

Till Shiloh Come

(Delivered at Exeter Hall, May, 1896)

[Note by James W. Bruggeman: The following article was published in *The Covenant People* in the September and October issues of 1896. I discovered it and read it for the first time just a week after I had completed a study and lecture on the same topic. I called it *The Scepter Shall Not Depart From Judah*. The cassette tapes and CDs of my two-hour lecture are already in the mail to those on our Tape/CD Ministry. While it should be of great interest to any Bible student, this article will be of special interest and benefit to those who have heard our lecture.]

WE who believe in the identity of Britain with Israel are told from the pulpit and from the platform, as well as by our friends in the privacy of our homes, that "our hope is lost," that "the Scriptures are all against us." We are told we have no right to take a passage of Scripture and wrest a meaning therefrom without comparing it with other parts of God's word. That the word of God should be taken as a whole and not parcelled out into fragments. Then these good people proceed to do themselves what they have told us we should not do, or they go into cloudland, *i.e.*, the region of their own imagination, to prove to us that the Scripture is against us.

To me it seems as if the English language was totally inadequate to cope with such opponents. Parcelling into fragments is the very opposite of what we do. Comparing passages is exactly what we do, and by all these means we find Scripture is altogether with us, and—let me say it with all due

respect for the commentators and the expounders in the past as well as for those of the present day—no prophecy, anent the last days, within the binding of the Bible can be understood without keeping clearly before oneself the fact of the Ten Tribes being *the important factor*. Take the blessing of Judah as we find it in Gen. xlix. 10: “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet till Shiloh come; and *unto him* shall the gathering of the people be.”

I suppose this passage has given more trouble to commentators than any other in the Bible. The number of writers who have tried to explain or interpret it are almost countless. I do not pretend to give an interpretation of it which is, strictly speaking, my own, but, out of the host of writers, I have taken, as all the others have done, an idea here and there, and interwoven with them some thoughts of my own which I now present to you. If by my efforts anyone may be enabled thereby to see more clearly and believe more thoroughly that this part of the prophecy is yet to have its complete fulfilment in the near future and in Britain, our own beloved land—that we are to be participators in the blessings attached thereto; if we make our calling and election sure, I will be amply rewarded.

“The sceptre shall not depart . . . till Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” These are the dying words of Jacob. Take the passage as a whole and examine the Bible from Gen. i. to Rev. xxii. and find, if you can, a passage that can annul that one. It is “beyond the wit of man,” unless, as I have already said, you go into cloudland.

If you go there, then I am done with you, for I cannot follow. There is too much of the “will o’ the wisp” about such wanderings for us. We want hard facts, not misty nothings. It behooves men to trust to the written Word—not to any one

part, but to it in its entirety; not to labour through a labyrinth of learned arguments, but to remember the words of our Saviour to the Lawyers: "Ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves and them that were entering ye hindered."

We want no discussions, then, of that kind. Our God inspired holy men of old to write the several parts of that book. We believe it. It was written for our guidance, if so written at the dictation of God. Can we ignore it and its teaching? Is that not the very error of Judah? These words of Christ's, I think, answer the question.

The Sceptre, if it means anything at all, denotes kingly authority. Nearly every commentator has his own particular pet idea on it, and nearly all clash with the simple language of the Sacred Word.

Let me give you the interpretation of two, both eminent Hebrew scholars.

In their strivings after a clear and good explanation of it (on their own lines), and from the appearance of the word "Shiloh" in the text, one comes to the conclusion that the Sceptre was to depart *from* Shiloh at the division of the nation into the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Why, think you? Because Ahijah the Shilonite was the prophet under whose ministry the secession took place. This, I believe, is the interpretation which finds most favour with the Jews of the present day.

The other rendering is somewhat different, though still pointing to the same epoch in the history of the Hebrews. It is, "Until one comes to Shiloh, and the gathering of the tribes be to him"—and this one, he says, was Jeroboam, who took or

gathered the Ten Tribes into one kingdom.

