

## JESUS AND JUSTICE

**I**N the last lecture we turned to the Bible for evidence of a just system of land settlement and laws essential for the happiness of the people, and we found that when the Israelites disposed themselves in the Promised Land, the Land of Canaan, they adopted none of the departments of the State that had been known in Egypt. There were no ministers, no king, no Parliament, no treasury, and no courts of justice that dealt with positive law. Under the system of the First Covenant, justice was the foundation stone upon which the people were to thrive and enjoy the work of their hands. Both the Justinian definition of justice and that of Socrates are clearly understood in the account given to us in the Bible. There can be no doubt in anyone's mind that the land was for use and the laborer had a right to his produce.

We learned also how this paradise of a heritage was lost. Moreover, the penalties announced in the curse were prophetic, and in the sufferings of the people

scarcely one of all the afflictions to be visited upon them was omitted. They bore the full sentence of their sin.

Let us now turn to the story of One who came to undo the wrong and fulfill the law of the First Covenant. The greatest scholars of our day—Hebrew and Gentile—agree that Jesus was a real person. Joseph Klausner has given us *Jesus of Nazareth* and *From Jesus to Paul*, two books in which he examines all the known Hebrew sources and also the canonical gospels. Klausner is the latest and most accomplished of all the critics, and he sums up the evidence of the sources of the Synoptic Gospels as follows:

. . . Matthew, who as a publican and official had a knowledge of writing, translated this Aramaic document into Greek when Christianity began to spread among the Gentiles. Mark later translated it from a more condensed version. . . . According to this view, the Synoptic Gospels have one common source—a primitive Gospel composed in Palestine and written in Aramaic.

This source is lost. Many commentators and investigators suggest that it was destroyed. What matter did it contain that would compromise the early Christians and perhaps jeopardize the future of their cause?

Our purpose is to make an attempt to seek a reason for the disappearance of the Aramaic source, and that I think we shall find in a deeper understanding of the sayings of Jesus than they have yet received from the schools of higher critics.

Wellhausen said, "Jesus was not a Christian; He was a Jew." The moral basis of Judaism is absolute justice. Therefore, the restoration of absolute justice must

have been the aim of Jesus and the reason for His mission. This is the line to be followed for a clearer understanding of His purpose.

We may accept the Hebrew scholars' charges of plagiarism. It is true many of the sayings set down for all to read in the Torah and the Talmud were current in the speech of the teachers. However, Klausner does appreciate the fact that it was the genius of Jesus that shaped them into the fabric of His philosophy and gave to them a force and clarity which made them shine brilliantly for a definite purpose. Indeed every text, axiom, and command He found in the speech of His people, which came from sacred writ, bore the stamp of His own wisdom when it was fitted by Him into the message He gave to His hearers.

Furthermore, we may now relegate to the Limbo of the forgotten the bickerings of the skeptics as to whether or no there ever was a Jesus. It is now conceded by the greatest authorities that He could not have been invented. He is the most patent reality of all time.

For our purpose, however, it is sufficient to accept Jesus as One who lived and devoted His life to the sole aim of the spiritual and economic redemption of Israel. We are not concerned with cults and rituals of any description. We shall touch upon no controversial matter which arises in the domain of religious speculation. Our approach will be that of sons of the Creator, irrespective of race, color, creed, or cult observances.

Jesus was born a year or two before the beginning of the Christian era, and if we are to understand clearly much that has been enigmatic in His philosophy, we must refresh our minds with the newer knowledge we

now have of the conditions that prevailed in Galilee about the time of His birth.

The country was suffering from Roman occupation, plus Herod. All the iniquities of imperial spoliation of a crushed people fell upon the Israelites. It is essential to understand this so that we may more closely interpret the sayings of Jesus, for He was undoubtedly a man of His time and environment. This is not to say that He was only the product of His day, for His mission and His message were all-embracing in their scope and applicable not only to Jews but to people everywhere and at any time. When He said, "My kingdom is not of this world," He must have meant that He did not recognize the power of the conqueror and that His kingdom would be that which the laws of God would establish if the people repented of their misdeeds and fitted themselves to enter the new realm. Clearly He saw that there was no chance for them to establish the kingdom of God so long as they did not realize its justice. Therefore, in this interpretation, you will see how essential it is in an attempt to understand Him that we fix firmly in our mind the conditions which existed in Galilee when He was born. Nor can we readily understand many of His references if we do not know of the revolt of the Gaulonite, Judas, the Zealot, against the Roman foe.

