

Second Sermon on the Mount

by Sir Robert Anderson

The sermon examines the fulfillment of biblical prophecies concerning the Kingdom of Heaven and the future restoration of Israel through the lens of Christ's ministry and teachings.

Scripture: Matthew 1:1, Matthew 2:3, Matthew 4:24, Matthew 10:5, Matthew 13:41, Matthew 24:3

Topics: "Kingdom Of God", "Messianic Prophecy"

Description

Sir Robert Anderson delves into the Gospel of St. Matthew as the connecting link between the past and the future in prophecy, emphasizing the Messianic promises associated with David and Abraham. The sermon explores the significance of the Kingdom Gospel proclaimed by Jesus and the rejection of His Messianic claims by the Jewish leaders. It highlights the transition in Christ's ministry, from the open proclamation of the Kingdom to veiled teachings through parables, leading to a deeper understanding of the mysteries of the Kingdom.

Transcript

THE connecting link between the past and the future, between the fulfilled and the unfulfilled in prophecy, will be found in the Gospel of St. Matthew.

The chief Messianic promises are grouped in two great classes, connected respectively with the names of David and of Abraham, and the New Testament opens with the record of the birth and ministry of Messiah as "the Son of David, the son of Abraham"; (Matthew 1:1) for in one aspect of His work He was "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." (Romans 15:8) The question of the Magi, "Where is He that is born king of the Jews?" aroused a hope which was part of the national politics of Judah; and even the base Idumean who then usurped the throne was sensible of its significance: "Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." [1]

1. Matthew 2:3. It must not be imagined that it was any religious emotion which disturbed the king. The announcement of the Magi was to him what the news of the birth of an heir is to an heir-presumptive. The Magi asked, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" Herod's inquiry, therefore, to the Sanhedrin was, "Where should Messiah be born?" and on being referred to the prophecy which so plainly designated Bethlehem, he determined to destroy every infant child in that city and district. Herod and the Sanhedrin had not learned to spiritualize the prophecies.

And when the proclamation afterwards was made, first by John the Baptist, and finally by the Lord and His apostles, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," the Jews knew well its import. It was not "the Gospel," as we understand it now, but the announcement of the near fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy.[2] And the testimony had a twofold accompaniment. "The Sermon on the Mount" is recorded as embodying the great truths and principles which were associated with the Kingdom Gospel; and the attendant miracles gave proof that all was Divine. And in the earlier stages of the ministry of Christ, His miracles were not reserved for those whose faith responded to His words; the only qualification for the benefit was that the recipient should belong to the favored race. "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give." [3] Such was the commission under which the twelve went forth through that little land, to every corner of which their Master's fame had gone before them. (Matthew 4:24, 25)

2. Cf. Pusey, Daniel, p. 84

3. Matthew 10:5-8. The chapter is prophetic, in keeping with the character of the book, and reaches on to the testimony of the latter days (see ex. gr., ver. 23).

But the verdict of the nation, through its accredited and responsible leaders, was a rejection of His Messianic claims.[4] The acts and words of Christ recorded in the twelfth chapter of Matthew were an open and deliberate condemnation and defiance of the Pharisees, and their answer was to meet in solemn council and decree His death. (Matthew 12:1- 14) From that hour His ministry entered upon a new phase. The miracles continued, for He could not meet with suffering and refuse to relieve it; but those whom thus He blessed were charged "that they should not make Him known." (Matthew 12:16) The Gospel of the Kingdom ceased; His teaching became veiled in parables,[5] and the disciples were forbidden any longer to testify to His Messiahship. (Matthew 16:20)

4. In our own time the Jews have had the temerity to publish a translation of the Mishna, and the reader who will peruse its treatises can judge with what contempt and loathing the Lord must have regarded the religion of those miserable men. The treatise Sabbath will afford an invaluable commentary on the twelfth of Matthew. The Mishna is a compilation of the oral traditions of the Rabbins, made in the second century, A. D., to prevent their being lost by the dispersion - the very traditions, many of them, which prevailed when the Lord was on earth, and which He so unsparingly condemned as undermining the Scriptures, for then as now the Jews regarded them as possessing a Divine sanction. (Cf Lindo's Jewish Cal., Introd.; Milman's Hist. Jews, Book 18.)

5. Matthew 13:3, 13. "From the expression *ardzato* in Mark, compared with the question of the disciples in ver. 10, - and with ver. 34, - it appears that this was the first beginning of our Lord's teaching by parables, expressly so delivered, and properly so called. And the natural sequence of things here agrees with and confirms Matthew's arrangement against those who would place (as Ebrard) all this chapter before the Sermon on the Mount. He there spoke without parables, or mainly so; and continued to do so till the rejection and misunderstanding of His teaching led to His judicially adopting the course here indicated, *choris par. ouden elalei autois.*" - ALFORD, Gr. Test, Matthew 13:3.

