

PEOPLE'S PULPIT...



Sermon by CHARLES T. RUSSELL, Pastor Brooklyn Tabernacle.

Pastor Russell's Discourse On Jerusalem

Brooklyn, N. Y., June 5.—Pastor Russell returned from his European trip just in time to keep his appointment to speak in Brooklyn's largest auditorium, the Academy of Music. His topic was "JERUSALEM," from the text, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her appointed time is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins" (Isaiah xl. 1, 2). As had been anticipated, the crowds were too great for accommodation at the Tabernacle. The spacious Academy of Music was crowded, with a large number of ministers and other men on the platform. After announcing his text the speaker said:—

Christendom, with united voice, admits that all of the Divine Revelation came to and through the Hebrew people. Listen to the argument of the Apostle Paul, "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God—the Divine message respecting the Divine purposes, present and to come. The Apostle again informs us that the entire Gospel message was briefly comprehended in the Creator's promise to Abraham, "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Galatians iii. 8).

"To the Jew First." It was the most natural thing imaginable for the Jewish Nation to suppose that the giving to them of the Law at Mount Sinai, through the mediatorship of Moses, was the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. Nevertheless they were mistaken.

Israel's Mediator, and the sacrificing priests, and the sacrifices they offered, and their Tabernacle, with its Holy and Most Holy, and the Temple, and all the features of the Law Covenant were types or foreshadowings of the "better sacrifices," higher Priesthood, better Mediator, and glorious blessings of eternal forgiveness and reconciliation yet to be accomplished. Nevertheless the period of Israel's types was not wasted. Not only were the types there given, but at the same time a special class of agents were selected: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the Prophets and worthy ones of that age, holy, consecrated to God, and accepted as agents qualified for the Kingdom conditions. Of these the Scriptures declare, "They fell asleep." They are still asleep in the dust of the earth, awaiting the glorious resurrection morning, and a grand share then with Messiah in the work then to be accomplished. In their lifetime, they were styled the Fathers, because Messiah was foretold to be of the posterity of Abraham, and also "David's Son."

But other Scriptures, without contradicting these statements, show us distinctly that "David's Son" and "Abraham's Seed" is to be Lord and Father of both David and Abraham. Thus we read, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth" (Psalm xlv. 16). David's son, Messiah, will be David's father, or life-giver, when he will raise David from the dead. Similarly he will be the father of all of those ancient worthies; and as David's Lord, and "Lord of lords," it will be his pleasure to appoint to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all of the Ancient Worthies, and Prophets, and faithful ones a glorious share with himself in the great Messianic Kingdom, which he is about to set up for the ruling and blessing of Israel and all the nations of the earth. Will not this be a grand honor to Abraham and his Seed! Could we expect that the Almighty would honor and use in such a high position any except the faithful? Surely not. When Messiah shall make these Ancient Worthies "Princes in all the earth," as representatives of his invisible Kingdom, will not this mean honor and dignity to the Jews first?

"Comfort Ye My People." Our text is one of three declarations in the Old Testament, which assure us that there is a "double" connected with Israel's history. That is to say, Jewish history naturally divides itself into two exactly equal parts; the first of which was a time of favor, intermingled with disciplines, but favor nevertheless. The second of these parts has been one of disfavor and exclusion from Divine fellowship. As foretold by the Prophet, Israel for many centuries has been without prophet, or priest, and without ephod and without communion with God; whereas, at one time they were God's favored people. They now, according to their own admission, are so thoroughly rejected that they have no communication whatever, no light to shine upon their pathway. The prophet's words have been fulfilled, "Let their table become a snare before them; and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not" (Psalm lxxix. 22, 23). They have stumbled; they are blinded; but thank God! their blindness is not to be perpetual. The period of their blindness

is the second part of the "double," with the fulfillment of that "double" their blindness will begin to vanish, and "All the blind eyes shall be opened." Of that time the Lord declares that "He who scattered Israel will gather them."

