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Editor: T. T. SHIELDS

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans 1:16.

Address Correspondence: THE GOSPEL WITNESS, 180 Gerrard Street East, Toronto 2, Canada.
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WILL THE JEWS OF THE WORLD MAKE PALESTINE THEIR HOME?

A Sermon by the Pastor, Dr. T. T. Shields

Preached in Massey Hall, Toronto, Sunday Evening, January 29th, 1939

(Stenographically Reported)

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

"By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

"For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

"Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

"Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

"For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

"And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."—Hebrews 11:8-16.

The Jews as a race, and the question of their relation to Palestine, with many people have long been a subject for academic thought and discussion; notwithstanding, a subject that was rather remote from personal and practical considerations. But now that millions of Jews are seeking asylum in other countries than those in which they were born, many of them looking longingly toward the wide spaces of this Dominion, the Jewish problem has taken on a new colour, and instead of being a subject for theoretical speculation, it has become one of the most vital and urgently pressing questions of national and international politics.

Deeply as we sympathize with the persecuted people of Israel, I wonder whether Canadians, generally, are ready, with open arms, to welcome millions, or even hundreds of thousands of exiled Jews to Canada? I see that it has been proposed in some quarters that Canada should throw wide her gates for the most hospitable reception of hundreds of thousands of allegedly persecuted Roman Catholics from Europe. The fact is, some of these matters over which men and women have exercised their minds for years, in spinning interesting theories, are now forced upon us for practical consideration, and decision. It is one thing to sympathize with a great host of perse-

cuted people in Europe, and even to suggest what other people ought to do. It is quite another matter to secure general agreement among Canadians, that we should cordially receive these multitudes of Jews to competitive occupations in the Dominion of Canada. I pronounce no opinion whatever, for the moment, on the subject: I merely remind you that these questions are of great importance to us in this country to-day, and to many other countries, in fact to all countries where there is still room to absorb alien populations.

Surely there ought to be, there must be, a distinctively Christian attitude toward any question of such grave importance as this. Personally, I need not say that I have absolutely no sympathy with anti-Semitism of any sort; and that I am just as strongly opposed to it in Canada as I am in Germany. Such an attitude is certainly unchristian; I hope also, in the truest sense, it is un-British.

The Jews are human beings, like ourselves. It is quite true they have their racial characteristics, and some of them are anything but attractive. So probably, are some of your characteristics, and some of mine! It is easy to select extreme examples of any race; but it would be unfair to form a general estimate of the race as a whole

on such qualities as such extreme cases exhibit; it would be grossly unjust to judge the entire Austrian people by the character of the fiend, Adolph Hitler. I am an Englishman, whose forbears for many generations were English. I have never been ashamed of it; but I have met some Englishmen of whom I have been ashamed. And I suppose the same might be said by men of all nationalities—except Scotsmen and Irishmen! If it be so, however, that Jews, as a race, are, morally, no worse than other people, I certainly think we may say also that they are no better. In this, as in all matters the Old Book is still true, that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.

Certain people have a special theoretical interest in the Jews. I hope no one will question my belief in the divine inspiration, infallibility, and consequent supreme authority, of the Bible as the Word of God. I will yield to no man, not even to the most ardent literalist, in my profound conviction that the Bible is the Word of the living God. And as such, it is true. Therefore the promises that are wrapped up in its prophecies, whether for good or ill, must, as God is true, ultimately be fulfilled in the sense in which their divine Author intended. If therefore I question certain interpretations of the Bible, you are not to understand that I impugn the authority of the Book. I question only fallible human interpretations of what God has written. There are those, it seems to me, to whom the Bible is but as a Mill Pond, the circumference of which may, with comparative ease, be accurately measured, and the depth of which may, without great difficulty, be plumbed. Not so do I regard the Bible. I remember that it is written: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts". I have long since learned that it is not necessarily any derogation either of a man's intellect or of his intelligence that he finds himself forced to say, in respect to some things that are contained in this infinite Book: "I do not know what they mean". In some instances it may be possible, from other scriptures to be sure of what a passage does *not* mean, even while doubtful as to what it actually *does* mean. I believe God has still some light to bring forth from His Word. But there are literalists who insist that every prophecy of the Old Testament, in respect to its geography, its assumed chronology, and all other particulars, must be fulfilled with absolute literalness. I greatly fear that those who insist upon the literal fulfilment of every portion of God's Word, and who so boldly, and somewhat contemptuously oppose any spiritual interpretations, do not all, at least, recognize the inevitable implications of their principles.

