

VII. THE VISION OF JUDGMENT.

This vision, into which are woven parts of the gospel prophecies of Judgment, along with other elements, such as appear in the classic pictures of the Judgment Day, gives Bunyan an opportunity for a final assault upon conscience with the full force of his extraordinary spectacular imagination. For an interesting note regarding the central figure seated upon a cloud, see Lessing's *Laocoon*, chap. xii. Browning's 'Easter Day' gives the finest modern parallel to the whole picture.

It is characteristic of Bunyan that in this final vision he should revert to the form of a dream which was always to him peculiarly impressive. For interesting notes upon Bunyan's dreams compare Cheever's words upon this passage, and Froude's *Bunyan*, chap. i. No doubt much must be discounted from any such impression, especially in the case of imaginative natures like his, yet it is often true that dreams do reveal with appalling frankness the real bent of the soul. When we wake we check our frankness even with ourselves.

There are two striking points in the vision. The first is the opening of the pit *just whereabouts I*

stood. That has the note of true conviction. The hell of many people gapes just whereabouts someone else stands. Second, there is the haunting conception of him that *still kept his eye upon me*. This is the shattering of all privacy. He who has once realized it shall never be alone again. According to a man's relation with the great Onlooker, it is the greatest fear or the greatest hope of life.

Yet the picture as a whole is unsatisfactory. When the man is asked why he is afraid, he simply recounts again some of the details of the spectacle. Conviction has not gone deep enough yet, for there is no real thought here, and especially no real thought of sin. The time of the vision is the first moment of waking in the morning, when the imagination indeed may be excited, but the intellect is not collected. Then, when the lights of life are low, conscience stalks forth like a spectre, with imagination behind her; but the result is mere hysteria and not a rational view of life and sin at all. Very often such experiences pass away, leaving harm rather than good behind them, and on the whole the man in the iron cage is nearer salvation than this man.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF JEREMIAH.

JEREMIAH XXIII. 5, 6.

'Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute judgement and justice in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The LORD is our righteousness.'—R. V.

EXPOSITION.

'Behold, the days come.'—The phrase, according to Jeremiah's employment of it (compare v. 7, chap. 30³ 31^{27, 31, 38} 33¹⁴), implies a special call to note the announcement thus introduced. In spite of the troubles which were now gathering round them, there are none the less surely days of deliverance coming.—STREANE.

'A righteous Branch.'—Not the same word as in Is 11¹ (nétser). The word here used (tsemach) is the one that occurs in Is 4², Zec 3⁸ 6¹² of King Messiah. It denotes a budding or springing plant; a *sprout*. A tree has many

branches, and these can be pruned away without killing the tree, but the sprout is that in which the root springs up and grows, and which, if it be destroyed, makes the root perish also. For its use, see Gn 19²⁵, Is 61¹¹, in both of which places it springs directly out of the ground; also Ezk 16⁷ 17⁹, Hos 8⁷, where it is translated either *bud* or *spring*. A branch never does grow out of a root, but only from the trunk.—COOK.

THIS is the first time in which the title 'the Plant' is unmistakably applied to the Messianic king (possibly, but less probably, to the Messianic kings). It indicates that this great personage stands in connexion with the divinely ordained and ancient royal family, but that he is in some way unique, and far surpasses his human ancestors. He 'springs forth'; therefore he is not a sort of meteoric appearance, without any natural home among men, but rather the blossom of the Jewish nation, the embodiment of its highest qualities. And yet there is something extraordinary about him, for it is needful that Jehovah himself should 'raise' this Plant from the almost worn-out stock of David.—CHEYNE.

'Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely.'—The promise made to Israel in Dt 33²⁸ shall be fulfilled, and not Judah only but the ten tribes also shall dwell safely, *lit. in confidence, securely*, under the sceptre of the Messiah.—COOK.

'The LORD is our righteousness.'—Hebrew, *Yahveh* (Jehovah) *Tsidkēnū*. The name is formed on the analogy of other symbolic names, such as El-elohe-Israel (Gn 33²⁰), Jehovah-Nissi (Ex 17¹⁵), and especially Jehovah-Shammah (Ezk 48³⁵), also a name of Jerusalem. These names are, in fact, sentences; Jehovah-Shammah, for instance, means 'The Lord is there'; and the name in the present verse, 'The Lord is our Righteousness.'—CHEYNE.

