

# **A Study Of The Kingdom**



**By  
Elder Edward Byrd**

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Some Practical Aspects of Kingdom Truth

- A. Not many people think for themselves. This principle is acknowledged by salesmen whose very livelihood is based on the premise that since people do not know what they want or is good for them the salesman can lead him to think a certain way (for the salesman's advantage) while the individual thinks he is being candid and wise.
- B. Most of us do need help. If we receive our help from one whose goal is to exploit us then we are brought to ruin. Most of us are naturally "religious" but, not able to think for ourselves, we leave it to "the preacher" or our parents or some friend to lead us into the right way. But men who have come to think for themselves (in some measure) will rebel and reject "religion" or some brand of religion, not because they have investigated for themselves but because they know this principle of man's being "led around by the nose" and a victim of every huckster, so they refuse to be "shoved around." Sales people, certain so-called scientists and men of letters (novelists and other writers and teachers), and others illustrate this type of rebellion.
- C. Ministers, learning this principle, but not knowing the Truth, often proceed on the premise of "selling themselves" so that men will be willing to allow them to lead them. One preacher was heard to say, "People don't have any sense but they do have souls, so you must tell them what is good for them." While there is some truth in this (there is in all deception) it is dangerous to operate on the wrong assumption that men are to follow other men. Men ought to follow Christ.
- D. If one is to "trust in the Lord with ALL (his) heart; and lean not to (his) own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5), then surely it is not safe to lean to the understanding of some other man.

- E. I do not say this to disparage any man; in fact, I discourage your following me. But I would encourage you to read for yourself and to think for yourself. No man can answer for you in the judgment or at the judgment seat of Christ, only Christ the God-Man. Otherwise, you must answer for yourself.

### **What Does All This Have To Do With The Kingdom?**

- A. All teachings of the Word are inter-dependent. One doctrine hinges on every other in such a manner as to afford confirmation of Truth and rejection of error. The whole Word is harmonious and any doctrine, which has to be bolstered with much logic and explained in the face of plain Scripture, is "suspect" to say the least. This is not to say that a matter needs to be stated many times, or over and over, in the Bible to be true. Not many places explain to us HOW God became the Father of the Man born of the virgin, but this does not reflect on this essential teaching. On the other hand, that doctrine which makes Jesus a man like us – a sinner – or a "creature" is up against passage after passage, which has to be "explained away" in order for the doctrine to stand.
- B. Thus do we see that a fundamental teaching, essential to faith, is constantly met, supporting other principles, for apart from the incarnation there is no efficacy in His life or death and the resurrection is a fiction. Just about every teaching of the Bible hangs upon this one.
- C. Those who renounce the Deity of Christ must also renounce the authority of the Bible ("it just CONTAINS the Word of God but also has the notions of fallible men," they say). This leads to the exaltation of men, for without an authoritative Bible we must lean on some other authority. Such men deny the Genesis account of creation, miracles, the flood, Joshua's miracle in the valley of Ajalon, and even the resurrection.

### **The Kingdom – A Fundamental Truth**

- A. The teaching of the kingdom is just such a fundamental teaching. Because men have erred on this theme they are

possessed of a false hope, believing that "heaven holds all" without knowing what "heaven" means. Since men are "saved by hope" (Romans 8:24) in some sense they may entirely miss this "salvation." The brightest prospect for most professing believers is "just to get into the gate of heaven."

- B. Even the majority of those who talk of "rewards" and "ruling and reigning" with Christ have limited this to 1,000 years on the earth after which all men shall be "in the Bride" and no distinctions will remain. This is contrary to the Scriptures. "Of His kingdom there shall be no end," (Luke 1:33) and "the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever" (Daniel 7:18).
- C. Protestants and most Baptists have adopted the Catholic thinking in modified form on the Kingdom. (This is true of many other doctrines also.) The Catholic idea is that the church universal is the kingdom and it alone has the right to rule the earth and this authority is resident in the Papal See. Missionary Baptists, for the most part, believe that the kingdom is made up of all true churches so that "in kingdom activities the church is the unit and only unit that the churches have, and should exercise equal authority."
- D. Not only does this position assume that there is an "active" kingdom now but it has an authority to be wielded by men. This allows them to use their "liberty of conscience" to create agencies and institutions not mentioned in the Scriptures for the "advancement of the kingdom." It overlooks the Scriptural statement that Christ shall take over the "kingdom of this world" for Himself and shall set up His own kingdom when He returns to earth, doing so by His own power and authority.
- E. Further this reasoning that there is an active kingdom now demands that the kingdom be redefined, so that it is not the righteous rule of God over all the earth from David's throne, but is some spiritual force in the heart. It is not over the nations but is spiritual. To be sure, the kingdom is spiritual when it comes. And it does NOW wield its power

in men's hearts. What true prospect of joy and gladness, of peace and righteousness does not influence the heart! It IS "righteousness, peace and, joy IN THE HOLY GHOST" but that does not say that He has set up His kingdom in men's hearts and is ruling from some throne in heaven. His providences surely are over all the earth but His authority is not now recognized.

- F. The kingdom is not now set up. Its King is not on David's throne but in exile, as it were. The "children (heirs) of the kingdom" have not come to their inheritance, though the prospect of that inheritance as a "blessed hope" wields a mighty saving influence in their lives. All the references to persevering, continuing steadfast in faith, not falling away or drawing back, but walking by faith begin to make sense in view of the age to come and the ages to come.
- G. The Holy Spirit is simply "an earnest of our inheritance UNTIL the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:13,14). Not yet has the spirit been poured on "all flesh". Not even on all Israel has He come as yet (Zechariah 12:10), so they have not yet been in bitterness for the Firstborn. The wilderness is not yet a fruitful field, for we only have an earnest of the Spirit and not the final outpouring (Isaiah 32:15). Though the event of Pentecost "fulfilled" (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21), the "blood and fire and vapor of smoke" surely were not in evidence as they will be when He comes "in flaming fire taking vengeance." The sun has not been turned into blood, because "that great and notable day of the Lord" has not yet come.
- H. If one does not understand the Bible teaching of the kingdom he is likely to have only the foggiest notions about the Bride (possibly a selfish and limited idea), the marriage, the marriage feast, the judgment, the judgment seat of Christ, priesthood, covenants, glorification, adoption, election, sanctification, calling, etc.
- I. Even the law will not hold its rightful meaning unless one understands how the kingdom is the subject of "covenant, established (enacted as law) better promises."

- J. No false notion of "taking the world for Christ," or saving the world or converting the world could exist. True, many have some idea of truth on these themes, but had the basic kingdom teaching been discerned the truth would have been self-evident.
- K. Numerous false religions would never have arisen had this truth been understood. And many false teachings would be forestalled. Miracles, for instance, would be left where God put them and men would not be deceived and deceiving with this means.
- L. There is no teaching which better illustrates the unity of the Old and New Testaments. There is one purpose throughout. It is the relegating of the Old Testament, with the possible exception of the Psalms, to a minor place of story and history, which largely explains the false conceptions of the kingdom. And this neglect of the O.T. leaves a tremendous void in knowledge of prophecy.
- M. The kingdom makes eschatology of special significance. As we approach the end of the age, now very close, this subject of the study of "last things" becomes the primary subject of Christian teaching.
- N. No real understanding of the place of the natural seed of Abraham, the contrast with Gentiles, the cutting off of the tame olive branches and the grafting in of the wild, can be understood properly. Nearly all believers are in some darkness, if not thick darkness, about the place the Gentile holds in God's plan. "Times of the Gentiles" and "fullness of the Gentiles" means little. The "fullness" of Israel (Romans 11:12) means less. It is a "mystery" (Romans 11:25).
- O. This is a lifetime study. Suggestions here we hope, will prod you to study and pray for discernment of this most important subject.



## CHAPTER TWO

### The Revelation of the Kingdom

- A. By "The Revelation of the Kingdom" we mean that revealing of the truth of it in the Word, not its manifesting at the Return of Christ, though that last shall, indeed, be a revelation. Like much in the Scriptures, which is prophetic, pertaining to things "not seen as yet," the unfolding of this truth is necessarily and intentionally somewhat obscure. This may seem at first out of harmony with the nature of God who evidently "would have all men to be saved AND TO COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH." But it must be to man's advantage, if it is true that He is sometimes deliberately obscure, or God would not use that method.
- B. Not all of God's will was revealed at one time, not all to one individual. Times and places and persons vary. Some things were kept "secret" for many years (of Ephesians 3:5). The full identity of the Christ was withheld from some men for some time (Matthew 16:20, et al). "The disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables.... Therefore speak I unto them in parables; because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (Matthew 13:10,13). These verses and the context make it evident that all truth is not for all men. "Flesh and blood" does not "reveal" what only the "Father" reveals (Matthew 16:17). It was given to the disciples to know, but to the multitudes it was not given.
- C. Is God a Respector of Persons? No! Enough is revealed, clearly revealed, for any man to be saved - "without excuse" (Romans 1:20). But to come to "the knowledge of the truth" requires further discernment. This discernment comes through the Spirit to the man who possesses that Spirit dwelling in the position where He does His office-work. This is very obviously in the church during this age (Acts 2:38). Having the "mind of Christ" is not a blessing indiscriminately given. A "carnal mind" cannot and the "natural man" cannot receive the things of the Spirit of

God. It is not that God has meant to respect some men above others.

- D. If it seem that God has not dealt fairly with those "to whom it is given" to know, let it be pointed out that it is very mercy which would obscure from one who would misuse it information which would be dangerous for him to know. Since a man is to be judged according to "the light he has" it is better for some not to have that light. The hardness of Pharisees' hearts indicated that they would crucify the King as they had rejected the Savior and His forerunner. They had all the evidence they needed and any further understanding would only compound their guilt.

### **The Kingdom – A Mystery**

- A. There are several subjects, that have the nature of a "mystery," and the kingdom is particularly described by this word. A "mystery" denotes something quite beyond the understanding of the natural mind, and is revealed only to such as have the mind and Spirit of God. See Romans 16:25 ; 1 Corinthians 2:7,10. Vain man always feels he is on the "inside" when it comes to "understanding all mysteries and all knowledge," of course. None of us is immune to such vanity. We may have the wrong "spirit" when we are claiming to have discernment. Thus, we must "try the spirits" and be ever mindful of the dangers. The written revelation must be carefully followed and the fruits of the Spirit must be found in the life.
- B. The element of "mystery" continues to shroud the understanding regarding the kingdom right through to the time of its setting up (Revelation 10:6,7).
- C. But why should God not make it perfectly plain in simple language? Evidently, the depraved nature of man, demonstrated in his self-seeking pursuits, would have rejected a plainer revelation as "too simple" or beneath his dignity (as some do reject an earthly kingdom as "too Jewish" or too low in its ideals), or he would have made such information the basis of persecution or intolerance, as some claim an exclusiveness regarding it, limiting it to 144,000, etc. If the nature of the kingdom had been

clearly revealed the hatred of earthly kingdoms toward it would have made it next to impossible to preach the truth of it, so the work of gathering out the elect would have been much imperiled.

- D. Again, the language of symbol and prophecy sufficiently veils, yet reveals the truth as to preserve man's freedom to make his decisions. Had more evidence been given the Pharisees in Christ's day it is possible that they would have been "convinced against their wills" and thus their freedom destroyed. It is especially important that the time of the kingdom be obscure if men and nations are to be free in the time of the end of this age.
- E. Even the expectation of the faithful is nourished by the indefiniteness of the time of the coming and establishment of the kingdom.
- F. Israel is not to be restored. Perhaps the nations do not know why they so hate Israel but anti-semitism is a fact of history and a fact in our day. The Jew has made himself hateful in many respects, by his arrogance, his conceit in believing that he is God's chosen. A false Christianity feels a resentment toward this people growing out of the reputation which the Pharisees, scribes, and Sadducees have made for them during Christ's day. God has said He would make their name a byword among the nations (Deuteronomy 28:37; 1 Kings 9:7; Psalms 44:14). Besides these factors there is their own "apartness" wherever they are to be found, which is just about everywhere.
- G. But whatever the reasons, the nations are against them and would destroy them if they could. "They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more a remembrance. For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee." (Psalms 83:3-5). Perhaps these words apply to circumstances in Israel's past, so far as the Psalmist was aware, but there is no doubt that it is prophetic. These so-called imprecatory psalms envision God's ultimately having

the victory in a kingdom of righteousness and carrying out his covenant purpose for His people Israel.

- H. Thus it is necessary that a certain degree of obscurity surround the manner of their reestablishment as a nation and the setting up of His kingdom. Even with this obscurity there shall be a "confederacy" mustered against the Lord and His armies in that day. More bloodshed is avoided this way.

### **Israel Blinded**

- A. Doubtless if that part of the nation which is returned to Israel knew how bloody that land shall be in that day it might have something to do with their return there. Zechariah gives much of this information but the Jew "knows it not." But the Jew must be there. The anger of the nations is directed toward them there and thus is afforded the occasion of the last great world conflict.
- B. Whatever we make of the veiling of the Truth as God has given it, we know that it is His wisdom that has adopted the method employed to tell us of these things. Some of us may feel we can improve upon the wording of the Gospel, its promises and conditions of acceptance.
- C. But I doubt not that our very efforts in this direction have raised up a superficial band of disciples. Surely a "false hope" has been preached to these disciples, which has borne its fruit in the weaklings of our day. May we learn God's wisdom in all things.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Kingdom of Heaven

- A. Much confusion has derived from a strained distinction which men have made between the expression "kingdom of God" and the expression "kingdom of heaven" (literally the kingdom of the heavens). "Kingdom of God" is used uniformly in Mark, Luke and John. Matthew alone uses "kingdom of heaven" (some 33 times) but he also uses "kingdom of God" (four times: Matthew 12:28; Matthew 19:24; Matthew 21:31, 43. One other use, Matthew 6:33, is "his kingdom" in the Greek text.)
- B. If the reader has the spiritual concern that he should have he won't be satisfied until he has made a comparison of the use of these two expressions in all of their occurrences. That they are the same may be shown by only a few usages: Matthew announces in 4:17 that the beginning of Jesus' ministry declared "the kingdom of heaven" was near. But Mark says the same thing of "the kingdom of God" (Mark 1:15). The apostles offered the "kingdom of heaven" to Israel in Matthew 10:6,7, but in Luke 9:2 they offer the kingdom of God. The law of the future earthly kingdom is announced in Matthew (5:3) to be the law of "the kingdom of heaven." Does Luke (in Luke 6:20) mean some other, for he says "kingdom of God"?
- C. Three gospels talk of "the mystery of the kingdom" but one says the mystery is of "the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 13:11) while two say it is of "the kingdom of God" (Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10). Mark tells us that the "gospel" must first be preached to all nations, but Matthew calls it "the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 24:14). Must a distinction be made here? And, if the two expressions are not the same in sense, how do we account for the four times Matthew uses "kingdom of God"? May we take one passage to illustrate: Matthew quotes Jesus as saying, "Verily, I say unto you, it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye;

than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God?" (confer Mark 10:24,25; Luke 18:24,25). Is it not obvious that the use of both expressions in this single passage makes these two have the same sense.

- D. Those who differentiate either make the "universal" (?) church "the kingdom of heaven" or (as most Missionary Baptists) they say the churches in the aggregate comprise this kingdom of heaven. Is it hard to get into one of these churches? And do they themselves not teach that the "kingdom of heaven" (churches) have "tares" in them. Thus they admit that a lost man can get into the kingdom of heaven. Then is it hard? "With men this is impossible," the Bible says, but false doctrine says it is easy to get into the kingdom of heaven (thinking this means the churches). The truth of the matter is that being in the kingdom is the same as being saved (Matthew 19:25) in the full sense, or having eternal life. With God this is possible, even with a rich man involved, but with men it is not possible.
- E. Entrance into eternal life (being saved in the full sense) is future, and so is entrance into the kingdom, as this lesson sets forth. A similar problem relative to ease of entering the kingdom is seen in Matthew 18:3,4 where it is stated that one must become as a little child. Is this necessary to get into a church?
- F. "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).
- G. Are these "tares" who get in easily? It rather seems that we must understand that getting into the kingdom of heaven is something most difficult – impossible to men as mere men – accomplished only by the power of God.

### **Two Expressions**

- A. Why are two separate expressions used? Students realize the almost superstitious feeling the Jews had about using God's name. Even when copying the Scriptures, we are told, the copyist would stop with each occurrence of God's name, clean his pen (or get a fresh one), write the name,

clean the pen again, and then proceed. Through the years there was gradually built up a substitute terminology for ordinary speech, some of which is still evident today. The prodigal son prayed, or resolved to say to his father, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in they sight" (Luke 15:21). He had sinned against God, but he said "heaven." Jesus asked the Jews, "The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven or from men?"

- B. Matthew is particularly designed for Jewish ears. Some even suppose it was originally given in Aramaic, the form of the Jewish language being spoken at the time. Thus would Jesus and the others adapt their language to Jewish thought, yet preserving the Truth. This explains the use of "kingdom of heaven" in Matthew only, while the expression is the same in sense as "kingdom of God" in other places. The kingdom is God's; it is also heaven's rule over earth.
- C. The "kingdom of heaven" was near or "at hand" and so was "the kingdom of God" (Matthew 3:2; Mark 1:15). Daniel had prophesied this kingdom (Daniel 2:42-44) be set up by "the God of heaven" and the whole tenor of the prophets was to expect such a kingdom. John did not explain his language, but allowed his hearers to understand him in the light of their understanding of Daniel. Jesus followed with no other explanation.
- D. The people expected the kingdom of Messiah, the Davidic kingdom. This was the one the angel had mentioned in the annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:30-33). It was this kingdom which men had in mind and sought to enter, even with violence (Matthew 11:12) or pressure (Luke 16:16). It was near ("at hand") in that the King Himself was there and men "would come and take him by force, to make him a king" (John 6:15). But He could not accept the acclamations of those who had not heard the command to repent. Jews who thought they were entitled to the promised kingdom because they were seed of Abraham must learn that a changed heart and "the works of Abraham" in their lives were essential to entrance (confer John 8:33-39 and Matthew 3:9).