There are those who, from their reading of the Old Testament, tell us that the Jews are to be gathered back to the Holy Land; that it is to become their national home. They tell us that Jerusalem in the Old Testament always means literally Jerusalem in Palestine. They insist that the name "Zion" shall be distinctively localized; that Zion means always a literal Zion in the heart of Jerusalem. They contend that when the second Psalm says: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion", it means that Jesus-Christ is actually to reign

in Jerusalem, and is to set up an earthly kingdom, and to rule over the world from Jerusalem. They argue that the promises of the Old Testament made to Abraham and his seed, must be fulfilled through Israel after the flesh.

There are those who call themselves premillenarians, and who speak much about the millennium, and of what they conceive to be the divine programme for the millennium, who assert that these promises to Abraham must find their fulfilment through the people whom we know as Jews. Our friends of the Anglo-Israel school contend that these promises will find their fulfilment through peoples other than those who are known as Jews; but that they still must be fulfilled in Israel after the flesh, such Israel, in their view, being the Anglo-Saxon race, whom they believe to be lineal descendants of Abraham. So with either school, there is an interpretation of prophecy which prognosticates an essentially carnal, fleshy fulfilment. There is to be an earthly kingdom over which Jesus, subsequent to His second advent, is to reign, and the kingdom thus restored to Israel is to have supremacy over all the nations. By that theory the temple is to be rebuilt in Jerusalem. You have it in Ezekiel, in Zechariah, they tell you, and elsewhere. They go so far as to say that all the ritual of blood, the offering of sacrifices—is to be restored. Dr. Scofield says so in the Scofield Bible, in his note on Ezekiel forty-three and nineteen. That as these feasts and sacrifices "under the old covenant were anticipatory," so to the millennial saints "doubtless these offerings will be a memorial, looking back to the cross". This, notwithstanding the personal presence of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem as a reigning King! We are told that men will still need sacrifices of blood to teach them the meaning of the atonement wrought by Jesus Christ!

I know it is a thankless task to try to bring these matters, these presuppositions into the white light of scriptural truth. Seldom is one thanked for calling attention to them. I admire the zeal of the people called "Brethren" for the Bible, and for many aspects of evangelical truth, but I have known not a few of them to quote Mr. J. N. Darby as though his word were just as authoritative as the Bible itself. "Mr. Darby said so". That ends it! In our day we have countless thousands who, reading the interpretations contained in footnotes in the Scofield Bible, impart to them no less practical authority than that which inheres in the inspired text. Dr. Scofield finds Russia specifically mentioned in Ezekiel. Gog is the prince of Russia; Magog is the land of Russia; Meshech and Tubal are Moscow and Tobolsk. "And on this", Dr. Scofield says, "all agree"! Nothing of the kind! I know of at least one exception.

I.

I want you to look at the simple word of Scripture. Divest your minds, if you can, of all preconceptions, and let us see WHAT GOD DID ACTUALLY PROMISE ABRAHAM.

We begin with Abraham in the eleventh chapter of Genesis, but we have his history, more particularly from the twelfth chapter forward. God promised Abraham that He would make him a great nation, that He would give him a great name. Do not forget that. "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing." He promised him a numerous seed. He challenged him to count the stars, or the dust of the earth, and said,

"I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered." He promised him also the land of Canaan in which he was a stranger.

Because I cannot go into all the details, I shall confine myself to a few salient points which perhaps may be useful to you in your further study of the question. Do not take what I say for granted. I know you will give a respectful hearing, but then take what you have heard to the Bible. And if you do not find it in agreement with the Bible, do not accept it. Do not accept what any man says unless and until you are assured it is in agreement with the Bible. Your responsibility before God will not be for your acceptance or rejection of my interpretation or anyone else's: your responsibility will be for your attitude toward the very Word of God itself. It is your obligation as a Christian to know what the Word of God says, not what men say about that Word. That is why every true believer ought to be a Bible Christian, a diligent student of the Word of God, knowing at first hand what the Bible actually teaches.

Two things were implied in the promise: a numerous seed, and the land for an inheritance. How did Abraham regard that promise? What interpretation did he put upon it? I think I am on safe ground, ground that is unassailable, when I say that I endeavour, always, to interpret the Old Testament through the New, and the verses which I have read to you constitute an inspired commentary upon an inspired chapter of history. Both are the Word of God; both are absolutely accurate.

How, then, did Abraham regard that promise in respect to the land? Well, we are told that "he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." He did not possess the land. He was a stranger in the land; neither did Isaac; neither did Jacob possess the land. Abraham, to whom the promise was originally given, did not expect to inherit the land of Palestine himself, for he was told, by special revelation that his seed would go down into Egypt, and that those who were heirs of this promise, would be strangers in Egypt, oppressed, for four hundred years, because "the iniquity of the Amorites (was) not yet full". Now Abraham did not expect, I say, to possess the land of promise himself, for the Lord told him that he would not, and by actually naming the four hundred years, Abraham must have known that the land of promise would not be inherited by his immediate successors. They would go down into Egypt, and there suffer affliction as the people of God. But Abraham did believe, without doubt, that somehow, at some time, his seed would inherit the land of Canaan. That was definitely promised.