It is significant that in chap. 33¹⁶ the same name is given to Jerusalem. There it is clearly not, in logical language, the predicate of the city, but that which she takes as her watchword, and blazons, as it were, on her banner; and we cannot consistently press more than that meaning here. The interpretation which sees in the words (1) the identification of the Messianic king with Jehovah, the Eternal, and (2) the doctrine of imputed righteousness, must accordingly be regarded as one of the applications of the words rather than their direct meaning. That meaning would seem to be that the king, the righteous Branch, will look to Jehovah as giving and working righteousness. Some commentators, indeed, refer the pronoun *he* to Israel, and not to the righteous Branch. We cannot forget that, at the very time when Jeremiah uttered this prophecy, a king was on the throne whose name (Zedekiah = righteous is Jehovah) implied the same thought. His reign had been a miserable failure, and the prophet looks forward to a time when the ideal, which was then far off, should at last be realized. If with many critics we refer the prediction to the reign of Jehoiakim, we might almost see in Mathaniah's adoption of the new name a boast that he was about to fulfil it. The Christ, we may say, answered to the name, not as being Himself one with Jehovah, though He was that, but as doing the Father's will, and so fulfilling all righteousness (cp. Mt 3¹⁵).—PLUMPTRE.

THE SERMON.

The Lord our Righteousness.

By Professor S. R. Driver.

Jeremiah endured more tragic experiences than those which fell to the lot of any other prophet. He both suffered with and at the hands of his nation. He saw Jerusalem sacked, the temple burnt, and himself an exile in Egypt; and more bitter still, the men of his own native place conspired against him and the princes of Judah had him imprisoned.

In the section of his book which is closed by the 22nd chap. Jeremiah reviews the lives and characters of the last three kings of Judah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Jehoiachin. His judgment of Jehoahaz, who was deposed by the Egyptians, is short; he 'shall see this land no

more,' with Jehoiakim, who had ground the people down to meet the demands of Pharaoh and also to gratify his own love of costly buildings, he is more severe. He 'shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.' Jehoiachin who had only reigned a hundred days is to languish in a Babylonian prison for thirty years. The troubles which befell Judah are traced to the neglect of its responsible guides, but now God promises that He 'will raise up unto David a righteous Sprout,' and he 'shall be called Jehovah is our righteousness.' In this picture Jeremiah sketches the very counterpart of the imperfect rulers of his own time. Under this king Israel shall 'dwell safely.'

But in what sense are we to understand the name 'Jehovah is our righteousness'? This same name which is applied here to the ideal king is, in chapter thirty-three, applied to the ideal city, 'Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name whereby she shall be called, Jehovah is our righteousness.' It was a custom of the Israelites to form proper names compounded with one or other of the sacred names; for example, we have 'Jehovah is a help'; 'Jehovah is perfect,' and of places 'Jehovah is my banner,' 'Jehovah is peace.' Such names were felt to be of good omen, or were intended to mark what was, or was hoped to be, a reality. So the prophets frequently use the name as the mark of a character. Jerusalem is to become the home of righteousness through the gracious operation of God, and a similar name is given to the ideal king, because he is a pledge to Israel that their righteousness is to have its source in God. Under the administration of this ideal ruler whom Jeremiah foresees, the divinely imparted character of righteousness will be realized by the nation.

Jeremiah does not tell us in the passage *how* he conceives this state of righteousness to be brought about. The Messiah is the author of *civic* righteousness, but how far this presupposes righteousness in the heart of the *individual* does not seem to have been present in Jeremiah's mind. In the thirty-first chapter, however, he does anticipate a recreation of man's inner nature by a divine act. 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' But in neither passage does Jeremiah say how he conceived human nature would be turned to righteousness; that is left for the future. He does not conceive

the Messiah as the author of justification, but pictures Him as ensuring by his wise administration the *conditions* under which righteousness of life might be maintained by the people.

Interpreting Jeremiah's words in the light of the future, we may say that they teach us to look to God, as the source of our righteousness through Christ. They point us to the ideal of human life; to realize for ourselves the truth that 'the Lord is our righteousness.'

Jehovah-Tsidkenu.

By the Rev. Aubrey Price, B.A.

Let us consider that part of God's work in which He appears as *Jehovah-Tsidkenu*—'the Lord our Righteousness.' God's justification of a sinner is the most marvellous thing; it has no parallel in the world. Speaking loosely, we might say that redemption, adoption, and pardon had parallels; for if a man falls, the world may forgive, and in time forget, but it never justifies that man, *i.e.* regards him as though he had never fallen at all.

i. *God's provision for the justification of a Sinner.* First, we notice that it is the *sinner* whom God justifies, never the *righteous* man. And which of us can claim that we have perfectly obeyed the two commandments—love to God and love to our neighbour? We have failed not in one point but in many, and so the law condemns us before God. But Christ has become our righteousness, and through faith in Him we are justified. But we ask, holy as our Lord's life and death were, they were only the life and death of one, how then can they be available for the many? The answer lies in the fact that throughout His work He was God as well as man, and so *infinite* merit attaches to His obedience and His death.

ii. *Faith's appropriation of the Provision.* Faith is not feeling; it is a definite act of the soul, by which, renouncing all other hope, it trusts itself to Jesus only for salvation. And after that supreme moment God sees that man *in* Christ. 'He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.' Jehovah-Tsidkenu is to all who are *in Him* security for the past, the present, and the future: for the past, that their sins shall never be remembered against them; for the present, that nothing shall separate them from the love of God; for the future, that they shall 'hold on their way

until heaven be reached and the crown be won, and they sit with the Saviour on His throne and see all His glory.'

