The Church As Seen By The Prophets

Intro: The prophets described the church in symbols and figures of speech or in language within the bounds of their normal day to day experiences and activities; cf. a man from prior to the War Between the States taking a ride in a jumbo jet. How would he describe it. The prophets spoke in terms of their past and present experiences. To illustrate, the term Egypt conveyed the concept of bondage; Babylon conveyed the idea of captivity; Canaan conveyed a delightful land that flowed with milk and honey.

I. JOEL SAW THE CHURCH AS HAVING ITS BEGINNING WITH A GREAT OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

A. Joel 2:28-32 “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. 30And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. 32And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.”

1. The concept of an outpouring or overwhelming of a storm was a common occurrence to Joel and the people to whom he spoke.
2. “All flesh” gave the concept that the Spirit would be poured out without distinction of race; Jew and Gentile alike.
3. “Sons and daughters” represented without distinction of sex.
4. “Old men and young men” represented without distinction of age.
5. “Servant and handmaids” represented without distinction of social position.

B. Acts 2:16-21 “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 17And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions: 18And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: 19And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: 20The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: 21And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

1. The miraculous age of the Holy Spirit had been ushered in by the outpouring of the Spirit.

II. AMOS SAW THE CHURCH AS THE RESTORED TABERNACLE OF DAVID.

A. Amos 9:11-12 “In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: 12That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this.”

1. The tabernacle was very interwoven in Hebrew life.
2. But Amos saw a breached or broken down tabernacle.
   a. That tabernacle was the United Kingdom of Israel.
   b. Solomon had married many foreign wives that had turned his heart from God to worship idols.
   c. As a result God sent Ahijah to anoint Jeroboam as King of the ten northern tribes. Only two tribes remained to David.
3. Amos saw the tabernacle of David raised up, with the breaches, divisions, closed up.
4. Amos also saw the restored nation as it proceeded to possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that were called by the name of God.

B. Acts 15.
1. Conference on circumcision.
2. Acts 15:7-9 “And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. 8And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; 9And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.”
3. Acts 15:13-18 “And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: 14Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. 18Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”
   a. Amos’ prophecy had been fulfilled.
   b. The breaches had been closed up.
   c. The church had been established and consisted of both Israel and Judah who believed.
   d. Thus the restored tabernacle of David was the church.

III. MICAH AND ISAIAH SAW THE CHURCH AS THE HOUSE ESTABLISHED ON THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAINS AND EXALTED ABOVE THE HILLS.

A. Isa. 2:2-4 “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 2And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 4And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

B. Micah 4:1-3 “But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. 1And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his
ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 5And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

1. Jerusalem was filled with houses, as well as God’s house, Solomon’s temple.
2. Thus, it was natural to think of the church as God’s house.
3. Notice the history of house of God.
   a. The first mention is Gen. 28:10-21
      (1) Jacob’s dream; a ladder to heaven
      (2) Gen. 28:17 “And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”
      (3) The place of God’s presence, where Jacob in reverence met God and was blessed by God.
      (4) It was the place of Jacob’s access to God and thus the gate of heaven.
   b. The tabernacle.
      (1) The tabernacle is where the glory of God dwelt among Israel.
      (2) Ex. 25:8-9 “And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.”
      (3) God dwells in His house today.
   c. The temple.
      (1) It was there that Israel offered prayers, sacrifices and homage to God.
      (2) God’s glory was there.
   d. Christ was, in a sense the “house of God” while in the flesh. John 1:14 “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”
      (1) Word dwelt among men
      (2) Dwelt is literally tabernacled.
   e. The church.

C. 1 Tim. 3:15 “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

1. Established on the top of mountains conveyed that the church would occupy the most exalted position on earth.
2. All nations flow unto it conveyed a steady stream whether men or women; Jew or Gentile would flow into the church.
3. Many people go and say come ye, sets forth the zealous evangelistic program of the church.
4. God teach us His way and we walk in His paths sets forth the edification of the church.
5. Law would go forth from Jerusalem would be the church would begin at Jerusalem.
6. The peaceful non-militant attitude of the church.

IV. Isaiah Alone.

A. Isa. 28:16 “Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.”

1. The church has the foundation of Jesus Christ.
   a. Mat. 16:16-18 “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”
   b. 1 Cor. 3:11 “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

2. 1 Pet. 2:6-8 “Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. 7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.”

B. Isa. 56:5 “Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.”

1. The memorial or place was instituted by Christ.
   a. Mat. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20
   b. This memorial would be a weekly observance; Isa. 66:23 “And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.”

2. An everlasting name.
   a. Isa. 62:1-2 “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. 2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.”
   b. The name would not be given until the Gentiles were brought in.
   c. Acts 11:26 “And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”

C. Isa. 56:3 “Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.”

1. The eunuch would be allowed to enter into God’s house.
2. Deu. 23:1 “He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord.”
3. Acts 8:26-39

D. Isa. 66:18-21 “For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory. 19 And I will set a sign among
them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. 20And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord. 21And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord.”