Go a little farther forward, and we find Joshua leads the people into the land of Canaan. Now the New Testament is very explicit about this matter. It says that all these things, in respect to the land of Canaan, "happened unto them for ensamples: (or "by way of figure") and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world (of the ages) are come." Or "These things by way of type were happening unto them, and were written with a view to our admonition, unto whom the ends of the ages have reached along". All the details of Israel's journey through the wilderness, into the promised land, in the New Testament are explicitly said to have been types of spiritual things.

Moses, who was representative of the law, could not lead them into Canaan. Joshua, as you were reminded by Mr. Whitcombe's reading, by the very significance of his name, was a type of Jesus, the New Testament Joshua. And we read in the fourth chapter of Hebrews that Canaan was a type of the spiritual inheritance into which believers were to enter, from which those to whom the promise was first made, were excluded because of unbelief. Indeed, the Old Testament Israelites are given priority as hearers of the Gospel over hearers of the New Testament in the striking passage, "Unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them". And says this Word: "If Jesus (Joshua) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day." But Joshua did bring them into the land; the children of Israel did inherit the promised land. It did fall to them as an inheritance in later years. Notwithstanding He afterward spoke "of another day", saying, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

Someone will say—you thought I was going to pass it over—"Did not God promise them the land for 'an everlasting possession'? What have you to say about that?" That is true. Israel possessed the land, but they lost it again. They were driven out from it. Therefore they have not yet been given it "for an everlasting possession". "But the Lord is coming again, and will gather His people back." True: the Lord Jesus Christ will come again. But will He then secure to the Jews the "everlasting possession" of Canaan? I thought you were millennialists! I thought you believed the Jews were to occupy it for a thousand years? But after that—what? A thousand years would be no more an "everlasting" occupation, than the period of time they did occupy it. Their occupation probably exceeded a thousand years. If you insist upon the literalness of that promise, that they must have the land of Palestine "for an everlasting possession", you would make the promise of the "new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness", and a large part of the Bible, absolutely impossible of fulfilment.

II.

HOW DID ABRAHAM REGARD THAT PROMISE IN RESPECT TO THE LAND? It is said of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that "these all died in faith, not having received the promises", but "were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers, and pilgrims"—that they were strangers and pilgrims in the land of promise? No; that is not what it says. They "CONFESSED THAT THEY WERE STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS ON THE EARTH." Let me repeat it: The New Testament says Abraham, with Isaac and Jacob, "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." What country did Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all those of whom they were representative seek? Let the scripture answer: "Truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now"—now—NOW—"they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly"—not an earthly country at all but an heavenly—"wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

In view of this, and in view of the fact that the New Testament both in Corinthians and Hebrews—and I believe, implicitly, in other places explicitly says that Canaan was a type and illustration of the believers'

spiritual inheritance in Christ; and in view of the further fact, that our text says that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "declared plainly" that they desired "a better country, that is an heavenly," is it not a fair and inevitable inference, that even to them the element of everlastingness in the promise referred to an inheritance of vastly greater value than could inhere in any mere terrestrial possession?

In the next place, *how did Abraham regard the promise respecting his seed?* The emphasis in the promise spoken to Abraham personally, and repeated to his seed after, was upon the number of his seed. It was to be an innumerable seed. Indeed, part of the text I have read to you says: "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable"—this was promised to Abraham. And yet, as I have reminded some of you on more than one occasion, the Jews have never been a prolific race. Had they been, they never could have inherited Palestine, it was not large enough.

Germany is complaining all the time of her want of elbow room. One German has gone so far as to say that we need not flatter ourselves that these wide spaces in Canada belong to us just because we were here first, implying that they belong to Germany just as much as to us. They have their agents in Canada trying to prepare us to be soft enough to give it to them. But Palestine is considerably smaller than Germany, and if all the Jews in the world to-day were to go to Palestine—and there are only about seventeen millions of them—it would mean that they would have to live in pretty close quarters.

Did Abraham believe what our friends of this modern day would have us believe as to his seed? Let me refer you to a Scripture which I venture to believe you must have read many times, some of you, at least, without seeing the full significance of it. What interpretation did our Lord put upon this matter? Never mind how your favourite author or "Bible teacher" interprets it, what interpretation did our Lord put upon this matter? I quote from the eighth chapter of John. The scribes and Pharisees said: "We be Abraham's seed"; "Abraham is our father". Jesus said: "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God; this did not Abraham." In effect, He said: "You claim descent from Abraham after the flesh, but by God's appraisal, and by the standards of His promise, you are not Abraham's children at all, for if you were, you would recognize in Me, the Seed to Whom the promise was made." Our Lord went so far as to say to them: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." Later, Jesus said (I read still from the eighth chapter of John. Read it when you get home); "If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste death", they said to Him: "Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar

like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad."