These are the two renderings which obtain favour with the Jews. The first is given by Dr. Zanz, the other is Mendelsohn's. Taking them together, they are at cross purposes, for the one says, the Sceptre was not to depart till the secession took place; and the other calls the same secession a gathering—"to him shall the gathering be."

I cannot imagine either of the readings as correct, for really the Sceptre had up to that time only been with Judah a total of 120 years. As Saul was not of the tribe of Judah, but of the tribe of Benjamin, we cannot say the Sceptre was with Judah during the 40 years he reigned. Be that as it may, from the beginning of the reign of Saul to the dethronement of Zedekiah and the first destruction of Jerusalem, there was a period of 373 years—120 before that secession and 235 after it. So that the Sceptre did not depart from Judah for more than double the number of years after the secession, that it had existed before the epoch these Jewish commentators state. But Jacob also added, "unto him shall the *gathering* of the people be." At this particular time in the history of the nation, we cannot say there was a *gathering*; it was rather a scattering. They were split into two kingdoms, which have never—up to the present time—united. I think you will agree with me in saying, both are wrong; so far wrong, indeed, that one wonders they find adherents at all. We must bear in mind the whole of this prophecy of Jacob; and if these commentators had kept in mind the preface to the blessings, I think they' would never have given to the world these readings of them.

Jacob calls his sons around his death-bed by saying, "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days." Surely no one will say that the death of Solomon in 975 B.C. was the time of the last days? Isaiah (it.

2) says: " It shall come to pass in the last days." That was 760 B.C., or 215 years after the death of Solomon ; even then it was in the distant future, and points to the reign of peace, for in verse 4 we are told: " They shall beat their swords into ploughshares," &c. Half a century later the prophet Micah (iv. 4) repeats nearly the same. Again, in the New Testament these last days are spoken of as still future, for in 2 Tim. iii. 1 (this epistle is dated 66 A.D., *i.e.*, 1041 years after the death of Solomon) Paul says: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." Paul again in Hebrews, James in his epistle, Peter, John, Jude, all mention these last days. So it is quite out of the question for us to accept the reading of Jacob's prophecy as given by Zanz or Mendelsohn,

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah till Shiloh comes." Let us look at it in a plain literal way. As I have stated before, we must acknowledge, we do acknowledge, that this denotes kingly authority and kingly rule. It was to continue till Shiloh came, and that was to be in the last days. It does not denote the reign of a priest, for that would mean the throne occupied by one of another tribe, *viz.*, Levi; so that the family of the Maccabees—they being of the Levitical family—are out of the reckoning. It cannot mean the reign of Zerubabel—for although he was of the tribe of Judah, and of the royal house of David, still he was only a governor appointed by the Persian king, and was liable to be at any moment ousted from his office—so that the sceptre or kingly authority was located outside of Judah. It did not mean Herod, for he was an Idumean and was a king under the Romans; therefore the sceptre was apparently held in Rome. Hence, if the prophecy of Jacob, as recorded in Holy Writ, be correct, a descendant of Judah must have been reigning somewhere over a part of Israel down to the Coming of Christ, *if Shiloh means Christ*. Here a doubt crops up as to the meaning of Shiloh, for if Shiloh means our Saviour, then I ask the question, Did He come at the

beginning of the present era as the Peaceful One ? For that I believe is the only definition of the term Shiloh as applicable to Christ.

Keith on Prophecy, page 18, says; "The time of the Messiah's appearance in the world, as predicted in the Old Testament, is denned by a number of concurring circumstances that fix it to the date of the advent of Christ," and here he quotes the prophecy we are now considering, and goes on: "The date fixed by this prophecy for the coming of Shiloh, or the Saviour, was not to exceed the time that the descendants of Judah were to continue a united people; that a king should reign among them, that they should be governed by their own laws, and that their judges were to be from their brethren." A king might and did reign among them then, but that was not the prophecy. It was: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah"; and the sceptre then was not in the hands of Judah, nor for nearly six centuries preceding that date. He (Keith) quotes Mal. iii. 1 and adds here: "No words can be more expressive of the coming of the promised Messiah, and they as clearly imply His appearance in the Temple before it should be destroyed. The concluding words of the Old Testament, subjoined to an admonition to remember the law of Moses, import that the next prophet would be the harbinger of the Messiah. Another criterion of the time is thus imparted."

