Job 14:7-9 (John Ruskin Gill) 130362

The Future, Lecture Number 1 (14:7-9)

The proper hope of the Christian is to see the coming of the Lord. The world is under condemnation. God is saving men out of it.

The only hope for the sinner is in the death of Christ—not His life. His life was that of a man as it should be. It could only condemn us, but His death opened up the way to glory for us.

His coming, then, is before the Christian. It is not connected in Scripture with any signs and is waiting for nothing. But many things are to transpire after His coming. If we see these things shaping up now, His coming must be very near! “For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb. 10:37).

We will now speak of things to happen after He comes. Let us begin with the Jews, God’s earthly people.

“He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down” (Luke 13:6-9).

The fig tree is emblematic of Israel; like the lion of England and the eagle of the United States. It is Israel in professed relationship to God.

Here the tree is in the place where care and skill are lavished upon it, but “the certain man,” the Lord on earth, is seeking in vain to find fruit. He complains in verse 7 of three years—His public ministry on earth.

“Cut it down”—the removal of Israel as in professed fruit-bearing for God is here contemplated.

Verse 8: “And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it.” This is the Spirit of God answering with a plea to allow a certain additional time for Israel to respond to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

See Acts 3:19, but read “and” instead of “when.” “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, and the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

If Israel had then turned, the kingdom would have come—even at that late hour. Many Christians do not know that even after the Lord ascended to heaven, a supplementary period of grace followed. Of this the Holy Spirit here speaks through Peter. They did not turn, however, so mercy was ended and the fig tree was finally cut down.

Matthew 21:17-19: “And He left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and He lodged there. Now in the morning, as He returned into the city, He hungered. And when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever. And presently the fig tree withered away.”

This again is Israel professing to bear fruit, but bearing none. So sentence was imposed, as in the other parable.

Compare with Mark 11:12-14 and verse 20: “And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, He was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find any thing thereon: and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever. And His disciples heard it. ... And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.” Notice in verse 20 that the curse did not immediately come.

Again it is Israel not bearing fruit—sentence imposed but not executed at once. Only at Jerusalem’s destruction in 70 A.D.—thirty-seven years after the curse was pronounced—it was carried out in the siege of the city. A million Jews were crucified, until no wood was left; and even Titus called on God to witness he was not responsible, but compelled by the stubbornness of the Jews’ refusal to submit.

With this the fig tree died—the end of any profession of Israel as a nation in relationship with God. Since then they are scattered and peeled, the objects of persecution and contempt—under God’s judgment. “Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever.” It is final—never to bear fruit again.

But the tree will be heard from again. See Mark 13:28-31: “Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: so ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away.”

He refers to the kingdom coming. See verses 26-27: “And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall He send His angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.”

The tree puts forth leaves. This is future. It revives and sends forth shoots. Under the first covenant it never will revive or bear fruit. But God, out of seeming defeat, is Victor and receives the greater glory.

An artist put long labor on a beautiful painting. A jealous rival spoiled it with a daub of paint. The artist reproduced it, under a spell of enthusiasm, better than it was at first. He reproduced it under pressure in three days. This is a feeble illustration of God's ways always. This is redemption.

The Jews failed under the first covenant, but the purpose of God is not hindered. Hebrews 8:8-12: "For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when 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 when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

A note reverberates here, "I will." It is God declaring without reservation. It is the new covenant, and the fig tree will reappear in connection with it.

Luke 21:27-33: "And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. And He spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My words shall not pass away."

The appearing of Christ, the kingdom to be introduced and the judgment of the world are connected with the revival of the fig tree and all the trees. "When ye see." This is interesting because the fig tree and all the trees—other nations—are now beginning to shoot forth.

The Lord seals this statement of the revival of the fig tree three times with the words of verse 33: "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My words shall not pass away," in the three gospels. See Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; and here in Luke 21:33.

The development of national aspirations by the Jews is a new thing in the world since the Jews' scattering. It is now, in our day, a national spirit revived and the desire to return to their land—the Zionist movement. It is something of the last twenty years; the beginning of the "shooting forth" of the fig tree; or, "budding."