That was the interpretation our Lord put upon Abraham's view of the promise.

III.

OBSERVE NOW THE TEACHING OF OTHER NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES ON THIS MATTER.

Now this may be familiar to many of you, I dare say it is, but it is always profitable to read familiar scriptures over again. There are some books which, having read once, you may put them aside, but never allow yourself to suppose that you have exhausted the significance of a single word of Scripture. In the third chapter of Galatians it is said: "If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise"—not of the law by Moses, but of the promise fulfilled through Joshua, unmistakably, according to the New Testament teaching, a type of Christ. "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham". Then: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many: but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." The New Testament says plainly and unmistakably that the promise to Abraham's seed, was the promise made to Christ, and through Christ to the world.

I almost hesitate to say it: Jesus Christ had no son after the flesh: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit": "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many: but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." The promise made to Abraham and his seed was made, not to Israel after the flesh, but to such as were spiritual children of Abraham, for listen: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." How could the Scripture speak more explicitly?

In the second chapter of Ephesians it is said: "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world"—by that was meant the Gentile Christians of Ephesus to whom the epistle was addressed,—"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God". Whether you be Jew or Gentile, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you are a fellowcitizen with the saints.

Look further at the twelfth chapter of Hebrews: "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness,

and tempest . . . but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." In view of that scripture can it reasonably be argued that "Zion" always means literal Zion? Or that "Jerusalem" must be interpreted historically and geographically?

I remember being at a funeral with the late Mr. Butland, and referring to that passage, he said to me, privately: "The more I study the question the more impressive that passage becomes, 'Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.'" "Ye are come"—even now! What else? "To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." What is "mount Sion"? What is "Jerusalem"? What, but the Old Testament types and symbols of the Church of Jesus Christ? And the prophecies made to "Sion" and to "Jerusalem" are made to the Church, and are fulfilled in her.

Again in Galatians, you remember that striking "allegory" passage—suffer me to read it—"Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free-woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh: but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory (literal history, but an allegory, that is, history with a typical, and spiritual significance): for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." That is a New Testament interpretation of the spiritual significance, at once of Jerusalem, and of the child of promise.

I must confess that when I consider the implications of the position taken by literalists, it chills me; please do not be offended—it positively hurts. Would you tell me that the temple must be rebuilt at Jerusalem, and that once again sacrifices of blood must be offered; and that in that millennial state, as it is alleged, enjoying the personal presence of the Lord Jesus, we must needs look to these bloody sacrifices to illustrate the gospel? That teaching is absolutely contrary to Scripture. Why? "Once in the end of the (age) hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation"; "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." Do not dare tell me that our gracious God is going to turn back the clock of revelation, and re-establish in Jerusalem that which was a typical ritual, intended to teach people who were in the kindergarten stage of their spiritual existence. Well might we say to present-day evangelicals, or "fundamentalist" Judaisers, as Paul said to the Galatian Judaisers: "But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, wherewith ye desire again to be in bondage?"

I cannot find in all the New Testament one word any-

where that teaches that the Jews are to be gathered back to Palestine, and that it is to be the national home of the Jews because God has pledged Himself that it shall be so. I am sure that the theory is absolutely devoid of New Testament authority.

Someone may say, "What about the parable of the fig tree?" Get a copy of THE GOSPEL WITNESS of last week. There is an article on the front page entitled: "The Parable of the Fig Tree". I read in an English paper a sermon by a widely-known American preacher, entitled, "The Jews Fulfilling Prophecy". This preacher tells of being in San Francisco near the close of the World War, and of hearing one day the newsboys shouting, "Extra! Extra! Allenby has taken Jerusalem!" And he said, "I said, 'Here, lad, give me one! I've waited thirty years for such news!'" He proceeded then to say that the budding fig tree was the recognized symbol of the covenant people of God, of Israel, saying: "We are living in the days of the budding of the fig tree, for that is the recognized symbol of the covenant people of God, of Israel. So the Lord was really telling His disciples: When you see them again acting as a people in the world, then you may know that the coming of the Lord is close at hand." Certain people will say, "Of course!" Well, you will find the parable of the fig tree mentioned in Matthew, in Mark, and in Luke, but in none of them will you find the remotest suggestion that God ever intended to bring His people back to Jerusalem. There is some word about their fleeing from Jerusalem, but not a word about their returning. He did say: "Learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Luke says: "Behold the fig tree, and all the trees"—the trees in your garden and mine. Some time in the late spring I shall go out into my garden. The wind will be cold, and I shall feel as though winter were coming back again. And if I feel a bit discouraged I shall look at my shrubs, and say, "Thanks for your assurance. Your budding indicates that summer is nigh." That is what the Lord meant when He said, "When ye see all these things". What things? Read your chapter, and you will not find a word about the Jews going back to Palestine. Some of them may repossess the land. Many Jews have settled in Palestine. Now would be a good time for as many as can be accommodated to go there. But the sons of Ishmael will not consent to their occupying the land exclusively.

