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The Herald of His Grace

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The King of Tyre

by — Edward Henry Clayton (1887-1972)

A false notion requires other inaccuracies to support it, and, as a consequence, truth becomes increasingly obscured. Much teaching, professedly based on the Scriptures, can, at the best estimate, be considered as theory. However, when confusion is allowed to assume theory as fact, then we have a deplorable situation, and the only escape from our plight is to cast theory to the moles and bats, and rigidly examine the facts. This may be a slow and tedious process, but it is one which will ultimately give satisfying results. Such examination must be thorough, and, in our case, because we deal with the Word of God, we must be prepared to go beneath all versions and get down to concordant and consistent translation.

The foregoing observations are prompted by meditation upon the theological notions regarding Satan. The lack of real examination of the Scriptures on this matter is especially notable, and the passages which have been forced to buttress the theory that Satan is a fallen angel are little short of a tragedy, both as regards method as well as results. Ezekiel 28, particularly the section which speaks of the king of Tyre, is a favorite passage on which to base assumptions showing that Satan is there spoken of in figure. Is the king not distinguished from the “prince”? The very plausibility seems to freeze our minds and prevent investigation; we seem unable to look below the surface, and so we go on to formulate another query: Is not the king of Tyre said to be the Anointed Cherub? Further, was he not in Eden, the garden of God? Surely such details must refer to Satan!

That there are problems in Ezekiel 28 is not denied,

but it is suggested that these will be solved only by patience on the part of those who seek to sift the facts, not of a translation, but of the text of the original. Truth does not yield itself to the superficial considerations which seek to ignore or explain away the plain scriptural statement that the Adversary is sinning from the beginning (I John 3:8).

Before any exegesis is attempted, the first necessity is to be certain concerning the rendering, or, better still, to deal directly with the original text. The following translation of Ezekiel 28:11-19 is therefore submitted. Afterwards the new features will be discussed as well as related problems.

And coming is the word of Jehovah to me, saying: “Son of mankind, lift a dirge over the king of Tyre, and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord Jehovah: You are the seal-print of a model, full of wisdom and consummate in loveliness. In the luxury of the garden of God you come to be. Of every precious gem is your booth-like pavilion: carnelian, peridot and diamond, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, carbuncle and emerald, and with gold you have filled the shoulders of your and your alcoves which are in you. In the day of your creation, they establish the anointed cherub’s booth, and I bestow you in the holy mountain of God; you come to be in the midst of the fiery gems. You walk flawless in your ways, from the day of your creation, till iniquity is found in you. In the increasing of your trading, they fill your midst with wrong, and you are sinning. And I am violating by thrusting you from the mountain of God, and destroying you ▶

is the cherub of the booth from the midst of the fiery gems. Haughty is your heart in your loveliness. You ruin your wisdom on account of your shining. For the multitude of your sins, on the earth have I flung you, before kings have I given you to make of you a spectacle. Because of the multitude of your depravities, by the iniquity of your trading, you violate your sanctuaries, and I am bringing forth fire from your midst. It devours you, and I am giving you to be ashes on the earth for the eyes of all to see you. All who know you among the peoples are desolate over you, decadent you become and there is nothing of you for the eon.”

A careful reading of the foregoing and comparison with the *Authorized Version* will reveal several distinct differences, and also that two of the major statements of the *Authorized Version* concerning the king of Tyre must go. Moreover, the way is opened to make a real consideration, not only of these changes based on the language of the Hebrew, but also the reason for the cherub being spoken of in the discourse. It is claimed that the latter will much enhance our understanding of the cherubim.

The tentative translation given above really takes us beyond the first objectives of this article. Lest its main purpose be obscured and lost amidst the details of the proposed adjustments, some of the paragraphs will discuss vital matters in the light of the *Authorized Version* and its connection with the Hebrew text.

CRITICAL RESULTS

Critical examination of the Hebrew, and comparison with the LXX, brings features to the surface which lead us to adopt some of the adjustments in the foregoing translation. A brief explanation of some of the changes may be welcomed.

