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TO THE JEW FIRST

– OCTOBER 20. – MARK 7:24-30; MATT. 8:5-13. –

"Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." – John 6:37.

THERE IS general confusion prevalent amongst God's people respecting the relationship between the Gospel of Christ and the Jewish nation and between the Jewish nation and all other nations. In the past we have been too free to guess, to imagine, to suppose, and have not carefully enough studied the clear statements of the Bible on this subject. The Bible tells that until the coming of Christ – yea, until three and a half years after Jesus died, arose from the dead and ascended on high, the Divine dealings were confined to the Hebrew race – to Abraham and his natural posterity. The whole world is involved in the penalty that came upon Father Adam because of his disobedience – the whole world is under Divine sentence as being unworthy of everlasting life or of relationship with God – the whole world, therefore, as St. Paul describes, "are by nature children of wrath," and all were strangers, foreigners and aliens from God.

The Jews were no better than the remainder of the race, so far as the Scriptures tell, but God, having from the first determined to provide a Redeemer for mankind, through whose Kingdom all the world ultimately should be blest and have the privilege of return to Divine favor, made a selection of Abraham's posterity, because Abraham himself was a noble character whose faith and obedience to God were thus rewarded. It was not, therefore, anything of which the Jews might boast that their nation and not another nation came into relationship with God through the Law Covenant. It was of Divine grace or favor. According to Divine prophecy this favor was [R5101 : page 294] to continue with the Jew for a definite period of time, namely, until three and a half years after the cross.

THE GOSPEL TO CORNELIUS

As soon as the limit of time expired God manifested His favor toward the Gentiles by sending the Gospel Message to Cornelius, a reverential and holy and generous Gentile. Since then God's favors are as open to the Gentile as to the Jew – "the middle wall of partition" has been "broken down." The Gentiles and Jews are now both received on the same terms, viz., faith in Jesus and consecration to walk in His steps.

It is from this standpoint that we should read the Apostle's statement that the Gospel of Christ "is preached to every creature under heaven." He did not mean nor would it have been true that the Gospel had been preached to every creature in the sense of being proclaimed to *all*. For now, eighteen centuries later, it has not yet been proclaimed to all mankind. What the Apostle did mean is that the Gospel is now unrestricted, free to be preached to every creature under heaven, no matter what his nationality – that it is no longer confined to Jews as at first. Now, whoever has "an ear to hear, let him hear" the good Message of the Kingdom. Now, whoever hears and has a heart to accept God's gracious Message, let him present his body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God through Christ. (Rom. 12:1.) Now, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

THE SYRO-PHENICIAN WOMAN'S FAITH

The narrative of today's study fully confirms what we have said about it, namely, that at the time of our Lord's ministry, and for three and a half years after His death, all God's favors still belonged to the Jews only. The Syro-Phenician woman of our study was a Greek – not a Jewess. Her daughter was possessed of an evil spirit, a demon – "obsessed." She heard that Jesus was near the border of Judea, near her home, and she sought Him out, imploring that He would cast out the demon.

But Jesus said to the woman, "Let the children first be filled, for it is not proper to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." She understood the force of this statement. The Jews claimed to be God's people, and the Gentiles were styled "Gentile dogs," because they had never been in covenant-relationship with God. Yet the poor woman's faith in Jesus and her earnest desire for the relief of her daughter moved her to press her case and she answered, "Yea, Lord, but the little dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." She was one of these "little dogs"; might she not have the crumb of comfort and blessing which she craved – the healing of her daughter? Jesus replied, "For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter." She got the crumb, her faith prevailed.

Today the Israel of God, to whom belong all the blessings and promises and favors of God, are the Spiritual Israelites. These, through full consecration to the Lord and through the imputation of the merit of Jesus' sacrifice, begotten of the Holy Spirit, are embryo sons of God, partakers, inheritors of the Divine nature and Kingdom.

Have we not, however, from time to time heard of some outsiders – Gentiles – who have never come into covenant-relationship with God and who are therefore strangers and foreigners to all the blessings which belong to the "household of faith" – have we not heard of some of these receiving occasional crumbs of comfort and of blessing? We have. But surely these will be exceptional cases. The door to come into Natural Israel was barred, but the door into Spiritual Israel is open, and as our text declares, Him that cometh unto Jesus He will in no wise reject. Hence there is no excuse today for any being in the attitude of "dogs," receivers merely of an occasional crumb of God's blessing. If they will, the door of favor still stands open that they may become "sons of God without rebuke."

THE CENTURION'S SERVANT HEALED

A Centurion in the Roman army service corresponded to a Captain in our military service today. Palestine, as a Province, was

subject to the Roman Empire, and little garrisons of Roman soldiers were stationed here and there, usually under a Centurion. They were Gentiles, of course. One of these knew of Jesus and His mighty works, and when his faithful and appreciated servant fell sick he went to Jesus asking for healing. In our Lord's metaphor this was another Gentile dog desiring a crumb from the children's table.

The Centurion's faith, our Lord declared, was superior to anything that He had found amongst the Israelites, God's favored people. He was so confident of Jesus' power that while he urged that, being a Gentile, Jesus would not wish to honor or recognize him by coming under his roof, yet he besought Him simply to say the word and he was sure it would be sufficient to heal his servant. He explained that he had this faith because he himself was a man of authority and could command his servants to come and go, and that as Jesus had still higher authority, His messengers, whatever they were, by which He healed sickness and pain, could be commanded and would obey. He got his request. **[R5101 : page 295]**

Jesus took the occasion to say that the Israelites, who were counting so much on their relationship to God as the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, would find themselves greatly mistaken in the end. Being the children of Abraham did indeed mean that they would have special privileges and opportunities, but these they were enjoying and were not appreciating them. They should not think that God would take them for His Elect people regardless of their character, their faith, their obedience, or their likeness to Abraham. They were indeed the children of the Kingdom – the ones to whom it was properly first offered, but God would not thrust it upon them.

God did take out of their nation the "Israelites indeed"; meantime the rest were blinded, and for the past eighteen centuries He has been completing the Elect Kingdom Church, out of all nations, peoples, kindreds and tongues. But He is selecting none except such as have the faith and obedience of Abraham and the spirit of His Son Jesus –

none but the holy, the loyal, the true. These will be associated in the Kingdom, while the natural Israelites, over-confident, let the privilege go by.

Nevertheless the Scriptures most clearly declare that the natural seed of Abraham, the Jews, are still heirs of a certain promise of God, which in due time will come to them. To their nation will come the great privilege of being the foremost nation amongst men during Messiah's glorious reign, when the Church glorified, spiritualized, will be with Him in His Throne, invisible to men. St. Paul thus explains that the full number, to complete the Elect Kingdom class, must be first found amongst the Gentiles, and then, these being glorified in the First Resurrection, Natural Israel will obtain the great earthly blessings which are still theirs and which were promised to their fathers. Natural Israel will receive blessings from Spiritual Israel. "They shall obtain mercy through your mercy." – Rom. 11:25-34.

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