But does Malachi in the following verses bear out the idea? He does not, for in the 2nd verse he says; "Who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?" You will find John, in the Apocalypse (vi. 17), using the same words, and at the same time pointing, not backward as he would have done in that case, but forward to a day *yet* in the future, "for the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

Malachi furnishes still further proof that Keith is wrong, for he says: "The day is to burn as an oven, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up"; and he thus gives a signal by observing of which they will know the day is at hand; "Behold I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

We need no further proof then that Keith founds his argument on error, for Elijah has not yet come back to this earth, and know that our Saviour said: "Elias truly must first come." Let us therefore dismiss all these interpretations, for Holy Writ will not bear them out. Let us turn to the Word of God ourselves. Let us look at the book, not as a collection of conundrums and mysteries, but let us take it as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, trusting to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Christ, as recorded by Matt. (x. 34), says: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword." And in Luke (xii. 49, 50) we find He also said: " I am come to send fire on the earth. Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on the earth? I tell you, nay; but rather division." If these words mean anything; if they have any connection with the passage—and I cannot but think they point directly to it—it must be to let His hearers know that He as the peaceful One had not come. They must wait till the later appearance, when He will then come as a peaceful King, predicted in the passage I already quoted from Isaiah, in the last days: "When they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. When the wolf shall lie down with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the falling together, and a little child shall lead them."

We have now, I think, put it beyond question, that the prophecy could not refer to Judah's ceasing as a ruler at the division of the kingdom, for it existed and was in the hands of a descendant of David double the number of years after, that it was before, the severance; and also that Judah was not reigning in Palestine for nearly six centuries before the birth of Christ. Likewise, when He did come to this earth at the beginning of our present era, He did not come as Shiloh the peaceful one. Yet the prophecy of Jacob stands: "The Sceptre shall not depart till Shiloh come."

The reign of Judah, in the person of David, began in 1055 B.C. The sceptre, to all human eyesight, departed when Zedekiah was dethroned, and taken along with the bulk of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi to Babylon. This occurred in 588 B. C.

So the kingdom had existed for only 467 years under the sceptre of Judah, and there was still another 467 with 121 added to it, making the total of 588 ere Christ would appear. It must be quite apparent to the unbiassed mind that the continuity of the sceptre does not depend on the existence of Judah as a tribe or nation in the land of Palestine. We must disassociate the tribal name from the land.

When the land was allotted to Judah, it then (and only then) became Judah or Judea; so that if Judah, as a tribe, had migrated to any point of the compass, and had land given them there, that land would have become Judah. Likewise, if a descendant of Judah, and also of the royal house of David; wielded the sceptre as king anywhere, then the sceptre had *not* departed from Judah.

We know that it is necessary, for the maintenance of God's Word that not only must the sceptre be in the tribe of

Judah, but it must also be in the royal house of David, for in Jer. xxxiii. 17, and following verses, we find; "Thus saith the Lord, David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of Israel, Thus saith the Lord, if ye can break My covenant of the day and My covenant of the night, that there should not be day and night in its season, then may also My covenant be broken with David My servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne." And we find in Psalm xxxix. (which is a Psalm of instruction written by a famous teacher, "Ethan the Ezrahite," who was famed for his wisdom—I Kings iv. 20—and who was also a leader in the Temple praise), in that Psalm he thus sings: "I have found David My servant. With My holy oil I have anointed him. My mercy will I *keep for him for ever*. My covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to *endure for ever*; My covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to *endure for ever*: his throne as the days of heaven. *If* his children forsake My law, I will visit their transgressions with the rod; *nevertheless* My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I *not break*, nor alter the thing that has gone out of My lips. Once have I sworn by My holiness, that I will not lie unto David; his seed shall endure for ever; his throne as the sun before Me; it shall be established for ever as the moon, as the faithful witness in heaven."