The word “sealest” of :12 of the *Authorized Version* is not a verb in the Hebrew. It refers to the seal on a signet, and is so rendered by the *Authorized Version*. The Hebrew word rendered “sum” occurs but once elsewhere, viz., Ezekiel 43:10, and in this case the *Authorized Version* translates it “pattern,” noting “sum

or number” in the margin. From Ezekiel 43:10 we may realize the difficulty in the Hebrew word, which is *thknith*. The translators were constrained to give a sense agreeable to the context rather than the Hebrew word. In the two occurrences of this word, the LXX rather agrees with the Hebrew *thbnith*, which signifies *model*, and is synonymous with the *Authorized Version* “pattern.” The difference between the Hebrew letters k and b is very slight, and this will be understood by those familiar with the Hebrew letters. An up-to-date example of this may be seen in the index to *Wigram’s Englishman’s Hebrew Concordance* where, under the word pattern, *thknith* of page 1347 is printed *thbnith*. It seems that we must accept the LXX understanding, for it is so agreeable to the associated word seal-print.

The word “covering” (:14) belongs to the word family of OVERSHADOW, and appears to be after the grammatical form of the *piel* participle. Without the initial *m* it is rendered *booth*, *tabernacle* and *pavilion* in the *Authorized Version*. At this stage of investigation we render the *m* form as *booth-like*, supplying the word *pavilion* to complete the sense. The other cases (:14, 16) which are *kal* participles, we render by *booth*. These renderings seem to be more suitable than our *Authorized Version* in these cases.

The rendering “workmanship” in the *Authorized Version* (:13) represents the Hebrew word *mlakth*, but it was not so understood by the LXX. They seem to have read *mlath*, which is the verb *you fill*. It would appear that the two final letters of *mlakth* have become transposed, and the *k* probably belongs, as an initial letter, to the word *thphik* (A.V., “thy tabrets”). This makes the word to be *kthph*, signifying SHOULDER, figuring the side of a building. The LXX renders this by the Greek word *treasure*.

In line with this we find the LXX reads the Hebrew *nqb* (A.V., pipes) as having the significance of *store*. In Numbers 25:8 we have *qbbe*; this is the feminine form, and has been subjected to *Apheresis*,¹ which takes away an initial unaccounted letter, similar to that which happens in the case of our words “esquire” and “squire.” The *b* of the Hebrew word is

1. [Editor:] Figure of Speech: The cutting off of a letter or syllable from the beginning of a word. — E.W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, App. 6, p. 6: Bible Student’s Press (2010)

doubled in compensation for the elision.² Now our *Authorized Version* renders *qbb* by *tent*; it indicates an antechamber, and so we suggest *alcove*. *Nqb* occurs as a proper name, Joshua 19:33, and the lexicons give *cavern* as its meaning, which confirms the suggestion here made.

We now turn to another kind of difference: that of division into sentences. It is well understood that both the Hebrew and Greek division into sentences and verses is the work of textual editors, and so we are not bound to follow them, provided significant sense is maintained.

In the present study the sentence construction is also influenced by the word “*workmanship*” of the *Authorized Version*, and of course its Hebrew equivalent. Since we make this to be the verb *you fill*, we must modify our sentences, or we shall have too many verbs. Thus the “*was prepared*” of the *Authorized Version* (:13) finds its object in the word which commences :14, but the Hebrew for “*was prepared*” is not necessarily the passive form; it can be active, and so the Hebrew *ath*, discussed in a later paragraph, points out the object. Thus we render: they establish the anointed cherub’s booth.

This adjustment of verbs requires that we construe the words “*in the holy mountain of God*” as being accusative to “*I bestow*.” Also “*you come to be*” with “*in the midst of the fiery gems*.” Then “*you walk*” as with “*flawless in your ways*.” By close attention these details will be understood, and it will be observed that the supplied verbs of the *Authorized Version* are not required, yet we have a vigorous and intelligible sense.

THE GOVERNOR IS ALSO THE KING

It will be well first to discuss the connection of these verses with those of the prior section of the chapter which the *Authorized Version* makes to be speaking of the “*prince of Tyre*.” Can this one be the same as the “*king of Tyre*”? The *Authorized Version* translates eleven Hebrew words by the word “*prince*” and it behooves us therefore to enquire whether the one here used is really “*prince*.” The Hebrew is *ngid*; some of

the *Authorized Version* renderings are *captain*, *chief*, *governor*, *leader*, *noble* and *ruler*. The words signify governor, and its usage reveals several interesting details.

