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Plain and Precious Things Restored, Part 2: Why Margaret Barker Matters.

In describing conditions in Jerusalem at the end of the 1st Temple period in the 6th Century B.C.E., Margaret Barker often refers to passages in 1st Enoch 93:7-8 that describe a condition of blindness that prevailed in Jerusalem at that time.

And after that in the fifth week, at its close, The house of glory and dominion shall be built for ever.

And after that in the sixth week all who live in it shall be *blinded*, And the hearts of all of them shall godlessly *forsake wisdom*. And in it a man shall ascend; And at its close the house of dominion shall be burnt with fire, And the whole race of the chosen root shall be dispersed.

Several of the Biblical prophets who lived at Jerusalem also described both the blindness and the consequent forsaking of wisdom. By comparing the passages that describe the blindness, we can get a better view of what defines the condition, what wisdom was lost at the time, and what the contrasting condition of vision should be. Each prophet gives part of the picture, and by seeing how the parts interconnect, we can get a clear vision of what happened. For example, Ezekiel, a priest taken as part of the first group of exiles writes:

Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have *eyes to see, and see not*; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house. (Ezek. 12:2)

Notice that Ezekiel credits the blindness to rebellion, which implies a willful internal enemy. Jeremiah also talks about the blindness, and relates it to a loss of understanding (which implies a lack of wisdom that corresponds to the description in 1st Enoch).

Hear now this, O foolish people, *without understanding*, which *have eyes, and see not*; which have ears, and hear not. (Jer. 5:21)

Jacob, like Ezekiel, a temple priest, provides important details about the blindness:

But behold, the Jews [that Lehi knew in Jerusalem in the period before the destruction] were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things which they could not understand.

Wherefore, because of their blindness, which *blindness* came from *looking beyond the mark*, they must needs fall; for *God hath taken his plainness away from them*, and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand because they desired it. And because they desired it, God hath done it that they may stumble.

Jacob 4:14

This passage is very important. LDS scholars have generally focused on the more conspicuous prophecies of the apostasy that would follow on the death of the Old World apostles. Indeed, Barker's work on the transmission of the Biblical texts correlates astonishingly well with the prophecies in 1 Nephi 13. (See her article "Text and Context" from her 2003 book, *The Great High Priest*, also available online here: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/barker.htm>). However, in also pointing back to the earlier upheavals around 600 B.C.E., Barker also provides the best clue as to what the "mark" that Jacob refers to actually was. Barker points to Ezekiel, like Jacob, a temple priest and Jacob's exact contemporary. In a vision of the angels of destruction summoned to the Jerusalem temple, Barker explains how Ezekiel saw that:

[A]n angel was sent to mark the faithful: 'Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark upon the foreheads of the men who groan and sigh over all the abominations that are committed in it' (Ezek. 9.4). The LORD then spoke to the other six angels: 'pass through the city after him and smite... but touch no one upon whom is the mark... (Ezek. 9.5-6). The mark on the forehead was protection against the wrath.

'Mark', however conceals what that mark was. The Hebrew says that the angel marked the foreheads with the letter *tau*, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the ancient Hebrew script that Ezekiel would have used, this letter was a diagonal cross, and the significance of this becomes apparent from the much later tradition about the high priests. The rabbis remembered that the oil for the anointing the high priest had been lost when the first temple was destroyed and that the priests of the second temple were only 'priests of many garments', a reference to the eight garments worn on the Day of Atonement (m. Horayoth 3.4). The rabbis also remember that the anointed high priests of the first temple had been anointed on the forehead with the sign of a diagonal cross (b. Horayoth 12a). The diagonal cross was the sign of the Name on their foreheads, the mark which Ezekiel described as the letter *tau*." ¹

Jacob's 'mark' then, must be a reference to the anointed high priest of the first temple. Those who received the anointing were those who took upon themselves the Name of the anointed, the Messiah. Barker explains that:

It was also remembered that the roles of the anointed high priest and the priest of the many garments differed in some respects at Yom Kippur when the rituals of

¹ Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, Which God Gave Him to Show to His Servants What Must Soon Take Place (Revelation 1.1)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clarke, 2000) 162.

atonement were performed. The anointed high priest, they believed, would be restored to Israel at the end of time, in the last days.²

Why does this matter? We will recall that the Hebrew Messiah and the Greek Christ, both mean ‘anointed one.’ The implication is that the role of the anointed high priest was changed and that the differences had something to do with the Day of Atonement.

Lehi begins his own ministry in Jerusalem by prophesying of “a Messiah, and the redemption of the world.” This clearly points to the “anointed” and to the Day of Atonement, and suggests that Lehi acted in direct opposition to those who were making these changes (1 Nephi 1:19).

Jeremiah objects to someone turning away from traditional understanding, making innovations:

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where [is] the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk [therein]. (Jeremiah 6:16)

Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways [from] the ancient paths, to walk in paths, [in] a way not cast up; (Jeremiah 18:15)

What kind of innovation does Jeremiah object to?

Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit...For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. (Jeremiah 2:11, 13)

What was the fountain of living waters to Jeremiah? References to a fountain in 1st Enoch point to a Temple setting, and Barker notes that “in the traditions of the ancient Near East there is ‘a garden of paradise’ where a gardener supervises the Tree of Life growing at the Water of Life..” Jeremiah 17:7-8 says that the “man that trusteth in the LORD...shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river” and then continues the Holy of Holies imagery in verses 12-13, saying that “A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary” and then proclaims woes on those who have “forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.”

Nephi, a contemporary of Jeremiah, also refers to the “word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God; and I also beheld that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God.” (1 Nephi 11:25). Taken together, all of this suggests that the tree and fountain are linked images, and that the rejection of the tree and fountain amounted to the nation changing their gods. The tree of life and the fountain were both temple images associated with

² Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God*, 15.

wisdom. The anointing was associated with vision. All are associated with the temple and the anointed high priest.

Furthermore both 1st Enoch and Jeremiah charge someone is actively changing scriptural writings.

And the burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more: for every man's word shall be his burden; for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hosts our God. (Jer. 23:36)

So far, we have a condition of willful blindness associated with people in Jerusalem rejecting wisdom as represented by a fountain and a tree of life, someone making deliberate changes to the role of the anointed high priest (that is, the messiah), killing prophets, and changing scripture. Next time, we shall look at Barker's identification of the Biblical events and people that fit this description, as well as additional confirming evidence that her identification is correct and casts important light on both Biblical and LDS scripture.