We are impressed, not by fancy, but by the Word of God, that Israel's "double" is now fulfilled, that Israel's blessing has already begun, that the opening of Israel's eyes is now in progress. For this reason we have chosen for our text, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Cry unto Jerusalem and say unto her that her appointed time is accomplished, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double [the two parts of her chastisement] for all her sins." Because the "double" is completed, we may speak the words of comfort.

Thirty-four years ago we called attention to these facts, but few had ears to hear. When eighteen years ago we visited Jerusalem, having in mind chiefly the fact that the time for the regathering of Israel was nigh at hand, and that the set time to favor Zion had come, we found no hearing ears amongst the Jewish people; and Zionism had not then been dreamed of. Our communications with the representatives of the Baron Hirsch Immigration Fund, and also with the executors of the Sir Moses Montefiore Jewish Relief Fund met with scant recognition. Nevertheless, we felt sure that Israel's "double" had been fulfilled, and that her morning of joy would soon break.

Meantime how much has happened during those eighteen years! Zionism has risen and engendered the hope of the "chosen people" in every land, and turned their eyes toward the land of promise; not that all are thinking of returning thither, but that every Jew who retains faith in the God of his fathers, and in the Abrahamic promise, is now looking and hoping for the time of blessing, long foretold. They know not about their "double"; they have not been studying the Holy Scriptures, but the teachings of their ancestors, as presented by the Talmud. They have been making a very similar mistake to that of Christian people, who have been studying the creeds of the "dark ages" instead of the Word of God.

The Three "Doubles." Glance with me at three different statements by the Lord through the Prophets of Israel respecting Israel's "double" of experience: the first, an experience of God's favor; the second, an experience of equal length without Divine favor. Notice first Jeremiah's prophecy (Jeremiah xvi. 18). After telling of Israel's disfavor, and then of their regathering, the Lord declares, "And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double"—some of the recompense with favor, and some without favor. Jeremiah's prophecy looks down to the "double" from his own day, which was more than six hundred years before the second part of their "double" began.

Turn now to Zechariah's prophecy, and note that prophetically he takes his standpoint at the very time when the second part of the "double" began. His words are, "Even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee (Zechariah ix. 12). Come next to our text, and note that the Prophet Isaiah stands with us, and views the matter from the standpoint that the "double" of experience has been fulfilled: "Speak comfortably unto Jerusalem, cry unto her that her appointed time is accomplished, because she hath received of the Lord's hand double [two equal parts] for her sins." It is our understanding that this "double" reached fulfillment in the year 1878 A. D., and since that date we have been declaring to the best of our ability, as the Lord granted opportunity, these comforting words to Israel, assuring God's chosen people that their period of disfavor has ended, and that they are gradually returning to prosperity; that Divine favor began with them in 1878. Yea, more than this, our sermons which to some extent reflect this feature of the Divine program relating to Israel's restoration to Divine favor, are being read to a considerable extent by Hebrews as well as by Christians; their eyes are gradually opening, as the Scriptures foretell they shall do.

But how may we know when the turning point of Israel's "double" took place? How may we know that the "double" was completed in 1878? We reply that the answer to the question necessitates an acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah. Israel's rejection of him as their King, marks the turning point of God's favor, as the prophecy of Zechariah, just quoted, distinctly shows. Neither Christians nor Jews have appreciated the full import of the incident mentioned in the Gospel; that five days before his crucifixion, Jesus rode upon an ass, after the manner of Jewish kings, into the city of Jerusalem, a multitude surrounding him, and going before him, shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah!" The Prophet Zechariah called attention to this in-

cident centuries before it occurred, and then gives the Lord's words, "Even to-day do I declare, I will render double unto thee."

Israel's history as a nation began with the death of Jacob, when he gave his blessing to the twelve tribes. The period from that time to the death of Jesus, according to the Scriptures, was 1845 years; and a like period of disfavor, measuring from the day of Jesus' rejection marks the year 1878, as the end of Israel's disfavor—the time when the message of comfort should go forth. However, Divine favor was only gradually taken from Israel, and altogether a period of thirty-six years intervened between the death of Jesus and the utter destruction of Jerusalem. Similarly we should expect that the return of favor would be gradual, a like period of 36 years; and this would bring us to the year 1914, as the time when God's favor for his people will be publicly and openly manifested.

