

THE GOOD TIDINGS DISCREDITED.

– FEB. 25. – LUKE 14:16-20. –

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not." – John 1:11.

REMEMBERING the proverb, "A prophet has no honor in his own country," our Lord did not begin his ministry in Nazareth, where almost twenty-eight years of his life had been spent and where consequently he was well known to the people. His ministry began in Judea, and the people of Nazareth undoubtedly heard considerable respecting the marvelous works and words of their suddenly notable fellow-citizen, before he came thither. All this would be in their favor, and tend to prepare them to receive Messiah and his message, offsetting the familiarity which so frequently begets contempt.

Our lesson shows that our Lord had been in the habit of attending the religious services of the synagogue every Sabbath day, and intimates that it had been his custom to do the reading of the Law – which implied an education far beyond that of the majority of his day. As synagogue-attendance was not strictly a part of the Law, our Lord's example in thus seeking to associate as far as possible with the most religious people of his day, and his willingness to take part in the public services, are a lesson to his people everywhere, in harmony with the words of the Apostle that we should not forget the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, for the Lord's worship. – Hebrew 10:25.

The passage of Scripture read by our Lord from the prophecy of Isaiah was quite probably the stated Scripture lesson for that day, for it would appear that it was a custom of the Jews to have Scripture readings each Sabbath day, taking up various parts of the Old Testament Scriptures alternately. At all events, the lesson read by our Lord is easily identified as a Greek translation from Isaiah 61. He read the first verse of the chapter, and stopped reading in the middle of the

second verse, closed the roll, and returned it to the servant having charge of the closet in which the rolls were kept, and then, according to the custom of the time, as an indication that he was ready to make remarks, Jesus sat down. How much of an explanation of the Scriptures he gave his hearers we are not definitely told, but doubtless he commented liberally upon the various features of the prophecy, summing up his remarks with that which is recorded, viz., that the prophecy was in process of fulfillment at that very moment.

The audience, composed chiefly of his acquaintances, had a mixed sentiment as respects him; with the natural feeling of irreverence for those with whom we are intimately acquainted was blended another feeling of pride in a fellow-citizen, who had attained such renown; and as they listened to his exposition of the prophecy they were filled with admiration, "and all bear him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." They said within themselves and to each other, We have never heard such wonderfully good tidings before in our lives, and this from our neighbor, the carpenter. Little did they realize, when thus admiring his gracious message, that something would occur in a few moments which would completely frenzy them, and lead them to desire to murder the one who now declared himself to be the fulfiller of this prophecy, the Anointed of the Lord, the Messiah, ready to give in due time the blessings mentioned by the prophet.

The people of Nazareth were more interested, however, in the miracles of Jesus than in his claim to be the Messiah. The miracles were practical, and they could appreciate them, but his teaching that he was the Messiah seemed farfetched, when they had known him for so long as the son of Joseph, the carpenter. They therefore began to wonder, and possibly to question, how soon he would do in Nazareth some of the wonderful miracles done by him at Capernaum and elsewhere, of which they had heard. Knowing this to be the attitude of their mind, our Lord anticipated their request for miracles, and explained that they must not expect miracles from him – though they

evidently expected more miracles amongst his friends than they had heard of his doing amongst strangers. This made necessary a little explanation, which was not at all flattering to them.

Our Lord does not say that he was not permitted of the Father to do miracles at Nazareth, although this is implied in the fact that he did none, and implied also in the explanations and illustrations which he gave. Doubtless he was guided in the matter by certain principles governing his use of the power from [R2579 : page 55] on high. As we have already seen he might not use this power selfishly in his own interest; we may likewise suppose that he would not be at liberty to use it simply as a gratification to curiosity, but that it could be used only in response to proper faith. The people of Nazareth evidently were not in the attitude of faith, not therefore in the proper attitude of heart, to receive God's blessing – the wrong condition of their hearts was manifested by their actions, when our Lord refused to gratify their curiosity. We note the difference between this curious and unbelieving desire for miracles, and the course of action following it, in contrast with the faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman, her humility of heart, and the manner in which she received our Lord's first refusal to grant her request. (Matthew 15:22-28.) We can but suppose that had the people of Nazareth been in a proper attitude of heart they would have accepted our Lord's refusal to work miracles in a different manner, and would have said, "Well, we enjoy the gracious words from his mouth anyway, for they have brought a healing and blessing to our hearts." And if such had been their attitude no doubt later our Lord would have performed miracles of healing in their city also.

