

A NATION BRINGING FORTH THE FRUITS THEREOF

[Note by James W. Bruggeman: The article herebelow is taken from the July, 1905 issue of *The Covenant People*. A response by J. D. Reid was published in the August, 1905 issue and immediately follows this article.]

A Scotch friend writes: "Can you explain, or show, where the nation was that the kingdom of God was taken to be given unto, when taken from Judah? It was with Judah when Christ said it was to be taken from them. It could not have remained with them after the fall of Jerusalem. Where then was the nation bringing forth the fruits of the kingdom? Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes, Normans were not in Britain in the first century."

Our friend's difficulty seems to be due to a misapprehension of the text. Let us see what is said :—"Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. xxi. 43). Now, as a matter of fact, when those words were spoken by our Saviour, the kingdom of God was yet with the Jews, and was not taken from them till about forty years later. Our friend evidently thinks that the nation to which the kingdom of God was given must then have been in existence—a nation known as already producing the fruits of that kingdom. We do not, however, understand the text to convey that idea.

There are two points with regard to this new nation, these new custodians of the kingdom of God, that must not be overlooked:

(i.) That they were a people scattered and in captivity. A people outside the covenant of Jehovah at the very time these words were spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ. They were, as Hosea tells us, Lo-ammi—not my people. "Then said God, call

his name Lo-ammi: . for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God." Concerning them the verdict was pronounced, and they were now under the displeasure of their Maker, as it is written: "Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure" (Hosea viii. 8); and also Hosea ix. 17: "My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations." Now under such conditions one could not expect to find them bringing forth the fruits of the kingdom

There is no doubt in the mind of our friend as to who the people were to whom this kingdom was to be given, and the only difficulty is as to the time of the appearing of this nation as a fruit-producing kingdom, being known by their fruits as the kingdom of God. We can see that he believes that this kingdom was taken from the Jews and given to the house of Israel, which was then under the curse of God. The Greek of the text is decisive. It is **εθνος** (nation), and, therefore, cannot mean the Church, which is a collection of people from all nations incorporated into the redeemed house of Israel, the nucleus or body of the Church of Christ. Again, to what other nation could this kingdom be given. It is obvious that it must have been the house of Israel to which Christ referred in our text.

(ii.) That nation, the only one to whom the kingdom of God was to be handed over, was to have been recovenanted by our Lord Jesus Christ, " Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt ; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord " (Jer. xxxi. 31, 32). There is not the slightest doubt about it that. Christ came to make this new covenant and seal it up by his precious blood which he shed on the cross in atoning for us; for we read in Rom. xv. 8: "Now I say that Jesus Christ was

a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, *to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.*"

When the words of the text in question were spoken, the New Covenant was not yet established. Christ had begun His work, but His ministry was not accomplished till after His death on Calvary. This was the chief event of Christ's life, and the climax of all that went before. For all the prophecies of the Old Testament point to this great event. The Lord said, in His wonderful prayer to His Father I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Yet He could not actually say, "It is finished," till just a moment before his death. The Atonement on the Cross is not only the seal of Christ's redeeming work, but it is also the seal of the New Covenant which He ushered in by His death. Just as we are looking to Him for all our spiritual blessings, so are the house of Israel and the house of Judah dependent on Him for all their national blessings. There are no national blessings to be got outside or without Christ. Just as there is "none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, neither is there salvation in any other," so are "all the promises of God in Him Yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (chap. viii. 6) tells us that Christ Jesus is the Architect of the new and better covenant: "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." Just as every member under the Old Covenant had to have the sign of circumcision, so under the New Covenant every member has to receive the sign of baptism, the outward and visible sign of the inward and invisible grace and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

There are some of our opponents who accuse us of diminishing from the Saviour's glory, but how can that be possible when we gladly acknowledge that all our national as well as spiritual blessings flow to us through our Lord Jesus

Christ, to whom be glory, dominion, and power for ever and ever.

Therefore we cannot expect to find the house of Israel—a nation bringing forth the fruits of the kingdom—only about forty years after the New Covenant had been ushered in and the re-covenanting of the outcasts had begun. The rejection of the Jews was not a work of a moment. About forty years were required for its accomplishment. The Lord is longsuffering, and He gave the Jews a chance to repent. It was not till after their national rejection of Him that they were cast out and scattered, and the kingdom was transferred to another nation.

We even find from Old Testament prophecy and New Testament Scriptures that the New Covenant was made with the house of Israel *first*. In Jer. xxxi. 33 we read: "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel." In vers. 31 and 32, we read that the New Covenant is to be made, and in ver. 33 the house of Israel is only mentioned, showing that it would be the first one to enter into its possession; Judah proving itself unworthy at the very time of the ushering in of the New Covenant. Again, in the New Testament we are taught the same truth. Rom. xi. 25 teaches that the house of Israel, called there "the fulness of the Gentiles," will be saved before Judah, and "so all Israel shall be saved." Actual facts amply support Scripture evidence. To-day Israel is in possession of the birthright blessings, while Judah is an outcast and a wanderer amongst the nations.

