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TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

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LECTURE

DELIVERED BY

ELDER JAMES A. LITTLE,

Before a Joint Meeting of the Y. M. M. I. A., in the Third Ward, City of St. George, on the evening of February 20th, 1878.

It is the first time I have had the privilege of lecturing before an Association of our young people.

We have here the Bible and Book of Mormon, the records of two streams of population which flowed in different directions from the tower of Babel, when the language of the people was confounded about one hundred years after Noah's flood.

One of these peoples, known to us as the Gentiles, of which we have some account in the Book of Mormon, traveled eastward across the continent of Asia to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, which they crossed, and landed on the west coast of North America. We will not notice their history farther at this time, but turn our attention this evening to the other branch, who held the priesthood, the Abrahamic family, whose history is recorded in the Bible.

We form but very imperfect ideas of history, without some data to guide us; and with all the imperfections of Bible chronology, it is better than none. I do not expect that we will have anything much better until that remarkable history of the world written by the brother of Jared is revealed to us.

One hundred years after the flood the tower of Babel was constructed. If you will examine a map of Asia, on the river Euphrates, a short distance above its junction with the Tigris, you will find the little town of Hillah; near it are supposed to be the remains of the tower of Babel and of the ancient city of Babylon. Probably the most of you recollect the story of the confusion of tongues at the tower of Babel, and the declaration of the Lord that he would scatter the people from there over the whole face of the earth. The priesthood descended from Noah through the lineage of Shem, consequently the Jarediites and the Abrahamic family are his descendants.

Abraham was born three hundred and fifty-one years after the flood. If, as is stated, Shem lived 500 years after the flood, he and Abraham were cotemporary. Although Abraham's kindred appear to have fallen into idolatry, he sought after the true God and attained to the blessings of the priesthood, of which he was the rightful heir through the fathers. In the year 1921, B. C., at the age of seventy-five years, Abraham was called of God to leave the land of his nativity and go into the land of Canaan, which was promised to him and his children for an everlasting inheritance. The Canaanites were descendants of Ham, as were also the people of those famous cities Nineveh and Babylon.

After the arrival of Abraham in the land of Canaan, he and his immediate descendants appear to have had no permanent abiding place, but were wanderers in the land which was to be the future heritage of their children. In fact, it may be said that Israel, thus far, have mostly been only wanderers and sojourners in the earth. At the time of Abraham's return from his battle with the four kings, an account of which may be found in the 14th Chapter of Genesis, in which he released Lot, his brother's son, from captivity, he was hospitably entertained by Melchizedek, King of Salem, who was also "the priest of the most high God;" he blessed Abraham, and Abraham "gave him tithes of all." Some of our elders believe that Shem and Melchizedek were one and the same person. I do not feel to question the correctness of this opinion. There are not wanting men of thought and study, outside of our church, who are also of this opinion. Mr. Priest, in his work on the "Antiquities of America," published, I think, in 1832, advances some good arguments in favor of this idea.

The city of Salem here mentioned, was afterwards known as Jerusalem. Its subsequent history is intimately connected with that of the House of Israel, and is full of interest. Its location and history have been definitely understood for nearly 3,800 years, a significant fact which pertains to no other city that has ever existed on the earth. Its whole history indicates that its location is the peculiarly sacred spot of the vast Eastern hemisphere. Josephus, the Jewish historian, who wrote seventy years after Christ, states that Melchizedek built a temple there; if so, it is the first temple built in the interest of the priesthood of which we have any account, either in or out of the Bible. But little is known with certainty of the cities of Nineveh and Babylon, which flourished 600 or 700 years before Christ, except what is recorded in the Bible. The history of the first two centuries of the City of Rome, which is said to have been founded 753 B. C., is considered not reliable by many of the learned, and the story that the two brothers who founded it were suckled in their infancy by a she wolf, certainly partakes of the fabulous. In fact, we are pretty much indebted to the Bible for what little reliable history we have of the old world, from the creation to within five or six centuries of the birth of our Savior.

In the 22d chapter of Genesis we are informed that Abraham went into the land of Moriah to offer up his son, Isaac. Josephus further says, that he built the altar on Mount Moriah, where Solomon afterwards built the temple.

In passing, permit me to call your attention to the promises made by the Lord to Abraham, after he had offered sacrifice in the land of Moriah. The Lord said, "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the seashore;" it is the latter part of the promise, not so often repeated as the other, which it is well to bear in mind in all our studies of the history of Israel. "And thy seed shall possess the gate of their enemies;" a promise which still remains to be fulfilled, after thirty-seven centuries have passed away. What little we have learned of this city of Salem and its priest, serves to excite our curiosity to know more of their history; and why and when the priesthood disappeared and the city went into the hands of the wicked Canaanites.