By way of explaining to them why he might not perform his miracles in their midst, as well as toward others, our Lord cited two illustrations from the prophets of the past – Elijah sent to the poor Gentile widow, to be a blessing to her home, while widows of Israel were passed by; and Elisha healing Naaman of leprosy, while many lepers in Israel were passed by. These apt illustrations were unkindly received by his hearers, because, drawing the parallel, it likened them

to starving poor and diseased lepers and implied our Lord's comparative greatness and superiority to them as a dispenser of divine bounty. After the same manner our Lord elsewhere told the Pharisees that he, as the Good Physician, had come to heal the sick and that the well needed not a physician. That this was their attitude of heart, and feeling no need of him, and the blessings he dispensed, they did not realize their sin-sickness, and their deadness in trespasses and sins, and hence did not realize their need of redemption and deliverance from the power of sin and death.

The effect of our Lord's illustrations was almost electrical upon the proud hearts before him, whose only interest in him from the first had been that of pride in him as a fellow-citizen and hope for miracle-proofs of his power. Now, however, this pride was turned to bitterness, and they would murder the one who had spoken so disrespectfully of them as to compare them to hungry widows and lepers, needing his aid. The congregation immediately became a mob, filled with angry passion; and surging forth with him the crowd led in the direction of a precipice with a view to casting him headlong from it. But by the exercise of some power, possibly a power natural to a perfect human being, our Lord mastered them with his mind, and passed from their midst, none daring to stay him, and went on his way.

Let us note carefully the message which our Lord declared was in process of fulfillment that day. He declared himself to be the Anointed One mentioned by the prophet – his anointing of the holy spirit dating from the time of his baptism, when John bore witness that the holy spirit descended upon him and abode with him. The anointing was for a purpose, as the prophet declared, and our Lord confirmed the same, saying that he was anointed to preach the gospel.

THE GOOD TIDINGS BORNE BY THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT.

We are to distinguish between the preaching of the gospel or "good tidings" and the good things promised, which are to come to pass in due time. The preaching was begun by our Lord and has been continued throughout the Gospel age, by all those who by the grace of God became "members in particular of his body," the church over which he is the head [R2580 : page 55] forever. (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:22-23.) After this preaching of the gospel shall have been given, and shall have accomplished its purpose and intention, then will follow the glorious actualities referred to in it. And if the mere description of the coming blessings is called the Gospel, good news, good tidings for all people, what may we not hope respecting the blessings themselves, of which only the message is now given to the hearing and sight of faith?

The gospel was to be preached by the Anointed Head and by the anointed members of his body, to all who have ears to hear it, in the special interest of one particular class, viz., the poor, the broken-hearted – not the literally poor any more than the literally broken-hearted, but the "poor in spirit," the humble-minded, who are also the sympathetic, the tender, the heart-broken, as in contrast with the hard-hearted. We make this distinction as between the poor in purse and the poor in spirit because it is a very necessary one, which some failing to discern have been misled into grievous errors. True, not many rich, either in purse or intellect, will attain the Kingdom, the majority, being chiefly the poor of this world in purse and intellect, but rich in faith. (1 Cor. 1:26-29; James 2:5.) However, it is not because of their poverty of intellect and of purse that there will be more of this class chosen, but merely because poverty of purse and intellect are much more favorable to the development of humility than are riches of any kind; and humility is a prime essential to an inheritance with the saints in light.

While all of the anointed gossellers may during this age bear their message without restriction as to nationality or color or sex, to whomsoever has an ear to hear, Jew or Gentile, bond or free, and

while they may not be able to discern in advance which will prosper, this or that – nevertheless they will not waste time and effort upon those whom they find to be mentally "rich and increased in goods, and feeling that they have need of nothing." (Rev. 3:17.) No; they are rather to take note of those who, when they hear the good tidings, give evidence of proper "ears to hear," the meek, the poor in spirit, realizing that it is this class that the Lord is specially seeking during this age.

Similarly, the anointed ones are not to spend their time endeavoring to break the hard hearts of the worldly, for this is not a part of its commission. God himself, through various providences, is attending to the work of breaking the hard hearts; some are **[R2580 : page 56]** broken and softened by the trials, difficulties, perplexities and adversities of the present life; some are torn and bleeding through severe trials of life and earthly disappointments; and the time of trouble fast approaching is specially designed of the Lord as the time for breaking and melting many hard hearts, in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom and its blessings of restitution, etc. Now, however, the message is to "bind up the broken-hearted."