There are those who will still insist that the fig tree is everywhere generally recognized as the symbol of God's chosen people. Who said so? The Bible does not. There is not one word in the entire Book to suggest that God ever intended it to be so: Christ merely said, "I tell you of certain things that will precede My coming. And when ye see these things coming to pass, it will be like the trees budding. It may be cold, but you know summer is not far away. And when ye see these things coming to pass, you will know that the second advent is not very far away." He does speak of wars and rumours of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places, of false Christs and false prophets, but not a word about the Jews returning to Jerusalem.

IV.

SOMETHING MAY BE SAID OF THE SILENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ON THIS SUBJECT.

Furthermore, is it conceivable that prophecies of such import as this, predicting the establishment of a literal, earthly, kingdom in Jerusalem with Christ as the King, the rebuilding of the temple, and all the rest of the millennial programme—is it conceivable that the entire *New Testament should be absolutely silent respecting such far-reaching prophecies as these?* But it is. The New Testament contains no such prediction, either as an interpretation of a prophecy of the Old Testament, or as an original prediction.

When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman, she said: "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." That would have been an appropriate occasion for the Lord Jesus to have told her that Jerusalem was the place where people of all nations would some day go to worship. But instead of that, He said: "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

If the theory of the literalists were scripturally based, when Paul was emphatically inveighing against the restoration of the ceremonial law in the case of circumcision among the Galatians, surely if the whole ceremonial law were to be re-established, Paul could not, reasonably, have objected to a small part of it. But he said, in effect: "You destroy the very foundations of faith if you substitute the ceremonialism of the law for the gospel". Or, to quote his exact words, "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law. Ye are fallen from grace. . . . This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you."

The epistle to the Hebrews was written to Hebrews who evidently missed some of the ceremonialism of the law. If the ritual of the Mosaic economy was some day to be re-established, it is strange that nothing should be said about it in such an epistle. The epistle was written to show that in the Person of Jesus Christ all lesser priesthoods were forever abolished; that He was "a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec", and that He had offered one sacrifice which should never be added to, and never superseded.

So, my dear friends, I bring you to-night to the place where I would always leave you, and remind you that *even in the Old Testament God was never related to his people on any other than spiritual principles*; and whenever His ancient people departed from Him, He treated them as the heathen round about. When they had defiled His temple, the place which He had chosen to set His name, He destroyed the temple and removed them from the land. He carried Judah away to Babylon for seventy years, and He carried the rest of them away to Assyria, never to return again. By an act of judgment, He removed them from their place of privilege. Even in Old Testament times, He insisted that they only are His people who worship Him in spirit and in truth. As a matter of fact, the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and

earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things". Whoever came to God in the Old Testament days, whoever will come to him now, whoever will come to Him in the future, however long the King may tarry before His coming—came and must always come on the same terms: "Marvel not" said Jesus "that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again".

The only kingdom of the future of which the Bible knows, is a spiritual kingdom. The only reign is a spiritual reign, and the only citizens of that heavenly kingdom are such as have been born again, and have their citizenship in heaven, and while they walk this pilgrim way, they declare plainly that they seek a better country, that is an heavenly:

"Jerusalem the golden,
With milk and honey blest,
Beneath thy contemplation
Sink heart and voice oppressed:
I know not, O I know not
What social joys are there;
What radiancy of glory,
What bliss beyond compare!"

What a glorious future! Some day the Lord Jesus will come in person, visibly and audibly, and gloriously; and when He comes He will create a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and we shall see "the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband", and in that happy, spiritual state, we shall serve the Lord for ever more. Oh, keep to the spiritual! Make Jesus Christ your King. Nay, rather, recognize and acknowledge that even now He is King. Then in complete and willing and happy subjection to Him, let us "put off the old man with his deeds; and put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all."

May we find Him so, for His name's sake.

Bible School Lesson Outline

OLIVE L. CLARK, Ph.D. (Tor.)

Vol. 3 First Quarter Lesson 7 February 12th, 1939

ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSION

Lesson Text: Genesis 18.