We are told in the Bible that the children of Israel were in bondage 430 years; Josephus, in one place, makes the same assertion, but afterwards explains by stating that this period is reckoned from the calling of Abraham, 1921, B. C.; from that to 1706, B. C., when Jacob and his family moved into Egypt as one-half of the time, and from the going into Egypt until the exodus in 1491, B. C., another period of 215 years. According to our chronology, Joseph did not die until seventy-one years after the family moved into Egypt, which reduces the time of the bondage of Israel to the Egyptians to 144 years. This appears to me to be a reasonable view to take of this subject until further light is given us.

In the latter part of this period, Moses, the great leader and lawgiver, was born. He gave to Israel a code of laws involving principles of equity, which Christians have never yet improved upon. The history of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt is of such length and interest, that I will barely notice it in this general outline. Moses and Aaron holding the priesthood of the Most High, through faith worked mighty miracles in the deliverance of Israel, the Egyptians, the descendants of Ham, holding a fallen priesthood, also worked wonders, and perhaps at that time the two powers ran as nearly parallel as they may do in this the dispensation of the fulness of times.

The Israelites went out of Egypt under Moses in 1491, B. C. They wandered in the deserts of Arabia forty years, passed around the south end of the Dead Sea and appeared on the east side of the river Jordan, nearly opposite the city of Jericho, in 1451. Here Moses rehearsed to them the blessings God had bestowed on them and their fathers, the commandments he had given, and caused them to renew their covenants of obedience. No man could pronounce the terrible comprehensive curses that Moses did upon Israel, if they failed to keep the commandments of God; no man could bless as he blessed in case of obedience, without the inspirations of the Almighty. It is wonderful with what earnestness of spirit, with what an intensity of interest he labored to establish his people in righteousness, in his last days on the east side of Jordan. As had been before appointed, Moses died and Joshua led Israel into the promised land. The Lord had commanded Israel that they should utterly destroy and waste away the Canaanites, and warned them that if they did not do this they would prove a snare and lead them into idolatry and wickedness. Disobedience to this command led to promised results, and numerous intermarryings took place, the degrading results of which, on the then future of Israel, it is difficult to estimate. About twenty-seven years after the crossing of Jordan, Joshua died. Just before his death he assembled the tribes, rehearsed the great blessings God had bestowed upon them, and caused them to renew their covenants of obedience. Two years after his death Jerusalem was partly taken, and occupied by the children of Benjamin, a portion still remaining in the hands of the Jebusites. In forty-five years after Israel had crossed over Jordan they had fallen into idolatry, and were in bondage to their enemies. From the crossing of Jordan to the anointing of Saul was 356 years. 111 years of this period, or nearly one-third, Israel were in bondage to their enemies, and their whole history is a record of the fulfilment of the promises of the Lord to them through Moses. Perhaps some of us scarcely take into consideration what bondage meant in those times. While it often varied in severity, it generally meant that the cattle, the grain, the personal liberty and lives of the people were at the mercy of the conquerors. As a sample of one of the smaller annoyances, the Bible says that in the beginning of the reign of Saul there were no smiths in Israel, and they were compelled to get their work done at the shops of the Philistines, so that, in case they should rebel against their oppressors, they would not have the means of manufacturing arms. A portion of the city of Jerusalem remained in possession of the Jebusites 377 years after the wars of Joshua, when the Jebusites were conquered by David, and it became the capital city of Israel. Probably most intelligent Israelites to-day would refer you to the reign of Solomon as the most glorious period in the history of their people. His world-renowned Temple was completed 1004 years B. C., or 487 years after the Egyptian exodus. That is the only Temple built for the purposes of the holy priesthood of which we have account in the Bible, although we may well suppose that others were built both before and after the flood. Solomon, notwithstanding his great wisdom and the many great blessings he received from the Lord, married many strange wives and concubines, who led him into idolatry and wickedness in his old age. They with their numerous children, with their wealth and social position, combined with the weight of Solomon's personal example, exercised an immense influence over the nation for evil. As a nation, Israel never recovered from these pernicious influences. As had been predicted by the prophets, after the death of Solomon the kingdom was divided, Rheaboam, his son, reigning over Judah and Benjamin, and Jeroboam over the other tribes. So rapidly did Judah sink into the degradations of the idolatrous nations around them, that in the fifth year of the reign of Rheoboam, and in less than thirty-five years after the completion of the Temple, Shishak, King of Egypt, took Jerusalem and plundered the House of the Lord of all its treasures. From that time both Judah and Israel were frequently in bondage to their enemies, besides having many long and destructive wars with each other.

