. So will be men of the Old and the new covenants, like two bronze mountains, will tread upon the evil in the Valley of Jehoshaphat and judge it by the Lord.

According to St. Dedymus the blind: [the bronze refers to the teachings of the heretics, on whom, having no love, the words of the apostle apply, saying: “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal*” (1 Corinthians 13: 1). As iron refers to revolting and solidity, bronze refers to concealing the fault behind appearance like two bronze mountains. It is befitting of us to flee from this valley – of the deceiving heretics with the words empty of true love, lest we would fall under the horrible divine judgment.

The diverse colors of the divine chariots refer to the chastisements of God against evil and his help to His people against the devil and his evil works:

- (1) The first chariot with its red horses represents the spiritual war in which the believer strives against evil, even to death (12: 4); By it He brings evil to perdition to the account of the edification of the inner kingdom.
- (2) The second chariot with its black horses is a sign of what the war will cause of death to the devil and of perdition to his evil works.

(3) The third chariot with its white horses, that follows the preceding chariot refers to the fact that the death of evil is life to the pure virtue. Or, according to St.

Dedymus the blind: [The black horses refer to the tools of God's wrath "*when evil is opened on all the inhabitants of the land* (Jeremiah 1: 14); followed by the white horses, a sign of joy after the temptation, that the believer would say: "*Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; When I fall, I will arise; When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case, and executes justice for me; He will bring me forth to the light; I will see His righteousness*" (Micah 7: 8, 9).

Benefitting by God's chastisements, he would sing praise, saying: "*O Lord, I will praise You, though You were angry with me; Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me*" (Isaiah 12: 1)

(4) The dappled horses, the strong steeds coming from the south, refer to the diverse fruition with which the soul flows inside through practicing repentance after the chastisement; when the bride says: "*Come O south wind! Blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out; Let my beloved come to His garden*" (Songs 4: 16)

Those four chariots with their horses which had the divine command: "*Go walk to and fro throughout the earth; so they walked to and fro throughout the earth And He called to me, and spoke to me, saying, 'See, those who go toward the north country have given rest to My Spirit in the north country*" (8, 9). In His love, God sets His chariots forth to work in the earth to realize His divine plan; and when the land of the north (Babylon) falls, the symbol of the devil under punishment, that gives rest to the Spirit of God toward His children. How amazing is God, who, having allowed for the land of the north to become a cruel tool of chastisement on them; His Spirit will have no comfort, and His Heart will have no rest until He sees His people return to comfort in the new Jerusalem, which bears diverse and a limitless abundance of fruition. While chastising, God hears our moaning; as though He, Himself, moans together with us, and will have no comfort until we find it in Him. In our interpretation of the book of Hosea we noticed the words uttered by God Himself who allows for the tribulation, say: "*My heart churns within Me;*

*My sympathy is stirred; I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; For I am God and not man; The Holy One in your midst; and I will not come with terror” (Hosea 11: 8, 9)*

## **2- THE VISION OF THE CORONATION OF JOSHUA:**

In the third chapter the divine command came to take the filthy garment off Joshua, to clothe him with rich robes and pure turban (3: 4, 5). This was a proclamation of our coronation in Him; For by the cross He tore off our sins and presented Himself to us as the secret of conquest and righteousness. While here, He crowns Joshua with a crown of silver and gold, and together with Him He crowns those returning from captivity. The goal of this vision is to show the coronation of the church whose members were before in captivity, then came to the new Jerusalem. So we can say that the first vision refers to the Lord Christ before ascension, when He was crowned on the cross, and the church was crowned in Him; The second vision was after ascension, when the church came to be crowned in Him, and Christ crowned in her. As according to St. Augustine, [the Lord Christ, before ascension worked in the name of the church hidden in Him and to her account; while after ascension He was hidden in her, to work to His account and in His name].

In this vision, it is noticed:

- (1) The name of Joshua was not mentioned among those returning from captivity; For He was crowned alone, being a symbol of our Lord Jesus Christ, who dwelt among us on our earth, without falling under the captivity of sin, and the devil had no place for him in Him. He conquered first; was crowned as the firstfruit of those who fell asleep, and was risen to His heavenly home, that by and in Him, we would enjoy the crown.
- (2) The Lord sought from the prophet Zechariah to take gold and silver from the captives – from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who have come from Babylon;

....and make an elaborate crown, and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Those gold and silver were previously confiscated by the enemy from the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, and carried together with the captives to be used to the account of Babylon; Now, with the return of the captives, the gold and silver are brought back to be used to the account of the house of the Lord, and to His glory. It is as though man, by being captivated by sin, all his carnal, mental, and physical energies would be directed to the account of evil; then, by returning to the bosom of God, he would put all those energies to be tools of righteousness for the glory of God.

(3) The names of men who were appointed to collect the gold and silver from the captives are:

- a- Heldai (or Kheldai), meaning (eternal); also called 'Helem' (14), meaning health and strength.
- b- Tobijah; meaning (God is good).
- c- Jedaiah; meaning (Jehovah knows); the head priest of those who returned from captivity (Nehemiah 12: 6).

So the three worked together to bring the silver and gold back to the Lord to become crowns of glory for the church in her one Groom – Joshua. In other words, if our silver and gold are not sanctified, let us look up toward eternity, or the everlasting eternal life, to grant us health to the soul and strength to the spirit, to set forth with all our energies to present as an offering to the Lord. The secret of sanctification of these energies, talents, and possibilities are God's goodness and compassion to receive us and our gifts as His children, so that we, in turn, would recognize Him and receive Him in us. In short, we are in need to perceive eternity, and to receive the Lord's compassion and knowledge.

(4) They brought the silver and gold into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah (10) before turning them into crowns. As the word 'Josiah' means (He who

saves), and the word 'Zephaniah' means (Jehovah hides or treasures), the sanctification of our energies should be realized in the house of (Him who saves), namely in the church, the temple of our Savior Lord, He who works in us secretly inside the heart, to treasure us as precious jewels fit for the eternal life. God does not care for the outer appearances that make us lose His splendor in us; but He wishes us to have the hidden glorified life, to be counted as precious treasures in His eyes.

(5) When the silver and gold are gathered together they become several crowns and not just one, all of which were put on the head of Joshua ..... It is as though every crown enjoyed by the believer is put upon the head of the Groom Himself. About the martyrs, the scholar Origen says that it is Jesus Christ who calls them to martyrdom, fights together with them; grants them the crown, and receives it in them. Transfiguring in His church, the Lord counts every crown as one for Him. According to St. Dedymus the blind: [Notice how it is possible for the Lord Christ the High Priest to put on His head the crowns of all; on account of that all believers represent the body of Christ and its members; being truly said to the congregation of the church: "*You are the body of Christ, and members individually*" (1 Corinthians 12: 27). Among these members are 'the feet' -- those who "*are not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*" (Romans 12: 11); others are the eyes; and those who ordain and execute -- representing the mind .....It is therefore reasonable for the head of the high priest to carry all those crowns.

According to another interpretation by St. Dedymus the blind of these multitude of crowns that are put on the head of our Lord Jesus Christ: [Meditate in how the Lord alone can take so many crowns, having fought all wars to the end, and "*was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*" (Hebrew 4: 15)



(6) Those crowns put upon the head of our Groom alone, He presents to us; granting each of us crowns of many virtues; according to St. Dedymus the blind: [It is not strange for several crowns to be put on one head; for every virtue has its own crown; or rather, every virtue is itself a crown; the perfect man, therefore possesses many crowns ..... and as the virtues are bound together, he who possesses them is adorned with many crowns.

(7) These crowns are made of silver and gold. Silver refers to the Word of God (Psalm 12: 6), and gold to the spirit or the heavenly life. To be worthy of these crowns, it is befitting of us to be prepared through the Word of God working in us, and the heavenly spiritual mind.

(8) The crown on our head in essence is our encounter with the Lord Himself; as it is written by the prophet Isaiah: *"In that day the Lord of hosts will be for a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty"* (Isaiah 28: 5); and according to St. Dedymus the blind: [The Lord Himself is the reward of glory, granted to those who glorified God in their bodies (1 Corinthians 6: 20); who have the spirit of submission to the doctrines of the church and the traditions of piety.

(9) In this vision, the Lord Christ is called: "the Man", "the branch", and "the East" at the same time.. According to the Septuagint version, it is written: *"Behold, the Man, whose name is the Branch; He is called 'The East'"* (12); which we have already discussed in the third chapter. On which St. Dedymus the blind comments: [So these titles concern our Savior who came to the world. He is the "Man being born by St. Mary. He is the true Light, and the Sun of Righteousness "the East". In conformity to this text, the prophet Jeremiah says: *"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will raise to David a branch of*

*righteousness; a king shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely. Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*” (Jeremiah 5, 6). Truly, He is “**the Branch**” of Righteousness who emerges from David ..... This Branch is the Sun of Righteousness raised from David according to the flesh (Romans 1: 3); and as said by the prophet Isaiah: “*And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious*” (Isaiah 11: 10) ..... “Behold, the Man .....”; Here, proclaiming about the Groom for whom is the bride, he calls Him “**the Man**”; which is also shown by the apostle when he wrote to the Corinthians, saying: “*I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*” (2 Corinthians 11: 2). To this “Man” St. John the Baptist testifies, saying: “*After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me*” (John 1: 30); he proclaimed this “Man” by saying: “*He who has the bride is the Bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice*” (John 3: 29). It is He whom the prophet calls “**the Branch**” from up high, a Branch of the true light, the Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4: 2), who gave light to those who sit in the darkness and the shadow of death Luke 1: 79), to scatter the darkness, and to uproot death, and to make us cross over to life (John 5: 24, and to become light in the Lord, as it is written: “*For you were once darkness, but now, you are light in the Lord*” (Ephesians 5: 8).

Commenting on calling Him “**The East**”, the scholar Origen says: [There are two kinds of East: a true East that gives us light; He who says: “*I am the Light of the world*”; and a deceitful East “*the light of the wicked which indeed goes out*” (Job 18: 5); and like the false light of the devil who appears like an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11: 4).

- (10) About the Lord Christ it is said: “*From His place He shall branch out*” (12). If, for our sake He became “The Branch”, He branches out to grant us the true

life; as said by the Psalmist: *"Truth shall spring out of the earth"* (Psalm 85: 11). He came to our earth, He, "the Truth" capable to carry us in Him, to raise us from the earth, and to set in us His heavenly house; hence he goes on to say: "He shall build the temple of the Lord"(12), and repeats it twice; on one aspect because the figure 2, as we previously said, refers to 'love'; for love lifts us up from earth and sets us a heavenly house and a living temple for Him; and on another aspect, He proclaims His work with the Jews, as well as with the Gentiles, to set both together.

- (11) In the temple He builds here, of the believers, whether of Jewish or of Gentile origin, He sits as a King and as a Priest at the same time; something that was not possible, neither in the temple of Solomon, nor in that rebuilt by Zerubbabel; for then, the kings were of the tribe of Judah, and the priests of the tribe of Levi. In the new temple the Lord dwells to reign on us and to become a priest to our account: *"He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on the throne. So He shall be a priest on His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both"* (13).. By His kingdom and priesthood, He will destroy the devil and grant peace to His people. According to St. Dedymus the blind: {It is a double throne: of the kingdom and of priesthood ..... as it came in the book of proverbs: *"A King who sits on the throne of judgment, scatters all evil with His eyes"* (20: 8).; and, *"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom"* (Psalm 45: 6; Hebrew 1: 8).; and, *"The Lord sat enthroned"* (Psalm 29: 10). As to the throne of priesthood, it came in the epistle to the Hebrews: *"For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is wholly harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"* (7: 26); and, *"Let us therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"* (Hebrew 4: 16). What he calls "the throne of grace" is the throne of the Holy, Righteous and undefiled Priest. He therefore means that He takes the throne of His father David to reign forever, *"and of His kingdom there will be no end"* (Luke 1: 33); At the same time, *"His priesthood continues forever"* (Hebrew 7: 24). He will be the only One who has both thrones of the kingdom and the priesthood\.

- (12) Speaking of the crowns enjoyed by those rulers he says that they *“shall be a memorial in the temple of the Lord”* (14); and according to the Septuagint version: *“they acquire praise in the temple of the Lord”*. *For the conquest by our Lord Jesus Christ will produce in us the nature of inner praise, and the spirit of joy; to turn our whole life into a praise. According to St. Dedymus the blind: [The teachings of good works present a praise we sing; and bring to our mind enjoyable thoughts, as though music played on a harp and a cymbal. We play on the harp through receiving the teachings of “putting to death our members which are on earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3: 5); “always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus” 2 Corinthians 4: 10), through which man would be like a cymbal made of the skin of dead animals, on which the five wise virgins, who carry lighted lamps play; according to the psalm, saying: “The singers were ahead, the players on instruments followed after. Among them were the maiden playing timbrels” (Psalm 68: 25); the timbrels used by the Hebrew women after the exodus from Egypt and crossing over the Red Sea, led by Miriam, sister of Moses and Aaron. Having been impossible in such a desert for thousands of Hebrew women to find enough timbrels; it is most probable that they found symbolic timbrels; namely the practice of piety along a number of years]*
- (13) Building His new temple, the Lord opens the door of work before all; saying: *“Even those from afar shall come and build the temple of the Lord”* (15), referring to the Gentiles who, after being afar and foreigners, by their new life in the Lord, they became a new building in the new temple.. And as it came in Isaiah: *“The sons of foreigners shall build up your walls; their kings shall minister to you; ..... your gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day and night; that men may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles, , and their kings in procession”* (Isaiah 60: 10).

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# CHAPTER 7

## A LESSON ABOUT FASTING

The work of rebuilding the temple was going on very well; and the people of Bethel sent messengers to inquire from the priests whether they should keep practicing the fasts for which they have committed themselves because of the captivity.

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### 1- THE INQUIRY OF THE PEOPLE OF BETHEL:

In the fourth year of king Darius, namely in the year 518 B.C., when the work to rebuild the temple was going well and steady, which was apparent in the disappearance of the signs of desolation from Jerusalem, the people of Bethel sent delegates: Sherezer, with Regem-Melech and his men to inquire from the priests who were in the house of the Lord and the prophets, whether, after the appearance of the new life, there is still need for practicing the fasting and weeping in the fifth month (the tenth day), as a memorial of the burning of the house of the Lord (Jeremiah 52: 12, 13; 2 kings 25: 8 -10); as they have done for so many years; or they may stop it? ..... As this question bore two painful portraits: that fasting represented a burden on their life they would rather get rid of; and that it was a goal in itself, not practiced with the spirit of inner repentance and true change; for which the response from God, on one aspect, came bearing rebuke, and on another aspect, revealing the true spiritual concept of fasting.

### 2- FASTING WITHOUT SPIRIT:

As the question came bearing the sign of grumbling on their part concerning the fasting, as well as a kind of hypocrisy; the Lord's response came that He is in no need of their fasting. Having committed themselves, by themselves, to fast, it would be their right to stop doing it without question. Yet, it was befitting of them to practice it with a true spirit, and if they decide to stop it, to rejoice in God's work to them. In other words, whether they fasted or ate, they have not presented offering of love to God, but all what they did were outer appearances; That is what He meant by rebuking them, saying: *"The word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying:..... Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me – for Me? When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink for yourselves?"* (5, 6)

They asked about the fasting in the fifth month, and He answered them, as well, about that of the seventh month, which they set as a memorial of the murder of Gedaliah, governor of Judah, that caused the scattering of the rest of the Jews after the captivation (Jeremiah 41: 1-3); and confirmed to them that those two fasts, and others, like that of the tenth month, the memorial of the first siege on Jerusalem. and the fast of the fourth month, a memorial of taking the city over in the days of Zedekiah (Jeremiah 39: 2; 52: 6, 7); as though He says to them: I am aware of all your fasts along the generations; but I do not seek the multitude of fasts, but their quality. You practiced them without the counsel of God, nor in obedience of His commandments, but only to calm down your consciences.

According to them, fasting was just abstaining from eating, and not from practicing evil, and for the enjoyment of righteousness; hence St. Dedymus the blind says: [we are committed to control our bellies with the bonds of metanoias together with tears. How destructive would it be for man to abstain from the enjoyment of the bread of life (John 6: 35); namely of the body of Christ, the true bread that comes down from heaven]. He then discerns between two kinds of fasts, quoting a testimony from the Holy Book, saying: [Concerning the good fast, it came in Joel: *"Consecrate a fast; call a sacred assembly"*(Joel 1: 14, 2: 15); and, *"Good is prayer with fasting and giving alms, for they save from death"* (Tobit 12: 8, 9). Whereas concerning the bad fast, we find the wicked accuse the Lord, saying: *"Why have we fasted, they say, and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?"* (Isaiah 58: 3); To which the Lord answers them, saying: *"Is it a fast that I have chosen?"* (Isaiah 58: 5). Beside abstaining from food, man is committed to double his good deeds; as according to the Holy Book: *"Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning; your healing shall spring forth speedily"* (Isaiah 58: 7, 8).