ILLUSTRATIONS.

'The Lord our Righteousness.'—I remember reading or hearing of the way in which one who had been condemned to death was saved by the interposition of representatives of Britain and America. During a revolution in one of the South American Republics a certain man was sentenced to execution. He was a British subject, and after having tried in vain to establish before the foreign tribunal his innocence of the charge brought against him, he appealed his case to the British and United States Consuls. They carefully investigated the matter and made representations to the judges to the effect that the man was innocent, and that in any case he was entitled to a fair trial before a British tribunal. These being disregarded, the Consuls visited the prisoner, informed him of their fruitless efforts in his favour, and handed him two flags, the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes, advising him to wrap these round him when he should be led out to the place of execution. The poor man did so, and when the fatal hour arrived, the firing party dared not execute the sentence, inasmuch as to do so they must fire upon the flags of Great Britain and the United States, and by that act declare war against these powers. Thus the man was saved not by his innocence, but by the majesty of the nations whose protection he had invoked.—HUGH H. CURRIE.

A Righteous Branch.—A Jewish Rabbi was questioned as to what his coreligionists looked for in their desired Messiah. He replied, 'We Jews expect in our Messiah Rex, Lex, Pax, Lux.' All these we find in the promised Branch. He is to be a *King*, who will reign over his people prosperously. He is to be a *Law*, who will lead his followers to justice and judgment. He is to be a *Peace*, conferring on his subjects safety and salvation. He is to be a *Light*, bringing heaven's illumination and righteousness to individuals, and to a world presently sitting in darkness.

He shall reign as King and deal Wisely.—True kingship depends not upon an earthly throne or sceptre, but upon the power to deal wisely, to execute justice, and to save—wisdom, righteousness, and redemptive power. There is a story told in the *Life of Garibaldi* of an Italian town manned by soldiers to resist the patriots. They waited long upon the walls for the expected attack, but it did not come. Then one evening a carriage drove right up to the walls of the town under the very muzzles of their guns, and in it Garibaldi stood alone and unprotected. They could not fire on a man like that. Brought face to face with the patriot who thus put his life in jeopardy—standing fearlessly for liberty and righteousness—they flung down their weapons and went forth to welcome him. It was the royalty of the man that stormed their hearts, the royalty of this unenthroned king whose life was devoted wholly to his fellow-countrymen. They saw in this the kingliness that meant salvation to Italy. And it is this kingliness in its utter perfectness which means salvation to the world. When

the King of the house of David came, as foretold by the prophet,—the Lord our Righteousness,—giving His life for men who were enslaved by evil, there were many who repudiated Him; but some have recognized in Him the world's Redeemer and gone out to kneel at His feet, calling Him King of kings, and day by day the Christ is conquering the world, and the world is coming to see that only by Him can it be saved and dwell safely.

YET the visible king may also be the true one some day.—Strange to think how the Moth-kings lay up treasures for the moth; and the Rust-kings lay up treasures for the rust; and the Robber-kings treasures for the robber; but how few kings have ever laid up treasures that need no guarding—treasures of which the more thieves there were the better. . . . Suppose there ever should arise a Fourth order of kings, who had read in some obscure writing of long ago that there was a Fourth kind of treasure, which the jewel and gold could not equal, neither should it be valued with pure gold. A web made fair in the weaving by Athena's shuttle; an armour forged in divine fire by Vulcanian force; a gold to be mined in the very sun's red heart—the three great Angels of Conduct, Toil, and Thought, still calling to us and waiting at the posts of our doors, to lead us, with their winged power, and guide us, with unerring eyes, by the path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen! Suppose kings should ever arise who heard and believed this word, and at last gathered and brought forth treasures of Wisdom for their people? Think what an amazing business *that* would be.—RUSKIN, *Sesame and Lilies*.

Jehovah Tsidkenu.

I ONCE was a stranger
To grace and to God;
I knew not my danger
And felt not my load;
Though friends spoke in rapture
Of Christ on the tree,
'Jehovah Tsidkenu'
Was nothing to me.

Like tears from the daughters
Of Zion that roll,
I wept when the waters
Went over His soul;
Yet thought not that my sins
Had nailed to the tree
'Jehovah Tsidkenu'—
'Twas nothing to me.

When free grace awoke me,
By light from on high,
Then legal fears shook me,
I trembled to die;

No refuge, no safety,
In self could I see:
'Jehovah Tsidkenu'
My Saviour must be.

My terrors all vanished
Before the sweet name;
My guilty fears banished,
With boldness I came
To drink at the fountain,
Life-giving and free:
'Jehovah Tsidkenu'
Was all things to me.

E'en treading the valley,
The shadow of death,
This watchword shall rally
My faltering breath;
For, when from life's fever
My God sets me free,
'Jehovah Tsidkenu'
My death-song shall be.
R. M. M'CHEYNE.

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