- E. Finally, their rejection of Him meant the rejection of the kingdom too, so Jesus warned that the kingdom which was theirs by covenant should be taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth kingdom fruits or works of Abraham (Matthew 21:43). The nation in question is the "holy nation" mentioned in 1 Peter 2:9, the "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). This "rejection" of the kingdom has left a "gap" or another delay – a time or season in God's own power (Acts 1:6,7) – during which we may labor to "take out a people" for His name (Acts 15:14-17). Because the King has gone the kingdom is not "at hand" in the sense it then was and will not be again until the very end of the age. "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is NIGH AT HAND" (Luke 21:31).
- F. The nearness of the kingdom during the earthly ministry of Christ is the reason for the miracles then wrought (Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20). Note how the preaching of the kingdom was associated with miracles (Matthew 10:7,8). The Jews sought signs (1 Corinthians 1:22) and so they should, for the prophets had prepared them to expect just such miracles when the kingdom should come (Isaiah 32:3,4, 15; Isaiah 35:5,6; Isaiah 61:1, et al.).
- G. But with all this "key of knowledge" which they had for entering the kingdom they refused to go in and hindered those who would go in, that is "the entering ones" (Luke 11:52; Matthew 23:13). This evidently means that they did not permit ("suffer") the entering ones to go in, inasmuch as they rejected the King and His kingdom.

### **The Kingdom Present**

- A. But someone wants to know about all those passages that speak of the kingdom as present, that is, existing in present time. First, may it be said that God purposed a kingdom, even prepared a kingdom, "from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). No one claims that it was in operation then as it is to be after Christ returns to reign.
- B. Second, what God has purposed is often set before us as present fact, not because God has brought it to pass but



because He most certainly will. Thus do the prophets speak of future events as present fact or past happening. This assures us with the tone of finality it involves and strengthens our faith that it will certainly come to pass. God has not left us to guess that He does this, for He says through Paul (Romans 4:17) that He "calleteth those things which be not as though they were."

- C. The illustration given is His statement that He had made Abraham the father of a multitude of nations (Genesis 17:5) and this at a time before Isaac, the progenitor of those nations, was even born. By faith we claim God's promises and thus accept what is future as present fact. This may be illustrated in the statement that declares that we are glorified (Romans 8:30). Well, we are NOT glorified in experience, but faith accepts God's statement that we ARE. This same kind of language is spoken of nearly every element in our salvation, so that it all is declared as past, some of it from the foundation of the world (as our election), yet we "wait for it" (salvation) "with patience," and thus are "saved by hope" (Romans 8:24,25). Thus does faith accept promises as reality because God does not fail. In this sense the kingdom IS ours; we have a kingdom. In truth we have not entered it, for this is future (2 Peter 1:11).
- D. Third, some of the passages which are used to prove a "present existing kingdom" merely refer to the presence of that which is the supreme representation of the kingdom, as that the "kingdom of God is come upon you" or "the kingdom of heaven is come unto you" by virtue of the miracles. The "powers of the age to come" were then present and experienced. He who is the King was there. Now that He is not here, neither are those powers manifested in the same way (overt miracles), though through the Spirit much of kingdom power is evident in the church (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:20).
- E. A false premise can be responsible for any number of wrong ideas without our being aware of its influence. For example: Many contend that the kingdom is here now because the kingdom was preached, seed of the kingdom

were sown, or heirs of the kingdom were present. This overlooks that one can preach a kingdom TO COME, sow the seed (i.e., word Matthew 13:19) in the world before there is a harvest, or produce "children of the kingdom" without their being in the kingdom (Matthew 13:38). Shining forth "in the kingdom" is not mentioned as a fact and does not come until the reaping, when the world has become the Lord's kingdom (which before was the kingdoms of this world, Revelation 11:15) and the reapers (the angels) have gathered out of it the things which offend (Matthew 13:41-43).

- F. Another example: because one must be born again to enter or see the kingdom some teach that one is "born into the kingdom." (Cf. John 3:1-6). The record does not say that one is born into it, but that the new birth is a prerequisite to entrance.
- G. May we then note some conclusions:
- 1) The "kingdom of heaven" and the "kingdom of God" are the same.
  - 2) This kingdom is "prepared from the foundation of the world" but is not entered until the end of the age.
  - 3) The kingdom is manifested NOW in the following ways:
  - 4) The King has come manifesting kingdom powers – powers of the age to come.
  - 5) The kingdom is now being preached; the gospel of the kingdom is now being declared.
  - 6) The heirs or children of the kingdom are now present as an evidence of the sowing of the seed (word) of the kingdom, (Luke 12:32).
- H. As the goal of God's purpose the kingdom has been "prepared from the foundation of the world," so that by faith we may claim the kingdom as ours now, claim to receive it now (Hebrews 12:28), and reckon that we are "translated into it" now (Colossians 1:13).

- I. We accept this statement in the same way that we reckon we are now "dead" (Romans 6:11) and "alive from the dead" (Romans 6:13). We believe that we are "delivered from the power of darkness" (Colossians 1:13) but we do not press this language to mean that we are already out of the reach of temptation. Just as Colossians 1:12 puts it, we have been "made meet (fit) to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," but we have not inherited yet, being only heirs. Still we have God's "earnest" of our inheritance. (Ephesians 1:12-14).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Kingdom Now?

- A. God Himself is the central theme of the Bible and His revelation of Himself in Christ is a poignant example of the handling of this theme. But that He may be revealed more clearly He shows His purpose in creation. His goal is to exercise His righteous will on earth (among men – in flesh bodies) as it is done in heaven. This has never been accomplished yet. The Fall of man proved the unfitness of flesh to perform this task of doing God's will completely apart from accepted grace. But the coming of the Second Adam proves that His will CAN be done in flesh.
- B. It is our opinion that when the kingdom comes, when the King sits on His throne on Mt. Zion, and he finally subdues all His enemies, the last being death – which subduing He takes a Thousand Years to finish – that then men will demonstrate or will have demonstrated in their natural bodies that it is possible by the grace of God for men in the flesh to live as God would have them to. See Galatians 2:20 for a comment on this.
- C. None of us is sinless now and the potential to sin is in all born of Adam. Doubtless this potential will still be there in the children born in the Millennium. But the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth and the abounding grace of God shall make it possible for God to prove that men can avail themselves of what it takes to please Him while living in natural bodies on the earth. For this we pray, "Thy kingdom come."

### Meanwhile, the Kingdom Has Not Come

- A. Good brethren in whom I have much confidence and whose judgment I respect and hold in esteem do not agree with me in this statement. They understand that the outward or physical manifestation of the kingdom has not come (in this we agree), but they understand that one phase of the kingdom has come and that men enter it while living in this body. This entering, though, they seem

to consider a spiritual thing.

- B. There is an element of truth in their conclusions but, I feel, somewhat misapplied. It is not my desire to strive with anyone about this, for I feel their effort is to say the same thing I am saying, but they are not allowing for certain statements of Scripture to have their full weight. On the other hand, they feel that passages they use to sustain their position are being overlooked or minimized in my presentations.
- C. We want to consider a few of these passages and their proper application: John (Matthew 3:2), Jesus (Matthew 4:17) and the apostles (Matthew 10:7) all preached the kingdom "at hand." This means "near," so it could be claimed by reaching out for it. This is not literal, of course, but by faith. Jesus came to offer Himself to Israel as King (as prophesied). Neither John, Jesus, nor the disciples explained the kingdom to be any other than that prophesied, that is, a literal kingdom which should break all earthly kingdoms in pieces, NOT be left to others, and would stand forever (Daniel 2:44).
- D. It is objected that Jesus did not "intend" to set up the kingdom; else He failed in what He came to do. We rather suggest He "intended" to offer Himself to Israel as the prophesied Messiah of covenant, the very King who should literally rule. What Israel did with Him determined whether they should have the kingdom then. He was a literal king and represented the prophesied kingdom in the same way that Nebuchadnezzar represented the kingdom of Babylon (Daniel 2:38).
- E. Thus the kingdom (in the person of its rightful King) was "near" - "in the midst" (Luke 17:20), "within" - in the nation of Israel. It was not "in the heart" of these Pharisees.

### **Kingdom Miracles**

- A. His casting out demons by the finger of God (Luke 11:20; Matthew 12:28) was evidence that the kingdom "is come" "unto" or "upon" them. The tense of the verb "is come" in

both passages is Aorist and is timeless (Robertson's Word Pictures). I understand it to mean that the kingdom, as represented in the Person of its King was actually there present, at hand, to be received.

- B. The miracles, the teaching, the Person of the King, all stirred the hopes of those in Israel that they would soon be relieved of the Roman yoke, so as "the kingdom of heaven (was) preached" "every man pressed into it" (Luke 16:16) and "the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12). What does this mean? I think it means that their natural desires for the ideal government, which the kingdom promised, constrained them to make every effort to become identified with the King and even to "take Him by force to make Him a king" (John 6:15).
- C. But Jesus knew that in their hearts they were not ready for the kingdom. They only saw the miracles, ate the loaves and fishes, and were filled (John 6:26) and they wanted this to continue. It is my opinion that in betraying the Lord, Judas Iscariot hoped to get Jesus to set up the kingdom and grant the material relief it promised. I have no proof for this opinion, but His committing suicide suggests that his disappointment and the attendant guilt were more than he could stand.
- D. Did men actually "press into" the kingdom? I think not. The lawyers (scribes) had the "key of knowledge," (Luke 11:52), that is, they knew what the kingdom was to be like and possibly knew that the conditions of heart must be met before men could enter it.
- E. Surely they knew the evidences identifying the Messiah from the prophetic Scriptures. But these did not go in themselves but they "shut up the kingdom" so that "them that are entering" they "did not suffer to go in" (Matthew 23:13). This says they did not permit these "entering ones" to go in. I suggest it means that though some did meet the conditions of repentance and faith as John had preached they were hindered from entering the kingdom because the rejection of the King by the nation (in its representative leaders) prevented His setting it up at that time.

**Luke 19:11-27**

- A. Note just here how our Lord would correct the disciples' thinking that He would then set up the kingdom: He spoke a parable because they were near Jerusalem (Luke 19:11 – where the throne would be set) and because they thought the kingdom should immediately appear.
- B. The parable suggests that the nobleman (Christ) should leave for a time (his kingdom is not to be left to other people, Daniel 2:44) and go to a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return (Luke 19:12). While He is gone His servants are to "occupy" (do business). He left His House (i.e., church Mark 13:34) but not His kingdom.
- C. When He returned, "having received the kingdom," (v. 15) He reckoned with all those servants and "his citizens" (Jews especially) who hated Him and would not allow Him to "reign over" them (v. 14) were slain as enemies (v. 27).
- D. Isolated statements seem to suggest that the faithful have been "delivered from the power of darkness" (for example) "and translated into the kingdom" (Colossians 1:13). Language like this affords great consolation and assurance for the "children of the kingdom." God says that certain "foreknown" are "glorified" (Romans 8:30) but none of us accept this to be literally true NOW. But it IS true in God's purpose. We are not actually delivered from the power of darkness, for it still reaches and hurts us (in a sense), but by faith we reckon ourselves no longer to be its victims and claim the complete victory. We live NOW as though it were THEN – when the kingdom for which we still pray (Matthew 6:10) shall come. Though entrance into the kingdom is future (2 Peter 1:11) after "much tribulation" (Acts 14:22) we can NOW enjoy kingdom blessings. This is possible because of two things:
1. It is our blessed hope affording comfort and incentive to wait with patience (Romans 8:24,25; Titus 2:13);
  2. We have received God's "earnest (the Holy Spirit) of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased

possession" (Ephesians 1:13,14; 2 Corinthians 1:22).

- E. We have not inherited the kingdom yet but we are the children (heirs) of the kingdom. By this "earnest" of the Spirit we enjoy the kingdom NOW. This "promise of the Father" is to be fully realized when the King returns and pours out His Spirit on all flesh (Zechariah 12:10; Joel 2:28,29;
- F. Isaiah 32:15) presently affords us who are in the church upon which the Spirit came on Pentecost (Acts 2) the "righteousness, peace, and joy" of the kingdom (Romans 14:17) and also some of the "power" of the age to come (1 Corinthians 4:20; cf. Hebrews 6:5). This blessing, though, is only afforded the "holy nation" (church) composed of the children of the kingdom (1 Peter 2:9).

#### **Kingdom – A Mystery**

- A. It is the purpose underlying all the parables to provide the church "to whom it is given to know the secrets concerning the kingdom" with understanding of her present relationship to that kingdom. Each one allows for a delay – till the harvest, till the tree grows, till the leaven works. All require a patient waiting. The gathering out of the kingdom of the tares poses a problem for some. Thinking the kingdom is composed of true churches in the aggregate (or institutionally) they take the tares to refer to false professors who got into the church (cf. Matthew 13:41). But it was not the "church" they were in, it was the "field" – the world, (Matthew 13:38.) At that time when the angels reap the "kingdoms of this world" have become our Lord's" (Revelation 11:15) and He has "reigned" (Greek ingressive aorist, "begun to reign", v. 17). The kingdom has (then) come (Revelation 12:10).
- B. When John spoke of being our "brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:9), I understand him simply to be setting forth his identity and relationship to the church. He was not an angel from heaven nor some superior priest or potentate, but he is our companion (fellow, co-partner) in whatever happens to be our lot at the moment.



- C. The hope expressed in v. 6 (that God has made us a kingdom) is the thing in view. The present tense usage to confirm our faith and encourage us is found throughout the Scriptures. See Hebrews 12:28. The best commentary on Revelation 1:9 is Romans 8:17 and 2 Timothy 2:12.

### **Witness Unto All Nations**

- A. The kingdom should be preached, by all means, even today. In fact it must be preached to all nations as a witness (Matthew 24:14). But it has not been preached as "at hand" since the ministry of Christ (about Matthew 11) and it will not be "at hand" again until the tribulation period (Luke 21:31).
- B. The kingdom did come and was at hand in the Person of the King, but He was rejected and now gone to the "far country." He will be back as King. So we pray for the kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

*"There remaineth therefore a rest (Sabbath – kingdom) to the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9).*

*"Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:11).*

*"Fear not, little flock (church); for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).*

- D. He hasn't done it yet but He will. We may claim it now by faith – and we should – for it belongs to "a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43). The disciples wondered if Jesus would "restore the kingdom to Israel" when He arose from the dead (Acts 1:6) and His answer lets us know that the time was yet future.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **The Kingdom Is Not Here Yet**

- A. Some events in history and in our own lives demand great soul-searching. A whole nation may assess its conscience in the light of such events. Such is the tragic death of John F. Kennedy. This event gives me occasion to point out some practical things that I sincerely believe about this great subject, though I realize they may be controversial.
- B. Just what is the motivation for righteousness in an individual life? One may quickly answer: Love! But how can we instill this motive? In the early days of our nation there appear many examples of strong preaching on judgment. Justice, liberty and peace were themes that had come to have real meaning to some of the "founding Fathers," as they knew what such terms mean. They had suffered under the hand of the oppressor. Life on earth came to mean less than liberty and Truth. This created a disposition to contend for the rights of men. Men were willing to lay down their lives for the cause of liberty.
- C. Now all these terms: judgment, justice, liberty, rights are terms which describe the KINGDOM OF GOD. Peace also fits this kingdom.

### **Strong Moral Principles**

- A. Men seemed to realize that they could not enjoy these benefits in a world of oppression, injustice, and selfishness. Strong moral principles of right came to be the order of men's lives. But these principles do not prevail in an anti-God state. Atheism, infidelity and unbelief are enemies of these moral objectives. Thus men were strongly religious and in a fundamentalist vein. The Bible was more than a symbol. We built a reputation on being a "Christian nation." This meant more than it does now: that we adhere to the Christian religion as against one of the pagan or heathen religions. It meant that our government and our whole lives were predicated on the principles of right laid down in the Word of God.

- B. This is no longer true. Enemies of God and man began to make great inroads upon our way of life and our national existence through what was called "German rationalism." Bible believers in this country branded it "modernism." It explained away the Bible and exalted the man. Where individual and personal liberty had been emphasized in the beginning as befitting the dignity of man, now these very terms were exploited to deny authority and exalt man above God. The "liberal" spirit in religion was born and quickly following it came the liberal spirit in national politics.
- C. Satan is ever the great deceiver, using imitation as a prime weapon. Thus he has turned "liberty" into "liberalism"; freedom into "freedom to do wrong." Let me go on record as saying that no man has a right to be wrong or do wrong. BEFORE GOD he may not. But men and governments may legalize wrong and when "democracy" creates the impression that men are their own law they are soon on the road to rebellion against God.
- D. True Christians stand for liberty of conscience. They believe that God alone has the right ultimately to avenge. So we do not press men to our views even if we believe they are in error. We use no courts of law to "have our way" or force "right." The "times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21), which is the coming of the King and kingdom will make things right. Until then we may expect oppression, tragedy, and rebellion.
- E. But let us carry this study a little further: Can we bring the kingdom in by preaching the Gospel. The post-millennial view of a few years back advocated such a gradual and complete improvement in the world as men learned to do right and were brought to trust God until the Kingdom would take full sway. These theorists, of course, believed that the kingdom was already here in germ or seed form. It was a spiritual thing which would gradually enlarge and fill the earth. Pre-millennialists, on the other hand, have preached that the world would get worse and worse, evil men would hold sway, and finally the Christ would have to

come and rescue His dominion out of great tribulation.