### 3- FASTING WORKING WITH REPENTANCE:

The Lord confirms to them that His talk about fast after the seventy years of humiliation, is the same He said to them through the prophets before the captivation; that He does not seek neither fasting nor eating and or drinking (feasts), as a goal in themselves ....., saying: *"Should you not have obeyed the words which the Lord proclaimed through the former prophets, when Jerusalem and the cities around it were inhabited and prosperous, and the South and the lowland were inhabited?"* (7). The word of God does not change in the time of anguish or that of prosperity; for He seeks the holy life, and therefore He would receive their fast and feasts; and smells their worship as sweet fragrance. Not separating between the spiritual conduct and the spiritual worship, God seeks the following from them:

- (1) ***“Execute true justice”*** (9). If we offer the fast to enjoy the mercies of God, it is not befitting of us to execute oppression on our brethren; lest we would hear the words of the Lord: *“How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked. Defend the poor and fatherless. Do justice to the afflicted and needy”* (Psalm 85: 2, 3). So has Habakkuk cried out to the Lord, saying: *“Plundering and violence are before me. There is strife, and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore perverse judgment proceeds”* Habakkuk 1: 3, 4)

He started by the execution of true justice; namely, he started by addressing His talk to the spiritual rulers; for it is befitting of them, before setting fast or stopping it, and celebrating a joyful feast, to revise their accounts in their practical life: Do they execute justice, so that God would listen to them and receive their counsel; or they practice oppression, that they would not have benefit of their fast and feasts. I wish they would rather hold fast to justice and truth, heed the words of St. Jerome, on the tongue of the Lord, saying: [I gave you authority over my herd, on the people of God; Be judges, and not wolves].

- (2) ***“Execute true justice. Show mercy and compassion, everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother”*** (9, 10).; Together with the commitment to justice and truth, man should also be committed to mercy and compassion, everyone to his brother. It is befitting of us to bear the Spirit of our crucified Lord Jesus Christ, who proclaimed on the cross that both justice and mercy embraced one another; Fulfilling the divine debt on our behalf, He proclaimed His justice and mercy without contradiction. For God to smell our worship, including fast and feasts, as sweet fragrance, it is befitting of us to walk by the spirit of truth without slothfulness, and with the spirit of love and mercy, without cruelty or arrogance.

Presenting to us an example of good discretion, St. Jerome says: [The wicked carries out diverse acts as though on the stage of our life. When he is hungry he puts on the mask of a lion to devour; and when he intends to take the possessions of others by force, he puts on the mask of a wolf; and when he intends to kill, he puts on the mask of a murderer, etc. So it is with the righteous, it is befitting of them to have diverse masks. albeit good. Whenever I intend to give alms, I put on the mask of compassion; and when I intend to execute true justice, I put on the mask of the good judge; and when I endure harm with humility, I put on the mask of the humble. With the same line of thought, I say that in life, we carry out diverse and short acts. I wear our Lord Jesus in me, to be the mask of truth when I judge; the mask of true fatherhood when I deal with the fatherless; and the mask of compassionate love, when I deal with the poor, etc.,

If we intend to practice this kind of fast, acceptable to God, or to celebrate a feast joyful to Him; let us care for our brethren, particularly the widow, the fatherless, the stranger, and the poor; let us bear love without hatred in our hearts even toward those who afflict us.

Presenting to us spiritual concepts of the widow, the fatherless, the stranger, and the poor, St. Dedymus the blind says: [The contended widow is she who has lost her wicked man, namely the devil, to seek her true Groom, our Lord Jesus. The good fatherless is he who lost his father who begat him in sin, listening to the voice: *“Forget your own people, and your father’s house”* (Psalm 45: 10), to have the Lord Himself, a Father, to lead him up high. The Lord is described as *“He relieves the fatherless and the widow”* (Psalm 146: 9); and *“A father of the fatherless, a defender of the widow”* (Psalm 68: 5). He also cares for the stranger, he who has forsaken the idol-worship, his old dwelling place, to head toward the higher Jerusalem; And cares as well for the poor, he who has forsaken everything, counting them as trash, to acquire Christ.

I wish we, therefore set forth together with that holy congregation: the souls who were widowed to win the heavenly Groom; became fatherless to receive God a Father; became strangers to set forth to the heavenly places; and became poor to acquire the precious pearl of high price.

- (3) ***“Let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother”*** (10). According to St. Dedymus the blind: [After that teaching concerning not oppressing those who are denied care and protection, the Holy Book strongly confirms that it is befitting of us to forget the insults directed to us, not only by words, but from the depth of the heart .....which conforms to the words of the Savior in the gospel: *“For if you forgive me their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you”* (Matthew 6: 14)

The Lord Christ presented to us the parable of the servant who owed him ten thousand talents (Matthew 18: 23-35); Moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt, it was befitting of him to forgive his brother; but having not forgiven him, he lost his master’s grace. Commenting on it, the Lord says: *“So My heavenly Father also will do to you, if each of you, from his heart does not forgive his brother his trespasses”* (Matthew 18: 35)

- (4) Obedience to the commandment and the voice of the Lord, saying: *“But they refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears, so that they could not hear. Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from the Lord of hosts”* (11, 12). This is in short their whole evil: “The stubbornness of the inner heart”, that closes shut the door of the Lord’s mercies in their faces, to fall under His wrath.

Concerning heeding the law or the commandment, St. Dedymus the blind says: [The Lord who gave them the law commanded them saying: *“Give ear, O My people to My law; incline your ears to the words of My mouth”* (Psalm 78: 1); *“meditate day and night in the law of the Lord”* (Psalm 1: 2); and, *“These words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates”* (Deuteronomy 6: 6-8). By our obedience to the commandments given to us, we shall be

counted as faithful listeners to the law. How could he not be, he who keep the holy words in his heart and soul, to talk of them in his house, as well as on the way; while awake, and during his sleep?! ..... In his sleep he would say to God who knows everything: *"When I remember you on my bed, I meditate on you in the night watches"* (Psalm 63: 6); ..... he utter the same thing when he wakes up, and dares to say: *"O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You"* (Psalm 63: 1); ..... and with the same longing, he says together with the prophet Isaiah: *"With my soul I have desired You in the night"* (Isaiah 26: 9).

He who does not heed the law would have "shrugged shoulder"; namely, stubbornly gives his back to the law; and as St. Dedymus the blind says: [This happens when we are planted in evil, to be worthy of the rebuke of the psalm, saying: *"What right have you to declare My statutes, or take My covenant in your mouth; seeing you hate instruction, and cast My words behind you?"* (Psalm 50: 16, 17). He who gives his back to the words of God, senselessly disregards Him; .....By not keeping the law, he foolishly dishonors the Lord, the Giver of the law; as according to the apostle: *"You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?"* (Romans 2: 23); *"They have turned their back to Me, and not their faces"* Jeremiah 2: 27)., when, on the contrary, they should have given to the Creator of everything, the face; saying: *"Unto You, I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens"* (Psalm 23: 1); and, *"My eyes are ever toward the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net"* (Psalm 25: 15).

He who does not heed the law would have impaired sense of hearing (by the ear of the soul, and not of the body), the fruit of which, according to St. Dedymus, is the "Shrugged shoulder"; It is written: *"The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf cobra that stops its ear, which will not heed the voice of the charmers, charming ever so skillfully"* (58: 3-6). How could he not be stubborn and deaf, he who stops his ears, he who, from the time he is born is a stranger from the Lord, speaks lies even while still in the womb?! This could symbolically apply to those who, since they were born, became strangers to the church, their mother; those who distanced themselves from her, stopped their ears like a cobra, and turned their energy to do evil, by spitting poison].

According to St. Dedymus the blind: [Testifying about those heavy ears of the soul, the prophet Isaiah says: *"Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy; and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their heart, and return and be healed"* (Isaiah 6: 10). Having pleasure in the whirlpool of their evil, which they have chosen for themselves, their ears became heavy, their eyes became shut, and their hearts became dull; so that they could not endure to hear any talk concerning the virtue and the knowledge of truth, which could make them virtuous, and bring them back to Him from whom they are estranged; who can heal them of their impairments.

In the talk before us there is a confirmation of the human freedom; With their complete free will they refused to listen, and made their ears heavy, etc.... something confirmed by the Holy Book with its two testaments.

- (5) God pays their refusal to listen, back with his refusal to listen to them; saying- *"Thus great wrath came from the Lord of hosts. Therefore it happened that, just as He proclaimed and they would not hear, so they called out and I would not listen, says the Lord of hosts. But I scattered them with a whirlpool among all the nations which they had not known. Thus the land became desolate after them, so that no one passed through or returned, for they made the pleasant land desolate"* (12 -14)..

In His love, God threatens to bring forth His wrath. Yet when we cry out to Him: *"Do not be furious, O Lord"* (Isaiah 64: 9); *"Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?"* (Psalm 85: 5), we shall find grace in His eyes. In His wrath, according to St. Dedymus the blind, God does not avenge Himself, but punishes to make us virtuous; to put an end to sin, as a disease or wounds that afflicted us; for: *"He desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2: 4). God's anger reveals His care for our salvation; hence He says: *"When My anger comes on him, I shall heal him anew"*. Then, the one healed from his wounds would say: *"O Lord. I will praise You; Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me"* (Isaiah 12: 1). According to St. Dedymus [God's anger, bringing forth with it a harvest of goodness, is not evil, but is necessary; for it is the work of the Physician of spirits, who *"heals all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people"* (Matthew 4: 23) ..... as a clever and wise Physician who does good, he sometimes uses painful and abhorrent ways.

He chastises them, proclaiming: *"I scatter them with a whirlwind among all the nations which they had not known"* (14). Even though He did not scatter them at that time among all nations, but allowed for them to be captivated by Assyria and Babylon, two nations well known by them; it indicates that this threat bore a clear prophecy of what will come upon them through their rejection of the Lord Christ, to be scattered all over the world, among nations they had not known.

What are these nations under which man falls through refusing faith in God, but the diverse evils according to the Book: *"God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts to dishonor their bodies among themselves"* (Romans 1: 24); *"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting"* (Romans 1: 28). By refusal to know God, His grace would forsake them, to fall under sins, and to be said about them that they: *"are filled with all unrighteousness"* (Romans 1: 29). Those are the nations, foreign to the nature God created man according to His likeness.

Because of stubbornness, the pleasant land became desolate, with no one passing through nor returning; So it is with sin, the Body (the land) will be corrupted, and man's life would turn into a life of mourning and bareness; would lose the inner peace, the gladness of the heart, and the spiritual fruition.

# CHAPTER 8

## FASTS TURN INTO FEASTS

After providing them with a bitter lesson from their actual history, that reveals the hardness of their fathers' hearts; He came back to confirm to them the fervor with which He is jealous for Jerusalem – His bride. If He allowed for her to pass through a cruel chastisement, to live in bitterness; yet He intends to turn her mourning into joy, and her fasts into feasts; to bless her, and to set her a blessing for nations. He, therefore turns the inquiry addressed by the people of Bethel concerning the fasts, to the positive aspect: the revelation of God's love for them, and the realization of His mission by dwelling among them, as the secret of their inner joy.

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### 1- GOD'S JEALOUSY ON ZION:

While inquiring about the fasts to which they committed themselves because of the captivation; God brings them forth to His depths, to reveal the fervor of His love for them; It is as though He answers their question by saying: [I am a jealous God who loves you; You should get in touch with my fiery love, to become, yourselves as well, a burning fire that the events could not quench.

The heavenly Groom proclaims His jealousy on His people returning from captivity, which was a chastisement because of their spiritual adultery and perversion.: *"I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; with great fervor I am zealous for her..... I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called 'The City of Truth', 'The Mountain of the Lord of hosts', 'The Holy Mountain'"* (2, 3):

God confirms His zeal for her, even though He chastised her for some time. According to St. Dedymus the blind: [That is what the Almighty God says: I loved Jerusalem or Zion; I shall remember her after I has rejected and driven her away, to become despised by the foreigners; My love for her is great].

He is the jealous Groom who longs for the return of His bride to the house of matrimony. Yes indeed, she despised Him and committed adultery behind His back (Jeremiah 3: 2); but having entered into tribulation, perceived her fault, and said: *"I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better for me than now"* (Hosea 2: 7). it is amazing that her first husband will not reject her, nor even admonish her on her past, but in His love he humbly says: *"Zion came back to Me"*; proclaiming His longing to dwell in her midst. And instead of the desolation that came upon her, He will make her 'The City of the truth'; and instead of the low pit into which she rolled down, He will make her "His Holy Mountain'.

According to St. Dedymus the blind: [She will be called anew 'The City of the Truth'; She will no longer be a desolate wilderness, but a city densely populated, with the temple, many high houses, ways, and roads .....From the spiritual aspect, Jerusalem represents the soul that meditates in the unseen eternal things (for the word "Jerusalem" means 'The vision of Peace'; The soul would see peace through the mutual conformity between the virtuous life and the divine love. On her side, being burnt with God's flame of love, she returns to Him; and on God's side, He returns to her, listen to her supplications, and grants her requests; she therefore will not cease praying to Him .....She will be called 'The city of the Truth', for she walks according to the truth, which she discovers under the shadow of the law; and on account of that she searches the divine books (John 5: 39; 2 timothy 3: 16), to enjoy the Truth].

That is the work of the jealous Groom; He enters into our heart to make it the city of Jerusalem, 'The City of the Truth'; to enjoy the vision of peace between our souls and God; to enter into the depths of the evangelic Truth; and would not stop at the shadows and the symbols of the law.

He also makes us 'His Holy Mountain'; and according to the psalm: *"Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion"* (Psalm 125: 1); He raises us up after our set back, so that, by His Holy Spirit we would reach high up, abiding in Him like a mountain that the tempests of the world, nor the deception of the devil, would not be able to shake us.

### 2- THE DWELLING OF THE BLESSING AND PEACE:

It is as though God says to His people: [Now, there is what is more important than to inquire whether you fast or stop the fast to which you committed yourselves because of the captivation; which is to perceive your new status, after I set you as the new Jerusalem, 'the City of the Truth', "the new Mount Zion", and "My Holy Mountain'..... Meditate in My gifts and grace, and hold fast to them. If you with mourning fast or you joyfully celebrate a feast, let it be with the goal, that I dwell in your midst, that my blessing dwells upon you, and you enjoy my exalted peace. God reveals the blessings of His dwelling in us by saying:



- (1) ***"Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem; each one with his staff in his hand, because of great age"*** (4).<sup>n</sup> On the literal aspect, as God dwells in their midst, they come to be filled with good days, peace dwells in them, death will not surprise them in their youth, but will live until old age, full of health, will come down to the city market to buy their needs, each with his staff in his hand. Whereas on the symbolic aspect, the city markets where the old men and women sit are the abundance of wisdom that flows as a river that make glad the city of God (Psalm 46: 4); to which all could come down to drink, or goes down to the markets to acquire. According to the wise Solomon: *"Wisdom calls aloud outside; She raises her voice in the open squares"* (Proverbs 1: 20). This wisdom is the Person of the Lord Christ, who came down from heaven, to us like a servant, for all to acquire inside him and enjoy Him; about whom the bride says: *"By night on my bed I sought the one I love; I sought Him but I did not find Him. I will rise now, I said, and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek the one I love"* (Songs 3: 1). As her heart kindles with longing for her Groom "the Wisdom herself", she seeks Him and does not find Him beside her, she gets up with repentance from her bed, enters the church (the Holy City), go about the streets and the squares, to find Him transfigured, to give Himself to whoever seeks Him.
- (2) ***"The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets"*** (5). Which refers to that peace dwelt on all, and there was no anticipation of war that would take away the joy from the old and the young. In his description of the Messianic era, Isaiah says: *"I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people. The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old"* (Isaiah 65: 19, 20).

Together with the old men and women there will also be little boys and girls playing; namely, the simple ones who live in the Lord in a state of infancy with no worries. It is as though the market places of the church will embrace the wisdom of the elderlies together with the simplicity of the infants; according to the words of the Lord to His disciples: *"Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves"* (Matthew 10: 16); and as according to St. Jerome: [Be harmless like a dove, do not put a snare before anyone; and be wise (clever) as a serpent, and do not allow anyone to put a snare before you].

Presenting to us a magnificent interpretation of those little harmless ones, playing in the markets of the church, namely the Holy City, St. Dedymus the blind says: [There are, as well, little boys and girls playing a commendable game, which was played by David, the man according to the Lord's heart (Acts 13: 22; 1 Samuel 13: 14), realizing the will of Him who chose him, trustingly proclaiming: *"I will play music before the Lord"* (1 Samuel 6: 21). We can say that the little children who play in the public places (the markets) of the glorious city of God are those who dedicated themselves since childhood to the Lord; and *"in all things showing themselves to be a pattern of good works, in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you"* (Titus 2: 7, 8)

In our interpretation of the book of Exodus, we saw how the boys refer to the soul, while the girls refer to the body; When man is wholly consecrated, he brings forth fruition of both the soul and the body; with no more contradiction between them, but they work together by the Holy Spirit; the fruition come as boys and girls playing together in the market places of the holy city in an unutterable glorious joy.