The thirteenth chapter is prophetic of the state of things which was to intervene between the time of His rejection and His return in glory to claim the place which in His humiliation was denied Him. Instead of the proclamation of the Kingdom, He taught them "the mysteries of the Kingdom." (Matthew 13:11) His

mission changed its character, and instead of a King come to reign, He described Himself as a Sower sowing seed. Of the parables which follow, the first three, spoken to the multitude, described the outward results of the testimony in the world; the last three, addressed to the disciples,[6] speak of the hidden realities revealed to spiritual minds.

6. As were also the interpretations of the Parables of the Sower and of the Tares.

But these very parables, while they taught the disciples in the plainest terms that everything was postponed which the prophets had led them to look for in connection with the Kingdom, taught them no less clearly that the day would surely come when all should be fulfilled; when evil should be rooted out, and the Kingdom established in righteousness and peace. (Matthew 13:41-43) They thus learned that there was to be an "age" of which prophecy took no account, and another "Advent" at its close; and "the second Sermon on the Mount" was the Lord's reply to the inquiry, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age?"[7]

7. Matthew 24:3. "As He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him." Compare Matthew 5:1 "He went up into a mountain, and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him." The Sermon on the Mount unfolded the principles on which the Kingdom would be set up. The King having been rejected by the nation, the second Sermon on the Mount unfolded the events which must precede His return.

The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew has been well described as "the anchor of apocalyptic interpretation," and "the touchstone of apocalyptic systems." [8] The fifteenth verse specifies an event and fixes an epoch, by which we are enabled to connect the words of the Lord with the visions of St. John, and both with the prophecies of Daniel. The entire passage is obviously prophetic, and its fulfillment clearly pertains to the time of the end. The fullest and most definite application of the words must therefore be to those who are to witness their accomplishment. To them it is that the warning is specially addressed, against being deceived through a false hope of the immediate return of Christ.[9]

8. Alford, Gr. Test., vol. 4., Pt. 2. Proleg. Rev.

9. Matthew 24:4, 6. That is, the final stage of the advent; not His coming as foretold in 1 Thessalonians 4 and elsewhere, which has no signs preceding.

To refer verse 5 to the times of Barcochab involves a glaring anachronism. The primary reference in vers. 15-20, and, therefore, of the earlier portion of the prophecy, was to the period ending with the destruction of Jerusalem.

A series of terrible events are yet to come; but "these are the beginning of sorrows"; "the end is not yet." How long these "sorrows" shall continue is not revealed. The first sure sign that the end is near will be the advent of the fiercest trial that the redeemed on earth have ever known. The fulfillment of Daniel's vision of the defilement of the Holy Place is to be the signal for immediate flight; "for then shall be the great tribulation," (Vers. 15-21. Compare Daniel 11:1.) unparalleled even in Judah's history. But, as already noticed, this last great persecution belongs to the latter half of Daniel's seventieth week, and therefore it affords a landmark by which we can determine the character and fix the order of the chief events which mark the closing scenes foretold in prophecy.

With the clew thus obtained from the Gospel of St. Matthew, we can turn with confidence to study the Apocalyptic visions of St. John. But first it must be clearly recognized that in the twenty-fourth of Matthew,

as in the book of Daniel, Jerusalem is the center of the scene to which the prophecy relates; and this of necessity implies that the Jews shall have been restored to Palestine before the time of its fulfillment.[10]

10. The question of their restoration to a place of blessing spiritually has already been discussed.

Objections based on the supposed improbability of such an event are sufficiently answered by marking the connection between prophecy and miracle. The history of the Abrahamic race, to which prophecy is so closely related, is little else than a record of miraculous interpositions. "Their passage out of Egypt was miraculous. Their entrance into the promised land was miraculous. Their prosperous and their adverse fortunes in that land, their servitudes and their deliverances, their conquests and their captivities, were all miraculous. The entire history from the call of Abraham to the building of the sacred temple was a series of miracles. It is so much the object of the sacred historians to describe these that little else is recorded... There are no historians in the sacred volume of the period in which miraculous intervention was withdrawn. After the declaration by the mouth of Malachi that a messenger should be sent to prepare the way, the next event recorded by any inspired writer is the birth of that messenger. But of the interval of 400 years between the promise and the completion no account is given." [11]

11. Clinton, Fasti H., vol. 1., p. 243.

The seventy years from Messiah's birth to the dispersion of the nation were fruitful in miracle and prophetic fulfillment. But the national existence of Israel is as it were the stage on which alone the drama of prophecy can, in its fullness, be displayed; and from the Apostolic age to the present hour, not a single public event can be appealed to as affording indisputable proof of immediate Divine intervention upon earth.[12] A silent heaven is a leading characteristic of the dispensation in which our lot is cast. But Israel's history has yet to be completed; and when that nation comes again upon the scene, the element of miraculous interpositions will mark once more the course of events on earth.