- F. As unfolding history has in many ways already vindicated the Pre-millennialists most of the "post"- theorists have vanished and a non-millennial preaching has sprung up. This rules out any idea of God's ruling on earth at all, except in the hearts of a few men, and "heaven" takes on larger and larger proportions.
- G. Now we see those who point to our technological progress (health, social betterment, education, automation) and would be these refute the "worse and worse" pre-millennialists.
- H. Then some sweeping malady shows up; the racial problem is a good example. Or such a tragedy as the assassination of a president awakes our national conscience and there is aroused a remorse, a resentfulness, and a defensiveness such as men would not admit under normal circumstances. Most of the news analysts seek to assess the blame.
- I. John Kennedy was hardly dead until men were "explaining" how such a thing could happen. Most blamed a philosophy – "rightism." Some blamed the location: Texas, Dallas, The South. A few even blamed the "blood redemptionists." I actually saw this in print. And it was not just a letter to the editor either. Nearly all blamed "the atmosphere of hate." Many self-righteous critics said, "We are all to blame," not being aware of what they were saying.
- J. There IS such a thing as national sin. And our nation IS guilty of such. But to pinpoint such acts as Oswald's and say "we are all guilty" is rather childish.

### **The Kingdom Is Not Here Yet!**

- A. But the national conscience was aroused and the cause of liberalism has received its greatest boost since Roosevelt cured the depression. Of course, some of us have never felt it was properly cured. But hunger sure does things with men's judgment (and morals) – just like shock and outrage. And a lot of people were hungry in 1933.
- B. It is a lot easier to justify theft when one's little children

don't have enough to eat or wear. So we reasoned that it was good to borrow (from ourselves) and help these poor. It IS Christian to feed the poor, you know. It is RIGHT. The END is good, so we will look at that "end" and wink at the means.

- C. "The end justifies the means" is now an accepted doctrine. Even if we do soak the rich and borrow from our grandchildren it is right because we are giving to the poor. The man retiring on social security has a clear conscience because he has "paid in" for years and it is "his money." One wonders why, since it is his, he wanted to mix it with somebody else's and send it to Washington.
- D. But I am only making observations on our modern role of playing Robin Hood.
- E. Seeing these things many Bible-believing preachers and other Christians have equated Christianity with a sort of rightist patriotism. In so doing they have besmirched the good name of fundamentalists. All these efforts to force "right" here and now are misguided. The kingdom is not here yet!
- F. The lines separating correct thinking on kingdom conditions are finely drawn. It is obvious that Christ and Christianity are in conflict with this "present evil world."
- G. The social order is out of harmony with the righteousness of God, as it will be established in His kingdom. He was out of harmony with the world when He was here. It is hard for some to see how He dealt with this situation.
- H. He presented Himself to men as King and was heralded by John as the Messiah, but they did not receive Him. He did not force Himself on them nor did He allow individual men or groups to "take Him by force and make Him King." He sought no governmental reforms and did not institute any ecumenical movements designed to reform the world.
- I. He did not attack any party of government directly, nor did he attempt to remove the human institutions that surely were in conflict with His nature and purpose. Slavery, for instance, was present, but neither Christ nor any of the

apostles sought to suppress it by law or social reform. Doubtless the race question existed but He did not advocate unified action to solve this problem.

### **Look Closely**

- A. It is at this point that the lines get particularly fine. There is a social gospel that advocates the solution of race, national, and social problems by the practice of the principles that Jesus practiced. It is true that these principles will solve these problems, but who agrees as to what these principles are? And do not most men overlook completely the Cross as containing the efficacy for human (individual and national and racial) redemption?
- B. To the social gospel preacher the Cross is only a symbol and represents the will to pay the supreme price in order to establish the complete good. They admit some super power in Christ which we may draw upon, but it is up to us to bear the cross, they say, and pay this price of being willing to die if we bring about social justice, overcome economic distress, eliminate the competitive spirit, relieve discrimination, and bring about lasting peace. It calls for a faith in a system (the kingdom principle of love and tolerance and justice), faith in one's fellowmen, etc.
- C. They say that if we would all believe in the workability of this system and would work at the job of making it work we could bring the kingdom in and it would come to pass.

### **The Bible Speaks**

- A. In contrast with this is the testimony of the Word. The "whole world lies in the power of the wicked one." Men are not inclined to do good but only evil. There is no "spark" of good, no starting incentive to make righteous principles work.
- B. The world is under condemnation and bound to perish. Then Christ personally, through His own worthiness and by His own power will set up His kingdom on earth. He comes in the midst of Great Tribulation and overthrows the power of the Enemy and forcibly subdues His enemies and brings in everlasting righteousness.

- C. Meantime, what shall we do? Shall we docilely accept injustice and evil as the proper order of the day? Shall we allow oppression and suffer in silence? This is not so simple as it sounds.
- D. Surely God's people are not sissies or weaklings. But as for defending their own rights they do not act like the world. They do not believe that in a world where their King has been exiled that they can claim "rights." They rather "suffer wrong." Their weapons are "not carnal, but spiritual." They do fight, but it is with Truth and love and righteousness. Their appeal is TO individual hearts and AGAINST sin, but they do not seek to overthrow by sword or gavel the governments and institutions of men. "Put up your sword, Peter." "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."
- E. The origin or nature of the Kingdom is not of the world, but it will ultimately be OVER the world. It is "of God" and "of heaven." And when it is established at the coming of the Lord in glory (Revelation 11:15; Revelation 12:10) there will be no power strong enough to resist it.
- F. So, now we preach the Truth and "every one that is of the truth heareth (His) voice" (John 18:37). "If a man love me, he will keep my words." (John 14:23). Believing that ultimate victory is His, the disciple "keeps His words" and waits for the "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." No earthly system or circumstance –not even a communistic state – can prevent God's "little children" from loving and honoring Him.
- G. We can pray for whatever kind of king or government we may have and show less concern for the present than for the Kingdom to come. The very pressures of the present serve to create yearning for the Kingdom. A present "liberty" and prosperity may dim the promises and hurt our faith.
- H. It is my sincere conviction that the Gospel of the Kingdom, properly taught and sincerely believed, produces utmost

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faith and hope in the heart and is most conducive to godliness of any message. A shallow "evangelistic" message may create a false hope. THE KINGDOM IS NOT HERE YET!



## CHAPTER SIX

### Subject of a Covenant

- A. A covenant is a "declaration of purpose." God has declared (and prepared) a kingdom "from the foundation of the earth" (Matthew 25:34). This is his promise. While this is a single purpose it has been revealed piecemeal until we have the complete revelation in Christ who seals the covenant with His own blood and makes it forever NEW and EVERLASTING.
- B. This everlasting covenant (Hebrews 13:20), or purpose, affords us that blood by which men are made perfect in every good work to do his will, and works in us that which is well pleasing in his sight.
- C. Simply stated, God's purpose has been to establish a kingdom of righteousness on earth wherein His will shall be done on earth and in human flesh as it is in heaven. The disciples' prayer that His "kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10) lets us know this.
- D. We have stated that God's covenant-purpose has been given in piecemeal fashion. This statement should come as no surprise to those who have observed the manner in which God revealed His covenant to Abraham; relaying only SOME of his promises to Abraham in the beginning, and then giving OTHERS at a later time.
- E. In truth, God began to make these promises (declarations of His purpose) in the Garden of Eden, *before* the fall. Men call this "the Edenic Covenant."
- F. After the fall other promises and purposed acts are recorded. This men call "the Adamic Covenant." To Noah God spoke more of His purpose – the Noahic Covenant. Then comes those several speakings to Abraham – the Abrahamic Covenant. Later came confirmations of these promises to Isaac, then to Jacob (but men do not call these declarations by new names).
- G. Later came the law – the Mosaic Covenant. This too was in

parts, not all at once. And I am convinced that the so-called Palestinian Covenant (Deuteronomy 29,30) is the same covenant by Moses, being that part given in Moab while the other was given in Horeb (Deuteronomy 29:1). There is a Levitical Covenant (Numbers 25:12,13) not often noticed, of which Christ is the messenger (Malachi 3:1-3). Then there is the Davidic Covenant and finally the New Covenant. These names are applied to segments of the same covenant (except the term "NEW" applies to the renewing or confirming of the whole).

- H. In each of these named segments or parts of God's stated purpose (promises) it is declared that the promises are everlasting; e.g., Noahic (Genesis 9:16), Abrahamic (Genesis 17:7, 13), Mosaic (Exodus 31:16; Leviticus 24:8), Davidic (2 Samuel 23:5), Levitical (Numbers 18:19), New (Isaiah 59:21; Jeremiah 32:40; Hebrews 13:20). What "everlasting" means will have to be understood in the light of what is realized in these provisions in the kingdom.

### **Covenants**

- A. As each of these declarations (specifically called a covenant, as well as those not so specified) makes provisions or looks to an everlasting kingdom of righteousness we shall see briefly:
1. **Noahic Covenant** This covenant provides for the preservation of a people (Genesis 6:18-21), but especially for the dominion or governing principle of man over men (Genesis 9:2-6, 10).
  2. **Abrahamic Covenant** Pertaining to a kingdom we find here provision for their "salvation" in a "Seed in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed," a land for inheritance (Genesis 12:7), kings (Genesis 17:6, 16; Genesis 35:11), resurrection (Genesis 15:1-15; 22:5; Romans 4:17-24; Hebrews 11:19; James 2:23), a capitol city (though details of this are only revealed later as to Abraham's knowing and trusting, Hebrews 11:10), a

reward (Genesis 15:1) which the New Testament reveals will include the nature and glory of God (Romans 9:4-23), righteousness (Genesis 15:6), and the fullness of the Spirit (Galatians 3:14).

3. **Mosaic Covenant** Kingdom provisions in this covenant are lengthy but are most evident in its provision for the typical kingdom in Canaan and in the moral preparation of a kingdom people as they were pointed to God's grace for their lives. This much-misunderstood covenant was one of God's means for establishing men in covenant relationship (Deuteronomy 29:13) so there would be a fit people as heirs.
  4. **Davidic Covenant** This made special provision for the Righteous King (1 Chronicles 17: 4-15) and the perpetuity of His throne without which no kingdom could be realized.
  5. **New Covenant** This is that affirmation of all God's purposes earlier declared but this time sealed by the blood of the Son, thus guaranteeing all these promises. Without this guarantee the promises of all the segments of His everlasting covenant could not be established.
  6. **Edenic Covenant** In this first statement of kingdom purpose we find the principle of human government set forth, as Adam was to "have dominion," (Genesis 1:28-31). Man was set over the works of His hands (Hebrews 2:7; cf. Psalms 8:4-8) but "NOW we see not yet all things put under him" (Hebrews 2:8). "But we see Jesus..." (v. 9). The Second Adam will guarantee what the first Adam could not.
  7. **Adamic Covenant** The principle of man's dominion is still avowed, though a curse has intervened because of sin (Genesis 3:14-19). A "seed of the woman" is promised and by Him the bruising of the head of the enemy is assured.
- B. Though but very briefly stated we see that every declaration (or covenant) examined makes some provision

for bringing to pass the kingdom of righteousness on earth.

- C. The unfolding nature or gradual process of the revelation was made necessary by virtue of man's part in God's purpose. As we learn from the covenants what provision God is making we are made to see the requirements on man's part and the grace on God's. Thus is faith and hope established and even love is born where otherwise there might be none.
- D. Perhaps most significant of all covenant elements is the fact of the FAITHFULNESS of the covenant God "of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### The Blessing of Abraham

*"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" — Galatians 3:13,14*

This is not a difficult text but, like so many others, we read right over it without observing what is said. Let us number a few points which may help call our attention to what is said:

- **"...the blessing of Abraham..."**
  1. This is in reference to the blessing promised to Abraham by God. We know from many passages it was promised by faith.
  2. Men suppose that since salvation IS BY FAITH that this is what was promised to Abraham. But this is not true. It is no more true that Abraham could be saved by faith than that others, including Gentiles – and even those before Abraham – could be saved by faith.
  3. The covenant with Abraham did NOT pertain to a plan or method of salvation (as the term "salvation" is ordinarily used to refer to what happens when one first trusts God for it). That covenant had to do with an inheritance.
  4. Thus it promised a "Seed" (Galatians 3:16) in whom all the families of the earth (this includes Gentiles) should be blessed. Still, the blessing was not mere "salvation."
  5. The blessing was to be an INHERITANCE. This involved a land, a King, kings, wealth, protection from enemies, etc. In other words, the very kingdom is based on the provisions of this covenant.

- **"Christ Hath Redeemed Us..."**

1. All the promises in that first covenant were to be realized by Abraham and his seed "through faith."
2. But the law covenant intervened and demanded that Abraham's seed attain a righteousness by works, describing the righteousness which is by the law, "That the man which doeth those things shall live by them" (Romans 10:5; Leviticus 18:5).
3. But "those things" became a curse from which no flesh could escape and instead of "living" thereby, that which was ordained unto life was found to be unto death (Romans 7:10).
4. This "LIFE" pertains to really LIVING in the age to come (cf. Mark 10:30; Titus 1:2; 1 Timothy 6:12; 1 John 2:25). "DEATH" on the other hand, does not pertain merely to perishing eternally, though it includes that, but pertains to a severing from or a separation from Christ and the promises.
5. Since the LIFE was "through faith," those who restored to the flesh for righteousness, even though they may have once trusted God for "salvation" were cut off from this position of LIFE and became the victims of DEATH, as in Romans 8:13.
6. There we see some who live after the flesh will die. If physical death were the subject that will come in any case.
7. But there is a "death" for living after the flesh. This has nothing to do with "once in grace always in grace," as it is called. The subject is UNION (life) with Christ. Such DEATH prevents one from coming into the BLESSING OF ABRAHAM or the blessed hope of eternal life. It was from such "bondage" and "death" that Christ has redeemed us.

- **"...Might Come on the Gentiles..."**

1. The blessing of Abraham was only to him and his seed. Gentiles could be "saved" but could not receive the

promises that pertained to Israel (Romans 9:4). The "mystery" hidden in ages past had nothing to do with Gentiles trusting God to save them, but pertained to their (Gentiles') becoming "fellow heirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:5).

2. It was no mystery that Gentiles could believe. But they could not receive the BLESSING OF ABRAHAM. Not even those who believed and were no part of the nation (seed) of Abraham. Christ's becoming the curse according to the law not only released the believing Israelite to receive the promise but it further allowed the Gentile to become a fellow heir.

- **"...Through Jesus Christ..."**

1. 'Through' or literally IN Christ Jesus). Christ has always been the Savior. "Through faith" has always been the way. But this is "through THE faith," that "faith of Christ" which did not come until "the fullness of time was come" (Galatians 3:22, 23; Galatians 4:4).
2. "In Christ" is a POSITION: IN HIS BODY. "Through the faith" is a RELATIONSHIP: also IN HIS BODY – the church. Gentiles are now allowed INTO this position and relationship, the middle wall of partition having been removed (Ephesians 2:14-16). Gentiles (or Jews) may trust Christ and be what we call SAVED without being IN this position or relationship. We call it "covenant relationship."
3. Not all who believe are IN CHRIST, then, just as all who believed in Old Testament days were not Jews and were not in Abraham. The REDEMPTION made it possible for THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM to come on JEWS and GENTILES through the faith, a thing that the curse of the law prevented.

- **"That we Might Receive the Promise of the Spirit through Faith"**

1. Two conditions are given in v. 14: that Gentiles might receive the blessing (promised to) of Abraham AND

that "we" (Jews and Gentiles) might receive the promised Spirit. Neither could have received this oft-given Old Testament promise had not Christ REDEEMED men and broken down the wall between the circumcision and the uncircumcision. NEITHER received this blessing before Pentecost. The promise came AFTER Jesus ascended and prayed the Father (John 14:16). The spirit was with certain believers before this but not dwelling IN them (John 14:17).

2. Jesus admonished the disciples to tarry at Jerusalem and pray for the enduement that should accompany the fulfilling of this promise (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 5, 8). But not all tarried and prayed – not even all that had been baptized in water.
3. Perhaps we have some insight as to why baptism, as well as repentance, is necessary to the receiving of this blessing (Acts 2:38). We see why obedience is necessary to the receiving of the gift (Acts 5:32). Is it not evident that NOT ALL WHO TRUST for salvation receive this blessing? The teachers of a universal church (of all the "saved") would have Christ (and the Holy Spirit) dwelling IN all, but this is contrary to the Word.
4. This is a most practical truth. In this glorious "ministration of the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:8) is our hope. The very resurrection with Christ depends on our being indwelt by the Spirit (Romans 8:11). Without this Spirit a believer does not belong to Christ in covenant relationship (as Bride) (Romans 8:9). See who is "given" to the Son (John 6:39).



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Gospel of the Kingdom

- A. It is the universally acknowledged belief of the churches that their business is to preach the Gospel. But there is no understanding or agreement as to what that Gospel is.
- B. The first time it was brought to my attention that some professing Christians and churches are erring in their preaching of the Gospel was when something called a SOCIAL GOSPEL was mentioned and condemned as a false Gospel – “another Gospel” (Galatians 1:6-8). The apostle explains that this “other gospel” is not “another” but they pervert the gospel of Christ.
- C. It seems to me that there should be much more clarity and unanimity in this preaching than there is. Most “fundamental Bible believers” talk of a “plan of salvation,” as though this were the Gospel. Most of these turn to 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 and point to the death for sins, burial, and resurrection of the Christ as “the Gospel.”
- D. But this overlooks the statement “according to the Scriptures” on the first and third element of this “good news.”
- E. When we turn back to the Old Testament Scriptures (the ones meant) to see what this means we find the prophets pointing with one voice to THE DAY OF SALVATION when “the glory that should follow” (1 Peter 1:10-12) should be in evidence.

### Mystery Hidden

- A. Those prophets did not know what or when it was that the Holy Spirit was revealing and “the sufferings of Christ” (since CHRIST means ANOINTED KING) was something which did not make any sense at all to them. Then it was revealed to them that their message was not for themselves but for us who live today.
- B. It does not take a gifted man to see that the prophets taught both the suffering and the glory, with the glory to

come "after." This "glory" belongs to the Day of the Lord, the KINGDOM which they all announced. And you can check for yourself and note the manner in which "the sufferings of Christ" are set forth and then, as if to constantly challenge Israel to faith, "the glory that should follow" is described right after the sufferings.