Finally, the market places of the city embrace old men, old women, boys, and girls; namely men and women, old and young; as according to St. Dedymus the blind: [All have become one choir who sing one song of praise with one heart. And as according to the psalm: *"Both young men and maidens, old men and children, let them praise the name of the Lord"* (Psalm 148: 12, 13). Mentioning the old men, he did not disregard the role played by the wise old women in the church. And as the church rejoices in the wisdom of the old men and women, she also rejoices in the conquest of the young; the apostle says: *"I write to you young men because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you"* (1 John 2: 14).

Such divine work in the life of all the members of the church may seem impossible; the prophet says: *"Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnants of this people in these days, will it also be marvelous in My eyes?'"* (6). *If the enemy has completely destroyed Jerusalem, that it seems in the eyes of all impossible for joy to return to her; but not in the eyes of God; with whom every thing is possible"* (Matthew 19: 26); He is capable to restore to her, her glory and joy through dwelling in her.

- (3) ***"Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Behold, I will save My people from the land of the east, and from the land of the west; I will bring them back, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and righteousness'"*** 7, 8).

The new Jerusalem does not embrace one choir of old men and women, boys and girls, but embraces one people for the Lord from the east and the west; for the door of salvation is open before all nations, for all to become one in the Lord. This is the greatest blessing of the dwelling of God in our midst. According to St. Dedymus the blind: [So the Lord of hosts said: Behold I will save My people from the land of the east to the land of the west; not only those circumcised, but those from all nations who come to have faith in the Lord proclaimed in the gospel. In the old, the people of God were truly one nation of Hebrews, according to the testimony of Moses: *"When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations; when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples, according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance"* (Deuteronomy 32: 8, 9). And it is written: *"In that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner for the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him; and His resting place shall be glorious"* Isaiah 11: 10; Romans 15: 12) ....; *"Rejoice, O Gentiles with His people"* (Deuteronomy 32: 43). The people are not anymore the Hebrews alone, but with them those who worship and serve the Lord, according to the psalm: *"All nations shall serve Him"* (Psalm 72: 11); and, *"All nations whom You have made, shall come and worship before You, O Lord"* (Psalm 86: 9); and, *"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the*

*families of the nations shall worship before You; for the kingdom is the Lord's, and He rules over the nations"* (Psalm 22: 27, 28) .... The gospel proclaims the unity of men from every nation mentioned by the words of the Savior: *"Many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 8: 11). This call is addressed to the whole world; to be added to what is said: *"The Mighty One, God the Lord, has spoken and called the earth, from the rising of the sun to its going down"* (Psalm 50: 1)..... When has the Mighty One spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down? When He forsook the circumcised people, for their denial of the Savior, the King of kings, saying: *"We have no king but Caesar"* (John 19: 15); and, *"His blood be on us and on our children"* (Matthew 27: 25). By crucifying the Lord Christ, they had fallen, the worship of the letter came to an end, and the Lord could say to them: *"I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts; nor will I accept an offering from your hands. For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles. In every place incense shall be offered to My name, and a pure offering; for My name shall be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts"*(Malachi 1: 10, 11)].

So will God bring humanity back from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, to become one people for Him by truth and righteousness. What we say about humanity, we say about man; whom God will keep from every right-hand strike (of the east), and every left-hand strike (of the west); namely from falling into apparent sins, and from self-righteousness; to come to be wholly for the Lord, enjoying the truth and righteousness in Christ Jesus.

- (4) Gathered together from all nations by one heart, the people of God will have the strong hands that, by the Lord, could build the temple: *"Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Let your hands be strong, you who have been hearing in these days, these words by the mouths of the prophets, who spoke in the days of the foundation was laid for the house of the Lord of hosts, that the temple might be built"*(9) . According to St. Dedymus the blind: [The Almighty God counsels that all hands dedicated to Him should be strong; ... by translating the spiritual teachings to true work; and to bind the words to work; so that those who hear the law would not be just listeners, but turn the listening into fruition in their work]

If we have heard from the mouths of the prophets about the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts; namely about the divine incarnation; for the Lord calls His body "a temple"; this incarnation grants our hands strength to work by Him; to turn the divine commandment in our life into lived practical life. God set this body; as is written: *"Wisdom has built her house"* (Proverb 9: 1); and God came to dwell in our midst, granting us His heavenly possibilities to work to the account of His kingdom. According to St. Dedymus the blind: [How could the hands of those who listen to the words of the prophets not be strong, when He is born by a Virgin, He, who is fitting to be called "Immanuel", namely, (God is with us)? (Isaiah 7: 14). In truth, if God is with us, our hands would be strong, and we would be able to joyfully sing: *"The Lord of hosts is with us; the Lord of Jacob is our refuge"* (Psalm 46: 11)..... He grants us exalted strength beyond nature].

Let our hands, therefore, be strong; and let the words of God in us turn into a life; for the Word has set for Himself a house by His incarnation; granting us strength to work. He made of us holy living stones to build His holy temple; saying: *"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our home with him"* John 14: 23). He will make us,, a dwelling place for Himself, or a holy temple set upon Him as the cornerstone, according to the words of the apostle: *"having been built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone"* (Ephesians 2: 20).

- (5) Our encounter of the incarnate God, and His dwelling in our midst, not only strengthened our hands by His divine possibilities working in us, but has cut off the spirit of despair in us, and kindled our depths with hope. For the work not only needs strong hands, strife, and persistence; but it also needs a spirit full of hope in the Lord; for which he says: *"For before these days, there were no wages for man nor any hire for beast. There were no peace from the enemy for whoever went out or came in. For I set all men, everyone against his neighbor"* (10); He surrounded them with so much anguish, that man, as well as beast are worthless; even if he does a good work, it will be for no wages. Jerusalem was as desolate as wilderness, governed by foreigners; and all efforts by man is as well as by beast, in his coming in or going out, are worthless; which turned their life into an unbearable hell; that made everyone turn against his neighbor for no cause. In other words, instead of everyone working together with his neighbor to build the house of the Lord, everyone, feeling humiliation, complete loss, and inner controversy, turned to oppress his neighbors.

On the spiritual aspect, without encountering His Savior who set His holy temple, man would be like an animal, works with no understanding nor wisdom; and, therefore, does not deserve a wage. According to St. Dedymus the blind: [Rebuking such men, the Holy Book says: *"Do not be like the horse, or like the mule, which have no understanding"* (Psalm 32: 9). Indeed, how could there be wages for someone who does everything with no understanding nor wisdom?].

This is a bitter portrait of humanity out of the work of God; she goes out to work, then enters to give an account, to find herself in void, with no fruition, and does not deserve wages; for everyone was preoccupied with oppressing his neighbor; as according to the Holy Book: *"With flattering lips, their tongue speaks proud things"* (Psalm 12: 3); and according to the Prophet Jeremiah: *"Everyone will deceive his neighbor, and will not speak the truth; they have taught their tongues to speak lies. They weary themselves to commit iniquity"* (Jeremiah 9: 5). But through the new covenant, Jerusalem is set on the true peace, brings forth increasing fruition; and the labor of man and beast would not be without wages the way it has been. The prophet says: *"But now, I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days, says the Lord of hosts. 'For the seeds shall be prosperous; the vine shall give its fruit; the ground shall give her increase; and the heaven shall give her dew – I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these"* (11).. What a joyful portrait: after man was working with no understanding like an animal, and deserved no wages, as the soul (man) loses her fruition, and the body (the animal) loses its sanctity; and each of them oppresses the other; Now, having the Lord dwell in him, his soul will not only enjoy wages, but so will his body; there will be spiritual harmony between them, and he will have exalted spiritual fruition; and the earth, as well as heaven will work to his account in the Lord. As the Lord return to dwell in him, and sets His

kingdom inside his heart, there will appear peace planted by the Father Himself by His Holy Spirit; so will the fruition of the Holy Spirit, being the fruition of the true vine; the earth (the body) will give forth its increase; for the body would carry a special sanctity, and become a tool of righteousness to the account of the Lord; and the heavens (the soul) will give her due, being filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit. All this God will grant to the soul that receives Him.

According to St. Dedymus the blind: [That splendid reform has been realized in a spiritual way when He came, who said: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me, to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty those who are oppressed"* (Luke 4: 18)..... It is written: In His days, righteousness and peace will abound; His peace will be boundless; will not be for one nation, but for the whole earth that submit to Him who said to His disciples, and to those who intend to minister to Him: *"My peace I give to you"* John 14: 27), to enjoy a great tranquility that prevails on it; the vine gives its fruits, the land its increase, and heaven her dew. The vine which gives its fruits, is the spiritual meditations in the truth ..... And the land its increase; as the seeds planted by Jesus yield a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty (Matthew 13- 8, 23)..... The land gives its increase to "those who sow it in tears, perspiration, and sorrow, to reap in joy; *he who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seeds for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him"* (Psalm 126: 5, 6). This abundant harvest is spiritual concerning the divine words; as the prophet Hosea counseled: *"Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you"* (Hosea 10: 12. *Heaven gives her dew"*; We shall understand the dew when we know heaven that gives it. Heaven, doubtless, is nothing but him who carries the image of the heavenly Man (1 Corinthians 15: 49), having his citizenship in heaven (Philippians 3: 20). About those who show the portrait of the heavenly Savior, it is said: *"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork"* (Psalm 19: 1); and on them it came in the great song in the book of Deuteronomy: *"Rejoice, O heaven with Him"* (Deuteronomy 32: 43); namely with the Savior. How could they not rejoice and exult with Him, having been created in His image, according to the words of the apostle: *"conformed to the image of His Son"* (Romans 8: 29); and also: *"as we shall bear the image of the heavenly Man"* (1 Corinthians 15: 49). It is befitting of us to say that by being united together in one heaven, they give the heavenly dew; Yet each of them gives his own dew; like Moses who said: *"Let my teaching drop as the rain; my speech distill as the dew"* (Deuteronomy 32: 2).

- (6) Getting these blessings by the dwelling of God in his heart, the believe comes to be heaven that gives her dew. He will no longer be a curse for himself, nor to others, but will be blessing .....; which we shall deal with in the interpretation at the end of this chapter (verses 20 – 23).

### 3- REMINDING THEM OF THE COMMANDMENT:

In the midst of those blessings that dwell in their life by the dwelling of the Lord in them, something that may seem impossible (9); he appeals to them to hold fast to the divine commandment, lest they would fall under His wrath like their fathers: *"These are the things you shall do: Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; give judgment in your gates for truth, justice and peace. Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; and do not love a false oath, for all these are things that I hate", says the Lord"* (16, 17).

Now, as He rebuilds the temple, and renews Jerusalem, His holy city; He intends to have his work founded upon truth melded with righteousness; namely, set upon the practical truth in the life of His children. And here, in His commandments, we notice:

- (1) He starts it by our relationship with our brethren in the Lord, as speaking the truth to them; judging by justice and peace, etc..... and ends it by a commandment concerning our relationship with Him, namely "the false oath". God intends for our inner Jerusalem to be set upon the true relationship of practical love with our brethren, yet in the Lord.
- (2) He starts by speaking about "The truth", which is the true foundation of the building. .... Now, what is this truth which we speak to our neighbors, and judge by it, but the transfiguration of the Lord Christ Himself in our talk, as well as in our deeds; for He proclaimed Himself as "The Truth". Such truth is not preached only by words, but is strongly proclaimed through the practical deeds in the life of the shepherds, as well as in that of their flocks.

According to St. Dedymus the blind: The Lord starts His talk concerning the spiritual leaders, who should proclaim "the Truth", not just by the theoretical mental knowledge, but through virtuous life, and practical behavior, as well. Of his words by which he commented on this divine phrase: [It is befitting of us to listen to the word of Jesus and practice them, the way He Himself counseled, saying: *"Whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man"* (Matthew 7: 24).

[Let our works proclaim the spiritual teachings we present; for by this, we come to be *"workers who do not need to be ashamed"* (2 Timothy 2: 15). By such way of thinking, the apostle writes to his disciple, to *"show himself to be a pattern of good works, in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility; sound speech that cannot be condemned"* (Titus 2: 7, 8). What is this sound speech that cannot be condemned, but to practice what we counsel the others, concerning faith?].

So have the church fathers confirmed the necessity of proclaiming the truth by the practical life; and by showing it in the daily behavior. For according to St.. John Chrysostom- [He who ordains the others is committed to be more splendid than any star in heaven; to have a blameless life; and to be a role model for all].

- (3) He goes on to say: *"Give judgment in your gates, for truth, justice, and peace"* (16)..... If "truth" is the foundation on which the new city is built, it is befitting to mix the truth with peace. The heavenly truth opens the heart by love to be wide enough to endure the others, to be, if possible, on peace terms with all men.

On the expression "in your gates", St. Dedymus the blind comments saying: [The courts of justice based on truth mixed with peace were set at the gates of the city to separate those worthy to enter from those denied. It means that peace does not mean compliment at the expense of the truth, or slothfulness to evil; but, while the heart widens with love, nothing unclean or defiled would enter the city.

Let us then, love everyone, and open our hearts with peace with all; .....Let us not open our inner hearts to evil and sins as a compliment to others.

- (4) *"Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor";* meaning to have the inner forgetfulness of every harm done by our neighbor against us; or not to misjudge his deeds; the way the righteous Joseph gave as a living example of this virtue; as, while prudently, he perceived what his brothers have done against him, but, in his heart he sees what is beyond their deed; namely the hand of God working for his and their salvation; hence, with a heart wide with love he said to them: *"You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive"* (Genesis 50: 20)

When man perceives the divine purposes, he would have comfort in everything, and his heart would become wide with peace even toward his adversaries, and will not pay evil back with evil, but with love.

- (5) Finally he asks them not to love the false oath hated by God; having commanded us: *"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain"* (Exodus 20: 7)

#### 4- FASTS TURN INTO FEASTS:

*"Thus says the Lord of hosts: The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be joy and gladness and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah. Therefore love truth and peace"* (17, 18). Their past life was characterized by fasting and mourning because of what dwelt upon them of chastisements because of their sins. But now, as God dwells in their midst and proclaims His dwelling in their hearts, He turns their hearts to joy and their life to unceasing feast. So it is with the true Christian in the midst of his fasts and sufferings, perceiving the dwelling of God in him, will always have an inner joy, and will always celebrate feasts.

In the last chapter we said that fasting is not refrainment from food, but from doing evil, together with an enjoyment of the Lord Christ the Bread of life. This is concerning the spiritual fasts; but concerning the feast, according to St. Athanasius the apostolic: [Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Door, and everything concerning us, is also "our Feast", as according to the blessed Paul: *"For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us"* (1 Corinthians 5: 7). And as the fast is not refrainment from eating food, the feast, as well, is not eating and drinking, but rather a joyful life in the Lord. According to St. Athanasius the apostolic: [I wish we do not celebrate the feast in an earthly way, but celebrate it together with the angels in heaven ..... Let us rejoice, not in ourselves, but in the Lord, to be with the saints. I wish we do not stop at keeping the rites pertaining to the feast, but prepare ourselves to approach the divine Lamb, and to touch the heavenly food].

#### 5- SETTING THEM A BLESSING TO THE NATIONS:

God does not accept half solutions; man either become a curse to himself and to others, or a blessing to himself and to his brethren; saying: *"And it shall come to pass, that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, So I will save you, and you shall be a blessing"* (13). Now to explain how they would become a blessing, he says: *"Yes, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord..... In those days, ten from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'"* (22, 23)

- (1) When the wrath of God dwelt on them and they were captivated, they came to be a curse among the nations. The sign of that curse was the desolation of Jerusalem, even in the days of feast. As according to the prophet Jeremiah: *"The roads to Zion mourn, because no one comes to set feasts. All her gates are desolate, her priests sigh"* (Lamentations 1: 4). But as the curse turned into blessing, *"many people and strong nations shall come to see the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem"*; and as 'Jerusalem means "the vision of peace", the sign of the blessing is drawing a multitude to enjoy this spiritual vision for reconciliation on the cross, and peace with God.
- (2) Commenting on the expression *"I myself will go also"* (21), St. Dedymus the blind says that the prophet seeing the multitudes of peoples and nations come to Jerusalem, his heart kindled with longing to join them; and he also believes that the speaker here is the Savior, who proclaims His entrance into Jerusalem ahead of those peoples with the spirit of conquest, saying: *"I have raised him up in righteousness; and I will direct all his ways. He shall build My city, and let My exiles go free, not for price nor reward", says the Lord of hosts"* Isaiah 45: 13). Opening the gate of conquest and victory, and building the inner holy city, and letting the soul go free from her exile, not for price nor for an earthly reward, but by His precious blood, the peoples and nations seek the Lord, and enter the new Jerusalem to give pleasure to, and seek favor with the Lord; those about whom the apostle says: *"You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and the church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect"* (Hebrew 12: 22, 23).
- (3) The Lord does not say that He blesses them, but what is greater, *"You shall be a blessing"* (13) to the nations, as it is written in Zephaniah 3: 20: *"I will give you fame and praise among all the peoples of the earth"*; and in Micah 5: 7: *"The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the Lord"*. Whoever bears the Lord in his heart bears blessing to the others, and comes to be a praise of joy to bring gladness to their hearts in the Lord; and like the heavenly dew that quench the destructive fire of the world.

