

Revelation 4, Part 2

The Nazarite

by Edward Irving

From *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Lecture XI, Revelation 4.

This is the second in a series of articles I will reprint here, from one of the lost treasures of the Advent awakening of the early 1800's, Edward Irving's *Lectures on the book of Revelation*. The first part of this lecture is found in the article: *Revelation 4, Part 1 – He Upon the Throne*.

In this article, Irving compares the Nazarite with the description of Christ in heaven, and parallels the life of Samson with events that unfolded between Christ and His church since the resurrection. It is the most remarkable prophetic interpretation of the life of Samson I've ever read (and indeed, perhaps the only prophetic interpretation of the life of Samson).

Having established who is on the throne, let us move on to His description:

Revelation 4

³ And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone.

Literally, a stone of jasper and sardine, by which I understand, not that one part of Him was like a jasper and another part like a sardine, but that altogether His aspect was like the combination of a jasper and a sardine. Let us now examine what that combination is, and what truth is revealed under this symbol.

The sardine is the color of flesh, or blood red; but the jasper is described by the Lord:

Revelation 21

¹¹ New Jerusalem, having the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper, clear as crystal.

These two, therefore, combined together give us the aspect of flesh beaming forth the light and glory of God. This is the best representation which can be given of the appearance of

the spiritual body arrayed with its celestial glory, God manifested in glorified flesh unto the celestial, as unto us on the earth He was manifested of the earth, earthy.

Illustrative of this the appearance of the King of heaven, I find two passages in the Old Testament; the one in the *Lamentations* of Jeremiah, and the other in the prophecies of *Ezekiel*. In the book of *Lamentations* the appearance of the Nazarite, in the day of Jerusalem's glory, is thus described:

Lamentations 4

⁷ Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies; their polishing was of sapphire.

Here also is the flesh-red color of the ruby, the pure white of the jasper, with the relucant polish of the sapphire. Now the law of the Nazarite, as it is contained in *Numbers* 6, had reference to the body, and to that only; prohibiting the use of strong drink, by which it is enervated and shriveled up, and likewise prohibiting the use of the razor, as the representative of those arts decorative of the outward person which show themselves, age after age, in such fantastical varieties.

The arts of man, by which he seeks to give inward vigor and outward beauty, being thus cut off, and the Nazarite separated to God, God showed what He could make of him, how fair and comely, and pure and mighty: "purer than snow, whiter than milk more ruddy in body than rubies; their polishing of sapphire."

And by this ordinance God did give in flesh a lively presentation of that beauty, and glory, and might, to which the human body should come, when it was wholly taken out of the hands of others, separated from the dead, and devoted to Himself, which it will be in the resurrection.

The ordinance of the Nazarite, blessed, as it was, of God with such surpassing beauty of body, I consider as a standing type of the resurrection body, which shall be fashioned after

the likeness of Christ's glorious body:

Philippians 3

²¹ Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

This is the reason, as I take it, why the person seated on the heavenly throne is described in His appearance by language so similar to that in which the Nazarite is described by the prophet Jeremiah.

That it is the resurrection body of Christ which is seated in the throne of heaven, I know for certain from what is written in *Ephesians* 1. This is not written of His Divinity, nor yet of His reasonable soul, but of His body in particular, for that only was raised from the dead:

Ephesians 1

²⁰ Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

²¹ Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

²² And has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

²³ Which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.

And accordingly, when the heavens, with their principalities, are revealed to us, the first thing we see is one upon the throne, who to look upon is like a jasper and sardine stone. Now that this identification of Christ with the Nazarite is correct I have other good reasons for believing.

First, because in the days of His flesh He was not a Nazarite, but was reproached for His indiscriminate use of the kindly fruits of the earth:

Luke 7

³⁴ The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and you say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publi-

cans and sinners!

Moreover we know that when He shall come again, He will drink of the juice of the grape with His disciples:

Matthew 26

²⁹ But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

If therefore at any time He gathers up into Himself this ordinance of the Nazarite, as He does every other, it must be during the period of His session at the right hand of God, even that period which is represented in the vision before us.