- C. See how Isaiah 54 follows Isaiah 53. See how Psalms 23 and 24 follow Psalm 22. You can locate many examples, and it is very interesting to note how it is the suffering of God's people (Israel) which is so often the theme and THEN their glory is described right after it. In both Testaments there is an IDENTIFICATION of the Christ or Messiah with His Covenant People.
- D. This study in search of "the sufferings of Christ" and "the glory which should follow" should point up the obvious teaching of the Old Testament that THE KINGDOM OF GOD is the dominant theme, the BLESSED HOPE, of God's people. This hope spurred them to a continued faith amidst the greatest trials and countless disappointments. It was the motive for their monotheistic faith in the midst of a polytheistic and pagan world. This is the reason they were familiar with the expressions "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" and needed no word of explanation when John the Baptist and, later, Jesus and the apostles used these expressions. Daniel's language (2:44) and the other social prophets had given them these terms. See specially Daniel 7.

### **Israel**

- A. The tendency in Israel to "rationalize" and to feel that their God would come down (see that term in Isaiah 64:1) and claim the KINGDOM OF ISRAEL as His kingdom and rule it and enlarge it over all the world was constantly present. This hope was not without reason, but their error was in feeling that earthly honor and power and glory was to approximate or approach the ideal and THEN God would claim the kingdom as His.
- B. This feeling began to run high in David's day and in Solomon's must have been hard to contain. But God cannot

acknowledge the puny glory of earthly kingdoms that men have built. And in their thinking was a pride of human accomplishment that left no glory for God.

- C. Thus He allowed a division of the kingdom – and later the captivity of one portion, then the other – that Israel might be purged of this self-glory and depend on Him. “The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:7), not the zeal of Israel.
- D. But Israel never forsook its zeal, a zeal “of God, but not according to knowledge.” Ezra and Nehemiah, with the background of the dispersion against which to preach, had shown that no people could qualify for God’s kingdom unless he was obedient to God. The law came in for a new emphasis (see Ezra and Nehemiah).
- E. This zeal soon degenerated into a form of legalism that we know as Judaism or Phariseeism. Some of these went to an ascetic extreme in their denying all the good of a present and waited for God to destroy the wicked and bring the kingdom in (these were the Essenes). Not a few took advantage of Israel’s hope and rose up as messiahs, and some of these had quite a following. Some continued to hold the idea that we won’t have anything unless we go after it (the opposite of the Essenes) and sought through political chicanery and even military forays to “take the Kingdom.” (The Zealots were among these and one of the apostles, Simon Zelotes, was one. Possibly Judas Iscariot had some of their spirit.) Those who would “take him by force, to make him a king” were often present (John 6:15).
- F. These attitudes show the error in those days of those who heard the Gospel of the Kingdom. A crucified king they could not accept – not even the disciples. (John 12:16; Matthew 16:22).

### **Christ’s Day**

- A. What John the Baptist preached was the Gospel of the kingdom (Mark 1:1), though the word “kingdom” was not used with the word “gospel” as applied to John.

- B. Mark's calling it "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" is not to indicate that the kingdom was not announced earlier.
- C. Here is a problem: The "good news" of the kingdom appears in different light according to the consciences of men and the revelation of God.
- D. When "the gospel" was preached to Abraham its form is entirely different than that which we preach today, though including the same ultimate goal.
- E. Then it is put thus: "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen (Gentiles) through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Galatians 3:8).
- F. This is not to infer that this is the "whole" or a "full Gospel," but it emphasizes that God's grace should embrace Gentiles too when they receive it through faith. This is only one aspect of the good news.
- G. The death of Christ for our sins is another aspect of it; His resurrection according to the Scriptures is another. This would seem to be the hub of the Gospel. This is the "form" of it which needs much emphasis today, because therein lies God's provision for preparing a people "fit for the kingdom." This surely is "the Gospel of the grace of God," which Paul called "MY gospel" (Acts 20:24; Romans 2:16).

#### **End Times**

- A. The Gospel, though, takes on other forms depending on the circumstances. When antichrist is exerting inhuman pressures on the people of God in the end of this age – just ahead of us, no doubt; maybe in our lifetimes; I expect it! – Then the Gospel takes on a "tone" or "note" which has always been significant, but which shall be even more so then: "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). "SHALL BE SAVED" is a note of deliverance.
- B. "Deliverance" has always been the good news of the Gospel, but when the pressures of the end-time are

assailing us "deliverance" will have a new meaning.

*"This GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all the nations; and THEN SHALL THE END COME"*  
— Matthew 24:14

- C. Thus we must see that a fresh, a vibrant and clear announcement of the deliverance from this "darkness" into the "Light" of the Day of the Lord is called for NOW: Preacher brethren, NOW is the time to announce THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM. If we do not there will be many who cannot "endure unto the end;" because their lot will seem hopeless.

*"And the gospel must first be published among all nations"* — Mark 13:10

- D. Note the "pressures" described in the context of this verse.

### **An Angel Preaches**

- A. Then when there is hardly a man left with strength or courage to preach it God sends an angel to "fly in the midst of heaven, having the EVERLASTING GOSPEL to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; FOR THE HOUR OF HIS JUDGMENT IS COME: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Revelation 14:6-7).
- B. The EVERLASTING GOSPEL! JUDGMENT IS COME! GOOD NEWS! This is the Gospel! Yes, it is the form of THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM needed at that moment. Judgment – justice – is about to be done in all the earth. Everlasting righteousness is about to be brought in (Daniel 9:24).
- C. This "everlasting gospel" is the same one Abraham hears (Genesis 22:18); it is the one preached to Israel in the wilderness (Hebrews 4:2); John preached it; Jesus preached it; Paul preached it. It has been preached unto us. It must be preached "for a witness unto all nations" and then shall

the end come. It HAS been preached IN SOME FORM (if only by the creation, Romans 1:16-18; Romans 10:18) to all the world (Colossians 1:5-6, 23). All are "without excuse" (Romans 1:20), but, oh, how the world needs that "witness" as the pressures increase.

### **Only One Gospel**

- A. There are not "many gospels" but just one EVERLASTING GOSPEL. It is the good news of the COMING KINGDOM and God's provision for "all nations" to have a part in that glorious kingdom for which we are to pray (Matthew 6:10).
- B. Improper emphasis on any of the forms of this "everlasting" "gospel of the kingdom" produces error. The good news of a kingdom, which only the Lord can establish, can only indicate GRACE, grace and salvation!
- C. Such "grace that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, (and is) teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that BLESSED HOPE, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13).

### **Full Gospel**

- A. Grace is unmerited; it is God's favor. The Gospel announces a free salvation! It announces a kingdom which shall be brought in by "the zeal of the Lord of hosts" and an "everlasting righteousness" which shall fill the whole earth. To seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33) is to yearn for His kingdom to come and for righteousness to prevail as the ORDER of all the earth, not just His righteousness in one's own heart. To preach a FULL GOSPEL demands that we recognize His grace to "bring in everlasting righteousness."
- B. A false emphasis on morality and righteousness in government and society becomes a "social gospel" but the Gospel DOES advocate morality and righteousness in all GOVERNMENT and SOCIETY and promises to secure it to all the world. This is good news. If we preach the right kind of gospel we shall CONDEMN SIN IN GOVERNMENT AND SO-

CIETY and expect God to provide righteousness and His JUDGMENT to secure it.

- C. An opposite extreme of the human righteousness in government and society is the antinomianism and carelessness seen today among those who despair of morality in society or justify sins as "to be expected" among men. While recognizing the depraved nature of man we must never be reconciled to sin in the world.

### **Gospel of Peace**

- A. While not expecting "peace on earth" NOW, we preach "the Gospel of peace" and announce the advent of the Prince of Peace. While admitting the depravity of all men we "condemn sin in the flesh" and strive to "destroy" "the body of sin" (Romans 6:6). While only expecting righteousness in all the earth in the kingdom to come, we announce a gospel that imputes righteousness NOW – RECKONS MEN RIGHTEOUS WHO ARE IN CHRIST – and condemns sin in all, particularly in ourselves.
- B. Thus we preach a gospel of hope and a gospel for society too. We only expect individuals to be delivered now, and they only as they RECKON THE OLD MAN DEAD and PUT ON CHRIST. But we believe our Gospel will afford redemption for society too – in the KINGDOM, which it announces, and the judgment, which it pronounces.
- C. No Gospel preaching is complete which does not preach judgment on sin – all sin in all the earth – and not just on sins of souls in hell. But that is not a GOSPEL at all which saddles society with the full responsibility of redeeming or delivering itself from sin. The Gospel of the grace of God provides a cleansing for sins and redemption from sin – a complete DELIVERANCE. Such deliverance is not just for the soul and the body but of society as well. Maybe that is the right kind of a social Gospel!

### **Kingdom Gospel Saves**

- A. In practice or practical application the Gospel of the Kingdom does more NOW than save the souls of believers. And I am not just referring to the benefits on society today of

the message as individuals believe. But this gospel of the BLESSED HOPE affords a purifying effect in the life of the believer (1 John 3:3). May it be that this aspect or form of the Gospel has been neglected and the result is a people professing faith in Christ who are not being purified because their expectations from Him by the gospel are limited to a saving of the soul? I fear this is so.

- B. We claim to preach the gospel – to be evangelistic – but we are not “doing the work of an evangelist” in the churches (2 Timothy 4:5). The “evangelist’s” work surely embraces the preaching of a gospel that settles for nothing less than a people fit for the kingdom of God. This calls for a gospel that must be obeyed (2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17).
- C. If we only get men saved in soul (as we say) and not in life are we preaching the Gospel? John’s message rebuked hearts and lives and demanded repentance in God’s people. Fruit was a part of his message – fruits meet for repentance. Israel claimed to be “children of Abraham” and not to need repentance to inherit the promises (see Matthew 3:7-12 and John 6:30-40).
- D. We must not let ourselves hold the false idea that the repentance John demanded was a once-for-all matter which pertains only to alien sinners. Those Jews were God’s people; maybe many of them were believers (see John 6:30). Many today have “repented” and trusted Jesus who claim now to be in the Bride, children of Abraham. They deceive themselves, being already “cut off” from the promises. Repent and believe the Gospel!



## CHAPTER NINE

### Our Blessed Hope

- A. There are many signs given of the Second Coming of Christ – events which precede that glorious advent – but “the sign” which is followed by “THEN shall the end come” is: “this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations” (Matthew 24:14). The statements in Colossians 1:6, 23 are not intended to mean that every man has actually heard the Gospel yet but, as Dr. A. T. Robertson points out, this is a hyperbole to emphasize its spread. “As a witness” it must still be preached to every nation. Somebody must do it and time is running out!
- B. Let it be understood in the beginning that our “blessed hope” is “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). At least this is WHEN the “hope” is realized. “We are saved by hope,” so we must have understanding of this teaching (Romans 8:24).
- C. Now this does not mean “salvation from hell” as experienced when we first trust Christ. It means the salvation of our lives, particularly deliverance from the pressures of persecution and tribulation which are yet to come on God’s people at the end of the age, for it is by this hope that we “endure unto the end” and are “saved” (Matthew 24:13) from those trials which shall beset God’s people then; that is, the false Christs, false prophets, delivering up to be afflicted, being killed, hated, betrayed by one another, hating one another, and having our love (which only a saved man COULD have) wax cold because of the abounding of iniquity (Matthew 24:9-12).
- D. This is the “falling away” which must come first (2 Thessalonians 2:3) and along with this must also come FIRST the “man of sin, the son of perdition.”

### The Man of Sin

- A. The “falling away” is obvious to the most elementary

Christian mind. But not many are expecting that other "FIRST:" the revealing of the man of sin. This, they think, is going to come AFTER the Lord raptures them out of the world. This is a FALSE hope – one not promised in the Bible. How pleased Satan must be that he has believers so complacent in their security and false assurance!

- B. The "feeling" is good when one thinks the dam is secure, or the insurance is sufficient! But the tragedy is even greater when it is learned that it was NOT secure and he had no insurance at all. Somebody had sold him a "bill of goods."
- C. For nearly 150 years Christians have been sold a bill of goods to the effect that they shall all escape the tribulation, the reign of antichrist, and the trials that shall try every man on the earth in the last days. It makes them feel good but how will it be when these things come and no preparation for them has been made? "Escape" on earth during tribulation will be provided for the faithful.

#### **First and Second Advent**

- A. When Christ comes it is to be "without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). When He came the first time it was on behalf of sinners and "for sin." But next time it will be "for judgment." "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:9).
- B. Friend, will you be ready to "go out to meet the Bridegroom" when He comes? Or will you be among those foolish "virgins" whose lamps will be going out because the delay has been long and you have to go buy oil while the "wise" go in and you are left out? Note the series of parables and teachings in this connection that Jesus gave his disciples (Matthew 24, 25; Mark 13; Luke 12:35-48; Luke 17:22 ~ Luke 18:34; Luke 19:11-27; Luke 21:25-38).
- C. There is not a statement in the Bible that places the RAPTURE before the TRIBULATION. There is not a statement in the Bible that places the resurrection before the tribula-

tion.

- D. There is no statement to indicate that the Lord shall come twice, once FOR and again WITH the saints. He comes FOR them who are on earth and WITH them that "sleep in Jesus" but this is all one coming. It is AT THE LAST TRUMP and this cannot sound until the other six have sounded.

#### **Like A Thief**

- A. Our blessed hope, then, is NOT a secret coming of the Lord. Nothing is said about His coming being SECRET. It is like a thief, to be sure, but "if the good man of the house had known...had "watched"...he would not have had "that day come on him as a thief" (I Thessalonians 5:4).
- B. "Watching," means to be awake, remembering one's stewardship, doing the Master's will, keeping one's garments! It does not mean expecting the Master any moment! Early disciples HAD to expect the Roman Empire to be divided into 10 kingdoms, even to fall (with a deadly wound) and rise again (have that wound healed), and an 11<sup>th</sup> king to rise up and subdue three of the ten BEFORE the day of the Lord should come.
- C. This erased an any-minute prospect, but it did not put it beyond the possibility of their lifetime (so far as they knew), nor has it ever been farther away than one's lifetime. Paul expected it in his lifetime. We may all the more expect it in ours.
- D. Early disciples had to expect the rising up of a prince (Daniel 9:25-27) who would make a covenant with Israel (they HAD to expect a remnant to be restored as a national entity) BEFORE the consummation.
- E. This prince, as they had to understand, was to be an "ABOMINATION OF DESLOATION" and must come BEFORE the sign of the son of man (Matthew 24:15, 27, 30). They HAD to expect this "sign" (Matthew 24:30) to come AFTER tribulation under this abomination (Matthew 24:21, 29). And this is just what they DID expect. Note the following quotations:

## Early Writings

### A. THE DIDACHE

1. translated by J. Louis Guthrie in his own literal, but crude, style; Chapter 16:1-9: "Arouse you for the life of you (keep awake), and the lamps of you will not be out, (literally your candles will not be snuffed), nor let yourselves be ungirded, but become prepared, for you do not know the hour in which the Lord of you comes. But come together often, seeking out the matters dealing with your souls, for the whole time of faith will not assist you unless in the last crisis you are completed.
2. For in those last days the false prophets and corrupters shall become multitudes, and the sheep shall be turned among wolves, and the love shall be turned unto hate, for while lawlessness increases, they shall hate one another, and persecute and betray, and then shall appear the world (universe) deceiver as the Son (heir) of God, and shall do earthly signs, and the earth shall be given into his hands, and he shall do wickedness, never yet done in any age.
3. Then will come the judgment of the human race, into the firing of trial, and many shall be scandalized (stumble), and be destroyed, but they remaining steadfast in their faith shall be preserved in this same curse. And then shall appear the sign of the truth, first, a sign of an opening out in heaven, then, a sign of a trumpet voice, and the third, the sign of the standing up of the dead bodies (resurrection), but not of all, but as said, The Lord will come and all the holy ones with him. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven."
4. Bro. Guthrie called the Didache a sort of early church manual, used in the very days of the Apostles, earlier than the so-called "Fathers," to teach young converts. This surely teaches no pre-tribulation rapture, but Anti-christ is presented first, along with the tribulation which shall test all men alive, including believers. Those remaining steadfast will be preserved, it says. Note also

the order of the signs mentioned.

### **B. JUSTIN MARTYR**

Justin Martyr (who lived about 150 A. D.), writes of his dialogue with Trypho the Jew:

1. "Two advents of Christ have been announced: the one, in which He is set forth as suffering, inglorious, dishonored, and crucified.
2. But the other, in which He shall come from heaven with glory, when the man of apostasy, who speaks strange things against the Most High, shall venture to do unlawful deeds on the earth against us the Christians, who, having learned the true worship of God from the law, and the word which went forth from Jerusalem by means of the apostles of Jesus, have fled for safety to the God of Jacob and God of Israel." (cf. Chapter 110)

### **C. EPISTLE OF BARNABAS**

1. This is a very early writing, though not by Barnabas, the companion of Paul. He quotes ENOCH: "For, for this end the Lord has cut short the times of the days that His Beloved may hasten; and He will come to the inheritance" (Chapter 4).
2. The days "cut short" is a reference to the "shortening of the days" under antichrist. He also quotes Daniel as saying, "Ten kingdoms shall reign upon the earth and a little king shall rise up after them, who shall subdue under one three of the kings" (Chapter 4).
3. There were no "ten kings" during the time of that writing, for the Roman Empire was world-wide, so no eminent coming of the Lord could be expected. Again he says, "When His Son, coming (again), shall destroy the time of the wicked man, and judge the ungodly, and change the sun, and the moon, and the stars, then shall He truly rest on the seventh day." (Chapter 15).

### **D. IRENAEUS**

1. Against Heresies (12-202 A.D.) says, quoting and explaining Daniel: "And toward the end of their kingdom

a king of a most fierce countenance shall arise, one understanding (dark) questions, and exceedingly powerful, full of wonders; and he shall corrupt, direct, influence, and put strong men down, the holy people likewise; and his yoke shall be directed as a wreath (round their necks); deceit shall be in his hand, and shall be lifted up in his heart: he shall also ruin many by deceit, and lead many to perdition, bruising them in his hand like eggs.