For many years before His birth Galilee had been the scene of fierce revolts waged by the nationalists under this Judas who spared neither Jew nor Gentile who opposed the idea of freedom. Perhaps the reason why we know so little of the youth and early manhood of Jesus is that the lost sources of the written life in the language of the Galileans would have revealed the struggles Jesus suffered in withstanding the tempta-

tions of joining the crusade of Judas. This gap in the story of the Nazarene is one of the strangest of all the biographical omissions. Scarcely anything is known of His life from the time that He was a child until the years when His mission began. It is obvious to many that there were definite reasons why the sources from which Matthew, Mark, and Luke drew their knowledge of Him were destroyed. We know what took place in Galilee during these years, but we do not know where Jesus stood in these scenes of rapine. We can guess, however, and the sayings themselves are clues to this matter, for they reveal a significance which many of the commentators have not the courage to face.

The revolt of Judas was purely nationalistic. The foe and all his abominations were to be driven from the land. Placed in such scenes of havoc, it is impossible to imagine that Jesus could have escaped association with a great nationalistic movement and its consequences. Think of the area of Galilee! How close were many of its chief places to Nazareth! It is only ten miles to Mount Carmel and but a few miles to Sepphoris, which was attacked by Judas a few years before Jesus was born. To Cana it is only five miles, and ten to Nain. Capernaum on the shores of the lake was twenty-five miles away. Indeed, from the rise of Nazareth itself, on a clear day it is easy to see many of the places Jesus visited.

The descriptions we have of the beauty and the fertility of Galilee reveal it as something of a paradise. Truly it was a place where "You shall lack nothing." The glowing passages of Moses as to the richness of the Land of Canaan scarcely surpass those of the classical authors who have described the country that bore Jesus. Imagine, then, conditions in which hunger

stalked through the land! Think of the savings of Jesus in His direct references to the plight of the poor and realize what the ravages of the Roman occupation had wrought! There was reason enough for the revolt of the Zealots and, as Galilee was torn by war, Jesus must have been made conscious every day of His life of the futility of force. This perhaps is the real reason why He was not directly associated with the revolts of Judas and why He went to the people to tell them that the only logical way to overcome force was to resist not evil.

After the most thorough examination of all the known works of ancient and modern historians and critical scholars, Joseph Klausner says:

. . . Scarcely a year went by during this century without wars or other disturbances: wars, rebellions, outbreaks and riots, and all of them with their concomitant of incessant bloodshed; and this state of things prevailed in the Land of Israel throughout the whole epoch which preceded Jesus and prevailed also during His lifetime. . . .

How is the silence of the Gospel Books to be explained? Is it possible to believe that Jesus, born and raised in such surroundings, under the direst conditions, could live without knowledge of these events? Furthermore, we may ask ourselves why Peter, Matthew, and Mark are silent. What reason can be given for this astonishing historical mystery? We are left to guess why little or nothing is mentioned about the revolts against the barbarities of the Caesars and their agents. My suggestion is that, because of the doctrine of passive resistance, neither Peter nor Paul dared take the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth to Rome. For the mes-

sage of passive resistance is not merely a negative one. There was a positive side to it, and the preaching of it became the chief feature of the crusade.

The mission is set down in clear terms: He came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it. How there can be the slightest doubt about the meaning of this is something I have never been able to understand. To interpret the mission as one of Messianic nature only is to destroy the plain words spoken by the Missioner. What law was to be fulfilled? That also is stated in clear terms: the law of the First Covenant.

What did the First Covenant contain? From the references to it scattered through the Bible, we gather that the laws of Moses, as they are set down in the Pentateuch, were those of the First Covenant. From the time of the kingship of Saul until the birth of Jesus, these laws had been repeatedly broken, and the rules and regulations of the priesthood, which were mainly domestic and social observances, ritualistic in their character, superseded the basic laws of Moses. There are examples enough in the Hebrew books to show what the people suffered under the tyrannies of the priesthood and that they often protested against all manner of strictures laid upon their lives.