The Nazarite surely, like every other ordinance, must testify of Jesus: He is the end of it. But the Nazarite He was not during the days of His flesh, nor is to be when He comes again: therefore the Nazarite He must be in His present exaltation.

To abstain from wine was the chief part of the Nazarites vow. To this perhaps also refers what He said,

John 17

¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify Myself [that is, "set myself apart"] that they also might be sanctified through Your truth.

Wherein I think is declared that the one end for which His body was sanctified and separated from all sinful, mortal, and corruptible properties by the resurrection, and the one occupation which it should during its separateness be taken up with, was to sanctify those who believe, to make them perfect in one, and to advance them to the fellowship of His glory, even as He speaks in the passage referred to.

Moreover, it answers well with the office of the Nazarite to see Christ as the only body, separate from death, through which the Father deigns to execute His purpose, in which the Father dwells, and which is altogether devoted to the Father.

On these accounts I incline to believe, that the embodied

Christ upon the throne of God, like a sardine and a jasper, is the antitype of the Nazarite; and that the appearance which is given to Him in the text is for the purpose of teaching us this, along with other truths.

Believing, as I do, that this is the true interpretation of the appearance of Him who sat upon the throne, it furnishes us with the key to the history of Samson, the mighty Nazarite of God, who was given to Manoah and his wife (*Judges* 13), with such glorious circumstances as attend not upon the birth of any other of the Old Testament saints, excepting only Isaac.

If, as we have shown, Christ became the Nazarite upon His ascension into glory, and continues so until His return unto the earth, we must find the beginning and the ending, and all the particulars, of Samson's history realized within that period of our Lord's being.

Now the first action of Samson's life is the extraordinary, and even unlawful, desire which he had for a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines, which answers to our Lord, upon His ascension into glory, seeking His spouse, His bride, from the uncircumcised Gentiles.

But, before this is accomplished, a lion roars against Samson, which he rent as he would have rent a kid; signifying the resistance made by the Pagan empire of Rome, which Christ had to subvert before He did attain His purpose amongst the Gentile nations.

Out of the carcass of this lion came forth sweetness and nourishment; signifying, as I take it, the delight and strength which flowed to Christ from the Gentiles, after that the wild beast of Paganism was overthrown.

Now the second act of Samson's life is his wrath and revenge upon the Philistines, for depriving him of his wife, which I conceive to be the act of Christ's vengeance upon the nations, for corrupting His Church, and marrying her to the

kings of the earth.

And behold how this act of vengeance proceeds, by burning up their standing corn in the time of the wheat harvest, making it to them a harvest of wrath, instead of a harvest of joy, which answers to all the Scriptures; as, for example,

Joel 3

¹³ Put you in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.

Zechariah 12

⁶ In that day will I make the governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand, and on the left.

Matthew 13

⁴⁰ As therefore the tares are gathered, and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world.

⁴¹ The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

⁴² And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

This battle with burning and fuel of fire being accomplished, the Philistines make war upon the people of Judah; and Samson smites them with the jaw-bone of an ass, out of which in his thirst flowed to him abundance of refreshing water.

If I err not, this signifies the destruction of the Gentile apostate lords by the word of the testimony of a few despised preachers of Christ, who are in His hand as the jaw-bone of the ass in the hand of Samson. And from the same word of testimony which destroys the nations proceeds the living water which refreshes the heart of the Lord, when His work of judgment is past and over.

Psalms 110

⁷ He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall He lift up the head.

This now is the first act of the Nazarite's life, in which, as I think, is contained under a type the act and history of our great Nazarite, in respect to His wife whom He takes to Himself from amongst the uncircumcised.

And now we come to the other act of Samson's life, separated from the former by a period of twenty years; and under which we believe the same great action of the mighty Nazarite, from His ascension to His coming again, is set forth with somewhat different emblems.