Moreover, it must be remembered that the gathering of the scattered house of Israel was not a work of a day, a month, or a year, nor must we forget that the change in the national character could not be brought about instantaneously. The People were to be collected into a land far off, and when in that land they were to develop into that acceptable nation. We are definitely told to what place they were to be taken. "Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more;

neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime" (2 Sam. vii. 10). This appointed place was no other than "the isles afar off," "the land of the north," the west, or the British Isles, for they so exactly correspond with the geographical position given in Scripture. It was in this place they were to change their characteristic from that of an outcast nation to the recovenanted people of Jehovah. These islands were the home of the prodigal where he was again to be received into his heavenly father's favour. Here the words concerning them, spoken by Hosea the prophet in chapter i.10, were to be fulfilled: "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God."

In the light of the foregoing explanation, our friend almost answers his own question. He asks:—"Where then was the nation bringing forth the fruits of the kingdom? Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes, Normans were not in Britain in the first century." Well, we are not told that they ought to have been all here in the first century; and as they were not here, they were on the way to their home Not till after they had all been gathered together, and not till the throne of David was established over them, could they have begun to represent the kingdom of God. Historically we can prove that, in several stages and under different names, the house Israel wandered across Europe to the shores of the German Ocean, and finally entered their appointed place, these islands, as Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes, and Normans, to be re-united into one great and mighty nation; and that that nation would show its right to the custodianship of the kingdom of God by its prolific produce of the fruits of that kingdom.

The question is not so much where was the nation then, but rather, has that nation justified its claim to the ownership of the kingdom? We agree that there can be no other nation to

whom the kingdom could have been given. It was taken from the Jews, it could only have been handed over to the house of Israel. The scattered nation had no chance to amend its ways, and to produce signs acceptable to God before it was gathered together in its appointed place. Therefore, it would not be fair to apply the test before that time.

It is, however, we rejoice to say, true that the lost and scattered house of Israel, resuscitated in its appointed place, has been and is producing the fruits of the kingdom of God; and it has thereby established its rights to be the guardian of the kingdom taken from the Jews. We are able to say of Great Britain, humbly, yet thankfully, that she is fulfilling that wonderful prophecy concerning her in Isaiah xxvii. 6: "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit."

S. J. Carlton

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IT should be quite apparent to Brother Canton that the difficulties he mentions in the article written by him in THE COVENANT PEOPLE for July are not mine. I wrote, "It—the Kingdom—was with Judah, when Christ said it was to be taken from them."

There was no need, therefore, to tell me in his article that I had misapprehended the text, for "as a matter of fact when these words were spoken by our Saviour, the Kingdom of God was yet with the Jews." Why? I wrote that "it was with Judah when Christ said it was to be taken from them."

I also wrote, "It could not have remained with them after the fall of Jerusalem," while Mr. Canton asserts "that" it was not "taken from them till about forty years after," *i.e.*, forty years after Christ uttered the words in Matt. xxi. 43. I am not prepared to agree with Mr. Canton in that, though I stated it could not have continued with Judah after Jerusalem's destruction; yet I am not prepared to assert that the Kingdom of God remained with them up to the seige of their capital, but think rather that the rending of the veil in the temple was the sign of its being taken from the one who had up to that moment been in possession of the Kingdom of God, for at the rending of the veil the redemption of Israel was completed.

That, however, is not the point. Where was the *nation* that the Kingdom of God was to be given unto, either then or at the fall of Jerusalem? That nation must have been existent. Not necessarily *then* bringing forth the fruits, but certainly when God established His Kingdom in their midst, then they would bring forth the fruits, for our Redeemer said they would. Mr. Canton repeats a part of my question (p. 30), "Where then was the nation? Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes, Normans were not in Britain in the first century," and then answers, "Well, we are not told that they ought to have been all here in the first

century.... not till after they had all been gathered together...could they have begun to represent the Kingdom of God."

That surely is not British-Israel truth, for it means that the Kingdom of God was not on earth for a thousand years after it had been taken from the Jews. The Normans were the last of Israel's tribes, we argue, who came to Britain, so according to Mr. Carlton's dictum it was only "after they had all been gathered together...could they have begun to represent the Kingdom of God." Nothing in the words used by our Redeemer can warrant me in asserting, or even thinking, of an interregnum of either long or short duration. "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation," these are His words, so I think I am justified in teaching that immediately on its removal from Judah it was given to a *nation*, not a scattered assemblage of units, but a *nation*, with, I doubt not, a descendant of David as their King. Israel was never to cease as a *nation*. So God said by Jeremiah. In human eyesight Israel ceased as a nation in 588 B.C. But God said it was never to cease as a nation, so I assert in defiance of Pope, Patriarch, or Prelate that it did exist, and although the Kingdom of God continued with Judah for at least 600 years later than Zedekiah's dethronement, Israel as a nation existed during that time, and down to the present.

Will Mr. Carlton again try to answer the question? Let him give it a little more thought, for it is a most important one. Perhaps English listeners may not voice their queries and doubts so freely as do the Scottish, so it is better to be prepared for the Scot as well as for all others.

J. D. Reid.