When Jesus gave the Beatitudes to the people, He said:

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

After this promise He said to them:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

This seems to me to be definite enough to satisfy anyone who comes to the subject with an open mind. If we proceed in our study with the object of dissociating the sayings of Jesus from the glosses of the early Christians, we shall find that there is a consistency of basic philosophy running through the whole purpose and mission of Jesus. In parenthesis let me remark that, in selecting the passages I shall now present to you, I would not have you think for one moment that I do not appreciate the wisdom and beauty of hundreds of verses to which I do not refer.

One of the most striking assurances in this philosophy is the following, which is repeated over and over again in so many different ways.

. . . When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, *before ye ask him.*

Then He gave to them the prayer which is the most perfect in all the hallowed literature of devotion. It has withstood the neglect of twenty centuries. What I mean by this is that it has been spoken by the millions, generation after generation, but not yet has it been shown that the worshippers by their actions have believed fervently and implicitly in its sacredness. For if ever a prayer was sacred, it is this one. You all know it, so I will just emphasize the philosophy in it which is that of Jesus and could not be of anyone else.



Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. . . .

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. . . .

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

In these few sentences we have the pith of a life's philosophy. To touch upon the chief needs of the spirit and the flesh, in sentences that can be spoken in two minutes, is a triumph for a God-given genius. Mark: "Thy will be done in earth," and see how that links up with "I come not to destroy but to fulfill the law." The schema is all of a piece. The kingdom to come can be no other than the one established under the laws of Moses. All we have to do to be assured of this is to return to the Pentateuch and read there the promises made to Moses when he took the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt—out of destitution and slavery into the paradise of the Promised Land. It was to be a change from the kingdom of political rulers to one established under the laws of the Creator. There ought to be no doubt in anyone's mind as to the certainty that a material paradise was open to them beyond Jordan and that in it their souls would find refreshment and their minds find leisure to worship God in His holiness.

The meaning of these words does not change in any

way. When uttered by Jesus they conveyed the same sense as when they were spoken by Moses. When Jesus says "My kingdom is not of this world," He means the world of the Roman occupation, the world of strife and horror. Does He not say, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon"?

Now we come to the revelation of the purpose and the mission of Jesus. Herein we shall find the echo reverberating down the ages for two thousand years, the echo of the voice of Moses at Sinai.

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

. . . For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his justice; and all these things shall be added unto you.

“O ye of little faith.” What does this mean? Imagine at that time, in the conditions under which the people of Galilee lived, that He should say to those who hungered and were sore distressed that the fowls of the air sow not, they do not reap, they do not gather into barns. Why should He remind His people that the lilies toil not, neither do they spin? Does it not seem something like blasphemy to say to the impoverished that they must take no thought of what they eat and what they drink and how they shall be clothed? If we really do wish to know the import of what is called the Sermon on the Mount, we must turn back again to the Pentateuch and learn afresh the promise of the Land of Canaan and all it would yield to the people who observed the laws of God. Jesus here is pointing out to them what might be if the law were fulfilled. As Moses believed there was no economic reason for involuntary poverty, so Jesus, too, understood from the First Covenant that such poverty had no place in the kingdom of God. Then He puts the coping stone upon this edifice raised to the bounty of the Creator by saying again: “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”

And now comes the condition of re-inheriting the paradise that was lost: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his justice; and all these things shall be added unto you.” It is justice that is the key that will open the gates of God’s paradise to man. Without it, all effort is vain. Remember the cry of the Prophets, “Restore, restore!” Yes, justice must be restored before redemption comes. Indeed, there can be no redemption

without justice. The history of the world to witness: the story of the rise and fall of each civilization bears evidence. Yes, the decline of ours is no different from the rest. All—all show this.

We may now ask ourselves if He were conscious of the true import of His purpose and mission. Was the principle thought out in all its consequences? Yes, He thought of everything. He knew what it meant to preach such a gospel, and He did not withhold from them what dangers they risked in asking for justice. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I come not to send peace, but a sword."

