

God's Faithfulness to David

[Note by James W. Bruggeman: The following article by a New Zealander was originally published in 1908 in *The Covenant People*. It makes a nice supplement to our just-completed lecture [*The Scepter Shall Not Depart From Judah*](#) (CD or Tape Nos. 485 & 486, q.v.)]

THE dynasty of David occupied the throne in Jerusalem for less than five centuries, and for 2,500 years no king of David's blood has ruled the kingdom of Israel from that sacred spot. Are we then, after all, to be compelled to admit that facts will not sustain us in our belief of the literal fulfilment of the promise?

Are the words of the covenant* to be taken as cruel satire, and is its repetition, four and a half centuries after, nothing better than a galling reproach? If the throne of David may be erected in no land but the land of Palestine, then in blank amazement we may well ask, Are, indeed, "the promises of God without repentance"? Assuredly, unless we can find reason to believe that David's house and David's throne have received establishment in some other country, we must give way to the dreadful fear that the Divine promise of ceaseless continuity has lapsed. But that is a state of mind which every loyal soldier of God is bound to fight against with all his strength, for it is simply abhorrent to him, as inconsistent with Divine veracity.

The interpreters of our modern days insist that *Israel is not a kingdom at this time*. They admit that Israel exists as a people somewhere, but protest *it has no throne of David to rule over it*. Yet, with it all, they hold that the promise of God to David must be shown to be true in some sense. And now, since it is impossible, they argue, to find it literally true, we are bound to explain it as having only a spiritual application to the present age. Hence the only

resource left them is to say that the throne of David is transported from earth to heaven; that as "Christ is the Son of David," and "the one Whose right it is to reign," therefore, at the present time, He is sitting in the throne of His father David, ruling over a spiritual Israel, which, they say, is the Church. The spiritual Church, therefore, has taken the place of the literal kingdom of Israel, and will continue to occupy it" until the times of the Gentiles be come in." In short, Israel has been displaced for all those twenty-five centuries, while a mixed body of people, principally non-Israel, enjoy the blessings of God's favours and the distinctions of the kingdom.

This is all very devout, as well as very ingenious. But how will it answer to David's legitimate and reasonable expectations? How will it fit the terms of the oath-confirmed covenant? How will it agree with God's guarantee to Abraham? It simply gives them all a flat and emphatic contradiction. It violates every clause of them all. What is the Church, according to those devout but mistaken men?

Is it not a great company of people belonging chiefly to the "wild" olive tree, with only a percentage of men having Abraham for their father? And is it not recruiting its numbers during a "dispensation" that has been named by men "The Gentile Dispensation," in which Israel, as a nation, has no share whatever, that being, according to them, a period in which Israel is not even a nation? The Church is, according to their view, a purely spiritual body, owning allegiance to no throne on earth; being subject to the government of God alone. It is gathered out of all kindreds and peoples, and tongues and nations, and no earthly power has control over it. The only throne it is called upon to recognise is the throne of God, Whose seat is in the heavens, while the earth is His footstool.

Now, that is not the kingdom of Israel, nor is it the throne of David. The throne of God "in the heavens" is not the throne that David and his sons were to occupy for ever. God has not abdicated. The throne of David was, and is, the

throne of Israel; the actual, non-spiritual seat of sovereignty; over the actual, non-spiritual, earthly kingdom of the seed of Abraham, originally set up in Palestine. There was indeed a great deal that was actually non-spiritual in that kingdom. It was essentially earthly. Further, the kingdom must be where the throne is, and the throne must be within the kingdom. Now, the kingdom has never been transferred from the earth. It is of the earth, though belonging to heaven, while not in heaven. It is a heavenly kingdom, inasmuch as no other kingdom of the earth has been planted, nurtured, legislated for, and claimed as it has been by the Mighty King of kings.

The kingdom of Israel was chosen by God, Who gave it an inheritance in the earth far superior to that of all other nations or kingdoms. He chose it as His own kingdom, and confined its limits, not to square miles of territory, but to the posterity of Abraham, according to the flesh, with power to absorb people belonging to other families of mankind. But from beginning to end it was to be politically confined to the race of the seed of the patriarch Abraham, in the line of Jacob. This is the nation that God, by two several oaths, sworn to in His holiness, with an interval of about a thousand years between them, undertook of His own wisdom to preserve throughout all generations with the constancy of the orbs of heaven.

This is the same nation which God chose David to rule over as His deputy, and promised that so long as the stars appeared in the sky at night, and the sun shone in the heavens in the daytime, He should not be without a son to occupy that position of chief honour.