See Job 14:7-9: "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant." This anticipates our day in reference to the Jews. The movement is gaining headway slowly like a snowball; 35,000 went back last year (1926), 50,000 this year. A Hebrew college has been established and the language is being taught. Millions of fruit trees have been planted, and the land promises to become prosperous.

"All the trees"—Luke 21:29: "And He spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees." The other nations are developing national ambitions and sentiments.

Egypt—a dead country for many years; now very different in the direction of independence and self-government.

Arabia—just the same conditions. It is peopled by wandering tribes of Arabs. Now they desire to be recognized as a nation and be independent.

Mesopotamia—almost an unknown country until World War I (1914-1918). English troops were sent there. The battle fought brought it to light.

India—same is true here. No longer satisfied to be a dependency. The cry is, "India for the Indians."

China—the giant of the East is awakened. Formerly with no patriotic spirit but now this is blazing up.

Russia, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and others: All ablaze with new sentiments of securing more freedom and territory—new ideals.

This is all happening now, at one time. It is significant. If we can see this beginning, it tells us that it will soon become fully manifest. So the kingdom of God is near. Therefore, the coming of the Lord is nearer still, when the Church will go—it cannot be long! These things in their fullness are connected with the establishment of the kingdom of God in the Scriptures referred to above.

Now, the future of God's earthly people: Isaiah 18:1-2: "Woe to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled!" "Woe" should read "Ho" in verse 1—it is a salutation.

After the church is gone, the Zionist movement will speed up enormously. There are about 16,000,000 Jews in the world known; 4,000,000 in America and the balance mostly in Europe. All must get back quickly to Canaan, according to prophecy. It will take several years to carry this out for 16,000,000 people. This is the full leafing out of the tree we only see budding now. Then it will take its place as a nation on earth.

They will return aided by some great western maritime nation. It will be a big task to get them settled there and all the conveniences of living there provided. Jewish money will hire the best brains of the world to carry through irrigation schemes, etc. When established there, they will

prosper.

Next step—Isaiah 28:14-18: “Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.”

Jews, having prospered in the land, will become the object of envy to the nation to the north and east of them. It will be what is now called Turkey. Turkey has always been a poor country. For centuries it has been the overlord of Palestine.

General Allenby hesitated to bombard Jerusalem with the Turkish flag. He telephoned to England for instructions and then a personal message to the King. The King sent back word to “pray about it.” He did so. A few days later an official came out of the city with a truce flag, and the city was his peaceably. Later England encouraged the national spirit of the Jews and is now committed to this policy definitely.

The “King of the North” is in this 28th chapter of Isaiah seen rising as a sinister figure on the horizon.

The Jews, newly arrived, feel unprepared for the threat from the “King of the North.” They turn not to God but to the Beast of Revelation 13, and he makes a treaty with them to last seven years—to protect them and also to guarantee religious freedom to them. They are to set up the old Mosaic ritual. This is more as a patriotic movement than exercise for God.

So the Jews are carried along on a patriotic wave, taking in the ancient law and temple ritual. The Beast, in the middle of the seven-year period, will break the covenant with them and force on them a religion of his own—setting up Antichrist as its head, who will force them to worship the Beast and the image of the beast that he will set up.

See Daniel 9:24 to end of the chapter (notice especially the last verse): “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

The Jews committed themselves to the Beast instead of to God. God is against them. They find idolatry forced on them at the peril of their lives. This introduces the great tribulation for three and one-half years. More terrible than anything ever seen on earth; urged on by the dragon who is now on earth.

By this time there will be a people of God on earth—Jews who will turn to God in their extremity. The Spirit of God undertakes a special work to give them a divine instinct to refuse to bow to the decree of Antichrist. They are a poor, ignorant people compared with Christians. They will be in three classes: (1) Those scattered over the earth to preach the gospel of the Kingdom. (2) Martyrs, and (3) A company miraculously hidden in the land by God from the Beast.

We close with Revelation 19:11 to end: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations; and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

The “armies” in verse 14 are the glorified saints. This is the end of the power of the beast and of those who trusted in him.

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