- (4) He ends his talk about the blessing by saying that *"ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying: 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'"* (23). Which is the portrait of the bride who says in the song: *"Draw me after You, we shall run"* (Song 1: 4). Setting forth toward her Groom, she bears with her ten persons she acquired for the Lord by her holy life and her testimony to the Lord. On another aspect, we, who belonged before to the Gentiles, we do not deny that from the Jews we have received the Old Testament including the law and the prophecies, as a way to know salvation in Christ Jesus. We, therefore are indebted to them for receiving faith in the Savior Messiah.

According to St. Dedymus the blind: [That Jewish man whose sleeve is grasped by ten men is the Person of the Lord Christ who comes from the tribe of Judah (Hebrew 7: 14); as according to the prophet Isaiah: *"In that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people, for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious"* Isaiah 11: 10]; He will be sought, not by one nation, but by all nations.

According to St. Dedymus the blind, the figure 10 refers to the believers who came to be like the ten virgins (Matthew 25: 1) who have five holy body senses, and five holy inner senses. That, and the believers bear the name of "Jesus Christ", that begins with the letter "Yota" which is equivalent to the figure 10 in the Greek language.

# THE THIRD DIVISION

## ISRAEL AND THE MESSIANIC ERA

(Chapters 9 to 14)

Alexander the Great and the Maccabees	Chapter 9
Anticipation of the heavenly kingdom	10
The rejection of the Good Shepherd	11
The new Jerusalem and the Messianic era	12 – 14

The first eight chapters represent one unit whose goal is encouraging the people to rebuild the temple; whereas the six last chapters deal with prophecies that touch Israel and the nations, since Israel was under the authority of Made and Persia (during the life of the prophet Zechariah) up to the appearance of the Messianic era. In the introduction we have given a summary of the views of critics who attempted to tear off the unity of the book, by referring the last six chapters to someone else, before or after the prophet Zechariah; But the Jewish, as well as the Christian traditions both proclaim the unity of the book, and refer it to the prophet Zechariah.

## CHAPTER 9

### THE MACEDONIAN DOMINION

#### (ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND THE MACCABEES)

When the prophet wrote this book, the first troubles that faced those who returned from captivity to rebuild the house of the Lord were about to come to an end; yet they felt themselves in danger because of the strong cities around them, like Tyre at the north, and Ashkelon, Gaza, and Ekron at the south, that represented great pressure on them; hence the prophet encouraged them by talking about an invasion coming to wipe out those strong cities, and that will show compassion on Jerusalem and all Judea; by which he prophesied the conquests of Alexander the Great.

- 1- The conquests of Alexander the Great
- 2- The Messiah, the spiritual King
- 3- The conquests of the Maccabees

#### AN INTRODUCTION

Seeing that what came in this chapter represent a living portrait of the conquests of Alexander the Great, his treatment of the Jews, and what followed of the conquests of the Maccabees, something that made them reject the view claiming that this part was written before the time of the prophet Zechariah, and believe that it was written as a historical record after those events, namely after the era of the prophet Zechariah. This view, even though it contradicts with the view claiming that it was written before Zechariah, but it does not mean that it was written after the era of Zechariah; for the author does not record a history that happened in the past, but a prophecy that was to be realized after its writing.

## 1- THE CONQUESTS OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT:

Here he presents an inspiration, a prophecy bearing a threat against the oppressive nations, and peace of mind to those who trust in God; That inspiration came to reveal the following:

- (1) How Alexander the Great dealt with the cities of Syria and Phoenicia: *"The burden of the word of the Lord against the land of Hadrach, and Damascus its resting place (for the eyes of men and all the tribes of Israel are on the Lord). Also against Hamath which borders on it, and against Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise. For Tyre built herself a tower, heaped up silver like the dust, and gold like the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out; He will destroy her power in the sea; and she will be devoured by fire"* (1 – 4)

Although Alexander the Great defeated a number of Syrian cities including Hadrach on the River Oront, not far from Hamath, yet his eyes were on the capital Damascus. Terror and astonishment because of his conquests have drawn the eyes of the children of Israel to God seeking the divine help. As to Hamath, close to Damascus, it has fallen before him.

After Syria, Alexander the Great entered Phoenicia, submitted Tyre, very rich with its commerce, that for it, silver was like dust, and gold was of no value like mire. When its inhabitants had to take refuge in a nearby island, Alexander the Great burnt the old city with fire, and cast its stones in the sea to create a quay on which to cross to put the island under siege, until it collapsed before him.

In Damascus and other cities of Syria, St. Dedymus the blind, sees a symbolic portrait of the nations oppressive against the Truth, then came back to receive it; being said here: *"Behold, the Lord will cast her out"*, to bring her back from her viciousness to His meekness. As to Tyre with its huge tower in which she took refuge, it refers to the heretics who resort to their empty debates as their stronghold; but God also works to submit them to the true faith.

Tyre, in truth, represents someone who says: *"I am rich, have become wealthy, a have need for nothing (Revelation 3: 17)*, and thought that, by himself, he could have a strong hold and be satisfied; but, while heaping silver, it would become to him like dust; and while storing gold, it would become for him like mire. The word of God to him (silver) turns into dust because of his earthly mind; and the spiritual life (gold), would turn into mire because of his going down to material thoughts. He falls into the sea that symbolizes the whirlpools of the world, and the tempests of anxiety and sorrow; and becomes devoured by the destructive fire of sin, that scatters his life and possessions..... How miserable is this man who, assuming that he is very wise, as Tyre did, corrupted her silver and gold, and cast herself into the sea of the love of this world, and the destructive furnace of sin.

- (2) How Alexander the Great dealt with the cities of Philestine: *"Eshkelon shall see it and fear; Gaza shall also be very sorrowful; And Ekron, for He dried up her expectation"* (5).

In this phrase and the next ones he mentions four Philestinian cities (Eshkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod); he did not mention the fifth city among the main ones, namely 'Gath', probably because it did not restore its past importance after it fell on the hand of Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26: 6). Eshkelon, Gaza, and Ekron were terrified when they saw what happened to Tyre the great fortified city; and perceived the extent of danger about to dwell upon them.

Those four cities: Eshkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod, refer to the arrogant pagan world with its four directions; which returns to its Savior Lord, and enjoy salvation. Those cities refer, as well, to the earthly man, bound to the earth (its four directions), as he returned to his Savior to bear the spiritual feature.

'Eshkelon' a Hebrew word derived from (Shekel), a weight. 'Gaza' means (majesty or power), 'Ekron' means (barren); and 'Ashdod' means (Stubborn or destructive).

'Eshkelon' refers to the soul, proud of her weight and measure; which, as the fear of God dwells upon her, would come to perceive the truth of herself, and return to the Lord, to make Him be everything for her; as according to the psalmist, "those who seek the Lord *"shall not lack any good thing"* (Psalm 34: 10).

'Gaza' shall also be very sorrowful"; for what she counted as majesty and power, she found out as nothing; and came back to receive the Lord Himself, as her majesty, power, and inner glory.

Ekron would also return in contrition to the Lord her Savior, who will grant her blessed children (spiritual fruition); as according to the psalmist: *"He grants the barren woman a home, like a joyful mother of children"* (Psalm 113: 9); and, *"Even the barren has borne seven, and she who has many children has become feeble"* (1 Samuel 2: 5). This refers to the church of the Gentiles, that was barren before, then begat many children, while the congregation of the Jews, with the promises and covenants, the fathers and the prophets, has become feeble because of her rejection of the Savior. The prophet Isaiah say: *"Sing, O barren; you who have not borne! Break forth into singing and cry aloud! You who have not labored with child! For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman"* (Isaiah 54: 1). And according to St. Dedymus the blind: [The woman here is married to "the law"; for the nations who were without the Mosaic law, came to be filled with the joy of salvation; whereas the Jews who had the law have fallen into spiritual barrenness.

While 'Ashdod', perceiving her corruptive stubbornness, and destructive work, returns to the Lord, and submits to him; her god 'Dagon' falls on its face before the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 5), and her opposition against rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, comes to an end (Nehemiah 4: 7), to receive the preaching of the gospel through Philip (Acts 8: 40).

On what happened to 'Ashdod', the prophet says: *"A mixed race shall settle in Ashdod; and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines; I will take away the blood from his mouth, and the abominations from between his teeth. But he who remains, even he shall be for our God, he shall be like a leader in Judah, and Ekron like a Jebusite"* (6, 7). This was literally realized, when Ashdod almost lost her original inhabitants; for the policy of Alexander the Great has been to mix the defeated nations together to make them lose their identity. As to taking the blood away from the mouth, it refers to forsaking the pagan habit of eating the sacrifices with their blood (Ezekiel 33: 25), prohibited by the law (Leviticus 17: 10, 11; Acts 9: 4). By receiving the Christian faith, Ashdod returned to the Lord, restored her original prestige, and became like a prince in Judah; as Ekron (the barren) became a Jebusite, namely trample on the world with her feet.

- (3) How Alexander the Great dealt with the Jews: *"I will camp around My house because of the army, because of him who passes by and him who returns. No more shall an oppressor pass through them; for now I have seen with My eyes"* (8). The Lord camped around His house to protect it from the army of Alexander the Great in his repeated passing by Jerusalem and returning; who did not do harm to the Jews, even though he did that to the Samaritans. According to Josephus the Jewish historian, Jaddo the high priest, together with all the priests, clothed with the holy attire encountered Alexander the Great, while the high priest had the turban on his head, and the golden plate on which was written *"HOLY FOR THE LORD"* (Exodus 30: 37). When Alexander the Great saw him, he bowed and told him that, in a vision, he saw the God whose name was written on the plate. He then entered into Jerusalem, offered sacrifices, and gave the Jews special privileges.

The Lord ends His talk by saying: *"Now, I have seen with my eyes"* (8). According to St. Diodorus the blind: [This clear vision refers to the power of the insight about which the apostle says: *"All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account"* (Hebrew 4: 13).

## 2- THE MESSIAH, THE SPIRITUAL KING:

Lest someone may think that Zechariah meant salvation to be realized in the Macedonian era, in which the Lord gave favor to the Jews in the eyes of Alexander the Great, he moved on to refer to the true salvation through the meek King and Savior, the Grantor of peace to the world. The open eyes of God, seeing His salvation work as a present work by which to save humanity; He says: *"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem. The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations. His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth"* (9, 10).

After being denied their land for a long time, and being submitted to foreign kings in captivity, behold, their King comes to them, *for which the daughter of Zion will greatly rejoice, and the daughter of Jerusalem will shout with joy; an amazing King, who, according to St. John Chrysostom, {does not ride on chariots like other kings, seek a tax, drive anyone out, nor seek guards, but walks with great meekness}*

In our interpretation of the gospel according to Matthew, we gave the thoughts of the fathers of the church concerning the interpretation of this text; and what the donkey and the colt ridden by the Lord when entering into Jerusalem, bore of symbols; and what Jerusalem bore of symbols in her rejoice to receive the Lord. Here we notice:

- (1) According to St. Diodorus the blind: [The word 'Zion' means (he who keeps or executes the commandments), and the word 'Jerusalem' means (the vision of peace). Those, therefore, who enjoy gladness and exultation in the entry of the Lord Christ into their life, are the ones who keep the commandments, and enjoy the vision of peace (through the cross). If according to the psalmist: *"The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure enlightening the eyes"* (Psalm 19: 8) by the first (the execution of the commandment), the soul would greatly rejoice in the coming of the true King; while by the second (the vision of peace), she shouts aloud for she, in a very high location, proclaims the coming of the King of kings ..... By the first, she has got a command to rejoice; while by the second, she has got a command to proclaim His coming].

I wish we truly be "the daughter of Zion", to rejoice greatly through keeping the divine commandment; and truly be "the daughter of Jerusalem", to shout aloud proclaiming a testimony to Him through seeing the vision of true and exalted peace in the crucified Lord.

- (2) Entering into the heart, the meek Savior Lord cuts off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow, to bring forth peace, makes Ephraim fruitful, and Jerusalem enjoy the true peace; to sing: *"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. They have bowed down and fallen, but we have risen and stand upright"* (Psalm 20: 7, 8).
- (3) The dominion of the Lord King extends over the Gentiles, from sea to sea, and from the River to the end of the earth. By the seas he probably refers to those who drink the salty water through the pagan teachings; while by the River he means the holy Mosaic law; by which He embraces both the Gentiles and the Jews under His dominion.
- (4) He says: *"As for you also, because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope. Even today I declare, that I will restore double to you"* 11, 12) ..... Israel, as a congregation of farmers, it so seems that every group of them used to dig a pit for themselves among the rocks, so that in the season of rain they



would be filled with water. At the time of captivity, when they entered into a condition of terror, they escaped from the enemy to a waterless pit where they were trapped. That pit probably refers to the human ego set by man to imprison himself by himself in it. But God sets him free by the blood of the holy covenant, from his selfish ego, to live in the perfection of the freedom of the cross. According to St. Dedymus the blind: [That waterless pit into which Joseph, Jeremiah, and Daniel, etc. were cast, refers to hell, denied of the water of eternal life; from which the Lord set us free, not through the blood of oxen and goats, but through the blood of the new covenant he calls us to set forth from the pit to the stronghold, namely, the glorious church, not having spots or wrinkles (Ephesians 5: 27); where the captive prisoners in the waterless pit, will find comfort. In the church, the captives of the war will find that:

- (5) *"the way of the Lord is strength for the upright"* (Proverb 10: 29); and the Lord Himself will be a stronghold *"Be my strong refuge, to which I will resort continually"* (Psalm 71: 3); and *"Be my rock of refuge, a fortress of defense to save me; For You are my Rock and my Fortress; Therefore for Your name's sake, lead me and guide me"* Psalm 31: 2, 3)
- (6) God restores a double reward to the soul for the days of her labor; as according to St. Dedymus the blind: He who is a captive of Christ will live in this city, takes refuge in the glorious strongholds in it, lives without fear, in anticipation of double comforts, and encouragement instead of sorrow..... a double reward for the past tribulations. An obvious example of this is the episode of the righteous 'Job', who had a strong soul, and got a double reward (Job 42: 11). He gets a double reward, enjoying hundredfold in this world, and an eternal life in the world to come. It is also a double reward, getting the salvation of the soul together with the body as well. The secret of it being double, according to St. Dedymus the blind is that the captive, as he returns from captivity, will not only be saved, but, becoming a teacher for his oppressors, he will have a double glory.

### 3- THE CONQUESTS OF THE MACCABEES:

After talking about the conquests of Alexander the Great, and about how God gave the Jews favor in his eyes, he got back to talk about the King Messiah; Here he talks about the Greeks, whom the Maccabees defeated in the second century B.C. (Daniel 11: 32; 8: 9-14). The prophecy came to confirm one thing, that God is the secret of their conquest.

He says: *"But I have bent Judah, My bow"*. What is this arrow coming out of Judah to support the children of Zion against the Greeks, but the Lord Christ Himself, the divine arrow who comes from the tribe of Judah to the account of the children of faith, against the devil and his evil works?! He is *"the Word of God, living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword"* (Hebrew 4: 12), He who says: *"He made My mouth like a sharp sword"* (Isaiah 49: 2).

As the arrow was set forth to the account of the salvation of humanity against the devil, the Lord transfigured in His kingdom; and as said by the prophet: *"Then the Lord will be seen over them, and His arrow will go forth like lightning. The Lord God will blow the trumpet, and go with whirlwinds from the south. The Lord of hosts will defend them"* (14, 15).. The Lord Christ, the true Arrow went out like lightning, to enter the heart, and to wound it by the wounds of love, so that the soul will say: *"I am lovesick"* (Song 5: 8); when He destroys in her the works of the devil, and shines in her the splendor of His glory. As it came in Habakkuk: *"The sun and the moon ..... at the light of Your arrows, and at the shining of Your glittering spear, they went"* (Habakkuk 3: 11); and according to St. Dedymus the blind: [The Sanctuary is Judah ..... as from him the divine Arrow comes out like lightning, by which the inner man and the eyes of the heart get enlightened]. And the way, the lightning the Lord grants enlightenment to the eyes of the soul; the blowing of the trumpet will grant us an inner ear to hear His voice that echoes loud to warn us against the devil, and to embrace us to the celebration of His joyful coming; for the trumpets are blown in war and also in feasts.