By omitting to study more than the A B C of Israel's history, men absolutely disqualify themselves for the accurate study of the prophetic Scriptures. The one key that will open the door into the guest-chamber of Divine prophecy is found only in the casket which enfolds the history of God's chosen kingdom of Israel. He who searches for it elsewhere may become rich in delightful theories, but

his knowledge of prophetic truth is fragmentary and disjointed; and the Bible is to him a book of many difficulties and contradictions, in spite of all his valiant efforts to harmonise it.

By the way in which some of our otherwise well-informed Christian friends write and speak it might be concluded that because no books which have been written by men who are looked upon as *authorities* trace for us the secular career of Israel "out of Palestine" for the past 2,500 years, and because the sacred story has omitted to keep up the record, therefore it is not now possible for any one to get upon the historical track of the deported tribes or wandering refugees among the nations, and trace them to a place of modern settlement.

There was a time when the distinguished prophet of Jehovah, Elijah, thought he knew a great deal about the kingdom of Israel, and he told God that all His servants but himself had been slain, and he was in imminent danger of his life. But to his surprise and confusion, God replied that He had still a list of 7,000 men in Israel who had never bowed the knee to Baal. There are many modern specimens of Elijah's ignorance of surrounding circumstances and literal facts. The majority of these are good men, zealous and amiable, devout, God-fearing men, who yet are not devoid of the high-coloured elements of spiritual pride which occasionally cause them to speak in sneering terms of their fellow-Christians, who are labouring faithfully to prove that there are some important things in history which the inscrutable wisdom of God has seen fit to keep from common knowledge for many centuries, but which He is now unveiling for the edification of His children. Elijah thought that he was the last spiritually-minded man in Israel, and that he stood alone among the vast multitudes who had given themselves over to the service of the false gods. How unwisely some of us set ourselves up as judges of our neighbours. But God knows better. He knows the hearts that are true to Him.

Nor has God left the pages of holy writ or of general history without the finger-posts that point out the pathways, diverse and strange though they be, that Israel traversed on the long journey from the "Land of Promise" to the "promised land of their own."

There are men to-day who have got the title of "Little Englanders"; there are others who should be known as "Little Zionists." They both belong to the same class. But recent events have converted many of the former into pronounced Imperialists, and there are approaching events that will compel the latter to confess themselves sons of Him who is called "the Heir of the world."

The straw tells how the current is moving, however slowly that may be; and there are some conspicuous straws of Israelite growth found floating on the currents of ancient history, and each one gives its important evidence.

" If those ordinances (of the moon and of the stars) depart from J. before Me. . . . If ye can break My covenant of the day and of the night . . . then may also My covenant be broken with David."

These words, given through Jeremiah, were uttered more than four and a half centuries after the covenant had been made with David; and they confirm the interpretation which says that the whole thing had, and has, a literal significance. Let it be firmly kept in mind that this is not the mere view of it held by the man Jeremiah, but that it is the meaning attached to it by God Himself. He gives no liberty to set its teaching aside by a spiritualising gloss. The Divine interpretation permits only the literal application of the terms to the seed of David, and the nation of Israel, together with the common throne, of the house and the nation. They stand or fall together literally.

Here I would request you, my dear readers, to make a special note of the intensely important fact that at the very time when Jeremiah was directed to write these words the man who then occupied the throne of David was the last

who sat upon it in Palestine. And so far as is known from the pages of what is recognised as authenticated history, with the death of Zedekiah the House of David came to an end, notwithstanding the almost contemporary republication of the covenant guaranteeing its perpetual existence. With Zedekiah the Davidic dynasty appears to have ceased to be a house, if 'we are able to discover no more about it among the annals of mankind.

Just at this supreme moment, when the throne of David was tottering to its fall in Jerusalem, Jeremiah is commissioned to republish the great and inviolable covenant which assured, under the guarantee of God's oath to this very throne, and to the very house that sat on it, a continuance as constant as the appearance of the sun in the heavens and as long as the stars at night should bespangle the sky. Consider what this must have meant. In a few short months Zedekiah would be made a prisoner, and should be compelled to look upon the cruel slaughter of all his sons, who were the last male hope of his dynasty; and with this ferocious act the kingdom of Judah should come to an end, and yet, in the face of this closely approaching event, God sent out the prophet to declare to the nation, that was just on the verge of destruction, that the throne, together with the nation of Israel, must continue, by virtue of His indestructible pledge, to preserve it for ever. The kingdom of ten-tribed Israel in the east had been for years defunct through the captivity of Assyria; and now the kingdom of Judah was about to cease to possess either a king or a throne. And yet, in view of all this, Jeremiah is directed to proclaim in the ears of the falling nation that the throne and the kingdom of David shall not perish, but continue as steadily as the sun in its course through the pathways of the heavens.