2. And then he (Gabriel in Daniel) points out the time that his tyranny shall last, during which the saints shall be put to flight, they who offer a pure sacrifice unto God" (Chapter 25:4). Then follows an explanation as to the 3½ years of Antichrist's rule.
3. In Chapter 26:1, Irenaeus says of the kings who are to give their power to Antichrist:
 

"And they shall lay Babylon waste, and burn her with fire, and shall give their kingdom to the beast, and put the church to flight. After that they shall be destroyed by the coming of the Lord."

#### **Later Writings**

- A. That the tribulation and rule of Antichrist should precede the coming of Christ and the rapture of the church is the universal belief of the early church.
- B. Not until the time of J. N. Darby and the rise of the Plymouth Brethren in England was the idea of a secret, pre-tribulation rapture advocated. This was about 1830 when that method of interpretation known as Dispensationalism first became popular.
- C. Dispensationalism is one of the essential features of pre-tribulationists. E. W. Bullinger is a marked advocate of this thinking that places the church in a sort of parenthesis, almost like an afterthought of God.
- D. The Scofield Bible is the most popular thesis on this position and is probably most responsible for the widespread thinking that there will be a rapture and resurrection BE-

FORE the tribulation under Antichrist.

- E. The Bible conferences, together with the most popular schools and institutes of the Bible, as Moody and Biola of Los Angeles, have largely advocated the Dispensational and pre-tribulation rapture lines of thought.
- F. Since these schools and conferences have been "fundamental" or "Bible-centered," opposing "liberalism," they have come to speak for "sound" Bible students of "Protestantism."
- G. Shall Baptist allow ANY Protestant to be their spokesman? We must not be different for the sake of being different; neither must we conform merely because a reputation for conservative thinking has been established by these groups.
- H. DO WE DARE READ THE BIBLE AND INTERPRET IT UNDER THE SPIRIT'S LEADING WITHOUT FOLLOWING THE "LINE" OF PROTESTANTS AND NON- OR INTER-DENOMINATIONALISTS? We may be ISOLATED if we do, but better be isolated from our brethren and find fellowship with God in Truth than have false concord with brethren and believe and practice error and be deceived at the return of Christ! "Historical positions" are NOT those of 50, 100, and 150 years ago, but those of the first centuries of Christ! How "old-fashioned" are we anyway?

## CHAPTER TEN

### Fit For the Kingdom

*"And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).*

- A. This theme has been touched on in several ways, as in the "heirs" of the kingdom, who shall inherit? And "faithfulness necessary." In the last lesson we dealt with "the blessing of Abraham" and how it could come on Gentiles. In this discussion was the observation that the gift of the Spirit does not come on all men who trust Jesus for salvation, since this is a special grace afforded the church.
- B. When we look back to the Old Testament to see God's dealings with Israel there is ample evidence that the very nation to which the promises were made were unfit to inherit these promises. Repeatedly it is shown that their "father" (Abraham) became an heir by faith; "he believed God" and this was how he was righteous (justified).
- C. That should have shown them that God blesses those who trust Him, not those who do not. Surely there was no other way of redemption! Abraham did not deserve the promises; but he did believe God, hence was "justified" so that he might receive the promises in God's own time.
- D. He died without receiving them, but he had "embraced" them and he, with us of this age who also qualify, will receive them. This is FAITH!

### God's Rest

- A. But then, as now, it was most difficult to teach people what it means to trust the Lord. God gave His word – the Gospel was preached unto them – but the Word was not mixed with faith, so "with many of them" God was not well pleased and swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest (Hebrews 4:1-2, 3, 6). Joshua ("Jesus") was not able to give them "rest" because they would not believe God's promises, though vouched for by Joshua.



- B. But God has said, in David (Hebrews 4:7, Psalms 95:7, 8), "Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear this voice, harden not your hearts."
- C. Now what are we to learn from this? That Joshua's dealings with the nation and his effort to lead them into the "promised land" did not afford them the "rest" that "remaineth to the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9).
- D. The nation's going across Jordan into Canaan and the battles to take the land, its division by lot, and the subsequent failures to drive the enemies out and "possess" it, all were designed to teach Israel some lessons:
1. The land was there for them and God said it was His gift to them (Joshua 1:2, 3). Though it was a gift they had to "make tracks" on it with the soles of the feet.
  2. God's gifts are to be claimed by faith. It took no fleshly works on their part for them to gain this land. God would drive out their enemies before them (Joshua 1:5).
  3. God guaranteed them victory and commanded them to accept it (Joshua 1:6, 9).
  4. Of course this gift was conditional: they must be strong, courageous, observing "to do" according to all the law, not turning from it to the right or left (vs. 7).
- E. There is no contradiction here, though many think that their keeping the law would be "works of flesh" and could not please God. If one kept the precepts merely in his flesh it DID NOT please God, but one evidently could so trust God that God would enable him to obey in faith and love. It is as the fall of Jericho's wall: It was "by faith" that they fell down "after they had been compassed about seven days" (Hebrews 11:30).
- F. Now all this walking around the wall was surely works of the flesh, someone says. No, God says it was by faith that the walls fell. The walking was by faith, evidently. No walking, no falling walls. No faith, no walking. Now some could walk by flesh, but this would not have worked.

- G. Many “fell” in the wilderness. This means they “died” physically there because they “turned back into the wilderness” and would not go on after having begun. This is “putting one’s hand to the plow and looking back.” They would not go on because of the trials of the way. They believed God that the land was there. They had been delivered from Egypt and provided for in the way, but they did not believe God’s promise that He would give them the land. For this unbelief they fell.
- H. A man who sets out in the springtime to make a crop has high hopes. But as the rains come in excess, or too little, or as the sun gets hot and the vegetation gets ahead of his labors, the pests attack and the strain is great, he looks back at the comfort of the shade or at a job in the city with a paycheck each week, and decides it is no use.
- I. We want comfort NOW and cannot wait till Harvest. Many Israelites looked back to the onions, leeks, garlic, cucumbers, melons, fish and fleshpots of Egypt and yearned to return. They were not fit for the “kingdom” in the land.

#### **Fit for the Kingdom**

- A. Brethren, this lesson is for us. No man is fit to be a disciple who cannot leave all, who cannot first count the cost of building a tower or attacking the enemy (Luke 14:25-33).
- B. Who are these lessons for? Are we to understand that Jesus meant this instruction for lost sinners? Surely not. They cannot “hear” such teaching. It would only be a discouragement to them to trust Christ if they did. Far too many excuse their delaying to be saved by saying they fear they cannot live it.
- C. No, these instructions about discipleship go right along with being “fit” for the kingdom. One is fit if he does NOT look back to Egypt (the world and its present comforts and thrills).
- D. He is fit only as he keeps the harvest in view, knowing that he cannot produce a single grain but that he must plant and plow and thresh in hope. He is fit only as he keeps making tracks on toward the swollen Jordan, toward the

giants and their walled cities.

- E. Yes, he is a "grasshopper" in the sight of the giants, and maybe it is all right to think of one's self as a grasshopper (see Numbers 13:33) just so long as we believe God "has given us the land" and will guarantee us protection from all our enemies and will ACT as though we believe it by continuing on, "reaching forth unto those things which are before," pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13, 14).

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### Who Shall Receive the Kingdom?

*"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" — Luke 12:32*

- A. From these words of Jesus several things must be obvious, providing such squares with the rest of the Word of God:
1. The "little flock" did not have the kingdom at the time.
  2. But there was a little flock at the time this was spoken.
  3. From careful study it can be seen that this "little flock" was the Lord's church.
  4. This church, existing thus long before that Pentecost of Acts 2, is promised the kingdom.
  5. It pleases the Father to "give" the kingdom to this church.
  6. Thus the kingdom is to be received as a gift and is not merited.
  7. A gift is no gift until it is received.
- B. So far I know the idea of "receiving a kingdom" is presented only once under the use of the word "receive," and this applies to the Christ, the "nobleman" of the parable (Luke 19:11-27). According to this story the Christ is now gone into a far country (heaven) "to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (vs. 12). It belongs to Him for it was covenanted or promised to Him as the Seed (Galatians 3:16). If any man, therefore, is to receive this kingdom it must be through identification with Christ.

### The Promises

- A. Originally, the promises were to Abraham, then to his "Seed." Paul explains this "Seed" to mean "Christ." Thus the covenanted promises (as shown in the last article in this series) are to Abraham and his Seed.

- B. Many Jews (seed of Abraham) thought the promises were certain to them because they had Abraham to their father (John 8:33; Matthew 3:9).
- C. John the Baptist pointed out that these Jews needed to repent before they could claim the promises and bring forth fruits which showed their repentance (Matthew 3:8). Thinking they "had a corner on" the Truth and the promises they scorned this message of repentance, though anxious to capitalize on the popularity of John's baptism. John prophesied God's turning to another people for "children of Abraham" should these natural seed not repent. When Jesus insisted that they "continue" in His Word, having believed on Him (John 8:31), they protested again.
- D. Thus they showed that their "faith" was not such as Abraham's. They did not like to continue in the Truth; they wanted a once-established relationship to suffice for all time. But Jesus pointed out that they were not secure in this relationship of the flesh to Abraham, though they believed on Him, for they must "do the works of Abraham" to "abide in the house forever." (John 8:35, 39). This "house" is a reference to the kingdom.
- E. Because of this lack of "faith...in Israel" the "children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness" (Matthew 8:12) while God makes children of Gentiles who "shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11).
- F. It was with reference to this same state of affairs that Paul was speaking when he said "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Romans 9:6-8).
- G. He also said, "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise" (Galatians 4:28). Thus are many of those natural seed cut off or come short of the promises.

### Working Faith

- A. Now, to bring the matter on over to us we continue with Paul in Galatians:

*"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" — Galatians 3:26-29*

- B. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all" (Romans 4:16). So Abraham is "the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised" (Romans 4:12).
- C. If the reader has noted the use of the words "seed," "promise," "children," and "father," it can be seen that we have been consistent in thus linking these verses. To "receive the kingdom" is to receive the promises of the covenant. Some of those in the correct "position" to inherit or receive the promise shall not do so because they do not do the works of Abraham, not being of the faith of Abraham.
- D. Now, there is for us Gentiles by nature a lesson in this connection. We must "walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham" if we would receive the promises. He is our father as we are one in Christ. Through Him we become "heir of the world" (Romans 4:13), that is, "through the righteousness of faith." This is a walking faith, a faith which causes one to "continue in His Word."
- E. Should we err as some of the Galatians were caused to do, under the influence of legalists (Judaizers) who taught an obedience according to the letter, then we stand disquali-

fied. Such a legalistic righteousness produces pride and a satisfaction with self.

- F. Such "highmindedness" jeopardizes ones continuing. We stand by faith (Romans 11:20) and unless we continue in His goodness we too may be cut off (vs. 22).

### **A Better Understanding**

- A. Baptists have difficulty "hearing" any teaching that assumes the possibility of a "cutting off." They think it jeopardizes the "Security of the Believer." But that is just the point! The believer walks in the steps of faith of Abraham, else he is not classed a believer (one who is believing) and cannot claim the "righteousness of faith." He is cut off from the covenant position, from the promises of "inheriting the earth" (which is the lot of the meek), and from being "heir of the world."
- B. Now, Baptists have always admitted that not all believers qualify for a place of rulership with Christ in the kingdom. They have and do teach that one may be disciplined and cut off from the Bride. This in no way prevents his being "saved" in the end, but it leaves him in a lesser position in the age to come or, as they prefer to say, he loses rewards. The true state of affairs is that he has no reward; he suffers loss, and is saved "so as by fire."
- C. This brings us squarely up to our subject: Who shall receive the kingdom? Not all shall inherit the kingdom, as we are told more than once (1 Corinthians 6:9; Galatians 5:21). He that overcometh shall inherit all things (Revelation 21:7). "Faith is the victory." But it must be such as walks or obeys, else it is not faith.
- D. It seems clear that some distinction must be made between those who receive the authority of the kingdom and share the rule with the Christ, on the one hand, and those who merely enjoy the privileges of enjoying the prosperity and peace of the kingdom.
- E. The "little flock" which is the church is surely granted a place in the rulership of His kingdom. The "nations of the saved" are privileged to walk in the light of the city but do

not rule. This signifies some distinction. The "little flock" is not called "nations" but is one "holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9). The little flock or "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16) is the "holy nation" which dwells in the city and enjoys the honor of Bridehood.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### Israel in the Kingdom

*"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" — Acts 1:6*

- A. This question was put by the disciples of the Lord to their Master following His resurrection. They were Israelites. It was Israel's expectation that Messiah should come and set up His kingdom (Luke 24:21). In their minds this kingdom was very redemption. He had told them that there would be a delay (Matthew 13, the "mystery" parables) until He should go away, receive the kingdom, and return (Luke 19:11,12). He had even told them that the kingdom should be taken from Israel and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it (Matthew 21:43).
- B. These disciples were no different from us in their limitations to receive something which might be contrary to their traditional beliefs. Thus they failed to grasp the full significance of some of the things which their Lord had told them. He had gone away for a short time and perhaps they thought this was sufficient for the purpose and now he would set up His kingdom. It is clear that in their minds He had not done this prior to His resurrection. His answer is not as conclusive as we might like for our own information, but it let them know that he was not then going to "restore the kingdom to Israel." It is a matter kept in the Father's own power.
- C. Now had He never been going to "restore" the kingdom to Israel this seems to have been the ideal time to tell them. This simply was a false hope and they should dismiss it from their minds. But He did not so dismiss it. Even His taking the kingdom from those "wicked men" (Matthew 21:41) – "chief priests and Pharisees" (Matthew 21:45) – does not mean that Israel is denied that which was the subject of covenant and prophecy and the hope of all the faithful from the days of Abraham.
- D. The miserable condition of those Israelites then living –

the fact of the Dispersion – was evidence that the nation did not have what they had enjoyed under David or Solomon, hence the desire that it might be “restored.” Their representative leaders could never have it in their wickedness. But the true Israel might still claim those Old Testament promises (cf. Romans 9:4-7).

- E. The nation was judicially blinded temporarily (Romans 11:25). God is able to “turn away ungodliness from Jacob” and according to His covenant He will do so (Romans 11:26, 27). Need we be surprised to see believing Jews “grafted in” again? (vs. 24).

### **National Israel Preserved**

- A. The strong language of the covenants will not allow that God completely cut off national Israel, or I should say “Israel as a nation.” Those individuals which rebelled at the Messiah when He came are dead and beyond any hope of redemption. Thousands of the flesh descendants of Abraham have since died in rebellion or unbelief and they shall never have opportunity to trust the Christ and be saved. But, miraculously, the nation has been preserved.
- B. In spite of the stand of modern Jewry, who deny that they are a “race” and claim to be a “religion” instead, they are still a distinct people. Many mixed their blood and these are obscured among the nations, but the nation is still a distinct people, visible to our eyes – how much more to God’s eyes! God’s specific promises and oath-bound covenant to the natural seed of Abraham are not yet realized. For illustration note the “land” is not all theirs and never has been. Below we shall point out a few prophecies which further illustrate promises to Israel as a nation which have not yet been realized but will be in the kingdom to come when Christ their Messiah shall reign from His father, David’s, throne on Mt. Zion.
- C. It is true that God has turned to dealing with Gentiles, in a sense, today. The flesh descendants of Abraham have “judged (themselves) unworthy of everlasting life” and He has turned to take out of the Gentiles a people for His name (Acts 13:46; 15:14). These branches (Gentiles) from

the wild olive are almost the only one's on the tree now. But the same root still grows; its "root and fatness" is still there. These promises (to Abraham) are just as real and precious to these engrafted branches as they were to the tame branches before. Indeed, this grafted tree is the "Israel of God" today (Galatians 6:16).

- D. Note that this Israel is one which walks according to a rule which negates the value of the "letter" and glories in the cross (Galatians 6:14,15). It is this Israel which constitutes the "covenant people" today and may claim the promises. The "children of the kingdom" (natural) shall be cast out of the kingdom while these "from the East and the West" "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom" (Matthew 8:11,12).

#### **Christ Rejected**

- A. The hard impenitent hearts of Jews played their part in crucifying the Christ. This is no light matter. This "hardness" is still most evident today. As a people the rebellion of Jewry is very obvious today. In so many of the issues of today's world they stand and defy the Word and the God of the Word.
- B. There are numerous, individual exceptions, to be sure. But the exceptions are making a very slight mark on the face of history as against the mark of "the international Jew" who seems to be pursuing a diabolical purpose to expunge the name of Jesus from the earth and set up some sort of a kingdom to his own liking.
- C. He has learned that Israel is to be "the head and not the tail" among the nations (Deuteronomy 28:13) and he does not observe that this prophecy says he can have this place only "if that thou hearken to the commandments of the Lord thy God."
- D. No such rebel shall succeed permanently in establishing a kingdom, but before Christ Himself comes and purges out the rebels (Ezekiel 20:38) this people seem destined to go on and on in the spirit of His crucifiers, foaming out their own shame.

- E. This is why there is the need for "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7). Read this remarkable chapter! Israel has shed much blood and been hated of many peoples and their persecutions almost go beyond words to explain. They asked for it (Matthew 27:25)! But God is their Judge, not I. The "day of the Lord" shall reveal things upon Israel that the world has never yet seen.
- F. As hard as their hearts have been, God loves them. Individuals of them may perish before they repent, but numerous others shall repent, returning to the Lord and obeying His voice (Deuteronomy 30:2), so that God shall gather them from the nations where they are scattered (Deuteronomy 30:3-6).
- G. Following this gathering God has promised to plead His cause with them in the "wilderness" "face to face" and bring them into the bond of the covenant, having purged out the rebels, so that only those who "turn" and heed will be brought into the covenant land (Ezekiel 30:33-38).
- H. This has never happened! They have never ALL served him, but the whole nation will serve Him in the land (Ezekiel 20:40). How shall this be brought to pass?
- I. This question of bringing such rebels to serve God is answered in the fact that He shall "circumcise" their hearts.
- J. God shall pour on them His Spirit, "the spirit of grace and of supplications" and they shall mourn for their sins and especially for their Lord (Zechariah 12:10 - 13:1). This pouring out of the Spirit is prophesied in many places (as Joel 2:28-32).
- K. Peter tells us (Acts 2) that this was fulfilled on Pentecost following the ascension, but that was only a "token" fulfillment designed to confirm the faith of the few who believed and in no wise afforded the "wonders" (vs. 30, 31) that are yet to come with "the day of the Lord."
- L. That marvelous language of Isaiah 53 is but the language of Israel as they shall be turned in heart and brought to see where their fathers sinned. Then they admit the whole

Truth: "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities."