12. There is, doubtless, what may be called the private miracle of individual conversion, and the believer has transcendental proof not only of the existence of God, but of His presence and power with men.

On the other hand, the analogy of the past would lead us to expect a merging of the one dispensation in the other, rather than an abrupt transition; and the question is one of peculiar interest on general grounds, whether passing events are not tending towards this very consummation, the restoration of the Jews to Palestine.

The decline of the Moslem power is one of the most patent of public facts; and if the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire be still delayed, it is due entirely to the jealousies of European nations, whose rival interests seem to render an amicable distribution of its territories impossible. But the crisis cannot be deferred indefinitely; and when it arrives, the question of greatest moment, next to the fate of Constantinople, will be, What is to become of Palestine? Its annexation by any one European state is in the highest degree improbable. The interests of several of the first-rate Powers forbid it. The way will thus be kept open to the Jews, whenever their inclinations or their destinies lead them back to the land of their fathers.

Not only would no hostile influence hinder their return, but the probabilities of the case (and it is with probabilities that we are here concerned) are in favor of the colonization of Palestine by that people to whom historically it belongs. There is some reason to believe that a movement of this kind has already begun; and if, whether by the Levant becoming a highway to India, or from some other cause, any

measure of prosperity should return to those shores that were once the commercial center of the world, the Jews would migrate thither in thousands from every land.

True it is that to colonize a country is one thing, while to create a nation is another. But the testimony of Scripture is explicit that Judah's national independence is not to be regained by diplomacy or the sword. Jerusalem is to remain under Gentile supremacy until the day when Daniel's visions shall be realized. In the language of Scripture, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." [13] But long ere then the Cross must supplant the Crescent in Judea, else it is incredible that the Mosque of Omar should give place to the Jewish Temple on the Hill of Zion.

13. Luke 21:24. That is, till the end of the period during which earthly sovereignty, entrusted to Nebuchadnezzar twenty-five centuries ago, is to remain with the Gentiles.

If the operation of causes such as those above indicated, conjointly with the decay of the Moslem power, should lead to the formation of a protected Jewish state in Palestine, possibly with a military occupation of Jerusalem by or on behalf of some European Power or Powers, nothing more need be supposed than a religious revival among the Jews, to prepare the way for the fulfillment of the prophecies. [14]

14. The following extract from the Jewish Chronicle of 9th Nov., 1849, is quoted in Mr. Newton's Ten Kingdoms (2nd Ed., p. 401): "The European Powers will not need to put themselves to the trouble of restoring the Jews individually or collectively. Let them but confer upon Palestine a constitution like that of the United States...and the Jews will restore themselves. They would then go cheerfully and willingly, and would there piously bide their time for a heaven-inspired Messiah, who is to restore Mosaism to its original splendor."

"God has not cast away His people;" and when the present dispensation closes, and the great purpose has been satisfied for which it was ordained, the dropped threads of prophecy and promise will again be taken up, and the dispensation historically broken off in the Acts of the Apostles, when Jerusalem was the appointed center for God's people on earth, [15] will be resumed. Judah shall again become a nation, Jerusalem shall be restored, and that temple shall be built in which the "abomination of desolation" is to stand. [16]

15. Gentiles were then admitted within the pale, not on an equality, but in some sense as proselytes had been received within the nation. The Church was essentially Jewish. The temple was their place of resort (Acts 2:46; 3:1, 5:42). Their testimony was in the line of the old prophecies to the nation (ibid. 3:19-26.), and even when scattered by persecution, the apostles remained in the metropolis, and those who were driven abroad evangelized only among the Jews (ibid. 8:1, 4, and 11:19). Peter refused to go among Gentiles save after a special revelation to him (ibid. 10.), and he was put on his defense before the Church for going at all (ibid. 11:2-18. Comp. chap. 15.)

16. Scattered among the people will be a "remnant," who will "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17); Jews, and yet Christians; Jews, but believers in the Messiah, whom the nation will continue to reject until the time of His appearing. It must be obvious to the thoughtful mind that such prophecies as the twenty-fourth of Matthew imply that there will be a believing people to be comforted and guided by them at the time and in the scene of their fulfillment.

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