What are we to make of it all? It is now twenty-five centuries since these things took place. The ordinances of heaven have ruled all that time, as they had done up till then. The sun, the moon, and the stars have never failed to

be there, as God's faithful witnesses in the sky for all those dreary centuries; but where, oh where, are the throne and the kingdom to whose permanent continuity they were to bear witness throughout the ages?

Britain is a long way from Palestine, but centuries before Jeremiah lived we learn from competent witnesses that Britain was not an unknown land to the people who dwelt in Palestine. This is not fiction, good friends : I am employing solemn facts. At least as early as the days of Solomon the land we call Britain was known to thousands of the families in Israel. This statement can be made without fear of refutation. How do we know? Follow me, if you please, with all the attention you can give. I can only here supply a sketch of what I would fain elaborate in particulars.

Israel, you know, had a tribe called Dan. In the time of the Judges that tribe became conspicuous by absenting itself from the field when Deborah led the forces of the nation to war against their foes; and the reason given in the Scriptures is very significant in this connection. It is, indeed, the first straw that shows us how things were trending as far back as the thirteenth century B.C. Now that was 700 or 800 years before the days of Jeremiah. The reason given was simply that "Dan remained in ships"; and from those four words, like a tiny spring in some mountain ravine, there issues a continually enlarging stream of evidence, swelling in its course to an important but little examined river of Israelitish history. "Dan remained in ships." The port of Joppa was in the territory of Dan. Recent excavations show that Joppa was at one time an excellent harbour compared with what it is now. It was indeed a safe and secure port, with extensive artificial harbour works of solid and substantial formation, which proves how great must have been the trade done in it. Dan, therefore, at an early period of its history, had become a maritime people, and we have almost as good reason for believing that Asher, whose portion had a large seacoast and adjoined the seafaring Phoenicians, also became a community of seamen; and we

learn from the same passage (Judges v. 17) that Asher "continued on the seashore," or in his creeks or harbours.

The Mediterranean soon became the busy scene of ships belonging to these tribes, as they traded across its expanse with peoples on its distant coasts and islands. Dan, indeed, is now known to have been one of the earliest colonisers of Greece. His ships were the most famous of that ancient people, so that the Mediterranean Sea, from the Levant to Gibraltar, in all its coasts, was known to these most ancient of mercantile mariners. But this was not, by any means, the limit of their voyages. So that by the time of Solomon the west coast of Europe as far as Denmark was familiar to them. It was from Britain that Solomon's ships brought their cargoes of tin, so extensively used in the erection of the great temple.

Is it strange, then, that we find among the oldest names of places in Cornwall and elsewhere in the British Isles many which are of distinctly Hebrew origin? Cornwall was the spot from which the miners of Solomon got their shiploads of tin. Nor is it, viewed from this point, strange that the first king of Cornwall, according to the early traditions of the place, was called Solomon!

What, then, do these things teach? Simply this, that it was not possible for the seamen of Israel to frequent the country of Britain and not bring back to their families and friends the stories of that faraway land. It is not too much to say that by the time of Jeremiah, which was four centuries after the age of Solomon, thousands of families in Israel had heard of the land to which so many of their race had already sailed.

From the book of Jonah we gather that about two and a half centuries before Jeremiah there was actually a passenger traffic, with its recognised fare, existing between Joppa and Tarshish, which was either in Spain or farther north, perhaps in Britain; and what was more likely than that Jonah, knowing of the Hebrew settlements in; that direction, was making flight to friends who had already gone

thither. Our general conception of the shipping activities of those ancient days is strangely crude, and our conclusions regarding it are hasty, inaccurate, and paltry.

For at least 500 or 600 years before the fall of Jerusalem under the arms of Nebuchadnezzar, there had been much common intercourse between Palestine and the land of Britain; and this was how things were when the prophet Jeremiah saw the last of the House of David driven from the throne in Jerusalem.

When Zedekiah fell into the hands of his captors and Jerusalem was taken, its splendid temple destroyed, and the people of Judah carried off into their seventy years of captivity, Jeremiah was entrusted with the care of the daughters of the fallen monarch, and he took them and went down into Egypt, with others whom Nebuchadnezzar had not carried off to Babylon. A very simple and superficial matter this in appearance, but for all that it was mighty and significant in its sovereign results. These two fugitive princesses were the only living representatives of the late king; and this prophet Jeremiah was a man who, by Divine appointment, held a commission of a most unique character. The commission is given in the following terms:—

“I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations... ..To whomsoever I send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth: See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, and to destroy and to throw down, *and to build and to plant*” (Jer. i. 7-10).

