

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

My own solution is that, underlying the name Eli Betzalim will be found an allusion to either the Cross or the Crucified. I freely admit that my explanation (Mary, the daughter of Eli, the mother of the Crucified) does not seem sufficiently simple. Another solution has been proposed to me by an excellent Talmudic scholar, which is that as *עלם*, *i.e.*, idol, is the Jewish esoteric term (by assonance) for the Cross, that we may read the passage: "He saw Mary, the daughter of Eli, hanging on a cross by her breasts," and I think this is a better solution than mine, though it would perhaps be objected that the use of "idol" for "cross" cannot be carried so far back as to furnish the explanation. But, whatever may be the exact solution, I think we have come very near to it, and that the whole passage will presently be cleared up. Mr. Cooke's objections to Gehenna have been dissipated, and it only requires now the courage to forsake the traditional and unnatural explanation of the Talmudic schools, and to substitute for it the explanation which, if they have not forgotten, the Jewish teachers are unwilling to disclose.

J. RENDEL HARRIS.

JEREMIAH: THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE.

VII. THE FUTURE.

"DEAD nations never rise again" is the aphorism of a modern poet. Nations have, like individuals, their seasons of development, when their genius unfolds its qualities and their contribution is made to the progress of the world; but, when this flowering time is past and the winter of decay overtakes them, there is no return possible to the place of power. In favour of this view of history a formidable array of facts might be adduced. Nothing in human affairs is more striking than the fourth-rate position

occupied in the modern world by races which, in ancient times, played a foremost part, or the desolation which now reigns in portions of the globe which were once the most crowded centres of human life. Nineveh and Babylon were, in the era of the Prophets, the Paris and London of the ancient world; but to-day things lie deeply buried beneath the sands of the desert, and so total is their annihilation that armies have marched over their sites without being aware of the fact.

If ever a nation appeared so dead that it could never by any possibility rise again, it was the Jewish people after it had endured the calamities foretold by Jeremiah. Not only had the country been harried again and again with fire and sword, but foreigners had been brought to occupy the vacant fields and cities. The capital was in ruins, the temple burnt; and the inhabitants, along with their king and such members of his family as had escaped massacre, were deported to a distant land, where their movements were watched by a jealous and powerful enemy. The natural issue seemed to be that they should melt into the larger and stronger population amidst which they were cast and disappear forever, whilst in the country which they had lost the new settlers built up a new state as far as they might be able.

Such was the position of Israel: it seemed to be utterly at the end of its history. Jeremiah at least might have taken this view of the case. In the later stages of his country's existence he had been the prophet of evil; while other prophets took a hopeful view of the situation, he refused to mitigate his predictions of calamity in the slightest degree; and, when the day of darkness closed down and there was no escape, his Cassandra-like voice kept on repeating woe as an accompaniment to the swiftly-falling blows of divine retribution. Such a pessimist might have been expected to believe that the calamity which had

befallen the guilty state was final, and that the dead nation could never rise again.

But, strange to say, this was not the case: Jeremiah was as steady as the most sanguine of the false prophets in declaring that the calamity was not final, but that there still lay before his country a future and a hope. In the middle of his prophecies there are four chapters, xxx.-xxxiii., which have been felicitously called the Book of Consolation; ¹ they are in marked contrast with the tone of the rest of his writings, being as full of sunshine as the major portion of the book is of gloom. The general uncertainty as to the order of Jeremiah's prophecies renders it doubtful to what period of his life the Book of Consolation belongs. Probably, indeed, it was not written all at once; it may be a collection of the bright things scattered over his whole ministry; but in the rest of his writings there are fragments which prove that consolation was always an element in his ministry. Gloomy as was the general tone of his messages, the gloom was never wholly unrelieved.

Jeremiah held firmly to the faith that the people of God could never perish. "Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar, the Lord is His name. If those ordinances depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever." ²

Not only would the nation persist, but the soil of the Holy Land, from which it had been expelled, would be restored to it. Of his faith in this restitution Jeremiah gave a signal proof by purchasing a field in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, in the height of the Babylonian siege. ³ The Roman historian, Livy, gives an account ⁴ of a trans-

¹ Kirkpatrick, *The Doctrine of the Prophets*, p. 310.

² xxxi. 35.

³ xxxii. 9.

⁴ Livy, xxvi. 11.

action almost identical at the moment when Hannibal was at the gates of Rome: the very spot on which the Carthaginian general was encamped was purchased at its full value by a Roman citizen who did not despair of the republic.