1. That all nations (Gentiles) God would take for priest.
2. 1 Pet. 2:9-10 “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; 10Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”

V. JEREMIAH SAW THE CHURCH AS A NEW COVENANT WRITTEN ON THE INWARD PARTS OF MEN’S HEARTS.

A. Jer. 31:31-34 “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord:
33But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

1. God had made a covenant with the Israelites when He brought them out of Egypt.
2. Jeremiah’s day Judah had become more wicked than even Sodom and Gomorrah. Jeremiah saw a time when the people would have God’s law written in their inward parts and in their hearts.

B. Heb. 8:6-12 “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. 7For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. 8For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: 9Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. 10For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

1. There had been a change in the priesthood which required a change in the law also, is what the Hebrew writer is speaking about.
2. Jeremiah saw the church in a very real sense as a covenant written on the inward parts.
VI. **Daniel Saw the Church as a Small Stone Cut out of the Mountain Without Hands, the Stone Grew and Filled the Whole Earth.**

A. **Dan. 2:31-35** “Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. 32 This image’s head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, 33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. 34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.”

1. A small hard stone was a familiar object to both Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar.
2. The stone was cut out without hands, denoting that it was no part of man’s order or arrangement.
3. The stone was small but very hard denoting its power to break in pieces the terrible image which represented the four great world empires.
   a. Daniel gives their ensign, banner, characteristics, places in history and historically what would happen to them.
   b. Babylonian Empire (625-536 BC)
   c. Medo-Persian Empire (536-330 BC)
   d. Grecian Empire (330-323 BC)
   e. Roman Empire (30 BC Octavian proclaimed himself ruler of the world).
4. The stone grew until it filled the whole earth.

B. **The church is that stone.**

1. The church had its beginning on Pentecost during the time of the Roman Empire with a small company of men and women.
2. They in time conquered and broke the great Roman Empire in less than five centuries.
   a. They endured 10 violent persecutions over three centuries.
   b. They ultimately conquered, not through physical might but through suffering and death for the cause of righteousness.

VII. **Ezekiel Saw the Church as a Sheep-fold With One Shepherd, David, Over Them.**

A. **Eze. 34:11, 22-23** “For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.... 22 Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. 23 And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.”

B. **John 10:14, 16** “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.... 16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”
VIII. Zechariah, Who Exercised Such a Vital Role in Causing The Resumption of The Work on Zerubbabel’s Temple, Saw The Church As a Temple and As an Open Fountain.

A. The work of the temple had been stopped.

1. Ezra 4:1-2 “Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel; 2Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither.”

2. When the Samaritans were denied their request they weakened the people’s hands, hired counsellors against them, and caused problems all the days of Cyrus and into the reign of Darius, some 16 years.

3. Haggai and Zechariah stirred up the people, but particularly Zerubbabel the governor, and Jeshua the high priest, to resume the work.
   a. Zechariah was particularly encouraging to Zerubbabel.
   b. Zec. 4:9 “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you.”
   c. He was faced with a great mountain of obstacles but said; Zec. 4:7 “Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.”
   d. The work resumed in the second year of Darius and was completed in the sixth year.
   e. Within this framework of Zerubbabel’s temple.

4. Zec. 6:12-13 “And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: 13Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”
   a. A spiritual temple built by the Branch (Christ) not Zerubbabel.
   b. The Branch would be both king and priest.
      (1) This was true of but one man, Melchizedek.
      (2) Heb. 6:20 “Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”
   c. The Branch would be both king and priest at the same time.
      (1) Jesus could not be priest on this earth; Heb. 8:4 “For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law;”
      (2) He is priest in heaven; Heb. 8:1 “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;”
      (3) Thus, His rule is in heaven; Heb. 1:2-3 “Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; ‘Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;”
B. Zec. 13:1 “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the
inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.”
1. Springs and fountains were quite common and essential for life.
2. It was not open then but would be opened “in that day.”
3. It would be for “sin and for uncleanness” or for purification of sins not
bodily or ceremonial uncleanness; cf. Jer. 31:34 “And they shall teach no more
every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall
all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will
forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”
4. When Christ died, shed His blood, that fountain was opened.
   a. 1 John 1:7 “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one
with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”
   b. Rev. 1:5 “And from Jesus Christ, who is
      the faithful witness, and
      the first begotten
      of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and
      washed us from our sins in his own blood,”
5. No wonder the Christian can sin:
There is a fountain billed with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners plunged be-neath that flood,
Lost all their guilty stains.

Conclusion:
1. God before the world’s foundation made a plan of redemption for man.
2. God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and He made it known
through the church. Eph. 1:4 “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the
world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love;”; Eph. 3:10-11 “To the intent that
now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold
wisdom of God. 11According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
3. By one means and another many of the prophets received visions relative to the church.