While prophesying the conquest on the Greeks by the Maccabees, he proclaims our eternal conquest on the devil by Christ Jesus, the true divine Arrow. He portrayed to us this conquest by saying: *"The Lord of hosts will defend them. They shall devour and subdue with slingstones. They shall drink and roar as if with wine. They shall be filled with blood like basins; like the corners of the altar. The Lord their God will save them in that day, as the flock of His people, for they shall be like the jewels of a crown, lifted like a banner on His land. For how great is its goodness, and how great is its beauty! Grain shall make the young men thrive, and new wine the young women"* (15 -17).

If God used the pagans as slingstones, which He aims toward His people to chastise them, He returns to them by His mercy, and makes those stones underneath them to tread on with their feet. The same way, if God allows for us to go through diverse temptations and tribulations, He uses them to chastise or to justify us, in His love, He does not let us fall under the temptation, but let temptation falls under us, has no authority over us that would make us lose our inner peace and our joy in the Lord.

And as, in captivation, the people drank the cup of the wrath of God with sorrow and suffering; God with His compassion, lets them drink the cup of joy and gladness.

He grants conquest to His people, being His rational flock; and sets them like the jewels of a crown, lifted like a banner on His land; (according to the Septuagint version, He sets them like holy stones rolling on the ground); On which St. Jerome comments, saying: [Notice His saying: 'like holy stones rolling on the ground'; as chariots running quickly toward the high places].; He also says: [There is *'a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones'* (Ecclesiastes 3: 5); Now God set from these solid stones of the Gentiles, children to Abraham (Matthew 3:9/, to come to be holy stones rolling on the ground (Zechariah 9: 16); that passed along through the windmill of the world, and rolled over in the chariot of God on swift wheels]. ..... Speaking about Paula, who used to spend her wealth, not on stone buildings but on the poor, he says: [She intended to spend her wealth, not on the stones that will go away together with the world, but on the living stones that roll on the ground; by which is built the city of the Great King, as it came in the book of Revelation 21: 14].

Through that exalted conquest, that lifts the soul up to heaven, like living stones that roll up to the higher Jerusalem; the soul feels a spiritual satisfaction; being said: "*Grain shall make the young men thrive, and new wine the young women*" (17) .....God presents Himself grain and new wine to satisfy our young men and women; namely to let the fruition of the spirit thrive in us through the sanctification of the soul with all her energies (the young men), and the body with all its senses and emotions (the young women).

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# CHAPTER 10

## ANTICIPATION OF THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM

If God granted them favor in the eyes of Alexander the Great, and successive conquests in the era of the Maccabees, but the need is to enter into the Messianic kingdom, when the meek King comes, the Grantor of salvation and the inner peace to the Gentiles; for in that kingdom we will have the following:

- |    |  |        |
|----|--|--------|
| 1- | The enjoyment of the latter rain                                 | 1      |
| 2- | The enjoyment of the personal care of God                        | 2 - 3  |
| 3- | The enjoyment of the conquest and the restoration of the kingdom | 4 - 12 |

### 1- THE ENJOYMENT OF THE LATTER RAIN:

*"Ask the Lord for rain, in the time of latter rain. The Lord will make flashing clouds. He will give them showers of rain, grass in the field for everyone"* (1)

In the old, because of evil, the prophet Elijah stopped the rain three years and six months, to chastise every one. Therefore, it is our sins that stop the abundant flow of God's grace on us, and deny us of His rain that turns the barren wilderness into a garden that brings pleasure to the heart of God (Song 5: 1).

In our study of the book of Hosea (6: 7) we noticed that in Palestine, early rain falls to sow the seeds, and latter rain falls to complete the maturation of the crop. The former rain refers to the work of the Holy Spirit through the law and the prophets, etc..... before the coming of the Lord; while the later, refers to the abundant flow of the Holy Spirit on the church of the New Covenant, proclaimed by the prophet Joel by saying: *"I will pour out My spirit on every flesh"* (Joel 2: 28).

We can say that the early rain is the law and prophecies that God granted men of the Old Covenant; while the latter rain is preaching the gospel that reveals the secrets of God, and grants us deep knowledge and vision of the divine life.

According to St. Dedyms the blind, the early rain means, as well, the teachings concerning the incarnation of the Savior; while the latter rain means the enjoyment of His divine secrets. Anyway, I wish we do not cease to seek from God to shine in our hearts the splendor of His glory, granting us His latter rain, to water our land by His divine love, and to grant it increase.

### 2- THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD'S PERSONAL CARE:

If God gives rain on both the righteous and the wicked; yet He grants His spiritual rain only to those who seek it. Now, to care spiritually for His flock, this flock has to forsake the deceitful divination, magic, and dreams, of the false prophets, in order to care personally for His people.

*"For the idols speak delusion; the diviners envision lies, and tell false dreams; they comfort in vain. Therefore the people wend their way like sheep; they are in trouble because there is no shepherd. My anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the goatherds, for the Lord of hosts will visit His flock, the house of Judah, and will make them as His royal horse in the battle"* (2 – 4).

The people in the old, used to keep 'idols' in their houses to protect them, and to consult them before they act. God will never receive the care of His people as long as they trust in idols, ask the diviners, and resort to the dreams of the false prophets; for those all deceive man by sweet words, but those who trust in then will fall into humiliation. Now, in case the people forsake those vain deceptions, the Lord will carry out two things: He will declare His anger on the corrupt shepherds, and receive the care in His own hands. And as He confirmed in the book of Ezekiel: *"For thus says the Lord God: 'Indeed, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out ..... I will feed My flock and make them lie down'"* (Ezekiel 34: 11, 15). He punishes the wicked goatherds, cares for His flock Himself, and *"gives His life for the sheep"* (John 10: 11); He grants them His life, to set them as a horse in the procession of salvation, capable of fighting against the devil and his works; and as it is said: *"O Lord, Were You displeased with the rivers; Was Your anger against the rivers, Was Your wrath against the sea; that You rode on Your horses, Your chariots of salvation?"* (Habakkuk 3: 8)

### 3- THE ENJOYMENT OF CONQUEST AND THE RESTORATION OF THE KINGDOM:

The fruition of the personal care of God is their enjoyment of the conquest, security, and joy, and the restoration of the kingdom in them.

- (1) *"From Him comes the cornerstone; from Him the tent peg; from Him the battle bow; from Him every ruler (oppressor) swiftly comes out"* (4).

The true divine care appears by the transfiguration of the Lord Christ among His people as “a Cornerstone” that binds all together in Him; and supports all by one Spirit. He also appears as “a tent peg” to support their temporal tent, namely their temporary life, so that the winds of the foreign teachings, or tempests of the love of the world and the evil desires of the body would never shake. This is the divine tent peg that support the body (the tent) by sanctifying it to the account of the kingdom of God. The Lord will also, in them, be a battle bow aimed by the believer to fight evil and sin; to be said about them: *“One of you can chase a thousand, and two can put ten thousand to flight”* (Deuteronomy 32: 30). They, being hosts of the Lord, bearing the Lord Christ, the true arrow, would say: *“We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but, against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”* (Ephesians 6: 12)

As to saying: *“From Him every ruler (oppressor) swiftly comes out”*, refers to His work in His church, which receives Him as the Cornerstone, the tent peg, and “the spiritual bow”; uprooting from it every oppressor and corruptor, so that all in her would be sanctified by Him.

- (2) *“They shall be like mighty men who tread down their enemies. In the mire of the streets in the battle, they shall fight because the Lord is with them; and the riders on horses shall be put to shame”* (5)

Such is their might, and such is their conquest, they would tread down the mire of the streets, so as not to be like the one who buried his talent in the ground (Matthew 25: 18), but, by the heavenly Lord they would rise above every material thought, soaring up in the heavenlies; however violent is this thought like the riders of horses.

St. Dedymus the blind discerns between the ‘horse riders’ and the ‘horsemen’. The ‘horse riders’ are those who ride their horses without a bridle by which to control them. If the horses refer to the body, in case the soul rides the body, but leave it to its stubbornness and disobedience; she will be put to shame because of the evil desires of the body. The horses, as well, refer to the suffocated and haughty thoughts, ridden by the soul, to fall into pride, and be denied salvation. About the horse riders it is said: *“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God”* (Psalm 20: 7); and *A horse is a vain hope for safety*” (Psalm 33: 17). Concerning the ‘horsemen’, on the other hand, they refer to those who ride their horses with a bridle to control them; it was said to the prophet Elijah: *“My father, My father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen”* (2 Kings 2: 12)

To make up to them for the years eaten by locusts, instead of the losses they suffered when God rejected them, they will get great blessings that cover all the past losses; saying: *“I will strengthen the house of Judah; and I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back, because I have mercy on them. They shall be as though I had not cast them aside, for I am the Lord their God, and I will hear them”* (6)

Why does He talk about the house of Judah and the house of Joseph? For from the former came Jesus the Grantor of salvation; and from the latter appeared Joseph, the symbol of Christ, who provided the grain, after they were crushed with hunger and draught (Genesis 41: 56). If Israel has passed through years of draught, the true Joseph satisfies them, as according to St. Mary: *“He has filled the hungry with good things”* (Luke 1: 53). He is the Lord their God who responds to their requests, and satisfies their needs, so that they would not remember the past with its cruel spiritual famine; for the joy of the present cover all the sorrows of the past; hence he says: *“Those of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as if with wine”* (7). That is the feature of the Messianic era: the joy of the Holy Spirit, that the world could never take away from the heart.

Here he mentions Ephraim as a mighty man full of joy; probably as a reference to the northern kingdom that lived in captivity a longer duration than Judah; hence He confirms His support for her. And He probably means the tribe of Ephraim in particular, for it was the violent tribe, that was the foremost provoker of corruption in the northern kingdom; particularly that ‘Jeroboam’ who provoked the ten tribes to revolt against Judah, was from Ephraim (1 Kings 11: 26; 12: 2); and who set the idol-worship in Israel (1 Kings 12: 25-33). Now the Lord confirms to Ephraim that he will be spiritually might, and will be filled with joy.

- (3) He will gather them and make them increase in His bosom: *“I will whistle for them and gather them; for I will redeem them, and they shall increase as they once increased”* (8)

Like a bee keeper who whistles to his scattered bees to gather the honey from the pastures and gardens; He will embrace them to Himself, grant them blessing to grow and increase as they did in the past; meaning, if He cared for them while they were under chastisement, under the bondage of the Pharaoh; when they increased as much as they humiliated them (Exodus 1: 7); How much more He would increase them when He redeems them of bondage?!

He fulfills to them His promise to Abraham the father of fathers: *“I have made you a father of many nations; I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you”* (Genesis 17: 5, 6); and is said in Isaiah: *“A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation”* (Isaiah 60: 22); and according to St. Dedymus the blind: {If these words are taken literally. It may seem difficult to fulfill; as many saints were childless like Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist, who, among those borne of women there has not risen one greater than him (Matthew 11: 11), in virtue and in knowledge of the holy secrets; we therefore should understand this spiritually}. On another aspect, they may have children in the spirit, like those borne by Paul in the gospel (1 Corinthians 4: 15), *“for whom he labored in birth again until Christ is formed in them”* (Galatians 4: 19); or like those whom the apostle Peter calls: *“obedient children”* (1 Peter 1: 14). On another aspect, they could have children in the heart, namely the fruits of the Holy Spirit proclaimed in us as children who bring pleasure to the heart of God.

- (4) Bringing them back to Him, to increase and have fruition by the Holy Spirit, He says: *“I will sow them among the peoples, and they shall remember Me in far countries. They shall live together with their children, and they shall return.. I will also bring them back from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them to the land of Gilead and Lebanon, until no more room is found for them. He shall pass through the sea with affliction, and strike the waves of the sea; all the depths of the River shall dry up. Then the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the scepter of Egypt shall depart”. So I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in His name’*, says the Lord” (9 – 12)

What a living portrait and joyful of the work of God in them! After He gathers them up from the captivity of sin and bring them back to Himself, He sows them among the peoples to testify to salvation in the far countries, and to have spiritual children in the Lord; But they will not walk with the spirit of the world, but their hearts will return from the symbolic land of Egypt, namely the love of the world; and He will gather them from Assyria, namely from the spirit of pride, and bring them forth to the lands of Gilead and Lebanon. And so as not to understand this literally: He said: "until no more room is found for them"; for they are in a continuous state of migration, and perpetually setting forth from strength to strength, and from glory to glory, their hearts are risen up in the heavens, and have no place on earth.

Commenting on this phrase, being a proclamation of spiritual migration of the believer, St. Dedymus the blind says: [Crossing over from iniquity to virtue; this is truly the change of location; a change from sin to righteousness, and from evil to piety ..... he walks from virtue to virtue (Psalm 83: 8); and crosses over from the shadow of the law, from the literality that kills, to reach the spirit that gives life (2 Corinthians 3: 6) .....s the blind: [the migration to the spiritual Lebanon is a migration to a state of Deity, namely to the enjoyment of the features of the Lord Jesus, when the soul would enter into the glorious holy church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Ephesians 5: 27); to be said about her: *"the fragrance of her garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon"* (Song 4: 11).

Bringing them forth into the new Lebanon, namely into the holy church, He makes them cross the sea of affliction, like the living fish that have no problem to hide in the waters with all its disturbance, and the sea with all its waves..... They enter into affliction in this world, yet its violent currents would not be able to swallow them, nor the depth of the River to draw them away! They come out from every anguish more powerful, to proclaim the kingdom of God inside them. Hence He ends His talk on the blessings of this era by saying: *"So I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in His name", says the Lord*" (12)

# CHAPTER 11

## THE REJECTION OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

(DURING THE ROMAN AUTHORITY)

The prophet moves on from the era of the Maccabees with their conquests by a divine arm, to the Roman era, in which the Messiah appears, the Grantor of conquest; who is rejected by, by the Jews, who accused Him as a national traitor against Caesar; persistently proclaiming that they have no king but Caesar. The horror of their stand appear more clearly in the action of Judas who delivered his Lord for thirty pieces of silver; a bitter portrait of rejection of the Good Shepherd, and receiving the 'antichrist, as their shepherd.

- |    |                                |         |
|----|--------------------------------|---------|
| 1- | A lamentation on the rejecters | 1 - 3   |
| 2- | Self-destruction               | 4 - 6   |
| 3- | Denying themselves the grace   | 7 - 11  |
| 4- | Betraying the Messiah          | 12 - 14 |
| 5- | Receiving the antichrist       | 15 – 17 |

### 1- A LAMENTATION ON THE REJECTERS:

Rejecting the Lord Christ turned Israel into a whole desolation; hence the prophet laments it saying: *“Open your doors, O Lebanon, that fire may devour your cedars. Wail, O Cypress, for the cedar has fallen. Because the mighty trees are ruined. Wail, O oak of Bashan, for the thick forest has come down. There is the sound of wailing shepherds, for their glory is in ruins. There is the sound of roaring lions, for the pride of the Jordan is in ruins”* (1 – 3)..

In this lamentation it is noticed:

- (1) Desolation is so extensive to cover Lebanon, Bashan, and Jordan. Rejecting the Lord Christ made them fall under an extensive collective strike; when they cried out, saying: *“His blood on us and on our children”*. Its extension is not confined to the location but even spread to the different kinds of trees, from cedars burning with fire, to cypress and oak trees of Bashan wailing; as well as the thick trees of the forest, etc.
- (2) He calls on nature to wail on man who denied his Creator and rejected His salvation work; and even betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver.
- (3) What he mentioned here has been literally realized; for it was the custom of the enemies when they take over a fertile land, to cut off its trees to use their wood, or burn them with fire as an action of desolation.
- (4) Symbolically, to what does Lebanon refer in saying: *“Open your doors, O Lebanon that fire may devour your cedars”*. The enemies have entered into Lebanon through its doors, namely through the entrances of the mountains that lead to the city, to destroy its cedars she cherishes. In the last chapter we spiritually saw how Lebanon refers to the migration to the holy church to carry in us the sweet fragrance of Christ; to be said: *“The fragrance of your garment is like the fragrance of Lebanon”* (Songs 4: 11). While Lebanon also refers to the fertile church that bears the features, fragrance of the Lord, and the fruition of His Holy Spirit. It also refers, according to St. Dedymus the blind, to paganism (apostasy from faith), and to haughtiness;
- (5) Saying: [When the Groom in the Song of songs calls on the church of those who conquered, He says to her: *“Come with Me from Lebanon My spouse”* (Song 4: 8) .... To come to Him who calls her from ignorance and lack of faith to the holy knowledge and the perfect faith].
- (6) What dwell upon the cedars, the cypress, the oak trees, and the dense trees of the forest, refer to the congregation of the Jews who rejected the Savior Messiah; and to the sins that lie in the soul, and cause man to be denied salvation. St. Dedymus the blind: sees in the haughty cedars to the haughty, and to the demon of pride, saying: [In Isaiah it came against those fruitless trees: *“For the day of the Lord shall come upon everything proud and lofty; upon everything lifted up – and it shall be brought low”* (Isaiah 2: 12); then goes on to say: *“Upon the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan”* (Isaiah 2: 13). Those wild trees that refer to pride .....will be consumed by fire together with the corrupt; *“Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One”* (Isaiah 10: 34).. Also according to St. Dedymus the blind: [If the cedars refer to the pride of the great, the cypress, little trees, refer to those who submit to them. If the cedars refer to the wise and the knowledgeable in their own eyes, the cypress refer to those who follow their lead. Hence, when fire consumes the cedars, the cypress wail on account of the fall of the mighty before their eyes.