"The Seed of Abraham." The question now arises, What has God accomplished during the latter half of Israel's "double"? Did he pass by his chosen people to directly bless the Gentiles, or how shall we understand Divine Providence with respect to this matter?

We answer that Almighty God had one feature of his plan which he did not make known directly and explicitly to Abraham or any other Prophet; he kept that feature of his purpose a secret. It is this: Messiah could not be a man and yet accomplish the great things which Jehovah intended, as stated in his Word. The Law called for an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth and a man's life for a man's life. As by man (Adam) came the sentence of death, and through hereditary upon all of his offspring, even so the Divine Law purposed that there must be a sacrifice of one human life to offset the one human life condemned to death. The one who would thus meet the demands of Justice on behalf of the race would have human perfection to every member of Adam's race willing to accept it on the terms of the Divine Law. It was for this reason that Christ should die, "the just for the unjust."

As a reward for his obedience to the Father even unto death, Christ was raised from the dead to the Divine nature. In this exalted condition he is capable of being a Mediator and of doing a work for Israel and for the world much higher and broader than Moses could effect. Moses, the typical mediator, made atonement for a year with the blood of beasts; but Messiah with his own blood makes perpetual atonement for the sins of all the people. This is the great Messiah (Jesus) who suffered the death of the cross—for the Jews and for the Gentiles—"for all the people." This is the glorified Messiah, who as the Spiritual Seed of Abraham is about to bless Israel's Ancient Worthies, and to "make them Princes in all the earth"; ministers of his Kingdom for the ruling, blessing and instruction of whosoever will, out of the present sin and death conditions, to life eternal to full human perfection, with the earth as Paradise restored.

Members of Messiah. But, some one may say, Where do Christians come in connection with this Divine arrangement? And if God's dealings with the world are to be through Israel, and not through the Church, why has there been so long a delay? Why did not the glorified Messiah at once set up his Kingdom, and bring forth the Ancient Worthies from the tomb to be its earthly representatives? Oh, here is another part of the mystery of God! Isaac, Abraham's son, was typical of Messiah, the Spiritual Seed, but before Isaac began the work of dispensing the blessings to his brethren and to his children, he first took a bride, and this act also was allegorical or typical. In the anti-type, Messiah, the glorified Jesus, partook of the divine nature according to the Father's invitation, and he is to take a Bride who is to be his joint-heir on the spirit plane—to share with him the glory, honor and service of his Messianic Kingdom. The period, of Israel's disfavor, as a Nation, has been the time in which a special class has been called in the Father and begotten of the Holy Spirit to joint-heirship with Christ as his Bride.

But did God pass by the natural seed of Israel to give these spiritual privileges to the Gentiles—to gather from the Gentiles a people, figuratively to constitute the Bride of Messiah? Nay! The Scriptures assure us that this spiritual privilege went first to the Jews; they show us that during the three and a half years of Jesus' ministry, and during the thirty-six years following it, the gospel message was given almost exclusively to the Jews, and gathered from that people as many as were found to be "Israelites indeed without guile," as many as were not only of the circumcision of the flesh, but also who were of the circumcision of the heart. God did not continue to deal with his chosen people, but after having gathered from them as many as were worthy of the spiritual blessing and exaltation—only then was the message sent to the Gentiles, to gather from the Gentiles a number sufficient to complete the fore-ordained and predestined number who will constitute the Bride.

So then, my brethren, in proving from the Scriptures that Israel's "double" is about completed; that Israel's blindness is about to be taken away, and that Israel's exaltation as the earthly representatives of Messiah's Kingdom is near at hand, we are proving to ourselves another thing; namely, that the full number called from amongst the Gentiles to participate with Christ on the spirit plane, as members of his Bride class, will soon be completed (Romans ii. 25-27).

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