Of course the restoration of the Holy Land implied that the people would be brought back from their captivity. This was a most unlikely occurrence; but Jeremiah again and again in the clearest terms predicted it: "The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, "Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book, for, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord, and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it." The deliverance from Babylon would outrival even the famous Exodus from Egypt: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the North, and from all the lands whither He had driven them. For I will again bring them into the land which I gave unto their fathers." To Jeremiah it was even given to specify the length of time which the captivity was to last; and the fulfilment of this prediction is one of the most remarkable instances of fulfilled prophecy which the Scriptures contain. "After seventy years be accomplished for Babylon I will visit you, I will perform My good word to you, and cause you to return here." At the time Babylon was the greatest military power on earth and seemed impregnable; but Jeremiah foretold that it would fall before the invader; and that in the catastrophe Israel would escape. And thus it all came to pass.¹

Jeremiah describes not a few features of the return. The towns of Judah would be re-occupied by their lawful

¹ Cf. xxix. 10, 14; xxx. 33; xxxii. 44; xxxiii. 7, 11, 26; xxv. 12, etc.

inhabitants. Above all, the Holy City would be built again on its own hills. The temple, with its sacrifices and services, would be restored; so would be the royal house. Jeremiah calls the king who is to reign over the New Jerusalem by the name of "David," not meaning that David would return from the dead, but that one of David's line and character would ascend the throne; and the same is denoted by calling the Messianic King "the Branch": although the tree of royalty had been cut down, a sprout would spring from its root, and flourish far beyond the dimensions even of the original tree.¹

Jeremiah's guarantee for all these wonders was the undying love of Jehovah for the people of His choice: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love," he represents Jehovah as saying, "therefore My loving-kindness have I continued unto thee." And what Jehovah's love designed His almighty power was able to accomplish: "Is anything," the prophet demands, "too hard for the Lord?" The very desperateness of the case is a challenge to God; for, more than anything else, He is the God of salvation.

Jeremiah's pictures of the future do not equal those of some of the prophets. The prospect, for example, of the return from exile does not make him glow with the poetic fire of Isaiah; nor does he nearly come up to that great prophet in his references to the Messiah. But his predictions are remarkable as coming from him. He was the prophet of lamentation and mourning and woe; the wings of his imagination never learned fully to expand, for they were pressed down by the leaden weight of calamity.

Yet there is one point at which Jeremiah, I will not say, soars higher, but goes deeper than any of the other prophets: this is in his prediction of the New Covenant,² perhaps the

¹ Cf. xvii. 25; xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 15, 17.

² Especially chap. xxxi. 31 ff.

profoundest glance into the future which the prophetic writings contain. If it is excelled at all, it is only by the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. On the whole, Jeremiah, like the other prophets, predicts the future in terms of the present. That is to say, while he foresaw the surpassing glory of the Messianic era, the scenery in which it was embodied was the scenery of his own age—the Holy Land, the cities of Judah, Mount Zion, the temple, the Davidic dynasty—only all these enhanced. The prophets could not divest themselves of the furnishings of the world in which they lived; and, although they predicted that a new world was coming, this was only their own world in a glorified form. All the more remarkable is it that Jeremiah foresaw that there was to be a change in the most important respect of all—there was to be a new covenant.

A new covenant means in the mouth of Jeremiah almost the same as we should mean by speaking of a new religion. The word "religion" never once occurs in the Old Testament—a fact which must strike the reader as strange when it is remembered that the subject of the book from end to end is religion. But, of course, the Bible has equivalents for the modern term, and of these perhaps the most important is "covenant." In scores of passages of the Old Testament "covenant" occurs where we should naturally say "religion."

The two words have nearly the same significance. Etymologically "religion" is usually supposed to mean something which binds back—it is a ligature by which God and man are bound together. Now, a covenant is a transaction in which two parties meet; it is a bargain, agreement or league. In a covenant each party to the transaction both gives something to the other and receives something in return. In ordinary covenants the things exchanged may be of less or greater value; but in covenants of the highest order the parties exchange the most precious

which they possess, namely, themselves. Thus in marriage, perhaps the highest form of covenant between human beings, the man gives himself to the woman and the woman gives herself to the man: he conferring on her the right to expect from him, as long as life lasts, all the love and protection involved in the name of husband, while she, in like manner, bestows on him the right to expect from her all that is involved in the name of wife. Many times in Scripture the covenant between God and His people is compared to marriage, and this shows what its nature is: it is such a connexion between God and man that, in giving up themselves, they thenceforth belong to each other. Hence the purpose of the covenant is constantly expressed by God in these terms: "They shall be My people and I will be their God."

There was an old covenant. This, Jeremiah says, was made in the day when Jehovah brought His people forth out of the land of Egypt. This is in accordance with the conception under which the whole Old Testament is written. The very purpose for which Jehovah delivered Israel from Egypt was to enter into covenant with them. For this purpose He led them into the recesses of the wilderness. Mount Sinai was the altar, the law was the marriage settlement, and in the twenty-fourth chapter of Exodus the story is told of how the union was solemnized.