As to the oaks of Bashan, they refer to the forests with trees laden with leaves but no fruit; representing the hypocrites who have the appearance of religion, but deny its power. The same apply to the dense trees of the forests.

- (7) The prophets then moves to talk about the shepherds who forsook their shepherding work, and started to wail, for the lions roar to devour, and no one is there to rescue; and now the proud Jordan because of its dense forests and its trees among which the beasts hide, was in ruins.

These are the broad lines of the lamentation set by the prophet about every soul that denies the work of salvation in her; it would open up her doors before the enemy, and loses all her trees; On her nature would wail, and the spiritual destruction would eternally dwells.

## 2- SELF-DESTRUCTION:

*"Thus says the Lord my God: 'Feed the flock for slaughter, whose owners slaughter them and feel no guilt; those who sell them say: 'Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich, and their shepherds do not pity them'" (4, 5)*

Having rejected the Messiah, the slain lamb, they brought themselves forth to perdition and destruction. By rejecting salvation for no price, they will be slaughtered by their possessors, who feel no guilt, for they are worthy of being slaughtered. Selling them their possessors come to be happy for they represented a burden on them, and say: 'Blessed be the Lord, for I became rich. By that he probably portrays the condition of the Jews, who, after rejecting the Savior, they were scattered in several countries, where they were bitterly persecuted; and every country wished to get rid of them as a heavy burden on them.

It is amazing how God allows for the wicked to have cruel shepherds to chastise them, saying: *Their shepherds have no pity on them". Shepherds are from God. In case He is pleased with His people, He says: I shall give you shepherds according to My heart to shepherd you with knowledge and understanding (Jeremiah 3: 15), in the pastures of divine wisdom (Ephesians 4: 11; 1 Corinthians 12: 28). But in case is displeased with His people, He leaves them to themselves to feed in the "pastures of the wisdom of this age" (1 Corinthians 2: 6); and delivers them to a pasture of an debased mind (Romans 1: 28), and of "reviled passion"(Romans 1: 26)*

The good shepherds set forth with their herds into the bosom of God to feel secure; whereas the wicked, push them on out of God to perish; hence the Psalmist says: *"Those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert you for harlotry; but it is good for me to draw near to God, that I may declare all Your works" (Psalm 73: 27, 28).*

When they rejected the Good Shepherd, the Savior Messiah, they were denied the good shepherds; and the Lord delivered them to shepherds who have no pity on them..... for, *"I will no longer pity the inhabitants of the land, says the Lord, but indeed I will give everyone into his neighbor's hand, and into the hand of his king. They shall attack the land, and I will not deliver them from their hands" (6).* He called them "the inhabitants of the land", for they have rejected the heavenly Messiah who came to lift them from earth up to heaven. They remained on earth, and were counted as "the inhabitants of the land", and they even bore the nature of the earth, that bore no heavenly love, nor a wide heart; but everyone delivers his neighbor to affliction and oppression to perish.

## 3- DENYING THEM THE GRACE:

It was the custom in the old for the shepherd to hold two staffs, by one he chases away any wild beast that attacks the herd; and by the other he leads the herd so as not deviate from the right path. But the Lord appears holding two staffs, the one called "beauty" (or grace) and the other called "bonds" (or unity). By His grace He leads us in His heavenly green pastures, to make us in need of nothing; and by "unity" He binds us all together in Him by the spirit of divine love

According to St. Dedyms the blind: [By these two staffs God leads both the Jews and the Gentiles, as His rational sheep. The two staffs may refer, as well, to His work as Savior and King.

Anyway, by the Jews' rejection of the Messiah King, the Lord broke the staff of grace and they were denied of the divine help, lost the blessings; and because they broke His covenant, they lost His compassionate care. *"I will not feed you, let what is dying die, and what is perishing perish; let those that are left eat each other's flesh" (9).* Not out of disregard of the sheep, but for the sake of His regard for human freedom, He left them to themselves.

He says: *"I dismissed the three shepherds in one month. My soul loathed them, and their souls also abhorred Me" (8).* Who are those three shepherds whom the Lord dismissed, and whom the Jews have lost? According to St. Jerome they are Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, who died before the Jews entered into the promised land. By rejecting the Lord Christ, He most probably means, that the Jews lost His triple care: as A Priest, as a King, and as the Grantor of prophecy; namely they were denied His atonement intercession (His priesthood), His Kingdom as a Conqueror Leader who leads them to victory; and as the Grantor of prophecy who reveals to them the secrets of the life to come. In the old, the king was other than the priest, other than the seer or the prophet; but in Christ, these three gathered together on an exalted and unique level.

## 4- BETRAYING THE MESSIAH:

God did not intend to present such a dark portrait of what will come upon the circumcised people because of their rejection of the Messiah, without revealing that the betrayal of Judas against his Lord for thirty pieces of silver represents a betrayal by the people as a whole; having set on Him the price of a mortal slave.

*"Then I said to them, if it is agreeable to you, give me my wages, and if not refrain; so they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me 'throw it to the potter' – that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter" (12, 13).*

- (1) What is the silver set as a price for betraying the Lord? According to St. Dedymus the blind: [Let us take the wages and the silver from the spiritual aspect. Silver most probably refer to the divine knowledge and Word, like saying: *"The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times"* (Psalm 12: 6); and as it came in the book of proverbs: *"The tongue of the righteous is choice silver"* (Proverb 10: 20) (here the word tongue means words). Yet, the word 'silver' should not be always taken in good sense; for, about the prodigal Jewish priests, the Lord says: *"Your silver has become dross"* (Isaiah 1: 22). Here He does not accuse the silver in itself, but their deceptive words. About those who utter such words, the Lord says: *"People will call them 'rejected silver', because the Lord has rejected them"* (Jeremiah 6: 30). In the same way we may understand what is said in the proverbs that the silver given for deception should be considered *"like earthenware covered with silver dross"* (proverb 26: 23). Having rejected the deceivers and the breakers of the commandments. In the same way we may understand what is said in the proverbs that silver given for deception should be considered like earthenware covered with silver dross (Proverbs 26: 23); the words of those who care only for the earthlies, about whom Isaiah said: *"Their voice come from the earth"* (Isaiah 8: 19). There are, therefore, several kinds of silver: As the people of circumcision set the wages of Him who suffered for their sake as thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 20: 18; Mark 10: 5; John 10: 15) ..... they paid deceptive silver .....and uttered deceptive words. In Christianity, as well, there are those whose doctrines are wrong, *"those who walk in craftiness, and handle the word of God deceitfully"* (2 Corinthians 4: 2); who understand the word of God according to their own discretion; of whom we should beware, and count their silver as deceptive.

It is as though, presenting deceptive words, the Jews and the heretics, sell the Lord for deceptive silver.

- (2) Counting Him as a slave, they set His price as thirty pieces of silver (Exodus 21: 32). The figure 30 probably refers to the defilement of the five senses; namely, the price of the betrayal of the Lord Christ is the defilement of our senses to the account of His enemy – the devil, instead of sanctifying them for Him.
- (3) What does he mean by throwing the silver into the house of the Lord for the potter (13)? According to St. Dedymus the blind, the deceptive silver paid as a price for betraying the Lord Christ, are thrown into the house of the Holy Book, namely, the house of the potter, where there is the testing fire that would expose their deception, and reveal their contradiction with the prophecies concerning the Lord.
- (4) The potter, dealing with dust and mire, together with fire, throwing the silver into the house of the potter proclaims the nature of their earthly heart of dust, not fit to be put in palaces or treasure houses, but in dust.
- (5) By that price they bought "a potter's field", called the (field of blood), to bury strangers in (Matthew 27: 7), as a reference to the acceptance of the Gentiles, to be buried together with the Lord Christ, with the price of His blood, to rise together with Him. According to St. Jerome: [The price of Christ is the location of our burial. The field was called "the field of blood", the field of the blood of the Jews, but the location of our burial; on account of that we are strangers and foreigners, and have no place of rest. He was crucified and died; and we were buried together with Him].
- (6) He ends his talk about the rejection and betrayal of Christ by saying: *"Then I cut in two my other staff (Bonds), that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel"* (14). According to St. Dedymus the blind: [The two staffs will bond together as one staff, as it came in Ezekiel 37; when the Jews, at the end of time, return and accept the Lord Christ, to come to be, together with Judah (the church of the New Covenant), one, by their entrance into faith].

## 5- ACCEPTANCE OF THE ANTICHRIST:

Having rejected the Lord Christ the Good Shepherd, they were denied the divine grace, and the unity (the bond) together in the Lord, by breaking up the two staffs, and accepted the vain care of the antichrist; saying: *"And the Lord said to me: 'Next, take for yourself the implements of a foolish shepherd. For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand. But he will eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their hooves in pieces'"* (15). Commenting on this text, St. Dedymus the blind says: [forsaking them in their shame, God raised up for them a foolish shepherd who lacks any experience of shepherding, who leads those who chose him a shepherd to perdition; who will not care for those who are cut off to bring back



the ones who have gone astray for vanity' nor seek the young, nor heals those that are broken, nor feed those who still stand. Running after his own benefit, he eats the flesh of the fat, and tears the hooves of those under his care in pieces. He is not like the shepherds given by the Lord, saying: *"I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding"* (Jeremiah 3: 15). For, would it be possible for them not to be good shepherds whose head is He who lays His life for the sheep (John 10: 15)?..... It is said: *"When the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away"* (1 Peter 5: 4). The shepherds who eat the flesh of those of their portion, seek their own pleasure, assuming that they find glory in their shameful deeds; *"whose god is their belly"* (Philippians 3: 19), to be their servants instead of being the servants of Jesus Christ. On those, the apostle writes: *"Those who are as such do not do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly"* (Romans 16: 18).

What does he mean by *"tearing the hooves in pieces?"*. While *"the good shepherds keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace"* (Ephesians 4: 3), the bad shepherds tear the hooves of their flock, namely, tear the unity off.

As a fruition of the evil of the people; God will give them up to a foolish shepherd who scatters them and himself; saying: *"Woe to the worthless shepherd who leaves the flock; a sword shall be against his arm, and against his right eye. His arm shall completely wither, and his right eye shall be totally blinded"* (17). About this sword that destroys the arm and right eye of the worthless shepherd, St. Dedymus the blind says: The Word of God particularly threatened the worthless shepherds..... For God says in Isaiah: *"If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land, but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword"* (Isaiah 1: 19, 20); And in Jeremiah He says about the avenging sword: *"I will stretch My hand against the inhabitants of the land, says thye Lord"* (Jeremiah 6: 12) to perish ..... The avenging sword against the arm and the right eye of the worthless shepherd will touch the two senses of work and meditation; His arm will wither like a dead member, and his right eye will be blinded].

In this, St. Dedymus the blind sees a prophecy about the antichrist who will have a strong arm through the signs and wonders he will do (2 Thyessalonians 2: 9); whereas his right eye refers to his deceptive views, claiming to have the perfect knowledge, even though he is a liar (1 Timothy 6: 20). 'Elymas' the sorcerer, who was his symbol, perverting the straight ways of the Lord by his magic works and lies; his works were put to no avail, and was blinded not seeing the sun for a time (Acts 13: 10).

# CHAPTER 12

## THE NEW JERUSALEM AND THE EVIL

Here, he concentrates his prophecy on the new Jerusalem and the house of Judah; as the soul, by the Savior Messiah came to be His spiritual Jerusalem; and united with Him to come to belong to Him like the house of Judah. Through this new position, evil stirred up against her, represented by the surrounding nations.

- |    |  |         |
|----|--|---------|
| 1- | The nations are stirred up against Jerusalem | 1 - 3   |
| 2- | The salvation of the house of Judah          | 4 – 9   |
| 3- | The spirit of grace and supplications        | 10 – 14 |

### 1-THE NATIONS STIRRED UP AGAINST JERUSALEM:

Receiving her Christ in her, the soul comes to be the new Jerusalem, a member in the house of Judah. And as much as she gets of graces, she will face opposition from the enemies (the Gentiles), through an allowance from God to consummate the cup of the evil one, and that the Lord transfigures as the Grantor of conquest in His children. Through the oppression of the enemy against the children of God, the later would become a cup of drunkenness for the former, a very heavy stone to heave, and fire to consume. The prophet says: *“Thus says the Lord who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him: ‘Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I shall make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all the peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it”* (1-3)

The cup of drunkenness most probably refers to the wrath of God, in that, by drinking it, man loses his consciousness and balance; as it came in Isaiah: *“Awake, awake, stand up Jerusalem, you who have drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of His fury; you have drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling, and drained it out. There is no one to guide her among all the sons she has brought forth; nor is there any who takes her by the hand among all the sons she has brought up”* (Isaiah 51:17, 18); and as said by the prophet Jeremiah: *“For thus said the Lord God of Israel to me: ‘Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it. And they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them”* (Jeremiah 25: 15, 16)

So it is, when God intends to give these nations (as the symbol of the devil) to drink from the cup of His fury, to stagger, He let them stretch their hands against Judah, to fall under the wrath of God, according to the measure of their cup.

Again, God likens His children to a very heavy stone, which the wicked heave to cast downward to be cut to pieces; to find themselves crushed under it.

### 1- THE SALVATION OF THE HOUSE OF JUDAH:

*“In that day, says the Lord, I will strike every horse with confusion, and its rider with madness. I will open My eyes on the house of Judah, and will strike every horse of the people with blindness”* (4)

He strikes the horse and its rider, who resist the work of God in His children; by confusion, madness, and blindness; to let the enemy lose his peace, balance, and insight. At the same time, God opens His eyes on the house of Judah – His church – to become for her a Leader and a Helper.

According to St. Dedyms the blind, the horses here are the demons of fault, lies, and craftiness; and their riders are those who spread the wrong and deceptive teachings. The blindness by which God strikes them is to deny them the Sun of Righteousness who grants them light. Commenting on God opening His eyes on Judah, he says: {After this God opens His eyes on the house of Judah – the church of the living God – (1 Timothy 3: 15), where the Savior who comes from the tribe of Judah reigns on those who have got wisdom from God, those who say together with Jacob: *“Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies. Your father’s children shall bow down before you”* (Genesis 49: 8). On the house of Judah, the watching God will open His eyes, namely His enlightened watchful hosts, to let them enjoy enlightenment and grace, so that everyone of them would pray, saying; *“Oh God, Turn to me, and have mercy on me”*

(Psalm 86: 16).. Such a gift, all the righteous will enjoy, for *"The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous; and His ears are open to their cry"* (Psalm 34: 15)].

God will not only be the secret of the enlightenment for the house of Judah, while striking the enemy with blindness; but He, as well, will be the secret of strength to His people, and of destruction of their enemy; *"The governors of Judah shall say in their hearts: 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in the Lord of hosts, their God'"* (5)

According to St. Dedymus the blind: [If the Messiah is the spiritual King of His church, the disciples are the princes of Judah who receive the Lord their God as their strength in their preaching work; who grants them a fiery divine power to burn the sheaves of straw; saying: *"In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples, on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place – Jerusalem. The Lord will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall not become greater than that of Judah"* (6, 7).

If the new Judah was called the little herd, yet he bears the fire of the Holy Spirit that destroys the devilish right-hand strikes (the self-righteousness), and the left-hand strikes (the defilements and the evil desires), and the believer remains holding fast like Jerusalem, capable of seeing peace. According to St. Dedymus the blind: [Being spiritually the princes of Judah, it is befitting of them to destroy by their enlightened and fiery words, the barren carnal will ..... By Isaiah it is said: *"So the light of Israel will be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day. And it will consume the glory of his forest and of his fruitful field"* (Isaiah 10: 17, 18). Namely, he will wipe out the corrupt environment and works]. The fire of the Holy Spirit working in the spiritual man burns the surrounding peoples right and left, namely, burns the evil intentions and works of both the soul and the body together.

According to St. Dedymus the blind, the right and the left here, refer to the **extreme**; for the Holy Spirit burns in the believer the spirit of meanness, as well as that of **extravaganza**.

It is amazing how God, by His fiery Spirit, as He works in the house of Judah, starts by the tents of Judah (7) before the salvation of the houses and palaces; so as no one would have to boast. He starts by the inhabitants of the tents who are without protection, so that the rich, in their conquest will not boast that it is by their strength and strongholds, houses, and palaces they have got salvation.