It consists of two scenes, being both scenes of love, the loves of the Nazarite;—the one for a woman in Gaza, which was a harlot; to whom having gone in, the people of Gaza thought to have destroyed him in the morning, but in the midnight he arose and carried the gates of the city upon his shoulder to the top of a hill before Hebron. If I err not, this is Christ in His love coming to the harlot city of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 1

²¹ How is the faithful city become a harlot?

And when they would have destroyed Him, carrying off the gates of hell and of the grave, and ascending into the place of David's government before He reigned in Jerusalem.

Thereafter, and apparently without any great interval, he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah, which if the former signify the Jewish Church, in whose service he carried off the gates of death and hell, then this must signify the Gentile Church, to whom the Lord be-took Himself after Judah would not be His.

And behold Delilah lends her ear to the lords of the Philistines; as the Gentile Church has forsaken her Nazarite, her sanctified and separated one, of whom she has been beloved, and given herself to the kings of the earth: the end of which treachery is, that the seven locks, where was the hiding of Samson's strength, being cut off, he becomes to them a miserable drudge.

Which being interpreted is, that our mighty Nazarite having by the treacherous dealing of the Church been stripped of His seven-horned or royal power, as King of kings and Lord of lords, the kings of the earth do use His name and His religion for bringing to pass all their vile machinations against truth, equity, mercy, and peace.

But at length, in the close of the Nazarite's day, their iniquity rises to such a pitch of daring, that they will use the Lord's Christ for the entertainment of their idol pageantry,—whereupon, at length wearied out, the mighty Nazarite comes down upon them with hideous ruin.

And so comes to an end the action of His Nazarite condition: teaching us, that when Christ comes forth from His state of separation at the right hand of God and concludes His Nazarite life, it shall be with the destruction and ruin of those apostate kings and judges of the earth who have appropriated His names and attributes, and used them for the service of their idol.

Such is a brief view of the mystery of the Nazarite, which some may think more ingenious than judicious, and which I give rather as the materials for an exposition than an exposition itself. To the students of the Old Testament, who have some insight into its method, these remarks will not seem unprofitable, though by others they be regarded as foolishness.

Editor's Note: I just wanted to add a note to Edward Irving's exposition, with regard to the parallel of Samson and Christ's last work. In the last scene of Samson's life, he brings down the two pillars during the feast to the false god Dagon, and so inflicts a final blow on the Philistines.

This event also has a definite fulfillment in the last struggle between truth and error. There are also two pillars of false religion in our day.

"Through the two great errors, immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deception. While

the former lays the foundation of Spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome.” Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 588.

These two false pillars will be brought down by the real Samson, Jesus Christ, working through His people. It is not violence that will bring them down, but faith in the word of God even against the supposed words of spirits from heaven, and obedience to the Lord’s Law, as symbolized by the Sabbath day.

The other passage in the Old Testament, with a view to which the appearance of Him who sat upon the throne, as well as the whole of these two chapters, is manifestly written, is that glorious vision which occurs ever and anon in the prophet *Ezekiel*, and which is written at large in the first chapter thereof.

As the prophetic part of the *Apocalypse* acknowledges the vision of chapter 4 and 5, so the book of *Ezekiel* acknowledges the vision of chapter 1 as the master-key of the events described, the secret moving cause of them all.

To this vision of *Ezekiel*, the wheels, and living creatures, and enthroned one, we have already referred both in our first and in our third Lecture (see Book 1, chapter: *The Substance and Method of the Book*, section: *Christ gathering His Church from the Hands of the Dragon*).

Now the vision of *Ezekiel* is after this sort: a firmament with an appearance of a throne and a man above it, supported by the living creatures and the wheels beneath it. The living creatures supported upon their heads and wings a firmament:

Ezekiel 1

²⁶ And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone, and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

²⁷ And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it: from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even down-

ward, I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

²⁸ As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord; and when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

This enthroned one, there can be no doubt, is the same with the enthroned one of the text; and indeed the whole of these two visions have so many points of resemblance, as ever to have been regarded as representing the same things and mutually illustrative of one another. And in the exposition which follows we shall have much use to make of the vision which Ezekiel saw by the river of Chebar.