Golden Text: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."—James 5:16.

For Reading: Genesis 19:1-3, 12-29.

I. Refreshment for the Lord—verses 1-8.

The Lord appeared to Abraham on several occasions (Gen. 12:7; 17:1; 26:2). Scripture speaks of a number of these pre-incarnate manifestations of the Divine presence upon the earth. The Lord appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre ("Richness" or "Blessing"). Blessing always accompanies God's revelation of Himself to His own. God came to him at noon, the time of rest in the East. The Lord will make known His presence to those who wait quietly for Him (Exod. 14:13; 1 Kings 19:12; Psa. 27:14).

The manner in which God appeared to men is not always disclosed. On this occasion, the Lord appeared in human form as one of the three angelic visitors who came to the door of Abraham's tent. This is evident from verses 21, 22 and Chapter 19, verse 1. The two angels went on toward Sodom, while "Abraham stood yet before the Lord".

Abraham recognized the Lord. All three visitors were welcomed, and all were offered the hospitality which is necessary courtesy to travellers in the East, but before One of them Abraham bowed, and One of them he addressed as "My Lord".

How condescending and how gracious for the Lord to accept refreshment at the hands of His servants! Favoured beyond measure were those who welcomed the Saviour into their homes in the days of His flesh (Luke 24:29; John 12:2). We have not that privilege, but we may receive Him into our hearts (John 1:12; Rev. 3:20). Great and glorious as is our Saviour, we may add to His joy and glory by living a life pleasing to Him (John 15:14). We may offer Him the tribute of praise, and prayer and service (Matt. 25:45; Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:15).

II. Communion With the Lord—verses 9-22.

Sarah was not sharing the blessing of the Lord's presence. Perhaps, (like Martha) she was concerned with the earthly comfort of her guests, and not taking advantage of spiritual fellowship with the Lord (Luke 10:41). Had she been close to the Lord, she would doubtless have believed His word immediately. The Lord would have us remember that He is all-powerful; nothing is too difficult for Him (1 Sam. 14:6; Psa. 62:11; Eph. 3:20).

Sarah's lapse of faith resulted in fear and shame. She attempted to cover her confusion by telling an untruth, instead of confessing and forsaking her sin, as she should have done (Prov. 28:13). One sin frequently leads to another.

The Lord repeated His promise concerning the birth of Isaac. Sarah's laugh of unbelief was finally changed to the laugh of joy and faith (Psa. 126:1, 2; Rom. 9:9; Heb. 11:11). She called her son Isaac, meaning "Laughter" (Gen. 21:3-6).

The Lord communed with Abraham concerning the personal affairs of His servant, and afterward disclosed His own plans concerning Sodom. Happy is the man whom the Lord can trust (John 2:24)! Abraham is known as the friend of God, for God did not hide from him the secret counsels of His will (Isa. 41:8; Eph. 1:19; James 2:23). Friendship is possible only when there is mutual confidence.

The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah called out, as it were, to God for vengeance (Gen. 4:10; 19:13; Jas. 5:4). God is absolutely righteous, and in His own time and way, all sin must be atoned for and put away. Just as the Lord came down that He might Himself visit judgment upon Sodom, so in the person of His Son did He come to this earth to bring salvation (Exod. 2:23-25; 3:7, 8; Luke 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15). What amazing grace!

III. Intercession Before the Lord—verses 23-33.

After the two angels had departed for Sodom, Abraham stood yet before the Lord, and drew near unto Him. We, too, have access into the Father's presence through the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:12; Heb. 10:19-22).

It was possible for Abraham to exercise the holy privilege of prayer and intercession because God had first spoken to him. God's word is brought home to our hearts, and we repeat that word to Him with the request "Do as Thou hast said". The Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts, inspiring us to prayer, and through the same Holy Spirit that prayer ascends to the Father (Rom. 8:26, 27).

Abraham thought of his nephew Lot who dwelt in Sodom, and whose righteous soul was troubled from day to day because of the wickedness of the city (2 Pet. 2:7, 8). Would God's wrath be visited upon the righteous as well as the wicked? In considering the problem Abraham knew for a certainty that the Judge of all the earth would do right (Deut. 32:4; 2 Chron. 19:7; Job 8:3; Rom. 3:5). Confidence in the righteousness, wisdom and love of God must be the foundation of all our dealings with Him.

Abraham asked God to save the city for the sake of the righteous ones who dwelt therein. That is God's plan sometimes, and God could have done so (Jonah 3:9, 10). At other times, as on this occasion, God destroys the city, but saves the righteous inhabitants. God in His holiness hates sin, but in His mercy He provides a way of escape for the sinner.