Days, weeks, months, years, centuries have passed since these words were uttered. God's sun and moon still rule the day and the night, and shall we not believe in the oath which God swore by these orbs to David.

We are told by someone, the sceptre had not departed when Zedekiah was taken a captive to Babylon. Although he and the tribes of Judah live, and Benjamin were removed as prisoners, it—the sceptre—was only in abeyance, and when Christ came, He took it, and that it is He who is the King; that it

is He who is now on the throne of David. Without pausing to show how false such reasoning is (for the words are, "The sceptre shall not depart till Shiloh come"—please remember the interregnum was 600 years), I proceed to Holy Writ; we must prove Scripture by Scripture, for no other means of getting reliable information exists without the "oracles of God." The throne of David was an earthly throne; the Son of David was to occupy that earthly throne. The Monarch was to be called the King of Israel, and Israel is on earth. Christ, when on earth, taught His disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come." Surely no one will say that Christ would so teach, if He then and there had the sceptre of Israel and was King of that people. Again, Christ said, "The kingdom shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Clearly this points to a future kingdom. If so, and if He was the King, then was He a King without a kingdom, for they were to pray, " Thy kingdom come."

I have still more proofs from Scripture. We are told "Jesus the Christ is indeed ascended into the heavens, *there* He sits at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens," Again, Stephen said, " He saw "the heavens opened," and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." Surely no one will say that *that* was the throne of David. As Jehovah gave the ordinances of the sun and moon as an earnest of the endurance of David's throne in perpetuity, so long as they existed, most certainly it is here on earth that David's throne is. Again, Pilate asked Christ the direct question, "Art Thou the King of the Jews," and Christ answered " My kingdom is not of this world [or age]. If My kingdom were of this world [or age], then would My servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from thence."

Then remember what He said in answer to His disciples, when asked by them: "Wilt thou at this time restore the

kingdom to Israel?" "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons." That answer assuredly bears that He had not the kingdom then. Clearly the sceptre was not in the hands of Christ, but was still in the possession of Judah, because there it was to remain till Shiloh came; and Christ as distinctly intimated that as Shiloh, or Man of Peace, He had not come then. Moreover, as the last days were the days of Shiloh's coming, and as the sceptre was to remain with Judah till he came (for Shiloh was *then* to gather the people), the sceptre must be on this earth in the hands of Judah to-day.

Do we not find in Matt. xxiv. 31, these words: "He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather his elect from the four winds." Who are his elect? The descendants of the men whom Jacob was blessing. The prophets say so in God's words: "Thou Israel art mine elect", and as proof that only one people could be so called, we have the other statement; "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise," and again, "I will not give my glory to another."

The question now stands, where are we to look for evidence of the fulfilment of Jacob's prophecy, and of God's promise to David? In Jer. i. 10, we find there written: "I have set thee [Jeremiah] this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, to pull down, to destroy, and to throw down, and to build and to plant." All through his prophecies we have the throwing down, the pulling up, and the rooting out process going on—but what of the building and planting. When Jerusalem was destroyed, and the inhabitants of the kingdom were taken captive to Babylon, in 588 B.C., we find a remnant forced Jeremiah (who had the daughters of the king under his charge) to go down with them to Egypt. Some commentators say he was there stoned to death by the Jews. That could not be, for he was told by God: "They shall fight against thee, but

they shall not prevail, for I am with thee to deliver thee." At any rate, most of the commentators assert that he died there. I cannot think that he would remain there till he died, for, from his own writings, we learn that it was against the will of God that the remnant that escaped the captivity of Nebuchadnezzar went to Egypt. We find in Jer. xlv, 26, 27, that he there gives voice to God's threatenings on those who would remain there. Thus, "Therefore hear ye the word of the Lord, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold I have sworn by my great name, saith the Lord, that my name shall be no more named in the mouth of any man of Judah, in all the land of Egypt, saying, the Lord God liveth. Behold I will watch over them for evil and not for good: and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them. Yet a *small number* that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt."