How much there is of this very kind of work that needs doing! The poor in spirit, contrite and mellowed of heart, disappointed with the world, vexed with the flesh and the adversary, are to be found in nearly every quarter of the world; and whosoever has received the anointing of the holy spirit should realize that this power upon him is given to be exercised upon this needy class – pouring in the oil and the wine of the divine promise, to cheer and comfort and bless, and prepare for joint-heirship in the Kingdom, some of the very class whom the Lord will be pleased to accept. To these the gospel may be preached freely; they will not turn again and rend the messengers, but will hear it, and it will comfort and bind up their wounded hearts.

If then we have found the class to whom the anointed ones are to specially address themselves, what is the special message of peace

and blessing which they are to bear, and which the Prophet and our Lord denominate the "gospel" – the good tidings? Is it the announcement of the election of a handful to glory, and the reprobation of all the remainder to an eternity of torment? No; this is not the gospel which the Prophet and Jesus declared. Is it the message of God's goodness of intention, but incapacity of execution, which will result in a very few being saved and the great mass of humanity being eternally tormented? No, not so. Evidently our Lord was not sent to preach this gospel (?) of damnation, so common to-day – for it is no part of the message here declared, nor would such a reprobation to eternal misery be called "gospel" truthfully.

Let us see what is implied in this "gospel" message set forth in the Scriptures. Let us know how widely it differs from the various messages of heathendom, and from the commonly accepted messages of "Christendom." Let us note the true gospel message that should be proclaimed by all who have been anointed with the holy spirit. It is divided by the Prophet into five parts: **(1)** Deliverance to the captives; **(2)** recovering of sight to the blind; **(3)** setting at liberty them that are bruised; **(4)** the announcement of the acceptable year of the Lord, as preceding these blessings; and **(5)** the announcement of a day of vengeance in the close or end of the acceptable year of the Lord, – a "time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation." This last part, tho proper to be proclaimed by the anointed "body," was not due to be proclaimed by the anointed "Head" at the time of our Lord's discourse. All mankind are captives, all are blind, all are bruised; hence it is a universal blessing that is announced in this Scriptural "gospel" message.

(1) The captives are the slaves of sin; Adam and all his race, "sold under sin." (Rom. 7:14.) Through disobedience in Eden the race was born in this slavery, "born in sin, shapen in iniquity." Some of the sin-slaved race have already been remanded to the great prison-house of death, while all others are on their way thither. The "good tidings" which Jesus preached and which all his followers under the same

anointing of the spirit must preach, is the resurrection of the dead, or as the Apostle expressed his teaching, it is "Jesus and the resurrection." (Acts 17:18.) Jesus, the Redeemer, Jesus the anointed Head of the spiritual Seed which, as God's Kingdom, is shortly to bring to mankind full opportunity of release, not only from the prison-house, but from all the other incidents of their slavery through the first Adam, – he having redeemed the first Adam and his posterity with his own precious life.

None but the anointed body of Christ are commissioned to preach this good tidings, and every member of that body is so commissioned irrespective of human distinctions of "clergy" and "laity"; and whoever does not fulfil this mission is unfaithful to his commission. And alas! as we look around us, throughout the length and breadth of Churchianity, falsely called Christianity, we find that evidently very few indeed have been anointed, because very few indeed know this message of the resurrection, – indeed that the majority of ministers in all denominations are heartily opposed to the doctrine of the resurrection, because it is in direct conflict with their unscriptural theories.

(2) The promised recovering of sight to the blind has a far deeper signification than mere natural eyesight. It refers to the blindness which sin has brought upon the hearts of men, perverting their mental vision, hindering them from seeing the divine being and his divine attributes in their true light, – as loving, gracious and true, just and wise. The blindness that is upon mankind, and "the gross darkness that covers the people" in general, is described by the Apostle as being the work of the great Adversary Satan, who by false doctrines not only amongst the heathen but also amongst Christians, has misrepresented the divine character, the divine Word, the divine plan, "putting light for darkness, and darkness for light," and has thus deceived the whole world, all nations, with the very small exception of the few whose eyes of understanding have been enlightened with the true light. We have no hope for this general opening of the blind

eyes in the present age – only the few now get the eyesalve. In some respects indeed it is better that the majority should be permitted to remain blinded until by the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom the conditions shall be much more favorable than at present, that when then the eyes of their understanding have been opened, and their responsibilities proportionately increased, it may be under circumstances more favorable to them.