### **Israel in Prophecy**

- A. There is a parable (riddle) in Ezekiel 17 which ought to be studied. The explanation is given or we would be without understanding. In this explanation is given the key to Israel's future place in the kingdom. She shall be set in the mountain of the height of Israel and become such a flourishing nation that other nations and peoples (birds of every wing) might find protection from her.
- B. Then all nations shall know that God has brought down all the "high trees" (strong kingdoms) and raised up the "low tree" (a small kingdom), dried up (reduced) the active or green tree (kingdom) and made the "dry tree" (Israel today, cf. Isaiah 24:16?
- C. Ezekiel 37:11) to flourish. Nations that have despised the Jew will see his land become the chief kingdom among the nations of the earth. His Holy City shall become the city looked to by all the governments of the earth, as there shall be the throne of the Great King.
- D. "There shall be showers of blessing" (Ezekiel 34:26). This describes the "pasture" (land of Israel) when God gathers His flock (men) and plants them in prosperity under one shepherd, David (Christ) (Ezekiel 34:11-31).
- E. The blessings of God which bring Israel to her prominence as a nation in that Day of the Lord (Millennium) shall cause the heathen (nations) left around them to know that God has done this (Ezekiel 36:36) and men out of all the nations shall seek to the Jews for Word about the Lord (Zechariah 8:23).
- F. This is significant for this "Word" they seek shall be the Truth as it pertains to the whole sphere of men's lives. It is not just a "plan of salvation" only that they will seek, but they shall know that the whole scope of men's lives are to be regulated by laws of the Lord and this includes their

governments.

- G. Passages could be multiplied but an honest reading of most any of the Old Testament prophets will show that Israel shall be planted again in their own land, shall prosper, grow populous, and become the HEAD NATION of the earth. But this is because of their exalted King. And this is only speaking of a nation upon whom God has poured His Spirit and circumcised their hearts. For a short time there shall be rebellion among the other nations (as Egypt, Zechariah 14:16) but this shall be brought down by supernatural means.
- H. Lest someone think that these promises of an exalted Israel are too "high" for a people in the flesh and would apply these passages to a "spiritual Israel," let it be noted that this nation "builds houses, plants vineyards," multiplies so as to crowd its borders and children fill the streets of its cities, men grow old "leaning upon the top of their staves for very age," and otherwise are natural men. This has never happened yet and God says that His covenant toward them is as certain as day follows night (Jeremiah 33:20-26) and he has never voided a single promise spoken to them.
- I. The church of this age shall be associated with this nation, to be sure, but not lost in its identity with it. The twelve apostles shall "sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
- J. Others of the church shall share the rule of their King and this shall extend to such great dominion as demands the obedience of all dominions (Daniel 7:27). Can we not, then, "pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psalm 122:6)?

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### What Does It Mean To Inherit the Kingdom?

- A. Terms like "heirs" (children) of the kingdom, "inherit" the kingdom, etc., teach us that certain blessings are in store for certain ones who qualify as heirs. Much has been assumed along this line. It is thought that every believer is "born" and therefore a "child" of God and, being a child, necessarily inherits. For support reference is made to Romans 8:16,17, but the latter part is usually ignored. Thus two errors are found in such thinking:
1. That the Holy Spirit dwells in and bears witness with all who ever believed;
  2. There is a condition ignored: "that we suffer with him."
- B. Not all who have believed have the indwelling Spirit or His "witness" and very few actually "suffer with Christ." This would suggest that not all are heirs. Verse 14 says "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." It would be foolish to say that most believers are "led" by the Spirit of God. If so, the Spirit is leading in all different and conflicting directions.

### The Kingdom Reward

- A. What are we saying? That some believers qualify as sons who shall receive the blessing of the birthright; some will not. Now, most everyone will admit that some believers (saved) will receive more reward than others, though few will admit that any believer will get NO reward at all. They suppose that he gets reward for any good he does though he may later rebel and fall away so as to destroy his usefulness. But the Word teaches that one may "suffer loss" and be saved "as by fire," with just "himself" saved: no reward at all (1 Corinthians 3).
- B. To understand the birthright blessing we need to know about the covenants. God promised Abraham certain blessings and his seed should "inherit" these blessings.

- C. Not everyone born to Abraham or in his line should inherit. This was illustrated in a distinction between Ishmael and Isaac. Abraham loved Ishmael and wanted him to be his heir, but Sarah did not think so and God told Abraham Sarah was right:

*"The son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman" (Galatians 4:30)*

- D. This is an "allegory" (vs.24) according to which God taught the Galatians that legalists – men who would be justified by the law or the works of the flesh – could not be heirs. They have the wrong mother: the Jerusalem now. The right mother is "Jerusalem above – to come down (Revelation 21).
- E. Those who demand their "mess of pottage" or "morsel of meat" NOW are after the flesh. Take a look at most churches and professing Christians today and see if they are not "living it up" NOW and what "righteousness" they have is a duty type, a law righteousness.
- F. Are these all unbelievers? Well, they may and probably DID trust Christ once but they are not about to commit their lives to Him and forsake their daily "morsel" down here and wait for the blessings in the New Jerusalem. They have the wrong "mother." They cannot be heirs with the sons of the New Jerusalem.
- G. (Remember, that to be a son means to be characterized by the qualities of the parent.) The bondwoman was a slave and so was her son. Those seeking present honor and esteem "have their reward" NOW (Matthew 6:1, 2).
- H. The "heir" as long as he is a child differs none from a slave and is "in bondage under the elements of the world" (Galatians 4:1, 3). It is when he forsakes these "elements" and allows the Holy Spirit to DWELL in his heart by faith (Ephesians 3:17) that Christ is "formed" in him (Galatians 4:19) and he receives the "adoption" of a son (Galatians 4:5).



- I. Thus he becomes one who is an "heir" and is characterized by a sonship Spirit which cries "Father, Father" (Galatians 4:6, 7). Such a believer will abide in the "house" (kingdom) as the church is presently that house, but the slave (who is in bondage to the elements of the world) (Galatians 4:3) cannot remain forever (John 8:35).
- J. The son can receive a reward and it is the reward that is called the inheritance. (Colossians 3:24). The son SERVES but his service is not a payment, like a slave's, but is out of love. Faith in his father, love for him, and hope for the future fill his life.
- K. Esau is an example of how one in the birthright position may LOSE that right. He wanted his "morsel of meat" right then. Later though he wept and persuaded, Isaac would not repent and give Esau the blessing, for he was ruled out by the "appointment" of the father.
- L. This "appointment" (Galatians 4:2) pertains to the giving of the Holy Spirit (as He did on Pentecost) and was with reference to His elective purpose.
- M. Thus it behooves every man to "make (his) calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:11). This cannot mean "make sure of," but make steadfast. How does one do this? By forsaking the weak and beggarly elements of the world and living by faith!
- N. There is no merit in the flesh or its works. If we would be justified in God's eyes it must be through faith, as with Abraham (Romans 4:1ff; James 2:21ff.). If we are to be glorified as an heir we must suffer with Him. Only so may we fit God's elected purpose (Romans 8:30).
- O. "Doth this offend you?" It offended the Pharisees. May we avoid their error.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### Faithfulness Required By Heirs of the Kingdom

- A. Salvation by grace is a glorious doctrine. He who puts any confidence in the flesh knows less, in his heart, than he ought to know about Grace. But there is absolutely nothing incompatible between faithfulness and grace.
- B. The enemies of the Truth, some of them unaware that they are enemies, frequently resist the preaching of faithfulness on the grounds that it conflicts with God's grace. This is untrue. The problem, with them, arises in the matter of the CONSEQUENCES of unfaithfulness. Having claimed about every blessing mentioned in the Bible as the lot of every believer they cannot imagine a believer, for any reason, coming short of any of these things which grace affords. We trust they are making an honest mistake, but honest or not, mistake it is and there is danger in it.
- C. The "reward" of faithfulness is described as an inheritance in the Bible (Colossians 3:24). While many admit there is such a thing as loss of rewards (putting an "s" on the word not found there in the Scriptures) they do not admit that any believer can fail to inherit the kingdom.
- D. Thus they contend that if one fails to inherit the kingdom it is because he had never believed. They believe that all believers are "born," and therefore "children" and "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ..." (Romans 8:17).
- E. This fails to take into consideration that the rest of the verse teaches that this is CONDITIONED on our "suffering with Him, that we may be glorified together."

### Terms Explained

- A. To be a "joint-heir with Christ" is to be a part of His Bride. The man who is "saved as by fire" is NOT a joint heir; he gets no inheritance at all. Any inheriting is predicated on certain conditions, all of which may be described by the word "faithfulness."

- B. Just because one has believed does not mean he is faithful. The "children" DO inherit, but who are the children? Romans 4 teaches us that Abraham is the "father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised" (Romans 4:12).
- C. This was so the "promise (of an inheritance) might be sure to all seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all." (Romans 4:16). Who is "of the faith of Abraham?" Was not his a faith that "staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief" but "walked" by successive "steps."
- D. One step is enough to bring one into a claim of the promises, but further steps, a lifetime of steps of faith, are necessary if one is to inherit the promises.
- E. If we simply define "faith" as being to "believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:24, 25) then let us be sure we know what the "if" means in Romans 4:24. Why should Paul (certainly one who had believed) say to the "beloved of God, called to be saints" in Rome, "if we believe." Is it that he thought maybe he or some of them were superficial professors? Was his motive to ask himself to determine whether he had ever believed? And did he mean to be asking these Roman saints to check themselves again to determine whether they may have been mistaken when they thought they had trusted Christ as Savior?
- F. No, the "if we believe" means "if we are believing" – if we are continuing in faith – walking in faith. This is shown in the rest of the verse and the next by the language that introduces Truth only countenanced by a continuing – walking – faith. I refer to that faith which rests in the consolation of His resurrection for our justification as well as His death for our offenses. Do please note that these are NOT the same thing!

- G. It is one thing to believe that Christ died for our sins; it is another to believe He rose for our justification. One is faith to accept Him as the price paid for our sins; the other is faith to claim Him as our righteousness day by day as we reckon the old man dead and buried (in baptism) and resurrected to walk in newness of life.
- H. The "if" comes in strongly here, for not many who believed are possessors of that faith which renounces the world and the old man with his deeds and trusts Him to make our lives according to His own will.

### **Justification**

- A. When one's faith OBEYS (by works) then that one is "justified" before God. He is counted righteous in that matter. Justification is NOT something said to be accomplished for all time in the first act of faith. Abraham is the example: He was "justified" when he believed God regarding the promised seed (Genesis 15:5,6).
- B. This was LONG AFTER he had trusted God as his Savior. Then he was justified when he offered Isaac his son on the altar (Genesis 22:1-19; James 2:21-24).
- C. Please note that "imputed unto him for righteousness" (James 2:23) and "is justified" (James 2:24) mean exactly the same thing. In this act of Abraham's "faith wrought with his works" and was brought to perfection, that is, it came to "walk," or take successive steps.
- D. The note in the Scofield Bible that makes this justification in the sight of MAN (See Romans 4:2) needs to be taken with quite a bit of salt. Who counted Abraham righteous in Genesis 15:6 as quoted in Romans 4:3? At what time in Abraham's life did God do this? Was this when Abraham FIRST believed? I think NOT. Surely it was not first faith which offered Isaac. Claiming God's promises calls for faith that OBEYS. The WORK in the act does not get the recognition, but the faith. But unless it is such faith as DOES work it is not the kind that God counts for righteousness.
- E. I am simply asking brethren to restudy the meaning of

JUSTIFICATION and note it is not something God finishes when we first trust Him. That act of claiming his promise God does account for righteousness, but He continues to so account every act which claims His promises. This we call faithfulness and without such obedience of faith there is no inheritance in the kingdom of God.

- F. Abraham, nor any other believer, may glory before God. This will never do, for it was not by his merits in any case. It is always by grace. But the idea that God sees faith while man sees works is an over-simplification of this Truth. The inspired Record represents God as seeing our faith IN OUR WORKS: He said by His angel, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." This anthropomorphism represents God as SEEING Abraham's faith and counting it to him for righteousness. GOD DEFINITELY LOOKS FOR OUR FAITH IN OUR WORKS and if it is not seen there by Him then we are NOT counted righteous – not justified, though we may have believed Him at one time.
- G. Let me repeat: Justification is not the same as that "salvation" (?) which occurs when we first trust Christ. Justification has to do with the saving of our lives. It is that bringing of our wills into harmony with His will. The whole point of Paul's explanation concerning justification and its not being by works but by faith is that what the law (through its deeds) could not accomplish in a lifetime, faith does accomplish daily. It justifies.
- H. This is a daily – a progressive – matter. The law was never intended as a Savior. It was NEVER given to lost sinners to bring them to be saved (?) in that first step; it was "added" to God's people to mark off sin for what it truly is so they would WALK BY FAITH. It "shut up unto the faith" men to whom it was given. It crowded out any hope of justification through the strength of a man. (See Galatians 3:23).

#### **The Law and Baptism**

- A. Before the law of commandments was given the

"promise" (of an inheritance) was to Abraham and his seed. This was in a covenant made 430 years before the law. These covenanted promises did NOT pertain to the matter of being "saved" as we describe what happens when men first believe. They pertained to an inheritance: a seed and seeds, a land, kings, a King, safety, etc.

- B. The law was added 430 years later in order to teach the people of God how short they were falling, that is, "because of transgressions," so they would come by faith and obey by faith every day. This is why it made daily requirements on the people. If it had pertained to being "saved" it would not have kept on requiring the same man to offer daily, to observe daily ordinances and rituals.
- C. Some requirements, like circumcision were done ONCE, but its lesson was for life. Baptism is done ONCE, but its lesson is for life. Other ordinances, like the sacrifices, holy days, etc., were repeated. The Lord's Supper is repeated by us today for its lessons are needed repeatedly.
- D. Then the law proved that the flesh could not be faithful. It made its demands on the flesh and thus eliminated it as able to please God, shutting men up to the faith of Christ. By proving the helplessness of the flesh a man was taught that the flesh could not please God.
- E. The righteousness which the law required is such as God STILL demands of men today (Romans 8:4). These demands are NOT done away. Instead, in this sense the law is established (Romans 4:31), it being holy, just, and good. How can this righteousness be produced? (Remember: "righteousness" and "justification" are the same.) Only by faith can this be produced.
- F. In the wisdom of God, and according to a mystery not revealed in ages past, provision is made for Christ, through the Holy Spirit, to live his life in our bodies and produce these fruits of the Spirit – fruits of righteousness – in us. This is called the "ministration of the Spirit" as against the "ministration of condemnation." It is a "ministration of righteousness" as against a "ministration of death." (See 2

Corinthians 3:5ff.)

- G. As we behold the glory of the Lord mirrored to us in the Word and especially in His body, the church, yielding to Him by faith, we are "changed into the same image," not all at once, not in one act when we first trust, but "from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).
- H. Both Jews and Gentiles may partake of "His promises IN CHRIST by the Gospel," becoming "fellow-heirs" of an inheritance – members of one body. It ought to be observed that there is no justification outside this "body," the church. This is not to say that none have believed outside, for all do who believe at all, but none has this ministry of righteousness except he be "in Christ" which is to be in His body. We are first "baptized into Christ," putting Him on, and then we must put on Christ as a daily practice of faith (Galatians 3:27; Romans 13:14; Ephesians 4:24).

*"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (of an inheritance, a reward). "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." — Hebrews 10:35, 36*

### **Search the Scriptures**

- A. Can't we see here that consistent application throughout the Scriptures that God is pleased with a walk of faith but not with one who makes the first step and then draws back? What is this drawing back? Does it mean to be lost as at the first? Surely the "shrinking back" is something only possible in one who had made progress in faith – not an alien sinner.
- B. These Hebrew Christians were "neglecting" their salvation and wavering on the verge of going back on their Lord, as though the price of faithfulness were too high. Paul reminded them that none of them had resisted sin to the price of bloodshed (12:4), so they had not paid the su-

preme price of faithfulness.

- C. No, one will not become lost as at the first; we are not such as shrink back to perdition but we are of faith which gains the soul (life). But a sheep may stray away (draw back) and become a lost sheep – outside the fold (the church) and void of blessings and an inheritance.
- D. So we conclude that there is no merit in the flesh, or in the works of the flesh, but there is no inheritance for the “faith” which will not work. One must prove worthy to receive the inheritance. He can do this through “the faith of Christ” which is evident in a life of obedience.



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### Children of the Kingdom

- A. First, it is necessary to know how the Bible uses its terms. What does "children of the kingdom" mean? See Matthew 13:38. It could even influence our thinking as to what it means to be "children of God" if we learn this term: "children of..."
- B. Does it mean "begotten and born of?" How do we then understand the following passages?
1. "children of light" (Luke 16:8? John 12:36; Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5)
  2. "Children of the day" (1 Thessalonians 5:5)
  3. "Children of promise" (Romans 9:8; Galatians 4:28)
  4. "Children of wickedness" (2 Samuel 7:10)
  5. "Children of the wicked one" (Matthew 13:38)
  6. "Children of iniquity" (2 Samuel 3:34)
  7. "Children of the devil" (1 John 3:10)
  8. "Children of disobedience" (Ephesians 5:6? Colossians 3:6)
  9. "Children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3)
  10. "Children of this world" (Luke 20:34)
  11. "Children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36)
- B. It should be obvious by now that "children of" does NOT mean "begotten of and born of." One may indeed be begotten of the Spirit and born of God and this language is correlative to the applications of the term "children of," but no one would contend that there is always such a begetting or being born.
- C. The language is designed to teach that the one so described has qualities or characteristics of that of which he is said to be a child. Then to be a child of light is to be one

who loves the light, walks in the light, and comes to the light. A "child of darkness" loves the darkness, walks in darkness, and will not come to the light.