But the old covenant had proved a failure. All through the history from the Exodus to the Exile it had run its course; but its course had been disastrous: the union between God and Israel had not been full of love and happiness, but of discord and pain. At last it was broken and at an end. So Jeremiah interpreted the fall of the Jewish state; and this was the worst aspect of the great calamity: it meant a final severance between Israel and Jehovah.

But at this critical juncture it was vouchsafed to Jere-

miah to announce that there was to be a new covenant; and this was by far the weightiest word he ever uttered. It had, indeed, to wait longer for its fulfilment than he anticipated; but, on the night on which the Son of Man was betrayed into the hands of sinners, He took the cup and, giving it, said, "This is the new covenant in My blood," intimating that in His cross the prediction of Jeremiah was fulfilled. It is most unfortunate that this saying of our Lord is rendered, "This is the new testament," instead of, "This is the new covenant," for the reference is obscured. Besides, "testament" is an incorrect translation; "covenant" is not only literal, but far more significant. In the same way Old Testament and New Testament, the names for the two halves of the Bible, ought to be Old Covenant and New Covenant. Were the correct word used, we should perceive that every time we name the second half of the Bible, we are quoting the phrase of Jeremiah. The Old Testament is the book which narrates the history of religion under the form of the old covenant; the New Testament is its history under the new covenant.

This prophet, then, perceived that religion under its old form had run its course, and that a new form was required. But wherein lies the difference between the old and the new? It is his insight into this which is Jeremiah's immortal distinction.

The old covenant had proved a failure; or, in prophetic phraseology, had been broken. But why did it fail? Because one of the parties had been unfaithful. God had been faithful; His love had never failed; but man had been unfaithful; man had ceased to love and therefore to obey. If, then, a new covenant was to come into existence, more lasting than the old, what must be its peculiarity? Obviously it must have more power of binding the human heart; on God's side no change was required, but man's heart must be held by a more potent and enduring attraction.

Accordingly Jeremiah thus defines it: "I will put My law in their inward parts and write it on their hearts." What is a law written on the heart? It is obedience springing out of affection. The law of the old covenant was written outside the heart, on tables of stone; men obeyed it in order to be loved. But in the new covenant love will be created first, and from it obedience will follow.

To the same effect is the prophet's further definition of the peculiarity of the new covenant: "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." This is generally interpreted to mean that in Gospel times religious instruction would be unnecessary; the prophet's function would cease because all would be prophets—a hyperbolical way of saying that knowledge would be intuitive and universal. But it is not to the instruction of religious teachers, but to their urgency that the reference is. What Jeremiah says is that it will no longer be necessary to press the knowledge of God; because God will be revealed in a character so attractive that all hearts will be fascinated and will desire His intimacy.

But how is God thus to be made more attractive and the human heart to be won? The prophet gives the answer in these words: "For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sins no more." It is by the fuller revelation of the gracious side of His character that God is to be made more attractive; it is by an unexampled experience of forgiveness that the heart is to be won.

We know how this has been fulfilled in the Gospel—"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Thus revealed, God is infinitely attractive; and, thus procured, pardon is infinitely affecting.

But can we affirm that Jeremiah connected his prophecy

with Christ? He has one name for the Messianic King—Jehovah-tsidkenu,¹ the Lord our righteousness—on which evangelical feeling has seized as indicating such a connexion; and there can be no objection to our using this title to express the fact that Christ has procured for us the pardon which is the root of love and obedience. But how far this combination of ideas may be ascribed to the prophet is more doubtful. All he knew may have been that the Messianic King was to bear a name denoting that in the new age God Himself was to be the source of the righteousness for lack of which the old covenant had been broken and in virtue of which the new covenant was to be everlasting. It was not given to the prophets to see the new era in its entirety; they set it forth, as they were able, in hints and fragments: it remained for the Messiah Himself, when He came, to draw together all the threads and form out of them the seamless and glorious robe in which He now shines and moves in the eyes of all the ages.

JAMES STALKER.

THE BEATITUDES.

SEEING that the beatitudes are prized as the very choicest gems in the treasury of our Lord's teaching, it is unfortunate that students of the New Testament have not been able to arrive at a common understanding as to the form in which they were originally spoken. We have two versions—one in the First Gospel (Matt. v. 3-12), and the other in the Third Gospel (Luke vi. 20-23), which differ considerably, as indeed do the two accounts of the whole discourse in which they occur. At the first blush of it, the simplest explanation would seem to be to follow Augustine in holding that we have here the narratives of separate discourses

¹ xxiii. 6; xxx. 16.