

CONSECRATION IN THE TEMPLE

– LUKE 2:22-39. – JANUARY 28. –

"For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people." – Vs. 30,31.

WHEN JESUS was forty days old, Joseph and Mary took Him to Jerusalem and presented Him in consecration in the Temple. This was in accordance with the custom which related specially to the first-born in each family. Although the first-born of the entire nation were passed over at the deliverance from Egypt, they had been exchanged for the one tribe of Levi, which had been specially devoted to God's service; nevertheless, the same principle was exemplified in respect to the first-born of each mother. It was to be devoted specially to God and His service.

The significance of this we see when we remember that the elect Church, being gathered during this Gospel Age, is styled the Church of the First-borns. Again, St. James tells us that we are "a kind of first-fruits unto God of His creatures." The clear intimation of all this is that after the Church shall have been gathered to heavenly glory by the power of the First Resurrection, the Kingdom then to be established will bring blessings to all the families of the earth, giving them also the opportunity of becoming sons of God, on the *earthly plane*, by restitution processes. – Acts 3:19-21.

Incidentally we remark that it is the custom of some parents to make a formal consecration of their children to God in the presence of believers. The influence upon the children cannot be other than beneficial, as in future days they shall look back and realize the parental care and love and devotion thus manifested in the giving of the very best they possessed to the Lord (the fruit of their bodies). Doubtless very many children will thus experience a beneficial

influence upon their minds as respects their own consecration to their Creator.

Furthermore, we believe that the parents who thus give their best to the Lord are really bringing to themselves great blessings. Trials and difficulties are sure to come, but in all of these their children belong to God. And if they can pray, Thy will be done, then they may have a peace and receive a joy in the Spirit which others cannot know. Of course, this does not take the place of the child's personal consecration when it reaches the age of discretion and judgment, but we believe that the blessed influence will be helpful to the child in mature years, assisting [R4942 : page 461] to a right decision for God, for Truth and for righteousness.

At the time of the consecration ceremony at the Temple, an aged Prophet came forward and took the babe Jesus in his arms and praised God. The record is that in some manner God had revealed to him that the accomplishment of the gracious promises made to Abraham was nigh, and that he should not die until he had seen the Deliverer of Israel. By some power Divine this aged Prophet recognized Jesus, and, after saying, "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation" – the way in which Thy salvation shall come to Israel and to all the families of the earth – he proceeded to say, "which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all people – the Light of the world and the Glory of Thy people Israel."

"SET FOR THE FALL AND RISING AGAIN OF MANY IN ISRAEL"

Simeon, addressing Mary, declared prophetically that the Child was "set for the fall and the rising of many in Israel, and for a sign [mark or standard], which shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." How wonderful a prophecy! It reminds us of the words of St. Paul, that our Lord is "a stone of stumbling and rock of offence" to many in Israel, that many stumbled, being disappointed. And St. Paul told also of the rising again of many who

stumbled. He declares, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it and the rest were blinded" – stumbled – turned aside from Divine favor. (Rom. 11:7.) Nevertheless he assures us that as soon as "the elect," the Church of Christ, shall have been completed, by the power of the First Resurrection, then Divine favor shall return to natural Israel, through Elect Spiritual Israel: "They shall obtain mercy through your mercy." – Romans 11:25-33.

Not a sufficient number of "Israelites indeed" were found to complete the foreordained elect, and hence the invitation went beyond Abraham's natural seed to gather during this Gospel Age the saintly of every nation, people, kindred and tongue. These must all be found before the blessings shall go to Israel and to the remainder of our race, offering to them restitution and human perfection.

A saintly woman, Anna, a Prophetess, over a century old, resided in Jerusalem and in the precincts of the Temple courts. She, also, moved by the Holy Spirit, recognized the Babe and gave praise to God and mentioned the matter to the saintly ones who were waiting for the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise – "for the consolation of Israel."

If the seeing of Jesus as a babe was worthy of praise and thanks, still more was it a cause of gratitude to God for those who beheld Him at the age of thirty, consecrating Himself a living sacrifice even unto death, and who realized that He had been begotten again by the Holy Spirit to be a New Creature, of the divine nature. Those who saw the Master's faithfulness in performing the sacrifice of His consecration during the three and a half years of His ministry beheld still more for which to give God praise. And when He had finished His course at Calvary and was raised from the dead the third day, and forty days later ascended up on high where He was before, happy were they who recognized that further development of the Divine Plan for man's salvation – the blessing of all the families of the earth.

Still more blessed were those who at Pentecost received the Holy Spirit as a begetting power and those who since have received the same, evidencing that they are the children of God, and, "if children, then heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ" their Lord to the great inheritance – to the oath-bound promise made to Abraham, that through them all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

THE FALL AND RISING AGAIN

The entire nation of Israel stumbled over Jesus, failing to recognize Him as the Sent of God – except the comparatively few who became His disciples – probably ten or fifteen thousand, according to the records. Of the nation in general the Prophet Isaiah declared, "They shall fall backward and be snared and taken." St. Paul, quoting Isaiah's prophecy, proceeds to show the recovery of Israel to Divine favor as soon as the elect class of this Gospel Age shall have been completed from amongst all nations. Then will come the time for Israel's rising again to Divine favor. – Isa. 8:15; Rom. 11:9-11.

Continuing his argument, St. Paul assures us that blindness happened to Israel, not permanently, but merely for a time, until the full number of the "elect" from the Gentiles should come in. He declares that then all Israel shall be saved from their stumbling. This is the very "rising again" referred to in our lesson. St. Paul declares that this is God's Covenant with natural Israel and that their sins shall be taken away and they shall obtain mercy, through the Church's mercy. In other words, when the Church shall be glorified in the First Resurrection, Divine blessing shall proceed forthwith to Israel and shall then extend to all the families of the earth. God hath concluded them all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all. – See Romans 11:25-32.

=====