(3) "To set at liberty them that are bruised" gives the thought of sin's captives sore and distressed from the manacles with which they are bound. This figure fitly represents the bondage of corruption, infirmity, etc., which are concomitants to the death penalty. The promise for such a deliverance means "restitution" in active operation (Acts 3:19-21), in the assistance and uplifting of the world of mankind during the Millennial age – to all the glorious perfections lost **[R2580 : page 57]** for all through father Adam's disobedience, and its sentence of death. What a glorious hope is here! No wonder this also was included as a part of the good tidings. How comparatively valueless would all the other features of blessing be, if sickness and pain and imperfection continued. It is when we see not only Sin, the taskmaster, itself removed, but also all of its results counteracted, and all the sinner-race privileged to return to the full liberty of sons of God, and that all this is provided for through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and through the Kingdom which is to be established in his hands for the blessing of all the families of the earth – then we discern why it is called "good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people," and hear the echo of John's prophecy from the standpoint of the future perfection, saying, "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for **[R2581 : page 57]** the former things are passed away." – Rev. 21:4.

(4) "The acceptable year (or acceptable time or epoch) of the Lord" is this Gospel age, which began with our Lord's consecration at his baptism, and his anointing with the holy spirit, and which will continue until the last member of the body of Christ has "filled up that

which is behind of the afflictions of Christ" – until all the sufferings of Christ (head and body) are complete, when the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. – Isa. 40:5.

This Gospel age is called the acceptable epoch, because during this time God is willing to accept sacrifices for sins. First he accepted the sacrifice of his only begotten Son our Lord, and secondly he has been accepting throughout the age all those who come unto the Father through Jesus, and who, justified by his merit, present their bodies living sacrifices to God as a reasonable service, and thus become joint-sacrificers with Jesus, and joint-heirs with him in the coming Kingdom, as it is written, "Heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."* – Rom. 8:17.

*See [Tabernacle Shadows of Better Sacrifices](#).

WE WALK BY FAITH AND NOT BY SIGHT.

However, it is well to notice that while the "gospel" includes all the foregoing blessings for mankind in general, it brings a sooner and still greater blessing to the "little flock" whose ears are blessed that they hear, and whose eyes are blessed that they see, in advance of the world. To these all of the coming blessings are anticipated, – not literally, but by faith, for "We walk by faith, not by sight." Already the true Church ("whose names are written in heaven" Heb. 12:23) is not only justified by faith, and thus reckonedly released from captivity to Sin and death, but also reckonedly is risen with Christ, reckonedly has become "new creatures" in Christ, reckonedly, under the New Covenant, are no longer in the flesh but in the spirit, and so accounted of God, and so accounted also of each other, who henceforth know each other, not after the flesh, but after the spirit – as new creatures. – 2 Cor. 5:16.

These have a new sight, seeing with the eye of faith things that are not visible to the natural sight. They are guided into all truth, as it

becomes due; yes, they discern "the deep things of God," because they possess the spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:9,10), seeing with the eye of faith things which the natural eye hath not seen, hearing with the ear of faith things which the natural ear has never heard, neither has entered into the heart of the natural man to conceive of or imagine – the things which God hath in reservation for them that love him, – and who manifest their love by their devotion to him and his. The eyes of their understanding being opened, they are enabled to "comprehend with all saints the length and breadth, the height and depth, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth (human) knowledge." – Eph. 3:18.

Altho this special class is not set at liberty from the bruises and imperfections of the mortal body during the present life, but require in this as in other things to walk by faith and not by sight, nevertheless, in one sense of the word they are set at liberty from these imperfections, because under the terms of the New Covenant they have the assurance of the Lord that none of the natural blemishes and imperfections and physical weaknesses are henceforth counted against them, their standing being reckonedly that of new creatures, and their judgment in the Lord's sight being according to their intentions of heart, and not according to the weaknesses of their flesh, which is reckoned dead.

We exhort all of the redeemed who have made a covenant with the Lord, "a covenant of sacrifice," to remember why they are reckoned as members baptized into the body of the anointed one (the Christ) – here plainly set forth by the Head of our body, viz., that each one is to be a preacher of this Gospel and not of another Gospel. Let us be faithful for yet a little longer, until the great High Priest shall fully qualify us as the "Royal Priesthood" in the glory of the Kingdom, that then it may be our privilege with him to bring to mankind all the wonderful blessings forestated in his gospel, for the blessing of all the families of the earth, with a full opportunity of attaining the light of truth and the liberty of the sons of God.