Saul was anointed to be *governor* over Israel (I Samuel 9:16) and was later proclaimed king at Mizpeh (I Samuel 10:17-27). David also was commanded by Jehovah to be governor (I Samuel 13:14), and this issued in his being king. It is also recorded of Solomon that he was king and governor (I Chronicles 29:22). It is obvious that the word *ngid* names the function of the king, and consequently both *king* and *governor* may be said of the same person. On the other hand, the term *governor* may be used of those who assist the king (see I Chronicles 13:1). There are a number of other interesting instances, but these will be sufficient to show that the *governor* of Tyre is most likely the *king* of Tyre also, merely differentiated to emphasize another angle of his overthrow. Neither the arrogance nor the wisdom of the governor of Tyre preserved him. Nor did the luxury and apparent flawlessness protect the king of Tyre. The governor of Tyre was a man, and the king of Tyre is said to be known among the peoples, and to become ash on the earth in the sight of all.

Such features entirely remove the king from consideration as other than a human, and at the same time tend to confirm that the governor and king are one and the same person. Other details around the king indicate the eminence he had, and also lift the curtain to reveal the position that God had afforded him in relation to the supreme and effective agencies by which the earth is governed under God’s economy.

The dirge against the king of Tyre opens with a terse description: *You* are the seal-print of a model, full of wisdom, and consummate in loveliness. This epitomizes the glory of the king, and is elaborated in :13-14. The consummate loveliness is expanded in :13, and the fullness of wisdom finds its correspondence in :14, for the king’s sagacity was such that Adonai bestows him with the overshadowing, anointed cherub. The model is explained in :15 as the king’s ways being flawless. The ancient splendor of the city of Tyre can be judged by its ruins, and these agree with the glory here ascribed to the king, its governor. ►

2. [Editor:] Omission of a sound between two words (usually a vowel and the end of one word or the beginning of the next). — WordWeb

IN LUXURY, NOT IN EDEN

The change from the *Authorized Version* rendering “*Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God*” calls for a remark. The suggested presence in Eden of the Tyrian king has been a problem, and no explanation has been satisfactory. Our versions have treated the Hebrew word *odn* as a proper noun, a name, but this does not give a sense fully agreeable to the surrounding context, besides creating other insurmountable difficulties. If we regard *odn* as a general term and render it by a word which gives its significance, we then reach a sense fully pertinent to the drift of the passage, and solve our problem in regard to Eden. At the same time we realize that the words “*garden of God*” are not a repetition of what would be meant by Eden, but are, in fact, required to complete the statement: You come to be in the luxury of the garden of God.

The wisdom of the king corresponds with that of the governor, wiser than Daniel. From the governor no secret was hidden. His understanding seemed merely to afford the acquisition of immense riches and treasures. These banished the flawlessness from the king’s ways, and the inwardness of the heart was then found. It revolted against Adonai and showed ignorance and lack of realization that all of the luxury and splendor of position was actually due to God’s economy, rather than to human ability and prowess.

TWO ASPECTS OF THE SAME MATTER

The separation of Adonai Jehovah’s messages under the titles of “*governor of Tyre*” and “*king of Tyre*” is to show more plainly that the normal course of events is not divorced from God’s administrating. To the governor it is shown that God is watching and ordering the rise and fall of Tyre. To the king the more intimate connection of Adonai to his position is revealed: they established the anointed cherub’s booth. This declares to the king something which his wisdom failed to understand. He did not perceive that Adonai had set him for rule and order in his section of the earth, that he, in his God-given kingly capacity, was an agent of God for the good of his people, and, as such, should restrain evil and not promote it.

NOT THE CHERUB

There is an infelicity in the *Authorized Version* rendering “*Thou art the anointed cherub*,” and it is quite important that we make the adjustment, for it controls the sense. The italics of the *Authorized Version* are supplied words, and, if correct, are admissible. The Hebrew word *ath* may be either the pronoun *you* or indicate the object of the verb. Since *ath* as a pronoun, without the pointing, is the feminine form, and the words *king* and *cherub* are masculine, the rendering as a pronoun must be ruled out, and so we are not required to supply the substantive verb “*art*.” This gives us *ath krub*, which must be accusative rather than nominative. We find confirmation of this when we perceive that the *Authorized Version* rendering “*and I have set thee*” is without an object as indicated by the supplied “*so*.” We may therefore render it, “*they establish the anointed cherub’s booth*.”

The difficulty that the king of Tyre was the anointed cherub is thus resolved into a matter which reveals God’s effective government over the earth, and, if we follow this indication, it is suggested that we shall receive an insight into the fact that God rules supreme over earth’s affairs. This will require that we consider the cherubim and endeavor to obtain fuller understanding of their function in the universe and the earth.