From the division of the kingdom to the captivity of the ten tribes, a period of two hundred and fifty-four years, nineteen kings reigned over Israel, all, without exception, idolatrous and wicked. From the division of the kingdom to the Babylonian captivity, a period of three hundred and eighty-seven years, twenty-one kings reigned over Judah, all except four or five idolatrous. Doubtless the great influence of Solomon and his family had done much to perpetuate these evils. In 730, B. C., Hashea, king of Israel, became tributary to Shalmanezer, king of Assyria. Nine years after, Samaria, the capital of the kingdom, was taken by the Assyrians, and the national existence of the ten tribes of Israel ceased, for the people were carried captive into the countries of Asia beyond the river Euphrates, and peoples from other countries were put in possession of their inheritance. We may consider this event as the beginning of the more comprehensive fulfilment of the word of the Lord through Moses, that in case of disobedience the Lord would scatter them among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other. We are informed by modern revelation, that the ten and a half tribes journeyed into the north country and were hid up to come forth in this dispensation, but it is not probable that more than a few thousands of this widely scattered people were gathered up for this purpose, and that the great mass remained to intermingle with the nations and thereby carry out the designs of the Almighty. This idea is strengthened by Josephus, the Jewish historian, who wrote nearly 800 years after, and who states that only the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin were subject to the Romans, for the ten tribes who were carried away by the Assyrians, still remained in multitudes beyond the river Euphrates. I have often asked the question, how came our fathers of the Ten Tribes, mostly of Ephraim, mixed up with the modern nations of Europe? About 1000 years after the captivity of the tribes, a sufficient time for them to have become well mixed up with the nations of Asia, in, I think, the third century of the Christian era, there appeared on the eastern bank of the river Danube, then the extreme limit of the Roman Empire, in that direction, an immense horde of semi-barbarian people from the plains of Asia. From the Roman officers in charge of the military posts which commanded the passage of the river, they requested the privilege of taking shelter in the territories of Rome, stating that they were driven to this extremity by their enemies. Their case was brought to the notice of the government, and they were permitted to take shelter in the empire under treaty stipulations, one of which was that they should deliver up their arms; one of the most difficult of terms for a warlike nomadic people to comply with. They succeeded in retaining their arms by bribing the Roman officials, even by presenting some of their sons and daughters, gifts of peculiar significance in that licentious age. It is supposed that the Roman officials very indifferently fulfilled their treaty stipulations, and the barbarians began to carve out their own fortunes and shape the destinies of Rome with their swords. Hordes followed after horde, until they in time crushed the Roman Empire by valor and the weight of numbers, devastated Europe, intermingled with the conquered peoples, and laid the foundation of the present nations of Europe.

This is the most plausible answer to the query, Where did our fathers come from? that history at present appears to afford us.

One hundred and thirty-three years after the captivity of the Ten Tribes, the Babylonish captivity took place. For many years previous the Jews had been plundered and wasted away by the surrounding nations. One king had been carried away captive into Egypt, and two to Babylon, with many of the people, before the final consummation of their afflictions in the destruction of Jerusalem and of that beautiful Temple which had so long been their pride, and the carrying of Zedekiah and the remainder of the people into captivity. In this we see the fulfilment of the word of the Lord in the 28th chap. Deut. "The Lord shall bring thee and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known." Fifty-two years after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews were permitted, by Cyrus, King of Persia, to return to the land of their inheritance. Nearly 50,000 returned, and, after laboring under great difficulties for over 50 years, the city was repaired, the Temple re-built and dedicated, in the year 519, B. C. This closed the seventy years of what is known as the Babylonish captivity. The casual reader of the Bible might suppose that the most of the Jews had returned to the land of their fathers, but this conclusion would evidently be erroneous, for the interesting incidents related in the Book of Esther took place nine or ten years after the dedication of the Temple, and some twenty-five years after the first return of the Jews; and yet, in the story of Haman and Mordecai, the Jews are represented to have been scattered in large numbers through the 127 provinces of the Persian empire. According to our chronology we find, by the 1st chap. of Nehemiah, ninety years after the first return of the Jews, that he was cup-bearer to the King of Persia. He inquired of certain men of Judah, who arrived at the city of Shushan, concerning the Jews who were left of the captivity and about Jerusalem. They informed him that those who were left in the province were in great affliction, that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down and the gates burnt with fire. This indicates that the Jews were still scattered, enough to make it appear that those who had gathered were in great distress. Forty-nine years after the events related in the first chapter of Nehemiah are supposed to have taken place, or 397 B.C., Malachi closed his prophecy, and we must now turn to profane history for further knowledge of the affairs of the Jews until their destruction by the Romans seventy years after the birth of our Savior. In general it was a period of sorrow and affliction, interspersed with a few short seasons of comparative prosperity. Sixty-three years B. C., Jerusalem was taken by Pompey, and the Jews remained under Roman rule until their extinction as a nation in the year A.D. 70; a period of 133 years. During the long period of nearly 1800 years from the going down of Israel into Egypt until the final destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, they were more or less in bondage to their enemies nearly one-third of the time. Their whole history is a vast accumulation of testimonies of the inspiration of prophecy, and of the sure fulfilment of divine decrees. They present the strange anomaly of a people often afflicted and wasted away, but never consumed; of a people who, in the later centuries, have entirely lost their nationality, but not their identity. In their conquest by the Romans, and especially in their last war and the final destruction of their capital city, we find the distinct fulfilment of that prophetic prediction of Moses in Deut. 28th chapter, from the 49th to 57th verses. It is too lengthy to take up the time to read. The whole chapter is worthy of frequent and careful perusal. After a desolating war of several years, in which all their fortified cities were taken except Jerusalem, that was finally surrounded by the Roman armies under Titus, and one of the most memorable and destructive sieges recorded in history took place. The time of this occurrence was an anomaly in the history of Israel. The Lord had promised their fathers that as long as they should be obedient, their enemies should have no power to injure them during their annual feasts.