Abraham exhibited humility before the Lord, and also a holy perseverance. The Lord was not angry with him, but rather was pleased, because of his importunity (Luke 11:5-10; 18:1-8). Such importunate prayer should always be in the spirit of submission to the Lord. Some people would con-

tinue to beseech God for something which may not be in accordance with His directive will. There is a great deal of difference between stubbornness and perseverance.

Abraham doubtless thought that there would be more than ten righteous people in Sodom. Mention is made of at least eight in Lot's family—Lot, his wife, two daughters, sons (at least two), two sons-in-law (Gen. 19:12-14).

God hearkened to the prayer of Abraham, and saved Lot for his sake (Gen. 19:16, 29). Believers are saved for Christ's sake (Eph. 1:6; 1 Peter 1:21).

NEW LANTERN SLIDES ON THE FRENCH WORK

Through the kindness of Dr. Johnson of Portland, Oregon, there is now available for our churches, an entirely new set of lantern slides illustrating the work of the churches in France and Belgium. There is a descriptive manuscript accompanying the slides which will make them useful to all. Our churches will want to see these new pictures, and we invite the pastors or Sunday school superintendents to write us at once letting us know when they could use them. In order to avoid disappointment send in your request at once, mentioning the date for which the slides are requested.

ABOUT THE EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION OF FRENCH-SPEAKING BAPTISTS

During the last year and a half articles have occasionally appeared in this paper giving information about the great evangelical testimony maintained in the three French-speaking countries of Europe by the Association of Baptist Churches, long known to many in England and America as the French Bible Mission. Those who have followed these articles will know that they have appeared in THE GOSPEL WITNESS because the Union of Regular Baptists of Ontario and Quebec adopted the French Association as its special foreign missionary object. Our Canadian Union itself was made possible by THE GOSPEL WITNESS which rallied evangelical Baptists against the encroachment of Modernism, and ever since has been our organ of publicity. We are happy to have such a foreign missionary work to tell about, and we are happy to have such a paper as THE GOSPEL WITNESS in which to make the story known. Bue the generosity of the editor of THE GOSPEL WITNESS is great enough to include not only the Canadian Churches of our Union but all the American friends of the French Bible Mission too. He has offered to send, free of charge, each number of THE GOSPEL WITNESS containing special articles on the French work, to the American friends whose names Mr. Dubarry and Mr. Buhler should give to us. This number, containing the article by Mr. Buhler, is the first to go to these friends with the compliments of THE GOSPEL WITNESS, and we hope that they will enjoy it and the other articles from France which will appear from time to time.—W. S. W.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE FIELD

By F. M. Buhler

Five years of studying, travelling and preaching in Canada and the United States constitute a fair introduction to North American affairs. Five months of working in France and Switzerland suffice to renew acquaintance with European affairs enough for me to form a well-based opinion on the work of the Evangelical Association of French-speaking Baptist Churches.

I shall never forget the first impression I had of France on my landing. All seemed very, very small. At the sight of a few rows of freight cars, I asked my travelling companion, Mr. Dubarry, if the barn which was to be seen behind was a toy factory, where miniature trains were manufactured. He

was not particularly pleased with the remark of his Americanized protégé. I had almost developed the complex which makes one say that on the other side of the Atlantic everything is bigger and better.

Certainly bigger and better in the material sphere. Bigger alone in the spiritual realm. But better? I have my doubts. It happens, unfortunately, that one may be very enthusiastic over a missionary enterprise until he has had an opportunity to investigate the work for himself, on the spot. Such has not been the case with our Association, for after examining the work here, I am more convinced than ever that it is carried on along the right lines, that its ideals are worthy, that its methods are most biblical and that its results are in conformity with the vocation to which God calls His children and His churches. I am happy in it, and my training at the Toronto Baptist Seminary has enabled me to appreciate the quality of this work.

Thus my contacts with the church of Mulhouse has been a revelation to me. The people have grown spiritually and, under the leadership of Pastor Waecker, they have become more anxious to serve the best interests of the Kingdom of God. The activity among the young people has particularly prospered. What a joy it was for me to speak to them on several occasions of the Gospel work on the New Continent, and then to hear them pray one after the other! I have seldom seen a group of young people where they prayed so readily for the salvation of other young people and for their own spiritual progress. At the Wittenheim mining centre the meetings are well attended also. Surely this church has bright prospects for the future.

The departure of Brother Bonijoly for Colombes necessitated the presence of a worker in the field of Bienne-Péry-Granges. All arrangements for my coming here were made, and since I came, almost three months ago, I have had much joy. The time has passed much too quickly. The weeks have followed in rapid succession and yet, we have seen the hand of the Lord at work.