THE CHERUB DESTROYS THE KING

Before taking up the cherubim, we will first discuss another inapt rendering, in :16, which reads thus in the *Authorized Version*, “*And I will destroy thee, O covering cherub*.” The details of the employment and activities of the cherubim ought to cause us to question the *Authorized Version* rendering that a cherub should require to be destroyed; that a human should be termed a cherub is quite out of keeping with the scriptural references to these creatures. Their connection with judgment suggests that the action would be by the cherub rather than against it. This agrees with the result of our examination of the prior :14, from which we saw that the pavilion of the king of Tyre was associated with the cherub’s booth. The king’s office supplemented that of the anointed cherub in whom the authority over Tyre really resided.

The solution of our problem concerning the verb “destroy,” *abd*, lies in the fact that, divested of the pointings, it may be either first or third person, and was not the cherub; then it is fully agreeable to decide that it must be third person, and hence should be rendered, “*And destroying you is the cherub of the booth.*” These changes bring the references to the cherub into line with all other cases in the Scriptures, for they are employed to check the powers of evil and keep them within God’s requirements.

TYRE WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF THE HOLY MOUNT

The statement that the king of Tyre comes to be in the holy mountain of God seems to require to be understood in reference to the land of Israel. We must first note that the preposition should be “*in*,” not “*upon*” as rendered in the *Authorized Version*. This is in keeping with the geographical situation of Tyre. Israel is God’s holy mount (Ezekiel 20:40), and its land is apparently looked upon as such also. The city of Jerusalem is also spoken of as God’s holy mount (Daniel 9:16, 20), while Daniel 11:45 seems to require the whole land to be so considered. Thus speak Isaiah 57:13 and Jeremiah 31:23. In reference to the future, a journey to Israel will be a journey to Jehovah’s mount. God’s coming kingdom will also be His holy mount (Isaiah 11:9). This understanding relieves us of holding any recondite idea, and makes the statement to be quite normal. We thus come to perceive that, of old, Tyre held a place in relation to God’s ordering of His kingdom for Israel. The nations around had their function and office in God’s government, but, like Israel, they overstepped and violated their assigned positions and duties, and God restrained them according to His counsel, and by the functionaries of His throne who operated according to Adonai’s fiat.

THE KING ASSOCIATED WITH THE CHERUB

That the king of Tyre comes to be in the midst of the fiery gems tells us in figure that he was in his ruling capacity associated with the cherub who really was charged with control in its initial aspect. This may be deduced from the mention of fire in the details

of the cherub vision seen in Ezekiel (see 1:4, 13, 27; 8:2; 10:6-7). The fire in the visions was used to judge Jerusalem; so, when saying that the king of Tyre is in the midst of the fiery gems, this seems to signify that it was his duty to judge in the earth by reason of the authority invested in the cherub. Probably the precious gems enumerated in :13 are the stones of fire, emblems of the dignity of the king.

We should not find any difficulty in the word “create,” for this must not necessarily be confined to the particular aspect that we have when Adam was created. The features of any creation must be based on the requirements of the case. Ezekiel speaks of the Ammonite being created (21:30); similarly in 21:19 we have “*choose [create] thou a place, choose [create] it at the head of the way to the city.*” A creation is something new, and thus the rise of a city or a nation is spoken of as its creation, and any detail is part thereof.

Having discussed difficulties concerning the king of Tyre, it now may be desirable to consider briefly the cherubim, especially as it has emerged that the king of Tyre was not a cherub. In the course of our examination, hints have been made which really anticipate matters regarding these beings, and it is hoped that such observations may have prepared the ground for a fuller understanding of their reality and position in the Scriptures. If so, then we have reason to be thankful to God that His Word does instruct rather than perplex.

THE VISION OF EZEKIEL

In Ezekiel the cherubim are perhaps more prominent than in any other section of the Scriptures. Doubtless there is good reason for this. Are we able to discover it? If so, it will help our understanding. This prophet is much concerned with the evil in Israel, and with its restraint. The series of visions and their accompanying messages issue in the judging and deposing of Israel from the position which Jehovah had given to them. Throughout the book the title Adonai, that is, Adjudicator, is associated with the title Jehovah. The nations around Israel are also dealt with; their expressed pleasure at Israel’s plight is an affront to Adonai Jehovah. The nations do not understand that they are assigned their positions in relation to Is- ►

rael, and so they must learn of the glory, majesty and judgment of Jehovah. When the several nations have been subjected to correction, the visions return to the establishing of Israel in their land in that future day when they will fully display Jehovah's glory and respond to his choice of them.