This terrible warning which has mightily puzzled the theologians is clear to them who know what it is to ask for God's justice in this world.

The long history of Israel was enough to convince Jesus that those who asked for justice met with the sword. He knew the story of the Prophets and that under the Roman tyranny those who were persecuted so shamefully in Galilee were those who called for justice; those put to the sword. And yet there was no other way. Follow the reasoning to its conclusion and it will be found that at the worst the only logical way is to take the sword, for in destroying the people, the tyrants destroy themselves. It was so with Persia, it was so with Egypt, and only a slight acquaintanceship with the history of Greece and Rome is enough to convince one of this fact. Did He not say on another occasion: "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword"? But there are many references to this.

That He was conscious, within Himself, of founts of wisdom never before tapped by mortal man is shown in saying after saying, and this gave to Him an assurance of rightness unknown in any philosopher before

Him. I think one of the most remarkable statements is contained in the parable of the leaven.

. . . The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and *without a parable spake he not unto them:*

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Peter, who dictated the gospel of Matthew, attributes this to the Prophet, but undoubtedly the Prophet is Jesus Himself, for it is shown all the way through that He was uttering things which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Further on, Jesus brings us up sharply to a realization that it is this world when established under God's law where we shall find the kingdom. He says: "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom."

All the priceless parables describing the kingdom take for their analogies things that happened every day, even in the Galilee of that time. The kingdom is like unto leaven. The kingdom is like a grain of mustard seed. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls. The kingdom of God is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered fish of every kind. I do not remember one parable in which He likens the kingdom of heaven to anything but some human action or desire. Yes, "ye must be like little children to enter the kingdom of

heaven." This means we must have a fresh intelligence, a mind not cluttered up with the impedimenta of modern thought, for let us not forget it was essential, after leaving Egypt, for the Israelites to spend forty years in the desert before they were fit to enter Canaan. Why? Surely the reason for this long sojourn was that the minds of slaves had to be purged and cleansed before they were fit to receive the gifts in store for them.

So far, we have put ourselves in the way of defining the mission and purpose of Jesus. He came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it. He came to tell the people there was no reason under God's rule for involuntary poverty. He had the highest authority for reminding them all that they were amply provided for by a beneficent All-Father if they would observe His just laws and use the faculties with which He had endowed them. This is all clear. Did His hearers understand him? Did they grasp the deep significance of the message? No. And Jesus knew that. Indeed, He did not hesitate to tell them so, and yet, they followed Him. While they were in Galilee, they believed in Him. Joseph Klausner in his works gives many excellent reasons why they were devoted to Him though they did not understand Him. But these reasons seem to me to want something more than the criteria and illustrations derived from the human characters we know.

One of the great expressions of the prophets was: "Let thy light shine forth." In this matter it is of great value to appreciate the significance of this expression. "Let thy light shine forth." What is that light? Surely it is that of a clear understanding, of firm conviction. It is the real knowledge that things can be uttered

which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. This is what so deeply stirred the souls of the people who heard Jesus in Galilee. Far more, indeed, than the beautiful homilies He used in the parables. Yes, He spoke to them in their tongue, in their idiom, and referred constantly to the things of their daily existence. All this undoubtedly counted much with His hearers. But above and beyond it all, there was the light reflected from His demeanor and His speech. These must account for those who did not understand yielding to His sway.

Then Jesus went to Jerusalem where the two tyrannies ruled—one of Rome, the other of the priesthood—and there He found He had not come to bring peace but the sword. Neither the Roman authorities nor the Pharisees were of a mind to brook this man who came to their city and was received with acclamation by the crowd. He was a dangerous visitor and, as it has always happened, as the history of every people records, the one who has come to proclaim justice and demand repentance so that the law might be fulfilled must be suppressed. And it is here, in their effort to trap Him, that we learn the secret He came to give us.

Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.

And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.

Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?

Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.

And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?