The fact that the Roman armies surrounded the city during the feast of unleavened bread, and imprisoned within its walls about a million of people who had gathered to that feast from the surrounding countries, and that no similar occurrence had transpired during a history of some 1,500 years, is conclusive evidence of their apostacy and wickedness, and that God had entirely forsaken them. I must refer you to Josephus for a reliable history of the last war of the Jews. I have not time to dwell on it long. Pestilence and famine added their horrors to the slaughter of the sword. During the siege many thousands of dead were thrown over the wall. The defenders of the city plundered the citizens without regard to sex or condition. They entered the house of a lady of rank and former influence, and demanded food. She took them into another room to a table, raised a cloth and showed them the body of her infant child partly consumed, and assured them that she had reserved that for them. Hardened as they were they were shocked, and retired. The circumstance became known in the Roman camp and created some excitement among the soldiers. Probably the previous condition of the woman gave the circumstance notoriety. Doubtless there were numerous instances of eating human flesh during the terrible seige.

After the city was taken many of the houses were filled with the dead; the soldiers slaughtered until they were weary; they then began to slay only the aged and infirm, and reserved those of a suitable age to be useful to them. Of these they drove together a large number and confined them within a portion of the walls of the pemple, where 11,000 perished for want of food. Some of the tallest and most beautiful of the young men were reserved to grace the conqueror's triumph, while the rest of the multitude over 17 years of age were sent to the Egyptian mines. A great number were sent into the provinces as presents to be destroyed in the theatres for the amusement of the multitude. Those under 17 years of age were sold for slaves. Titus also had 2,500 sacrificed to commemorate the birthday of one of his brothers. The whole number carried captive during this war is estimated at 97,000, the number who perished in the siege of Jerusalem 1,100,000—a vast number of people to perish in the siege of one city.

The time had now come when Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled. For 18 long centuries they have been a hiss and a by-word among all nations. They have been proscribed, outlawed, plundered and driven. In many nations they have been crowded together in close, unhealthy quarters in the large cities and then denied the common privileges of citizens. Under the difficulties of their situation the most available wealth they could possess has been gold and silver, hence the force of circumstances, for generations, has traditioned them to make the accumulation of money the great purpose of life.

We should cease pointing the finger of scorn at the Jew. He is what circumstances have made him. The day of hope long waited for is at last dawning on Israel. England was the first among the nations of Europe to place the Jews on an equality with other citizens, which was done by an Act of Parliament, I think, in 1847, the year that the Pioneers first entered Salt Lake Valley. When the time comes for the Jews to gather to the land of their fathers, probably their financial influence will be a mighty power to assist their gathering.

Time has permitted me to give you only the merest sketch of a very important subject. If you think I have erred in any of my views, the same sources of information are open to you as to me, and if this lecture in anyway tends to stimulate you to study and research, I am amply rewarded for my labor.

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NOTICE

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In the matter of the Estate of Ann Longstroth, deceased.

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ALL PERSONS having claims against the said deceased, are hereby required to exhibit them, with the necessary vouchers, within ten months after the first publication of this notice, to me the undersigned, at my residence in the 14th Ward, Salt Lake City.

JOS. S. RICHARDS,
Administrator of said estate.

March 13th, 1878. d & w

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