St. Dedymus the blind, talking about the tents of Judah, saved by the Lord, says: [These tents are the virtues about which is said in the proverbs: *"The tents of the upright will flourish"* (Proverb 14: 11). And, concerning these tents the psalmist sings: *"How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts"* (Psalm 84: 1). How could it not be lovely when it packed with those who come to celebrate its feasts; for the voices of joy and the works of grace, would not appear anywhere else but in the tents of the good?!

He sees, as well, in the tents of Judah, a symbol of the mortal and humiliated body, that we put on; for once it enjoys the salvation of God, he would put on non-mortality, glory and strength, and would turn from an animal body to a spiritual one (1 bCorinthian 15: 42-44).

As to annulling the boasting of the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem over Judah, it refers to the fall of the boasting of the wise in their own eyes; for the meek and the simple will precede them, because God strongly works in him who feels weak: *"In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the Lord before them"* (8); meaning that the weakest among them shall be like David (2 Samuel 17:8' 18: 3), for God Himself will support him. The secret of conquest is the appearance of God from the house of David, which, according to St. Dedymus the blind, refers to St. Mary from whom the Lord came incarnated. In that day when the divine incarnation is realized, the power of God is proclaimed in the new house of David, while the devil and his works will perish, and his authority on the believer will be destroyed, saying: *"It will be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem"* (9)

Commenting on this, St. Dedymus says: [In that day which is close at hand, when the night of ignorance and sin comes to an end, according to the words of the apostle: *"The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light"* (Roman 13: 12). In that day, God destroys all the nations that bear the spirit of war against Jerusalem, will destroy those who are foreign to the truth and to the ministry of God, not by destroying the peoples themselves, but by uprooting the spirit of evil and ungodliness..... So our Savior and Lord came looking for our lost race, to rescue through destroying all the nations working against Jerusalem, namely, destroying the causes of evil and war, of cursed works, and heretic views.

In short, we may say that, while God's wrath comes on the oppressors, to make them drink from the cup of drunkenness and stagger; and the believer himself would be the cup (2); and while God opens His eyes on His children to support and to lead them in their spiritual war, He strikes His enemies with blindness (4). While He gives Himself to His children as the secret of strength and consuming fire, He makes His enemies (the sins) like sheaves of straw to burn (6). And while He supports the weak and stumbling of His children, He destroys the wicked in his evil.

So God supports His children (the house of David) to let them enjoy His salvation through their trust in Him; as according to St. Sirenus: [Listen to what the King (God) Himself says, to encourage and to call His brave men to the spiritual war (against sin): *"Let the weak say: 'I am strong; Cause your mighty ones to go down there'"* (Joel 2: 11, 12 – the Septuagint version). You can see that it is only the weak and those who suffer, who go to war in the divine battle; the weak who truly have double as what the Centurion got (Matthew 8: 9), ; who says: *"When I am weak, then I am strong"* (2 Corinthians 12: 10) and, *"My strength is made perfect in weakness"* (2 Corinthians 12:9).

### 3-THE SPIRIT OF GRACE AND SUPPLICATIONS:

Reigning on the house of Judah, with the abundance of His Holy Spirit, on his church, to grant her every grace, and to support her in her strife until she crosses over this world, At the same time He lets those who stabbed the Lord by the spear of their sins, fall under the eternal judgment, and to come to be in great mourning.

*"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplications"* (10). According to St. Dedymus, the spirit of grace and supplications is the Holy Spirit, Grantor of grace, given to us by the Father of compassion (2 Corinthians 3: 3): [After the destruction of the nations (the devil and his works), the Book adds that, in that day God pours on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplications; for He is the Father of supplications (2 Corinthians 1: 3), and has the Holy Spirit.. About this St. Paul writes: *"The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us"* (Romans 5: 5). A.; and in Isaiah, the Grantor of the Holy Spirit says: *"I have put My Spirit upon him"* (Isaiah 42: 2); and says: *"I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh"* (Joel 2: 28). From the words of the apostle it is understood that the spirit of grace is the Holy Spirit; saying: *"Anyone who rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose will be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God under foot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?!"* (Hebrews 10: 28, 29). The Spirit of grace is also the Spirit of supplication Spirit of supplication (of compassion), granted by the Father of compassion (2 Corinthians 1: 3).

This is the fruition of the cross, poured on the church by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of grace, poured with His divine graces and heavenly gifts, and the Spirit of compassion who supports. Those who reject salvation, and aim the spear of sin, *"will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Magiddo"* (10, 11).

According to St. Dedymus: [The Jews who killed the Lord Christ have suffered, and came to mourn as one mourns his only son, and were filled with bitterness as one for a firstborn; when *"the wrath of God came upon them to the uttermost"* (Thessalonian 2: 16); when their homeland was taken away from them and they were scattered all over the earth.

*"Great mourning will be in Jerusalem"*; he probably refers to "the wailing wall" to which the Jews from all over the earth come to wail on their miserable condition and their scattering.

Here he describes the mourning *"like the mourning of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Magiddo"*, the location where the Egyptians killed king Josiah by their arrows, to be lamented by the prophet Jeremiah and others; There was such a grief that never happened since the beginning of Israel, when the royal chariot carried his body along the streets of Jerusalem to be buried.

He reveals the bitterness of that mourning by likening it to the mourning of parents on their only son; when the land shall mourn every family by itself, the wife by herself and the husband by himself; for none of them can endure the comforting attempts of the other on account of what they feel. The cause of that mourning and grief is a collective sin against the Lord Christ who was pierced with a spear; saying: *"They will look on Me whom they pierced"* 10).

Many fathers comment on this phrase concerning the encounter of the wicked with the pierced Lord, on the great day of the Lord; Of their words are:

- + Recognizing Him, whom they pierced, they will strike their chests ..... Him, whom they did not recognize then, on account of that He came in the humility of His incarnation.

(The

scholar Tertullian)

- + When He comes, together with His angels to judge (Matthew 25: 31); those who pierced Him will see Him, and become confused, because it is too late to repent.
- + He who was judged will sit as a Judge; He who stood before the court of judgment to be judged on crimes He did not commit, will judge the true crimes.

- + He will come in a human form to be seen by the wicked .....who will look at Him whom they pierced with a spear ..... And to them, God will remain hidden in a body, that they will not be able to see Him in His glory (His divinity), after judgment, as will those on His right hand will be able to do.
- + The Son will appear to both the righteous and the wicked in the day of judgment, in the same form He has been when He suffered, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven ..... But when the righteous go to the eternal life, they will see Him, not as He came to judge the living and the dead; but He will appear as He truly is, as a reward to them.

(St. Augustine)

While the wicked mourn when they see the Lord carrying wounds because of them, the righteous, on the other hand, He will bring forth into His glories to enjoy

what the wicked will never do.

# CHAPTER 13

## THE WOUNDS OF THE SHEPHERD

If God, by His Holy Spirit, pours the spirit of grace and supplications on His believers to draw their hearts by repentance to unite with the Savior, wounded for their sake; while the wicked who hold fast to their evil fall into bitter mourning, and are denied of the eternal glory because of the wounds they gave to the Savior, he talks to us in this chapter about:

- |    |  |       |
|----|--|-------|
| 1- | The sanctification of the land and its inhabitants | 1 – 6 |
| 2- | The wounded Shepherd                               | 7 – 9 |

### I- THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE LAND AND ITS INHABITANTS:

He talks about the secret of the sanctification of the land (the body) and its inhabitants (the soul) through the fountain of divine blood which purifies us from every sin and defilement, and cuts off from us every unclean spirit, and everything not from God, saying: *"In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. It shall be in that day, says the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land"* (1, 2)

What is this fountain opened for us – the house of David – having become kings in it, and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, namely those who enjoy the vision of peace, that cuts off every sin and defilement, but the wounds of the Lord Jesus?! .....A fountain of purification for us, and the cause of judgment for the wicked at the same time; A fountain that will never dry up; by which the church will be watered all the days of her life, and will be perpetually sanctified.

Commenting on this fountain, St. Dedymus the blind says: [This sprinkling or shedding is realized by the divine blood of the Savior, on which St. Peter says: " .....for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; Grace to you and peace be multiplied .....knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold ..... but with precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1: 17, 18).. Those who so abide to the shed blood will get a pure heart, saying, as though they are one, in their repeated unceasing prayers: *"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow"* (Psalm 51: 7) to get the purity, namely the pure religion.

This is our living fountain in which we are washed and purified from every uncleanness, and through which the names of the idols will be cut off, together with everything that belong to the devil on the land of our body. If the law prohibits uttering the names of pagan gods, that is meant to have only God reign on it. Sanctification does not stop at cutting off the names of the idols, but extends to those of the false prophets who work to their account, and to the unclean spirit of vanity and lying.

The power of that sanctified life appears in saying that the godly parents, mourning for the sake of their sins, will never let their own son play the role of a false prophet; for they would rather stab him with a spear to die (3). By the sanctified life, evil will be utterly cut off, the false prophets will be exposed, and will not put on the coarse hair robe for deception (4), and will even deny that they are prophets. So will God pour on His people the spirit of grace and sanctification, to keep them from being deceived by the false appearances nor endure vanity.

If one of the false prophets is asked about the wounds on his body – for the prophets of the idols used to wound themselves by their own hands while praying to their gods (1 kings 18: 28) -- he, out of fear and shame, will say that he is no prophet but just a farmer who was wounded in his friends' house, and not while worshipping (5, 6).

It is amazing that while the false prophet hides the cause of his wounds, the Lord Christ, on the other hand, the true Word of God, is actually wounded in His friends' house, as He is betrayed and delivered to death by His own disciple ..... Here, God uses even the words of wicked as a prophecy of what was going to happen to the Person of the Messiah.

### 3- THE WOUNDED SHEPHERD:

While the false prophet hides the cause of his wounds. The Lord Christ, on the other hand, declares them ahead by the spirit of prophecy, as is said: *"Awake, O sword against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My companion, says the Lord of hosts. Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered. Then I will turn My hand against the little ones"* (7)

According to St. John Chrysostom: [The devil is wildly stirred up against the teachers, for by their perdition, the herd will be scattered. By slaying some of the sheep their number will be decrease; but by striking the shepherd the whole herd will perish. That is what the devil assumed to be able to do by striking the Savior Messiah; he thought that by striking the Shepherd, the sheep[ will be scattered, and he can turn his hand against the little ones]. According to St. Dedymus the blind: [About this prophecy St. Matthew the Evangelist, when the Lord Christ was arrested and His disciples fled: *"that it might be fulfilled what was spoken by the prophets"* (Matthew 2: 23); *"I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered"* (Matthew 26: 31). By the word "strike" and other words pertaining to death, it is to be understood that the Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep(John 10: 15); *"He gave His life a ransom for many"* (Matthew v20: 28).

Through those wounds the Lord says that two-thirds of the inhabitants of the land *"shall be cut off and die, but one-third shall be left in it; I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people', and each one will say, 'The Lord is my God'"*(8, 9). If because of the rejection of the wounds of the Lord, or the rejection of the wounded Lord for the sake of humanity, two-third are cut off from the land of the living and eternally die, the one-third will enter into the fire of affliction, to partake of the wounds of the Lord by their wounds; or in other words, they bear their wounds as a sign of the unity with Him.

Through affliction, the church enters into the furnace of the cross to have the Word of God proclaimed in her as sevenfold purified silver (Psalm 12: 6); and her life as tested gold, namely as heavenly spiritual life filled with the true riches and the eternal glory. If silver refers to the Word of God, so will be every soul that intends to bear true silver, namely, a testimony to the Word of God, and come to be of heavenly nature (not of dust), spiritual (not carnal); with true riches and authority; it is befitting of her to be tested by the fire of the cross. Such a soul will hear the divine voice saying *"This is My people"*; namely He will let her join the true membership of His heavenly church; and she in turn will joyfully sing: *"The Lord is my God"*

# CHAPTER 14

## THE CROSS AND BAPTISM

### IN THE NEW JERUSALEM

If this book started with the return to repentance mixed with hope in the coming of the Savior Messiah (the Rider of the red horse), and sets with us forth from a proclamation to another, and from a prophecy to another concerning the salvation work of the Messiah on the cross, and the opening of the fountains of His holy blood to purify us; the book ends by a talk about the enjoyment of the new Jerusalem (the church) of this salvation work through the water of baptism by the power of the cross

1-	The captivation of Jerusalem	1 -
2-	On the Mount of Olives	
	(The Lord bears our sufferings in Him)	3 - 5
3-	The cross as a day known to the Lord	6 – 7
4-	The Holy Spirit and the church	8 - 11
5-	The destruction of the old man, and setting the new	12 – 21

#### 1- THE CAPTIVATION OF JERUSALEM:

*"Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, and the spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem. The city shall be taken; the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city"(1, 2)*

In the end of the last chapter we saw that two-thirds of the land will be cut off and die while one-third will be refined by fire like silver and tested like gold. And we saw how, according to St. Dedymus the blind, the two-thirds are the pagans and the Jews who reject the salvation; while the one-third are the congregation of believers who are set free from the captivation of the devil by the cross, and receive the divine fire, the Grantor of sanctification, about which St. John the Baptist said: *"He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire"* (Matthew 3: 11); and the Lord Himself said: *"I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it is already kindled"* (Luke 12: 49). According to St. Dedymus the blind, it is the fire of temptation that refines the soul, saying: [Those who were spared the fire, namely, the remaining one-third of the captives, who were refined and God listened to their prayers, will say to God who granted them peace: *"For you, O God, has tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined. You brought us into the net; You laid affliction on our backs. You have caused men to ride over our heads. We went through fire and through water, but You brought us out to rich fulfillment"* (Psalm 66: 10 – 12). And also in Isaiah, God, the Savior of man says: *"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned ..."*. When you cross through the waters, I will be with you; (Isaiah 43: 3, 4). How could we walk in the fire, and come out of it without harm, unless we have the voice of the Lord about which it is said that it quenches the fire. The way the Red Sea was divided by the stroke of the holy staff, and the people crossed over without harm, so will the fire divide and give way to the people to pass through without burning]

The divine fire, whether that of the Holy Spirit, the Grantor of sanctification, or that of the refining temptations, will make the believer more splendid and glorious; whereas by it, the disobedient will be destroyed; hence he says: *"Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, and the spoil will be divided in your midst"* (1). For the day of the Lord is the day of the salvation of the obedient souls and setting them free of their captivity; but is a day, cruel and bitter for the haughty souls, that hold fast to their evil; as it is said by the prophet Isaiah: *"Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate, and He will destroy its sinners from it"* (Isaiah 13: 9)

The spoil used to be divided outside the captivated city, lest those who divide it would be so preoccupied, that the captives would regain their strength and resume their fight. But here he says: *"The spoil is divided in your midst"*, a sign of that the enemy despise the city so much, and perceive that it is utterly destroyed, to dismiss any probability of them to regain their strength. The horror of such despise is shown in dividing



the women among themselves to ravish them before the eyes of their husbands; according to the words of the prophet Isaiah, saying: *"Their children will also be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses will be plundered; and their wives ravished"* (Isaiah 13: 16).

According to St. Dedymus the *"the divine wrath has come upon them (Jerusalem) to the uttermost"* (1 Thessalonian 2: 16) for killing the Lord and His disciples, to be horribly and fiercely desolated by the Roman leader 'Jestus', as reported by Josephus the Jewish historian.

It is a painful portrait of the soul that falls under the captivity of the devil through her lack of faith, to force himself on its depths, humiliate her from within, and stir up all sins (the Gentiles) against her, to confiscate every good thing in her, to ravish the body (the women) with all his energy, and to dash her fruits (children) to pieces.

It is amazing how half the city will be carried away into captivity; but the remnants will not be cut off from the city (2). The first half refers to the old Jerusalem, namely to the Jews who reject the Savior; whereas the remnants refer to those who received faith in Him, on whom the church (the new Jerusalem) is set. The first half, likewise refers to the old outer man, who should be driven out; whereas the remnants refer to the inner man who is renewed; [Let us put the old to death, and let the new live in us].

## **2- ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES (THE LORD BEARS OUR SUFFERINGS IN HIM):**

As the old Jerusalem – the literal to the law – is destroyed to set in us instead the spiritual Jerusalem, for the Lord to dwell in, to fight for, support, and to proclaim His cross in her, he says: *"Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley. Half of the mountain shall move toward the north, and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through the mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach Azal. Yes, you shall flee, as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with (Him)"* (3 – 5).