They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

This has never been understood save in the case of Ibsen in *Emperor and Galilean*. In all the works that I have searched, written on or about the life of Jesus, I have never found, save in the one case just mentioned, the slightest indication of what Jesus meant when He said: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

Some of the authorities have it that taxation was anathema to the Jew and that many of the revolts that took place at the time of the Maccabees and of the Gaulonite were in protest against the fisc. A few Jewish and Christian authors have found evidence to the contrary: that in certain circumstances the Jews submitted to taxation. What reason, then, was there for the Herodians to plan the trick of the tribute money? If the Jews submitted to the payment of the tax, without protest, then surely the Herodians ran the risk of their trick falling flat. They must have known the mind of Jesus, and they must have known that, as a Galilean, He might have been associated with the rebels who revolted against the Roman taxes. Josephus tells us, in *The Capture of Jerusalem*:

In his time [i.e. the administration of Coponius] there was a man at Galilee who upbraided the Jews, because, though of the seed of Abraham, they were now



doing menial service and paying taxes to the Romans, and because they had accepted mortal masters after forsaking one who was immortal. The name of this man was Judas. . . .

Most of the authors of our day who have searched the authorities agree that the taxes imposed by the Romans and Herod were not only crushing but iniquitous. Even Klausner himself describes the plunder of Herod. He says:

. . . Not only were the taxes levied on all the inhabitants year by year exacted mercilessly and by force, but it was impossible to live without bribes to himself, and to his domestics, and his friends and officers who were entrusted with the gathering of the taxes.

How, then, it is possible for the authors I have studied to miss the forceful meaning of the reply of Jesus to the Herodians is something of a mystery.

I have long since thought that those who imagined, when Jesus replied to the Herodians, He was sanctioning the paying of tax to Caesar will not take the responsibility of elucidating this problem because it would offend the powerful in the churches. Yet, the same people do not hesitate to point out that, under the law of Moses, no political government was established and, of course, there were no departments of the State to collect taxes and impose restrictions such as those suffered during the Roman occupation and the rule of Herod. The inconsistencies here are so transparent it is a wonder to me they can write as if they did not regard them of any importance.

According to the law of justice there can be no such thing as the taxation of wealth, and Jesus consistently from the first held to the straight line of justice being

the essential in redemption before all these things could be added unto His people. Was it likely that, having gone so far, He would deny Himself even though He knew it meant death? Certainly not! Moreover, His enemies knew He would not, and that was the reason why they laid the trap for Him. They knew that, if the things that were Caesar's were rendered to him, Caesar would have nothing and would be obliged to work. In rendering things to God, Caesar would be divested of all that gave him power. The church's interpretation of this scene in the life of Jesus has been put to the State's use.

Furthermore, if it be sincerely contended that Jesus advocated the paying of taxes to Caesar, there was then no proper legal reason why the authorities arrested Him and charged Him before Pilate.

Jesus warned: "Take heed that no man deceive you" and He told them what the consequence would be of not seeking the kingdom and its justice.

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

All these are the beginning of sorrows.

There have been sorrows enough since Calvary, and I firmly believe that the reason for them is because, generation after generation, Caesar has been permitted to take that which in justice cannot belong to him. If men within the church had preached the gospel of the kingdom of God as the people of Galilee heard it, mankind might have entered upon a new Canaan. It is not

the fault of the church that this duty has been neglected. My studies go far to convince me that the church itself has always held tenaciously to the essentials of the Gospel of the Nazarene. However, it has been different with the men within the church. The association of church and State has been its undoing. The kingdom cannot be sought in the political realm, for it is clearly laid down that the kingdom of God is within you.

Has this been the secret since the foundation of the world? What other secret could Jesus think of? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his justice; and all these things shall be added unto you." How simple! One has not to go here, there, and everywhere to find the key, for if the kingdom of God is within you, that kingdom, and only that kingdom, holds the justice which will unite man to his Creator.

Henry George was convinced of this. In *Progress and Poverty* he says:

. . . Political economy and social science cannot teach any lessons that are not embraced in the simple truths that were taught to poor fishermen and Jewish peasants by One who eighteen hundred years ago was crucified—the simple truths which, beneath the warpings of selfishness and the distortions of superstition, seem to underlie every religion that has ever striven to formulate the spiritual yearnings of man.