Now, in the verses quoted above, the man who sat upon the throne is called the “Likeness of the Glory of Jehovah”, and in chapter 10 it is written:

Ezekiel 10

¹⁹ And the Glory of the God of Israel was over the cherubim above.

²⁰ This is the living creature that I saw under Elohim of Israel, by the river Chebar, and I knew that they were the cherubim.

There can be no doubt then that the person seen by Ezekiel is He who dwelt between the cherubim, whose glory first appeared to Moses in the bush, when also He took His name of Jehovah, the God of Israel.

In His humility, in the appearance of His fleshly tabernacle, He ate, and walked, and talked with Abraham on the plains of Mamre; and in the same appearance He wrestled with Jacob at the brook Jabbok.

But when He appeared unto Moses, with a high hand to deliver His people out of Egypt, He appeared in His glory, and in that glory marched He in the heavens by His name “Jah”; in which pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, though a man appeared not, yet that a man was there is declared in the

Covenant itself:

Exodus 23

²⁰ Behold, I send an Angel before you, to keep you in the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

²¹ Beware of Him, and obey His voice; provoke Him not: for He will not pardon your transgressions: for My name is in Him.

²² But if you shall indeed obey His voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto your enemies, and an adversary unto your adversaries.

²³ For my Angel shall go before you, and bring you in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.

This Angel of the Covenant is the same with Him of whom Jacob speaks in his blessing of Joseph's sons:

Genesis 48

¹⁶ The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

And this is the same with the man with whom he wrestled, and with whom he had various intercourse in all his wanderings. The same also is it who appeared unto Joshua, as the Captain or Leader of the Lord's host, who in the same place is called Jehovah, and stood as a man over against Joshua, as a man with a sword drawn in his hand (*Joshua* 4:13).

Of this the Angel of the Covenant, who dwelt in the cloud that rested upon the wings of the cherubim of the most holy place, Ezekiel had the appearance presented to him.

It was not the very glory, because the Son had not yet assumed the form of man. It was not the likeness of the glory, which did not come into existence until the resurrection of Christ from the dead, who then became the brightness of the glory of God (*Hebrews* 1:3).

But it was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah; it was an exhibition or showing beforehand of that form in which God's glory should in the fullness of time appear.

Now the Apostle John sees the reality of that, of which Ezekiel saw the appearance. It was not the appearance of a man which John saw, but a man. Ezekiel saw only the appearance of a man, teaching us this great truth, which we have so often asserted, that though the Son acted from the beginning in the character of the incarnate God, He had not taken to Him any creature substance, but only appearances thereof, to accomplish the ends of God.

But from the Incarnation it was no more appearance, but very truth: wherefore it is written, "truth came by Jesus Christ;" and again, "I am the Truth;" that is, the Verity of all types, ordinances, and appearances.

Now the appearance which Ezekiel saw he describes as the color of amber outward, and as the appearance of fire inward; that is, as I understand, the ground-color was red, and the brightness emanating from the ground was as amber, which together form the best resemblance that can be had from the material of fire to that flesh which John saw, in color as a sardine stone, blood red, with an effulgence like that of jasper, which is clear as crystal, and as the glory of God.

For Ezekiel's representation is made altogether with the element of fire, which in the Old Testament is the standing symbol of the glory of Jehovah. But in the New Testament it is expressed, without a symbol, by glorified flesh.

And so much have we to say with respect to the appearance of Him that sat upon the throne; and methinks it ought to teach us a lesson of the dignity and glory to which this our mortal tabernacle shall yet be advanced; for though, as has been said, no one shall or can sit upon that throne of heaven, save He alone who is God as well as man. yet shall we who

are raised from the dead surely be like Him in that glorified body in which He now subsists.

Philippians 3

²⁰ For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

²¹ Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body...

1 John 3

² Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

This now is what flesh shall come to, when mortality and corruption, and weakness and dishonor, are expelled out of it. We are now wearing the image of the earthy; we shall then wear the image of the heavenly.