GOD'S PRESENCE ORDERS EVENTS

The reason for the controlling movements in the visions being around the cherubim seems to emphasize that God's presence is peculiarly in the upheaval of Israel and the nations. They are not haphazard movements; but God is, through the cherubim, restraining the existing evil and ordering the future which shall realize His will.

The presence of the cherubim indicates coming judgment. In Ezekiel they are beneath the throne, while in the Unveiling they are incorporated into the throne. The first mention of them in Genesis 3:24 employs them to guard the way to the tree of life, and in the holy of holies, overshadowing the lid of the ark containing the law, we see their zeal and concern for God's law. In the tabernacle and temple they are much in evidence, being almost a center of the service, possibly reminding of the divine presence therein, and the importance of the law and worship.

In visions, God's presence seems to be indicated by the cherubim. Hezekiah realized this when he spread the king of Assyria's letter before Jehovah in Jehovah's house, praying to Him Who dwells between the cherubim, recognizing Him as the God of all the kingdoms of the earth (II Kings 19:15). Jehovah responds to Hezekiah's prayer, and Sennacherib was restrained.

GOD'S GOVERNMENTAL AGENTS

It would seem that the cherubim are the prime agents in God's government of the earth. God has supreme and effective control of it, which is carried out by manifold agencies, but we see only the instrumental aspect, as when one nation overthrows another, and the Scriptures reveal it to be of God. When we read about the cherubim in visions, then we see God's throne in operation, and the cherubim take part in

His government. They are related to the authority of God as displayed in directing the affairs of the earth, and hence, because of the way which earthly matters take, this directing usually issues in judgment. The cherubim thus are employed to check the powers of evil, for they are the divinely constituted delegates of the earth, over and above the human. The cherubim forward essential good and frustrate evil, for they are always subservient to the fiat of God. If the cherubim are the primary means of God's ministry of earth's affairs, then such as the king of Tyre are but the remote agents.

The cherubim, then, are executives of God's rule, and should be distinguished from the emblems used to represent them. They have flexibility in details of form, which doubtless corresponds to the particular requirements of the vision. When seen in vision they seem especially to depict the glory of God's throne as it threatens judgment.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORD CHERUB

The derivation of the word cherub is not without interest, especially in regard to their being representative. It is a compound word of two parts, *k* signifies *as* and *rub* meaning *many*, thus *as-many*, or, made a little more English, like-*many*. In figure they are the likeness of many earthly things and deal with the dominion which is in the hands of man over sentient creatures, animal and human, populating the earth. They seek the good of the living, and are themselves also spoken of under the general title of "*Living Ones*."

SATAN DECEIVES – CHERUBIM CHECK EVIL

From our considerations it should become obvious to us that not only is the king of Tyre not a cherub, but also that the cherub cannot be the Adversary and Satan. The function and employment of the cherubim are opposite to that of the Dragon, that ancient serpent, called Adversary and Satan. It deceives the nations and promotes evil. The cherubim check the powers of evil. ■

— *Unsearchable Riches*, Volume 36, 1945
(edited)

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- the affirmation that God will save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
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- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
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 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
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ABBREVIATION KEY

Scripture Version

(Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations are taken from the *Bible Student's Version*).

CV: Concordant Literal Version
 DAR: Darby Translation
 DT: Dabhar Translation
 FF: Ferrar Fenton Bible
 KJV: King James Version
 RE: Rotterdam's Emphasized Bible
 WT: Weymouth Translation
 YLT: Young's Literal Translation

Reference Sources

AA: Analytical Analysis (Welch)
 BDB: Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon
 CB: Companion Bible Notes & Appendixes (Bullinger)
 CC: Concordant Commentary (Knoch)
 CKC: Concordant Keyword

Concordance (Knoch)
 CL: A Critical Lexicon and Concordance (Bullinger)
 CWS: Complete Word Study Dictionary (Zodhiates)
 FoS: Figures of Speech (Bullinger)
 SEC: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance
 TGL: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon
 UR: Unsearchable Riches
 VED: Vine's Expository Dictionary
 YAC: Young's Analytical Concordance

Reference Notations

cf. – compare
e.g. – for example
et al. – and others
etc. – et cetera (and so on)
ff. – and the following
i.e., – that is

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