The church of Péry was received into the Association in 1930, and is located in a community of some 800 people, surrounded by mountains and forests. The attendance has improved lately and the spirit of the people is one of sacrifice. Many come knowing that they will have to suffer because of their attendance at the meetings. I should like to introduce some of those friends to you. A young lady, whose mother died a few months ago, was converted and comes regularly. At home she suffered violent persecution from her father, her brother and her sister. Her firm and courageous stand has already won the heart of her sister who comes now with her from La Combe, which is half an hour's walk from Péry. The father is a drunkard; last Monday he chased his older girl away from home because she had been at three meetings on Sunday. She left home to go to her aunt, who encouraged her; and when she left, she said, "Well, it does not matter, Wednesday we'll hear some good things again." This aunt has had to suffer much in the past, herself, because of her Christian stand but is now very happy to see her two nieces at their places every Sunday and Wednesday. A brother of the aunt, a man seventy-one years old, who lives near the forest, comes also regularly with his wife. It is good to see them arrive by lantern. Another lady is grieved over the untoward attitude of her two sons who make her suffer because of her faith. One young man brought his brother along last week from La Combe; he also had with him two young men whom he had invited and whose home is an hour's walk from Péry up in the mountain. The only policeman of the village is a member of the church; he must endure a good deal of persecution and mockery for his stand. A man working in the cement plant is leading a straight life, though he is a brand plucked from the burning. The Lord has shown His power to save a few years ago, but the man became a backslider. For a good while now, the Lord is showing His power to keep him. Recently, two of our members of Bienne moved to Péry and their testimony has already proved to be a real blessing to the brethren and the community. It is touching to look over such an audience and see how much suffering, sacrifice and persecution is involved in their presence in that humble little basement, which is transformed into a vertiable Bethel by the manifest presence of God. It is an inspiring congregation and one can preach there with the utmost liberty, seeing it is evident that they are all hungry and need to be fed with the Bread of Heaven.

At some distance from Péry, there is the village of La Heutte. Meetings have been started twice a month and a course of religious instruction is given every night before the Bible study and prayer-meeting at Péry. The youngsters are very anxious to learn too, and all this work is changed into a real pleasure. Our people have shown great interest in what I have told them of churches in Canada and the U.S.A. I have requested them to intercede for you. You may fellowship with us in praying for them.

NEWS OF UNION CHURCHES

NORANDA—Rev. Stanley Wellington. Mr. Wellington writes as follows of the special meetings under the leadership of Mr. Byers: "The visit of Rev. John Byers with us was the occasion of rich spiritual profit to the church. For ten days, powerful and heart-searching messages from the Word of God ploughed their way into many souls by the Holy Spirit. Very severe weather conditions prevailed during the entire campaign, the temperature hovering constantly around thirty below, with cruel winds. Brother Byers is indeed a man of God, and a mighty preacher of the everlasting gospel of the grace of God. As well as being an effective evangelist, he is a pastor who co-operates with the man on the field in every possible way. We give God thanks for him and his ministry with us."

A man was saved whose father, a Christian man, had prayed for over forty-six years for his son's conversion. Many preachers and evangelists had called upon him and endeavoured to persuade him by speech and tracts to accept Christ, but without success. Last Wednesday night in his own home Mr. Byers had the privilege and pleasure of leading him to the Lord. He was planning to telephone his father, now living in Nova Scotia, to tell him of his decision. We can imagine the joy of his father on hearing this news from his son, that he had passed from death unto life after praying for a period of forty-six years.

ELEVEN YEARS WORK IN ORILLIA. In the absence of the pastor, Rev. John Byers, who is holding special meetings in the North, it was the privilege of the Secretary of the Union, Rev. W. S. Whitcombe, to supply the pulpit of the Orillia Regular Baptist Church. It was the coldest Sunday of the winter and an Arctic gale was blowing, yet in spite of the sub-zero temperature there were good congregations both morning and evening, and at the ten o'clock morning Sunday-school. A church that can so successfully pass through the ordeal of cold must surely be well built. It was a pleasure to meet with the saints at Orillia and thus to see something of the great work that has been carried on there during the last eleven years under the strong and uncompromising leadership of the pastor. Many have confessed Christ in that period, and have been built into the church, useful workers in the Lord's field. The fine church building, centrally located, on a main thoroughfare is a fitting symbol of the spiritual progress that has been made since a small group of people first met together eleven years ago in the upper room of a public hall.

Orillia Church is a fine example of Home Missionary Work: a strong evangelical testimony firmly established with a record of accomplishment behind it and great possibilities awaiting it, and all this without one cent from Home Mission funds! It does not seem long since Mr. Byers, then a student at the Seminary, accepted the call to go to Orillia, and we earnestly hope that in the next eleven years many more such men will be raised up to do similar exploits for the Lord.

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