This discloses the importance of the man's history. You will observe the two distinct parts of the life-work which his commission imposes. But the Scripture record supplies us with only Volume One of his life. Volume Two of his biography has either never been completed or it has been

withheld from publication. It cannot be that the material for it has not been prepared. The Divine nature of the commission demands and guarantees its fulfilment. Depend upon it, there was no more failure in reference to it than in respect to the covenant of the kingdom and the throne. The first part of the prophet's life is fully detailed in the Scriptures, but that is no argument in favour of the failure of the second part. We are not told that Jeremiah died in Egypt. Those who went there for safety were told that if they remained they would all perish, and in consequence of that Jeremiah, with the two princesses, retired, whither no one knows; and with that event the Bible narrative closes upon the scene.

But there are time-resisting finger-posts set up that "those who read may run." Just a few years before this, by the pen of the prophet Ezekiel, God put forth "a riddle and a parable" to the House of Israel (Ezekiel xvii.).

The parable refers to the destruction of the kingdom of Judah, and the riddle tells of what can only be the announcement of the reconstruction of Israel as a nation in some other place. Let us read the riddle (chap. xvii. 22-24):—

"Thus saith the Lord God; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon a high mountain and eminent. In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar : and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. And all the trees of the field shall know that I, the Lord, have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I, the Lord, have spoken, and have done it."

Now, what are these symbols? Are they not as follows :—

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| 1. The high cedar; | The House of David. |
| 2. The highest branch; | The reigning king, Zedekiah. |
| 3. His young twigs; | Zedekiah's children. |
| 4. A tender one; | One of the king's daughters. |
| 5. A high mountain; | A great kingdom. |
| 6. Of the height of Israel; | The nation of Israel. |
| 7. Boughs of the cedar; | Royal offspring, of David's
House. |
| 8. Fowl of every wing; | People of all nations. |
| 9. The shadows of branches; | Shelter, or protection. |
| 10. Trees; | Other nations, or kingdoms. |
| 11. High tree and green tree; | Kingdom of Judah. |
| 12. Low tree and dry tree; | Kingdom of Israel. |

In this explanation of the symbols I have accepted the plan of Mr. D. A. Onslow in *THE COVENANT PEOPLE*. There can, I think, be little doubt that he has given a very intelligent reading to the riddle. Then, taking it so, in view of the immediately succeeding events, what does it point to? Nothing so well fits it as this: A daughter of the House of Zedekiah shall be taken and transferred to another kingdom belonging to the House of Israel, and there she shall set up the throne of her ancestor. She shall have offspring, and thus perpetuate the line of the House of David in Israel, which shall become a mighty nation, under whose protection weaker nations of mankind shall find rest and safety. This will prove that the whole thing is the doing of the Lord God of Israel.

She was not carried away to the representatives of the "Lost Ten Tribes." She did not go and re-erect the throne of Jeroboam and reorganise the kingdom that had been overthrown by Assyria. But she went to plant the standard of David among a people that had *never been in captivity*, a people who had gone out from Palestine as colonists and had taken possession of "a place of their own"

in the far north-west long before.

And now comes in the second part of the commission imposed upon Jeremiah. I have argued that it was impossible for those dwelling in Palestine in the year of Judah's captivity to be in ignorance of the fact that many of their fellow-countrymen had emigrated to another land. What others knew, Jeremiah and the princesses also knew. They were aware that although Ten-tribed Israel had fallen before Assyria, and Judah was now in bonds to Babylon, there was still a *free people of the House of Israel* in the still farther off north-west, and thither they turned their faces. And I have little doubt that their way was directed by him who said to Jeremiah, "Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee." Here we discover a most important fact in this connection. Judah was taken into captivity in the year 587 B.C. Jeremiah was lost to history in the year 586 B.C., and, by the consensus of authority among writers, the princess from the east, accompanied by her aged guardian and their attendants, arrived in Ireland in the year 585 B.C. Closely following their arrival the new standard was set up, the old dynasty was established, and the kingdom of David organised in the land of Ireland. Since that time the standard has waved continuously up to the present day, the only one on the face of the whole wide earth that has done so. That kingdom has been a perpetual kingdom; and to-day a son of David lives and rules the oldest as well as the mightiest kingdom the world has ever known, and that, a kingdom whose God is the God of Abraham, of David, and of Jeremiah, in a sense in which it can be said of no other nation.

David's House is thus shown to be perpetuated in an unbroken line of kings; his throne has been constant as the sun, and his kingdom has been without end, as the shining of the stars. So we find that He who made the covenant with David, His servant, has kept it to the very letter. God did not lie to David, but has been faithful to the absolute, and gloriously literal, fulfilment of that to which He had

pledged the honour of His name!

* For the Scripture References to the Davidic Covenant, the reader is referred to the author's paper at p. 354 of Vol. XIV., April, 1908.

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