- D. "Children of disobedience" love disobedience, walk in that kind of life. "Children of the wicked one" are not necessarily "born of the devil" any more than "children of the devil" are "born" of him, but they live as the devil would live, or as pleases him; they walk in his ways and do his deeds (cf. John 8:44).
- E. So do children of God walk in God's ways and do His works. This is not to say that they are not "begotten" or "born" of Him, for only by the work of the Spirit – only as the Spirit DWELLS in one – can he walk in God's ways or do His works and thus it is said that "it is God which worketh in (him) both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

#### **Children of Abraham**

- A. "Children of Abraham" are not those begotten of Abraham or born in the natural lineage merely, but those who "do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). It was right in this connection that Jesus taught that those Jews, though they believed on Him (John 8:30-31), were children of the devil. They did the works of the devil: they loved a lie and they sought to kill Jesus. Satan is the Father of a lie (John 8:44), meaning that he originated the lie and it is characteristic of him for one to lie.
- B. The "believing" which these Jews did is not described, but it was such as allowed them to love a lie and seek to kill Jesus. We explain by saying it was "of the head and not of the heart" which is correct. But when is "believing" "of the heart"? Evidently it is "of the heart" when it moves one to do the works of Abraham, the will of God! Unless there is a living of Truth in everyday experience one's believing leaves him in no different position from those "believing" Jews who were of their father the devil.
- C. "Children of disobedience" are those who are characterized by disobedience. Any one may disobey, but a child of light

will SEE his error and repent and come to the light confessing his error. Do all who profess faith in Christ do this? No! Does this mean they are never believed? No! But it means they are NOT "children of light." They are NOT doing the works of Abraham, so they are not "children of Abraham."

- D. I would caution the reader against attributing some particular powers to that "believing" he did at the first, as though such gave him a position as children of God or children of the resurrection or children of the day or children of Abraham. Unless his walk – his life – is characterized by qualities named he is not a child of that thing (or person).

### **Kingdom Fruit**

- A. Children of the kingdom, then, are the product of the seed (Word of the kingdom, Matthew 13:19) which bears kingdom fruit. They "seek FIRST the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).
- B. Actually, no other explanation is needed. But I would like to go further to make the connection between the terms "children" and "heirs" and "inheriting." Also, there is a seeming discrepancy between our conclusion and Mathew 8:12 which says "the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
- C. Who are these "children of the kingdom" who are cast out? What are they cast out of?
- D. It should be observed that every term descriptive of God's special people is used of them as descriptive of their POSITION.
- E. For example: "SAINTS" are those set apart, FROM the world, TO the Lord" by the Holy Spirit or through identification with God's people Israel. Now if one is truly SET APART from the world he is not walking in its ways; he is holy. His life is pure and clean.
- F. This is the way it ought to be. But some (as at Corinth) are called "saints" who were A PART of the world, not APART

FROM it. Still they are saints. This is not to tell us that we can "play" saint and live as a part of the world. In the POSITION of those set apart by the Spirit – IN THE CHURCH – one is a saint. BUT ONE MAY NOT MEASURE UP TO THE POSITION'S DEMANDS and be ultimately CUT OFF from that position.

### **Israel**

- A. In the Old Testament the nation of Israel was the COVENANT PEOPLE. IN THAT NATION was the POSITION of blessing and promise. To that nation were the promises made and "the blessing of Abraham" (Galatians 3:14) belonged to that nation. However, individual Jews began to "count on" their position to give them the blessings when IN HEART they did not qualify. Thus they "argued" with John the Baptist about the need of repentance, claiming Abraham as their father, and he had to tell them that God could raise up children to Abraham of the very stones (Matthew 3:9), so there was no merit in the mere POSITION unless the heart be right (cf. Romans 2:28,29). This same matter came up again between Jesus and the Jews (John 8:33,44).
- B. So what happened to these Jews who were IN THE POSITION of the blessing and could thereby be called "children of the kingdom?" They were "cut off" (Romans 11:20) and "cast out" of the house (kingdom, cf. Isaiah 2:2), for only the "SON" can abide in the house forever (John 8:34,35). The son is the heir but the mere servant is not. That son's POSITION, until he is capable of being responsible, does not differ from the servant position (Galatians 4:1). If, however, when he reaches the "time appointed of the father" does not assume that responsibility, but "sells his birthright" for PRESENT good, then he may not inherit the father's goods and abide in the father's "house." This is the illustration seen in Esau (Hebrews 12:14-17).

### **Church**

- A. So there is such a thing as "failing of the grace of God" (Hebrews 12:15) and this warning is given to believ-

ers IN THE POSITION of sons and heirs. That POSITION was the "nation" of Israel in the O.T. Today it is the "holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9) or the church. Even though one has believed and may be "saved" he must "stand by faith" (Romans 11:20), "be not high-minded, but fear," and "continue in His goodness: otherwise (he) also shall be cut off (Romans 11:20, 22) from this covenant POSITION so as NOT to inherit the blessing.

- B. This should show us the terrific responsibility of those who hear the Gospel of the kingdom, come into the true church, and come to the full knowledge of the truth.

*"For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" — 2 Peter 2:21*

- C. The whole context of 2 Peter chapter two applies to this situation.
- D. "Falling away," "falling from grace," "drawing back unto perdition," and similar terms in the Bible DO NOT teach an Armenian doctrine of "saved and lost again." Confusion over this teaching grows out of ignorance of the Bible teaching as to POSITION and pertains to a SPECIAL or covenant people. The hyper-Calvinistic teachers have not begun to deal adequately with these passages, with their CONDITIONS and warnings. Arraying Scripture against Scripture is not the answer wither. We must accept what the Word says.
- E. The "elect" are those of this special people. Those ELECT by POSITION must make their calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10) in which case they "shall never fall."
- F. The children of the kingdom BY POSITION are responsible to bear kingdom fruits – works that characterize the kingdom. If they do not they cannot INHERIT the kingdom. Thus is the new birth essential to entrance (John 3; see also 2 Peter 1:11).

**Outside**

- A. Now, if you are asking "what shall happen to those "children of the kingdom" who are cast out?" Be sure it is not to learn whether you would be willing to settle for some inferior place "outside." It is a losing of rewards, to be sure, for he has taken away from him even that which he seemed to have. But, then, there were the stripes (Luke 12:47), the paying (Matthew 5:26), the prison (Matthew 5:26), the tormentors (Matthew 18:34,35), the "outer darkness" (Matthew 25:30), the fiery indignation (Hebrews 10:27), etc.
- B. Surely these things bespeak "the wrath of God which cometh upon the children of disobedience (Colossians 3:6). "Be not high-minded, but fear." No, we are "not appointed ...to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." But Paul labored among the elect, enduring much, that they might obtain this salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:9; 2 Timothy 2:10-13).

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### The Kingdom Preached...

#### ...And Then Shall the End Come

- A. We have shown that the Kingdom Gospel is the one true Gospel, though its preaching at various times and places receives a varying emphasis. In its being preached to Abraham the emphasis was upon the coming of the Seed in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed (Galatians 3:8, 16).
- B. When John the Baptist preached it he stressed the nearness of the kingdom because the King was "at hand" and men must repent and be prepared to receive Him. Jesus and the apostles gave this same emphasis.
- C. A little later Paul stressed the fact of His death for our sins ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES, His burial, and His resurrection the third day ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES. He insisted that any "other gospel" was not a true one, though preached by himself or angels, but a perverted Gospel.
- D. He insisted that its message was age-old and SAVED THE LIVES of men of faith, a thing which no mere law-keeping could ever do. He said that any Judaizer or legalizer who would re-enslave through law-keeping those who had trusted ("begun in the Spirit," Galatians 3:3) in Christ were perverting the Gospel of Christ and he would that they were "cut off" (Galatians 5:12), vowing that he who so troubled these brethren (Galatians 5:11) would bear his own judgment (Galatians 5:10).
- E. Then in the end of this age, DURING THE TRIBULATION, while antichrist is trying the patience of the saints (Revelation 14:12) an ANGEL shall preach this age-old "everlasting Gospel." At that time its "good news" is that God's judgment time has arrived - "the hour of his judgment is come" - and He is about to pour out His wrath against those who would persecute His people (Revelation

14:6, 7). It surely will be good news to the saints to hear the angel announce that their persecutors are about to receive their just judgment.

### **Same Message**

- A. So the Gospel is ever the same, though its "good news" takes on a different emphasis under varying circumstances. The emphasis on the coming of the King and the wrath of God against His enemies is to be the special emphasis at the end. Just now I feel sure the emphasis should be on the fact of a coming Kingdom and the necessary preparation for that Glad DAY OF THE LORD.
- B. If it is a "witness" and all nations must have this testimony it is high time it was being given to all nations. The "unequal" stressing of His death for our sins while almost entirely failing to point out the significance of His resurrection FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION "according to the Scriptures" has created a false impression in most minds.
- C. It would seem that getting a man to take the first step of faith is about the extent of God's will for him, since getting him "ready for heaven" is the most important thing. But God would have us know that He purposes to "save the world." Not all men in the world, though He is willing, but the creation itself must be renewed and the systems of men must be removed so that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- D. The very attitude of man makes him long for peace on earth. This must come, but it cannot come while man's ways, governments, philosophies, and systems prevail. The GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM contains the good news that God is going to remove the systems and philosophies of men and set up a kingdom of righteousness in which His will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- E. There never has been a time when such a message should have such ready hearers. But the traditional emphasis has so conditioned men for something else – a rather selfish notion of personal deliverance from hell to heaven – until men do not expect grace to save the world from itself and



bring Christ back and set Him on David's throne.

- F. This is the message we ought to be giving special emphasis. It is a message which insists that one trust Christ as His Savior, then continue to trust Him as His Master and Lord who has a right to rule His life – NOW and later. It is a message which insists on godliness and demands that men cease hiding behind a mere religious cloak, outward forms, or orthodox systems, and WALK BY FAITH with a view to the soon return of the King. It is a message of watchfulness. It is one which demands holiness and looks to the Holy Spirit to produce such in the lives of men.
- G. This is no new message, for it is in the Bible, but the so-called "evangelistic" emphasis has left much lacking in the area of personal righteousness.

#### **Not Saved By Works**

- A. It is almost invariable in our day if someone insists on personal holiness and a walk of obedience that certain self-styled "grace preachers" will bring charges of "salvation by works."
- B. The so-called "holiness groups" of Protestants have put such an emphasis on the man's part in this obedience until God is robbed of His glory and "grace preachers" automatically would put all who stress obedience in a class with these. Or they will classify them with others who emphasize certain deeds or ordinances as essential to salvation. "Obedience of faith" is a Bible term (Romans 16:26) and describes a posture on the part of men which God will honor, both in this life and in the age to come. It is a condition which He would have in "all nations."
- C. We must not allow the wrong emphasis of some to deter us from what God requires. If there is any element of truth in what some Holiness teaches then may we believe it. We ought to believe the Truth even if the devil should teach it, though being wary lest we become deceived by his wrong application. In Paul's day there were some who preached Christ "of envy and strife" and "of contention, not sincerely." But Paul was glad – glad because the Gospel was

preached (Philippians 1:15-18).

- D. May we not be discouraged then, if we find some label put on us by some uncharitable brother. If we insist that the saving of our lives demands Scriptural baptism some uncharitable brother may put on a label of "Campbellite" or "Mormon." Yet the same brother believes, often as not, that one must be a member of a New Testament church (which requires baptism) in order to be in the Bride of Christ. He can't see his own inconsistency. Of course, one should be a church member, Scripturally baptized; that is what we insist on. In it all it is the HEART ATTITUDE which counts – not the mere outward ordinance or works. But we insist on the obedience of faith. They accused Paul of preaching that men must do evil that good may come (Romans 3:8). So we need not expect all men to understand.

#### **Preaching the Truth**

- A. Some will cry "That is what Armstrong preaches!" referring to the World Tomorrow Broadcast of the Radio Church of God. Suppose he does! Are you going to refrain from everything Armstrong preaches? He says there is a God who created the heavens and the earth. He has a world-wide radio ministry, I understand. Could it be that He must introduce to the world the Gospel of the Kingdom which His true churches have failed to preach with proper emphasis? I do not say so, but there is no doubt that somebody must preach such a Gospel. It is to be for a witness to all nations AND THEN SHALL THE END COME.
- B. Could it be that our own failure has DELAYED the end this long? I do not endorse Armstrong, or the others who may preach works and a coming kingdom. Surely I do not endorse some of their preaching, such as "no hell." But I trust not to let fear of man hinder my preaching what God says.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### Guests at the Marriage Feast

- A. Both the Old & New Testaments tell of a Feast which God has prepared for certain men of faith. It is a feast of fat things (Isaiah 25:6), a table of consolation (Psalms 23:5), a marriage supper (Matthew 22:2; Revelation 19:9; Luke 14:16, 24).
- B. Doubtless we need some information about the nature of such things in the customs of people in Christ's days on earth, and before, which would contribute to the sense of this symbol. Such customs are described by various ones and they do not agree with our modern-day customs at all.
- C. Thus we may force a false conclusion if we suppose corresponding attendants and practices to those in our modern weddings.
- D. Looking at the parable of the marriage feast (Matthew 22:1-14) we note that a marriage (feast) is made for the King's Son. Certain invited "guests" (diners) have refused to come, ridiculing the feast and the King. Then the King sent out his servants to the various highways and intersections of the city to bid all they might find to come to the marriage and the consequent feast.

### The Invitation

- A. This is not the whole story but let us make application: The King is God the Father who has purposed a "marriage" for His Son, Christ. Invited was a special group, Israel, the nation – for it was they who ridiculed the Gospel of the Kingdom when it was announced as "at hand" (all things ready). The "marriage" is that intimate joining of the King with His people in the relationship of King and Queen. This "Queen" is mentioned in Psalms 45:9. This whole Psalm sets forth this wedding as representative of "kingdom blessedness." The "Bride" is the King's wife who shall reign with Him in glory in the coming Kingdom.

- B. The king was "ready" when Christ came to earth; the kingdom was "at hand." But the invited marriage "guests" would not then come. Who were these?
- C. Some will suppose that Christ had no Bride called out and ready at this time, thinking the church was not established until Pentecost, but this is a mistake (John 3:29). This "Bride" was composed of the faithful saved who followed Christ. How about John Himself? Many will question this statement, but he was one of these, being a "friend" as Jesus referred to them all (John 15:13-14), conditionally.
- D. The condition to remaining a "friend" was their willingness to obey (John 15:14). Because the individuals of the elect nation did not obey the invitation when the feast was ready, the Master said, "None of those men which were bidden (called, invited) shall taste of my supper (Luke 14:24).
- E. Who had been invited? The nation of Israel to whom the Kingdom had been covenanted. They failed to make their "calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10), as many are doing today. The "invitation" is not being heeded. Almost the last invitation in the Bible is "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come" (Revelation 22:17). "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9). The invitation is not merely to trust Jesus as Savior, but to heed the call to OBEY and get "ready" for the King. "His wife (woman) hath made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7). She could not do this of herself. She is not worthy. But she must have on the wedding garment of the Bride: "The righteousness (righteous works – not the same word as Romans 4:6, 9, et al.) of saints." Her preparation is "by grace through faith" and her own merit cannot avail, but she has the responsibility to submit unto her Lord. This seems to have been the failing of the man without a wedding garment. It was the error of the "foolish virgins." They had their own plans and methods.

### **The Guests**

- A. Since the "elect" nation was "cut off" and cannot "taste"

His supper others must be found who will bring forth the fruits of the kingdom (Matthew 21:43). Such a "nation" is the elect church (1 Peter 2:4, 9), embracing engrafted Gentiles (Romans 11:17; Galatians 6:16).

- B. B. Another name for these "friends" of the Christ is "children of the Bride-chamber" (Mark 2:19; Matthew 9:15; Luke 5:34). Both "friends" and "children" are plural terms, as is the word "guests." The question is: Who are these "guests?" Are they someone invited apart from the Bride herself? Tradition has taught us this. The argument is made that "the Bride would not invite herself to her own wedding."
- C. But this mere logic is not according to the facts. Is not the Spirit and the Bride inviting men to come all the way and share in this special glory which shall belong to the Queen? She is not inviting herself but she is doing her best, or ought to be, to "make friends by means of the unrighteous mammon" (Luke 16:9). It is not incongruous to find "friends" and "Bride" the same. "The children of the Bride-chamber" who rejoiced with Christ and "fasted" when he was taken from them were not mere "outsiders" but the very members of the Bride.
- D. The "guests" at the wedding shall be those "elect" who are reached to fill up the number which were not found in Israel because that people ridiculed such a King as the one from Nazareth and went on their own rebellious ways, but which shall be taken from among the Gentiles to fill up that number. They are the ones who partake of the Supper as diners. The privilege of sitting at table with Him shall not belong to those, even who trusted the Savior, who ridiculed Him as Lord and King.

### **The Marriage Feast**

- A. When it is seen just what the SUPPER is then it will be seen why the unfaithful shall not partake of it. The marriage is the uniting of the King with His Queen to rule in the Kingdom. This is a figure of speech found in the East, for the taking of the throne was so described.