Jeremiah, under these circumstances, would be part of that remnant, and would escape. But where to? Holy Writ is silent. That part I have read to you is his latest in the book. He at that time could not be an old man; he was very young when called to be a prophet (See *Messenger*, Vol. vii, p. 364, "Life of Jeremiah.") He himself says, on receiving the call, "I am a child." Now this was in the days of Josiah. Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and that was 641 B.C. In the 18th year of his reign he sent Jeremiah's father (Hilkiah the High Priest) to Huldah the prophetess, to enquire at the Lord. If Jeremiah had been a prophet then, the probability is they would have gone to him. That, therefore, brings the date down to 628 B.C., or forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and he was then a child. Let that pass. Jeremiah has fulfilled his instructions—he has thrown down, he has rooted up and destroyed—and left the record. But where did he build? Where did he plant? Where is the record thereof? Why all the king's family slain, with the exception of the two daughters, and why

did Jeremiah constitute himself the protector of these tender twigs of the topmost branch? Where has the sceptre (which was not to depart till Shiloh came) gone now? Where now was that descendant of David that was to be king over the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Holy Writ gives no answer. Yet an answer must be got to these questions. God is not a Man that He should lie. Hath He said it, 'and shall he not do it?'

Now the time is nearing when Christ, as Shiloh (or the Peaceful One), cometh. Now are we in the latter days, when Jacob's prophecy was to have its complete fulfilment. As Holy Writ is silent as to the prophet's after deeds, and as he was to be a builder and a planter, we turn to profane history to see if any record of such a person exists therein. Strange to say we have not to go far afield.

Ireland is a country to which we are not indebted for much in the past, but in this case Ireland does help us. From their chronicles we get the information that away back, before Israel was a monarchy, a people lived there who had the Mosaic law. Whether that people was a part of the tribe of Dan (who were a seafaring tribe) or not, we know that in the time of Deborah and in her song of triumph she asks, "Why did Dan abide in his ships." So they were sea rovers. We have evidence in plenty that the Phoenicians traded with Cornwall in the days of Solomon. If they and the Danites traded here, they would have settlements, and when the invasion of Israel by Tiglath Pileser II. and Shalmaneser IV. occurred, what more natural than for the Danites to escape. Again, in Irish history, we find the needed help, by the record there of the arrival of the Tuatha de Danan, or tribe of Dan.

At a later point in these chronicles, we find noted the arrival of a prophet and a beautiful princess, accompanied by one named Simon Breach. The princess was named Tea Tephi.

She married the then Heremon, or king of kings. He abandoned Baalism or Druidism, changed the name of his capital to Tara (which means the law of the two tables), and founded a school of prophets.

Now here you have three most remarkable items that fit into the history of Jeremiah. The prophet, with the princesses and Simon Baruch, are forced down to Egypt. If they remain, it is to incur God's displeasure, and shortly thereafter, when all trace of them in that part of the world is lost, Irish history narrates the arrival there of a prophet, an eastern princess, with their secretary, Simon Breach. Can any man say that these three persons in each case are not identical?"

The descent of our present Queen (thanks to the Scottish blood) from that union of Tea Tephi with Eochaid II. is testified by tracing back the reigning families of Great Britain, of Scotland, of Argyleshire, and of Ulster. So that the sceptre of Judah is in the hands of one belonging to the Royal House of Judah, who is reigning over Israel in the latter days, and to whom will it be given up unto when Shiloh comes, if not to Shiloh himself.—great David's greater Lord.

—*J. D. Reid*

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