As man has fallen into the captivity of the devil, and collapsed before the sins (the Gentiles), His Creator came forth to set him free, being said: *"Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle"* (3). He goes forth by Himself to fight against the devil with all his evil works, to set man free of his dominion. On the words "go forth", St. Dedymus comments by saying: [Yes, about Himself, our Lord and Savior says in the gospel: *"I proceeded forth and came from God, nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me"* (John 8: 42). With the same meaning, Habakkuk says to God: *"You went forth for the salvation of Your people; for salvation with Your anointed. You struck the head from the house of the wicked by laying bare from foundation to neck"* (Habakkuk 3: 13). And as He goes forth to save them, He also goes forth in a more clear way when He fights against the devil. In the book of Micah it came: *"For behold, the Lord is coming out of His place, He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth"* (Micah 1: 3). And in the book of Isaiah: *"The Lord shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up His zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out; Yes, He shall shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies"* (Isaiah 42: 13).

In that day, namely in the day of redemption, the Lord goes forth to fight on our behalf, on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west, making a very large valley. Half of the mountain shall move toward the north, and half of it toward the south. What does this mean?

- (1) The Savior stood on the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem, being the Sower of the holy Olive trees, about which it is written: *"I am like a green Olive tree in the house of God"* (Psalm 52: 8); and, *"Your children shall be like Olive plants all around your table"* (Psalm 128: 3). These trees, according to St. Dedymus the blind, are not planted in the valley, on the west, but high on the mountain on the east, and on them the Sun of Righteousness will shine with His divine light; as though the Olive trees planted by the Lord in paradise in the garden of Eden to the east (Genesis 2: 8); each of which hears the voice of the crucified Lord, saying: *"Today, you shall be with Me in paradise"* (Luke 23: 43). By that these holy trees would say together with the apostle: *"Our citizenship is in heaven"* (Philippians 3: 20).
- (2) If, by the crucified Christ Jesus, we are planted like Olive trees in the house of God east of Jerusalem, we shall be standing there together with the disciples, watching the ascension of the Lord from the Mount of Olives, anticipating His coming as told by the angel (Acts 1: 12).
- (3) By faith we are planted east of Jerusalem on the holy mountain. Whereas the Jews by denying the Savior Messiah, have rolled down to the bottom of the great valley toward the west (4), together with all those who denied the divine grace; and the valley will be like a great pit separating between those who are planted in the east from those in the west.

- (4) Half of the mountain shall move toward the north, where the cold wind blow, and the other half toward the south where the warm wind blow. The first half refers to those with the cold spirit, namely the followers of the devil; while the other half refer to those with the warm spirit. St. Dedymus the blind sees in the saying of the bride of the song: *"wake, O north wind, and come, O south! Blow upon my garden that its spices may flow out. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its pleasant fruits"* (Song 4: 16); that the north wind refers to the devil, where the fierce cold weather will kill the plants, and stand in the way of the gentle divine fragrant breeze. The wind of the south, on the other hand, with its warmth will kindle the soul, likening the Lord who says: *"I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled"* (Luke 12: 49)

Let us, not by tongue but by work, say to the north wind to keep away from us, by realizing the words of the apostle: *"Abstain from every form of evil"* (1 Thessalonians 5: 22); and let us call the wind of the south, by practically receiving the Lord Christ in our life.

- (5) St. Dedymus the blind sees in saying: *"For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal"* (5), that the valley between the mountains reaches to the young man 'Asahel', about whom it is said: *"Asahel was as fleet of foot as a wild gazelle"* (2 Samuel 2: 18). The soul of the believer in Christ sets forth in the holy mountains by fast feet, hastens to her Groom, concentrating her spiritual eyes on Him.
- (6) He says: *"You shall flee through the mountain valley, ..... as you fled from the earthquake, in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with (Him)"* (5). That famous earthquake happened in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, and was mentioned by the prophet Amos (1: 1). Uzziah was known for his trespass against the holy sanctuary by burning incense on the altar of incense (2 Chronicles 26: 16), for which he was inflicted with leprosy on his forehead before the priests, who drove him out of the house of the Lord, and from his throne, and set his son a king in his place. Fleeing from the earthquake means fleeing from what came upon Uzziah, of the leprosy of sin, to enjoy the dwelling of the Lord in our hearts.

Let us flee from the earthquake of Uzziah to receive the earthquake of the cross through which many of the dead saints set forth to Jerusalem and appeared to many (Matthew 27: 51, 52); to shake our earthly mind of dust, and to set forth in us the living spiritual minds.

### 3- THE CROSS, AS A DAY KNOWN TO THE LORD:

*"It shall come to pass in that day, that there will be no light; the lights will diminish. It shall be one day which is known to the Lord – neither day nor night, but at evening time it shall happen, that it will be light"* (6, 7)

Talking about the cross in our life, he separates the trees planted in the east from those planted in the west; .....those which receive the wind of the south from those which receive the wind of the north; .....those which bear the cross, hastening with fast feet and concentrated eyes toward her Groom, crucified for the sake of denying souls; .....those which reject the earthquake of Uzziah from those bowing down before it ..... all this will be realized in the day of the cross, described as follows:

- (1) *There will be no light"*. As it so happened when darkness dwelt in the day of the cross, that revealed the authority given to the darkness for sometime.
- (2) *According to St. Dedymus the blind: "It shall be one day which is known to the Lord"*: The day of the Lord is continuous, and not cut off by night; an everlasting day (Isaiah 60)..

- (3) *"neither day nor night, but at evening time it shall happen, that it will be light"* (7). It is not day because darkness covered the earth, nor night for it is day time; but at the evening it shall happen that it will be light, for the outer darkness was scattered after the ninth hour; as the inner darkness did through the work of the cross in the life of humanity.

#### 4- POURING THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH:

*"And in that day it shall be, that living water shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea, and half of them toward the western sea. In both summer and winter it shall occur"* (8)

What is this water but the water of the Holy Spirit bound to the cross?! In our study of the book of Ezekiel (Chapter 47), we read that water was bound to the altar, namely to the sacrifice of the cross. Now he talks of the cross as a day known to, and preoccupies the mind of God, through that day, the fountains of the Holy Spirit flowed out from Jerusalem – where the apostles are -- to the eastern and the western seas, namely to the Gentiles east and west (In the Septuagint version it came as the previous and the following seas), namely to work in the life of the Jews who have enjoyed the law, then in that of the Gentiles. So will the door be opened before all humanity, according to the words of the Lord: *"It shall come to pass that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh"* (Joel 2: 28); by which the name of God will be glorified on all.

According to St. Dedymus the blind, , that living water flowing from Jerusalem to pour into the eastern and the western seas, is the spiritual law, , the divine knowledge, or the divine love, things that flow into the church – the higher Jerusalem – to sanctify the world, saying: [This view is crystalized from our interpretation of: *"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea"; will be full of the divine love that flows on the select, and "; will covers a multitude of sins"* (James 5: 20), will cover the evil deeds, that nothing of them will remain; The knowledge of the Lord is water that covers the sea and turns it into pure sweet water.

We can say that our souls have come to be an eastern sea struck with self-righteousness (the right-hand strike), or a western sea struck by the left-hand strike. That we need the work of the Holy Spirit in us to take the self-salinity away from our water, the salinity of evil water to turn it into the sweetness of the holy river that brings gladness to God.

Through this new sweet water, namely, the flow of the Holy Spirit, God reigns on the church all over the world, saying: *"And the Lord shall be king over all the earth. In that day, 'The Lord is one, and His name one'"* (9). He will reign not only on the Jews, but on the Gentiles who come to Him. According to St. Dedymus the blind: [There used to be a difference between the eastern and the western seas, namely between the Jews and the Greeks; of whom not all confess the oneness of God; for the pagans believed in many gods, while the Jews believe in one God; but once the gospel came, the knowledge of the One and only Creator spread on all. The apostle Paul says: *"Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also. Since there is one God who will who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith"* (Romans 3: 29); In that day the Lord has made (Psalm 117: 24), when the Sun of Righteousness shines; there will be Only His name, for once all men unite in blameless mind and godliness, they will have one name pertaining to God; by which the words of the psalm will be fulfilled: *"O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is Your Holy Name in the whole earth?!"* (Psalm 8: 1); and, *"For You have magnified Your name above all"* (Psalm 138: 2); ..... By which the supplication raised to God is fulfilled, saying: *"Your name be hallowed"*].

The prophet goes on to say: *"All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rammon south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be raised up and inhabited in her place from Benjamin's Gate to the First Gate, and the Corner Gate; and from the tower of Hananel to the king's winepress. The people shall dwell in it, and no longer shall there be utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited"* !0, 11)

By these phrases he reveals the dimensions of the church in which the Holy Spirit works, as living waters that flow through the cross, for only God's name to be glorified on earth, which may be summarized as follows:

- (1) *"He says: All the land will be turned into a plain from Geba to Rammon south of Jerusalem"*. As 'Geba', which, according to St. Dedymus the blind means (testimony), and 'Rammon' which means (a high place), he believes that the dimensions of the knowledge of God that flow on the church is the testimony to the Lord by the high spirit (the heavenly). We can say that the church in which the waters of the Holy Spirit flow extends in the life of mankind from Geba, namely from the testimony to God in Christ Jesus, being the righteousness of God working in us, to bring us forth to Rammon, namely to the exalted high life. Rammon, being south of Jerusalem, as we have seen before, that is where the wind of the south is warm to kindle our Jerusalem by the Spirit who never cool down.

- (2) *"Shall be raised up and inhabited in her place"* (10). Raised up to Rammon, it is befitting of the soul not to cease being raised up; as according to St. Dedymus the blind: [She bears a high strength to be raised up and not to go down; for it is befitting of those who have reached the goal and achieved perfection through strife to hold fast to holiness].

- (3) *"from Benjamin's Gate to the First Gate, and the Corner Gate"* (10). The living church sets forth from 'Benjamin's Gate', namely (the son of the right hand), to be like her Groom who sits on the right hand of the Majesty, having no member on the left hand, but all are the children of the right hand, namely heirs of glory. The church sets forth to the 'Corner Gate', to be, like her Lord a Cornerstone that is rejected by the builders (Psalm 117: 22; Isaiah 28: 16; Ephesians 2: 20; 1 Peter 2: 6). He, who bonded the Jews with the Gentiles in an integral building. Like her Groom, the church binds all together by the Holy Spirit, to have one Sanctuary for the Lord.

Let us, therefore enter through 'Benjamin's Gate', called the 'First Gate', through which no one could enter except him who is hidden in the Lord Christ, who can dare to say: *"Open to me the gates of righteousness, I will go through them, and I will praise the Lord"* (Psalm 118: 19); and *"This is the Gate of the Lord, through which the righteous shall enter"* (Psalm 118: 20). Let us enter through that Gate, to bind with the Cornerstone, rejected by men, but glorified by God; and let us not be like the hypocrites who do not enter through the heavenly Gate, but stand at the corners, extend their prayers seeking the commendation of men.

- (4) *"from the tower of Hananel to the king's winepress"* (10). If the word 'Hananel', in Hebrew, means (God has compassion, or gives grace), a tower near the 'Gate of xxxxxx', and the 'tower of the hundred', renewed by Nehemiah (Nehemiah 3: 1; 12: 39). If the 'king's winepress' refers to the house of the spiritual wine, a symbol of the inner joy; the church of the new covenant is featured by the tower of the 'free grace of God', about which the Lord spoke to His disciples, saying: *"Which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it; lest after he had laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him"* (Luke 14: 28, 29).. So man begins his church life by counting the cost, whether he has the faith in God's free grace? whether he can enjoy the exalted divine tower, to take refuge in its stronghold, and say: *"For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings"* (Psalm 61: 3, 4). Through this tower, the believer would set forth to the 'king's winepress', namely to 'the house of wine', to be together with the Lord who passed through the winepress, in order to enjoy the joy of the Holy Spirit.
- (5) *"The people shall dwell in it, and no longer shall there be utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited"* (11).. Instead of the desolation that dwelt upon the soul because of the sin, she will be filled with glory and life; shall be inhabited, not only by men, but by God Himself as well, who sanctifies her to become wide open to all humanity; and so she can come out from the state of desolation to a state of fulfillment by the grace of God, the love for the neighbor, the feeling of the exalted peace, and the inner security.

##### 5- DESTRUCTION OF THE OLD MAN AND SETTING THE NEW:

The prophet ends his talk about the salvation work of God in His holy church, whose dimensions we saw through revealing the necessity of the destruction of the old man with all his evil works, and setting the new man, holy in the Lord, proclaiming the following:

- (1) Proclaiming the plague that will come upon the pagan nations, surrounding Jerusalem, being a symbol of the works of the old man, or of the war against sin, he says: *"This shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: 'Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet; their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets; and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths'"* (12)

If the body, before being sanctified, represents by its evil desires, the old man, this body that bears animosity against God has to dissolve (Romans 8: 7). And lest someone may assume that the body, in itself, is evil, he says: *"Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet"*; What dwells upon the body, is not a deterioration of its material being, but of its old evil desires, to bear sanctification instead; The same is said concerning the eyes in their sockets, namely they will be dissolved of their old looks, to receive a new spiritual insight, befitting to the new man.; and concerning the tongue that will dissolve in their mouths; namely, the tongue itself would not perish, but will come to death as far as its evil is concerned, to produce a holy voice befitting of the new life. The destruction, therefore does not come upon the body and its member in themselves, but upon the evil dwelling in them, to have the blessing and righteousness instead.

- (2) *"It shall come to pass in that day, that a great panic from the Lord will be among them; everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, and raise his hand against his neighbor's hand"* (13). That 'panic' here, according to St. Dedymus the blind, does not mean a loss of peace, but rather a feeling of great wonder before the work of God that confuses the soul to make it unable to perceive His secrets, like the saying: *"They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days"* (Hosea 3: 5), or: *"O Lord, I have heard Your speech and was afraid"* (Habakkuk 3: 2). Every soul marveled before the work of God, man would seize the hand of his neighbor, to become all by one spirit in their spiritual strife.

- (3) *"Judah also will fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be gathered together, gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance"* (14). Who is Judah who fights at Jerusalem, and not against Jerusalem, to gather to her account the wealth of the nations of silver, gold, and apparel in great abundance, but the Person of the Lord Christ who comes from the tribe of Judah, namely, the true Judah who dwell in our inner Jerusalem, to fight on our behalf our spiritual battles?. For, as long as He dwells in us, He would take by force the possibilities and energies that were used before for evil, as His spoil, and uses them for our spiritual edification. As a true King, He would fight in the soul to grant her victory and riches, to make her adorned as His heavenly bride.

If gold refers to the spirit or to heaven; and silver to utterance or the divine word; and the apparel to talents; our Groom dwelling in us fights against the devil to sanctify our spirit, mind, and all our talents.

- (4) *"Such also shall be the plague on the horse and the mule, on the camel and the donkey, and on all the cattle that will be in those camps; so shall this plague be"* (15)

According to St. Dedymus, these animals refer to the sins struck by the Spirit, sins of the old man, which should be forsaken. According to him, the horses refer man's evil desire for his neighbor's wife, as said by the Holy Book: *"They were like well-fed lusty stallions; everyone neighed after his neighbor's wife"* (Jeremiah 5: 8). The mules refer to the barrenness of the spirit, in particular of those who practice virginity of the body without the enjoyment of the virginity and purity of the spirit; to come to be like an eunuch, not for the sake of the kingdom, but to be commended by men (Matthew 19: 12). The camels refer to those who care for God's law, yet without discernment; not having the *"cloven hooves"* (Leviticus 11: 3) they would be considered unclean (Leviticus 11: 14); and the donkeys refer to lack of understanding, bowing their heads to the ground under the burdens, they are not able to look up toward the higher Jerusalem.

By the Holy Spirit, therefore, the plague will strike these evil works under the yoke of which man has fallen, to set him free from them.

- (5) He talks to us about the enjoyment of the Gentiles of the feast of the tabernacles, going up every year to worship the great King (16-19). It is not only the Jews who celebrate this feast, but the Gentiles as well, when the church of the new covenant unceasingly sets forth toward the heavenly Jerusalem to sanctify the world. Men celebrate the feast of the tabernacles, perceiving that their bodies (the tabernacles) have been sanctified for the Lord; and worship the king, the Lord of hosts, until they put them off (2 Peter 1: 14), to put them on a new spiritual bodies in the great day. They will be the same bodies, but they bear a nature befitting to the eternity. About this the apostle Paul talks to us proclaiming how the believer longs, not to put his body off, but to bear it new on which death cannot prevail, saying: *"For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life"* (2 Corinthians 5: 4).

- (6) He gets back to confirm the sanctification of the body by saying that he writes on the sound of the bells of the horses (20) If the horses refer to the body, even their bells would be "HOLY TO THE LORD OF HOSTS" (21); meaning that, in the body, there is no unclean members nor senses, but everything inside and outside are holy to the Lord.

Again he confirms the holiness of everything to the account of the Lord, by saying that the pots in Jerusalem and Judah shall be "holy to the Lord of hosts" (21). In the holy church there will be nothing unclean or defiled, but everything will be like a pot or vessel that contains the heavenly treasure inside it.

For the last time he confirms the same meaning by saying: *"In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts"* (21); namely there will be no opponent against God, nor an idol-worshipper inside the true church, nor anything foreign inside the true believer.