- B. This figure is seen in Isaiah 62 (specifically Isaiah 62:4) where it is said, "Thy land shall be married." Then see how Isaiah 62:5 confirms this figure. The city, Jerusalem, becomes the Bride city (just as in Revelation 21:9; Isaiah 62:1, 3). She is called the "daughter of Zion." This figure is also set forth in Ezekiel 16. Note specially the last 4 verses (Ezekiel 16:60-63).
- C. Then if the marriage is the joining with Christ in rule by the Bride (faithful), the Supper is the apportionment and enjoyment of the rewards. This is seen in Isaiah 62:11. Those who are "saved as by fire" have no part in this Supper, not even as a guest. This would be reward, but they lose all reward.
- D. So we conclude that the "guests" comprise the Bride of Christ and the Supper is a figure descriptive of the joys and blessings of the reward of the inheritance.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### Kingdom May Be Near

- A. Those who think the church (or the family, or the churches, etc.) is the kingdom would readily agree with this title.
- B. But those who have studied carefully, or kept up with these articles, will know that the Kingdom of God (or of heaven, being the same) as prophesized in the Old Testament and further explained in the New is the reign of the Christ with the rod of iron from David's throne on Mt. Zion in peace and righteousness, beginning when the King returns to earth and never ending (Luke 1:32, 33; Revelation 2:27; Revelation 12:10; Isaiah 11:4, 5, 9, 10).

### "At Hand"

- A. John the Baptist announced the kingdom as "at hand" (near) in his day. He made no attempt to explain what he meant by kingdom, though it is obvious that his hearers had in mind the reign of Messiah. Jesus preached the same thing (Mark 1:14, 15), and when Jesus sent forth the Twelve this was their message (Matthew 10:7).
- B. This was also the message to be preached by the Seventy (Luke 10:9). It continued to be the message of the Lord and His disciples until it became obvious that Israel, though its representative leaders, though they had "the key of knowledge," refused to enter or allow others who would to do so (Luke 11:52).
- C. This transition begins to show in the upbraiding of those cities which heard and witnessed His message and miracles (Matthew 11:20-30) and was completed after their rejection (Matthew 21:43). This explains the use of parables, beginning in Matthew 13. It is the key to their sin in Matthew 12:31, 32. The whole tenor of Christ's ministry and the message of the four Gospels is explained in the light of this message, its rejection, and His turning to the Gentiles.

- D. Though the disciples, including Paul to the end of his ministry, preached the kingdom, they no longer preached it as "at hand" any more. Rather, it will be "nigh at hand" in the end of this age when the signs predicted are seen (Luke 21:31).
- E. Why preach the kingdom, as Paul did (Acts 28:23, 31) if it is not "at hand," (near) or present now? Because it is our "blessed hope." The promise and God's purpose to bring it to pass engages every heart and demands our faith in Him and our obedient submission till the exiled King returns (Luke 19:15).
- F. Meantime, Israel's "house" is left desolate (Matthew 23:38, 39). Those of that nation who recognized the Messiah when He came were sorely disappointed when He died (Luke 24:21), not understanding the necessity of His suffering (Luke 24:25-27). It seems that none of the disciples understood this until after His resurrection (John 12:16).
- G. Then when He was alive from the dead they would naturally expect Him to fulfill the prophets in restoring Israel (Acts 1:6; see Isaiah 11:11; also see previous article, July, 1964.)
- H. But Jesus answered their question by saying it was not for them to know the times or seasons which the Father has put in His own power (Acts 1:7). So nobody knows the day or hour when the King shall return (Mark 13:32). Therefore, a sure mark of a false teacher is the setting of dates.

#### **Take Heed**

- A. Still, we may know that the kingdom, that is, the return of the King (Revelation 11:15) is near (Luke 21:30). We must not let ourselves become the victims of that carelessness which doubts the nearness (Luke 12:45).
- B. The Lord does "tarry long" (Matthew 25:5) and many will "sleep." We do not believe in that master deception, THE IMMINENT COMING OF CHRIST, being sure there are certain things which must come to pass before then, and sure also that that day need not "overtake" us "as a thief" (1



Thessalonians 5:4).

- C. The signs are all around us. The "falling away" is specially evident. The distress of nations is beginning – only beginning. The wars and rumors of wars are in evidence. We have not yet seen Jerusalem compassed with armies (Luke 21:20) which must precede His coming (Zechariah 14:1-4). Nor have we seen "the abomination of desolation" (Matthew 24:15).
- D. The preachers of an imminent coming have TWO comings some time apart, hence they do not expect to see these things that belong to the tribulation period. How shocking that these things will assail the elect (Matthew 24:24) but He has foretold them so we need not be distressed (Matthew 24:25, 26). After all, the three Hebrew children were safe IN the fiery furnace.
- E. So God's elect will be safe IN the tribulation. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure..." (2 Peter 1:10).

#### **Christ's Delay**

- A. There are two things which account for the delay in the King's return, though neither of these constitutes a sign, except indirectly.
- B. One thing which must be accomplished is the taking out of a people for His name. This is called "the fullness" – "the fullness of the Gentiles" and the "fullness" of Israel (Romans 11:12, 25).
- C. I understand this to refer to a full number of "elect" ones who must be "come in" to covenant relationship, qualified to share the rule and glory of the Lord. No man knows how many of these there are, either of the Gentiles or of the nation of Israel, though some point to the 144,000 (Revelation 14:1).
- D. But even if we knew the exact number we could not count, for they are from among those who have believed at least since Abel. It is not all who have believed for all shall not reign (Revelation 2:26). Efforts to harvest larger and larg-

er numbers as believers will not hasten the day necessarily for they may not qualify as "elect" of God. It IS our prerogative to "hasten the coming," however. (See 2 Peter 3:12 margin).

- E. The other thing which delays the coming is God's mercy (or justice), depending on how one views it. God assured Abraham that his and his seed's inheriting of the land of promise must await the time when the iniquity of the Amorites should be full (Genesis 15:16). The four hundred years (Genesis 15:13) would give them time.
- F. So in the fourth generation Israel could go out of Egypt and from the house of bondage into the promised land. Still there were the 40 years in the wilderness. More time yet. The desolation of Israel's house, the trodding down of the city of Jerusalem also, and even an undetermined "bondage" or tribulation must be fulfilled first (Luke 21:24). This explains the double barbed wire fence dividing that city today and the Arab occupation of the portion where the old temple was.
- G. The iniquity of the human race is fast filling up. It must "abound" (Matthew 24:12) and we are seeing "evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse" (2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13).
- H. The present forsaking of the churches, the increase of rebellion against constituted authority, the rioting and confusion, the destruction of liberties – all make us know that the iniquity of the Gentiles and of the Jews is coming to the full. How long, O Lord? It cannot be much longer. "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads (trust God and be encouraged); for your redemption ("the day of redemption," Ephesians 4:30; see Luke 2:38) draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### Kingdom and New Revelation

- A. This title may stop some readers from going any further. We hope not! It may not mean what you think it does.
- B. The language of the Old and New Testament is Divine and no less than verbally inspired. We believe it is a Revelation of the Person of our God. We freely grant that God is larger than His Word and "that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:7). Some might say, "But this will not be written." It matters not whether it is written, spoken or acted out, it is none the less a revelation.

### God's Witnesses

- A. In ages past God has never left himself without a witness (Acts 14:17), speaking largely by "the things that are made" (His creation) (Psalms 19:1ff; Romans 1:20, 21; Romans 10:18), speaking "from heaven" (Romans 1:18) and by His Spirit (evidently "in them," Romans 1:19).
- B. Such information lets us know that God has met each need for revealing Himself and His will as it arose. Thus Revelation is progressive, being given "in parts." A period of at least 1,600 years elapsed during the giving of the Old and New Testaments.
- C. There was a lapse of some 400 years between the last book of the Old Testament and the coming of Christ and yet more years before the New Testament was written.
- D. The whole "germ" of Truth is possibly found in the first "part" of the inspired record. There is some question as to what this might have been. It was possibly the Book of Job, but the Pentateuch of first five books of the O.T. came shortly thereafter. In this section surely there is the purpose of God to establish a kingdom or dominion in which He should exercise His righteous will in flesh.

- E. All successive revelation has enlarged on this "purpose" and explained how God will bring it to pass. This purpose is revealed in "key statements" known as "covenants." There is actually ONE purpose but the progressive revelation of this purpose has made the purpose known a little at a time.
- F. Thus the Old Testament contains this purpose and many details, but many of these details are very obscure, or meaningless, until the New Testament portion of the revelation. (By "revelation" we mean not only the last book in our English Bibles but all of God's inspired and manifested will.)
- G. Must we assume that the New Testament is the finish of this revelation? I think not. But I do think that it is sufficient for this age. We do not believe there is any need for more Truth to be revealed, but we confess there is great need for discernment of what is revealed.

#### **The Kingdom Age**

- A. A change of age or dispensation usually calls for a new revelation. With the coming of Messiah the first time there was the need for a revelation for this age (the church age). This furnishes strong inference that when He comes and changes the order again – sets up His kingdom – new revelation will proceed apace.
- B. I do not presume to say whether this will be written, as the Old and New Testaments, but doubtless we need further explanation about the will and character of our God.
- C. The whole plan was not unfolded in the beginning for it would only have confused men, or vicious men would have perverted it in attempted explanation or realization. The prophetic Word reveals much more than is ordinarily realized or appreciated, but vain man has even perverted that. The veiled nature of this language is for a purpose which we shall see.
- D. The "manifestation of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19) and the assignment of honors and position (Matthew 20:23)

are matters which must wait for the coming of the kingdom. The declaration of the Gospel of peace and glory shall have its final or ultimate fulfillment in the kingdom (Nahum 1:15; Isaiah 52:6-8) though there is a sense in which it receives an "inchoate" fulfillment in this age (Romans 10:15).

- E. This is characteristic of prophetic language. God is not guilty of "double talk," but His language is fraught with far more sense than appears on the surface. So, we are told, "The Lord gave the Word: great was the army of those that published it" (Psalms 68:11).
- F. This whole psalm clearly describes the kingdom AFTER the return of the King. Little wonder that "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9). This is to be "knowledge of the glory of the Lord" (Habakkuk 2:14), a subject which few men know much about yet. But Ezekiel tells us repeatedly that "men shall see it" (His glory) "and then shall they know" that He is the Lord (cf. Ezekiel 24:27; Ezekiel 25:5, 7, 11, 14, 17; Ezekiel 26:6; Ezekiel 28:22, 23, 24, 26; Ezekiel 29:9, 16, 21, et al.).
- G. From Jerusalem and Mt. Zion shall God's law and the knowledge of the Lord flow forth (Isaiah 2:3).
- H. I would even offer by way of suggestion that much of this revelation shall be given at Mt. Sinai, as it was when Israel was being prepared to enter the land the first time. Surely it is there that God will "plead" with Israel "face to face" (Ezekiel 20:35).
- I. The language of Deuteronomy 33:2, 3 surely has an ultimate fulfillment in the future when the Lord returns "with ten thousands of saints" (cf. also Jude 14) and there "shall go forth from His right hand" "a fiery law for them" (Jude 2). Zechariah 8:23 also suggests that men of all nations shall gladly "learn" from Israel and Israel's Messiah (cf. Deuteronomy 33:3).
- J. The ultimate fulfillment of that "new covenant" language (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:10-12; Hebrews

10:16) shall be realized in the kingdom (Isaiah 54:13; John 6:45), though we NOW experience an inchoate fulfillment of this IN CHRIST, through the "earnest" of His Spirit (Romans 14:17; Ephesians 1:14; 2 Corinthians 1:22).

- K. Joel's reference to the "sons and daughters" prophesying and the old men dreaming dreams (Joel 2:28, 29) can hardly be said to have received its complete fulfillment at Pentecost.
- L. Again we have an example of the manner in which prophetic language has a larger sense and FAR fulfillment as well as a lesser and NEAR fulfillment. These dreams and prophecies, doubtless, shall be part of a new revelation from God, to go along with a new language (Zephaniah 3:9), inchoately fulfilled at Pentecost in the "other tongues" (Acts 2:4). But the "pure language" of the kingdom shall furnish the ultimate reversal of the "confusion" of Babel.
- M. The finishing of the mystery of God (Revelation 10:7) calls for more revelation also.

#### **More Understanding**

- A. In addition to this actual giving of more Truth to further light God's purpose there is the matter of His "opening" His Word in the end of the age. Where Daniel was told to "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end" (Daniel 12:4), a special blessing is his who reads or hears the words of this prophecy, "for the time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3), referring to Revelation.
- B. This book of Revelation tells how a Lamb shall become a Lion in reality. This is a real revelation. The marvel of it shall more greatly confound and astound the world than did God's direct revelation at Sinai the first time (Hebrews 12:19, 20).
- C. This latter day, or "time of the end" "opening" of the Truth to the hearts of men is a special work of the Holy Spirit available to those who are yielded to Him (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:10-16). He performs this ministry (the "newness of

the spirit," (Romans 7:6) for men "in Christ" but not for those enslaved by "the oldness of the letter." If we would be "able ministers" then, it must be "of the spirit" and not of the letter (2 Corinthians 3:6).

- D. Man may have the "sufficiency" to read, run references, understand Greek and Hebrew, etc., but "to make manifest the savor of His knowledge in every place" (2 Corinthians 2:14) calls for a provision that the schools and scholarship cannot supply (2 Corinthians 2:16, 17; 2 Corinthians 3:5). I speak of spiritual discernment.

#### **Chapter and Verse, Please**

- A. Spiritual discernment is not afforded all men who believe. The flesh may think it has discernment while it is blind and this may even apply to men in a church of the Lord (Revelation 3:17). One may be forward to speak as though he has wisdom beyond the natural, but his language must be measured by the Book. Even so, the varied understandings of the Book surely prove that not all men have "the mind of Christ."
- B. I was taught for years that we might not even expect the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth or bring all things to our remembrance, "for," they said, "this, according to the rule of interpretation, applies only to the apostles whom Jesus personally taught and who would be "taught" and "reminded" of all His teachings so they could write the New Testament Scriptures." But I am convinced, on the contrary, that this language (John 14:26; John 16:13) applies, not to the apostles as men but, to the church as such, like the language of the Great Commission.
- C. Members of the church in covenant relationship, many expect the "Comforter" to fill their lives. This promise was to the church - not to all men, but to those who would "tarry and pray, hence, not even all the baptized disciples.
- D. A kind and sincere brother once chided me for holding that the Holy Spirit might be expected to guide us into all Truth, saying, "Why, you could go off on any kind of doctrine and say the Holy Spirit taught you." He even asked

me, "Do you understand all truth?"

- E. If the Spirit guides you into all Truth you ought to know all the Truth." But I could only answer that God has not promised to grant discernment of all of it at once. It is only as it is needed that He brings the sense to the heart of the man of God, to comfort, strengthen, enable, or otherwise provide for him in his hour of need. Thus Daniel's words were shut up to the time of the end but John's words (in Revelation) were open for "the time is at hand."

### **Revelation and Discernment**

- A. There is a difference, though, between revelation and discernment and neither means inspiration. Revelation is God's giving of His Truth by whatever means (creation, His Holy Spirit, Providence, etc.). Discernment is the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of a man yielded to Him, opening the eyes of his heart to give him spiritual understanding (cf. Ephesians 1:18; Ephesians 3:16, 18, 19).
- B. Inspiration is God's moving upon the mind and heart of "holy men, carrying them along to write just exactly what He would have written (2 Peter 1:21).
- C. No man is "inspired" today to know God's will. That is, no man is taken up by the power of the Spirit and has the Truth breathed into (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16) him. Instead, every man must take the revelations which are set before him and look to God to provide him with "enlightenment" or discernment of the sense. The witnesses God uses are:
1. "the things that are made"
  2. the written Word
  3. His providences (that is, his personal intervention in the course of events and affairs of men and nations)
  4. His people. Perhaps none of these would be an effectual and understandable testimony apart from the Holy Spirit's work with them.
- D. It is usually in combination that these instruments of revelation are used to get His Truth over to our hearts. Some



men are more responsive than others. It is true that none of us "seek after God," at least not before He has sought us. He knows our "frame" and He "opens the heart" of a Lydia or anyone as it should be so "opened."

- E. This causes an "attending unto the Word." This, in turn, produces an understanding which His grace has made possible and His will allows. We must not mark such things down as fatalistic or limited to God's Sovereign will, else there would be no explanation for "reward" and its varying from man to man.
- F. There ARE degrees of reward and this is determined by the distinctions between men. All men are NOT equal (not even created that way) but are different by reason of sin. It is OUR RESPONSIBILITY to receive the love of the Truth as God's grace has provided the possibility and the means. Thus we must study the Word, fellowship with the Saints in the body of Christ (the church), admonish and heed the admonitions of one another, observe God's providences, and ASK for wisdom (James 1:5) in faith.
- G. When we have done these things the Holy Spirit is not restricted in His providing us with discernment. We may so "restrict" is provingdHisHis proH5s His enlightenment just as certainly as men may "grieve" Him, "resist" Him, "quench" Him, or otherwise "rebel."
- H. This does not make man more powerful than God but He does His works according to His own character and if a man fails to come within the purview of His promises that man fails to receive or enjoy what could be His.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### Restoration of All Things

*"When they were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." — Acts 1:6, 7*

*"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ; which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." — Acts 3:19-21*

- A. These verses surely tell us that something had been lost to Israel and the disciples expected it to be restored. More, this included a kingdom which was once Israel's but which they did not possess when Jesus was on the earth. The disciples had come to understand, through tradition or Scripture or both, and possibly from the mouth of the Lord Himself, that this kingdom was to be given back to Israel.
- B. "The mouth of all the prophets," said Peter in this second passage, "since the world began" had spoken of a restoring of something lost. Now we see that there is coming a "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" when the Father "shall send Jesus" back to the earth. Presently the heaven must receive Him, but then He will return. These "times" no man is allowed to know now but they are put in the Father's own authority.

### Safe Conclusions

- A. The disciples were Israelites and had been led to believe in such a restoration for their people.

- B. Jesus, who surely knows, did not correct them and say, "You are mistaken about this kingdom; it is to be spiritual and not literal and will be given to a spiritual Israel and not the nation." He did not say this and we may safely infer that if it were NOT so He would have told them (see John 14:2).
- C. Dominion had been given to Adam in the garden (Genesis 1:26) but this was obviously not being enjoyed by man since the fall, or to this day (See Psalms 8:3-9 with Hebrews 2:5-9).
- D. A kingdom was provided for in the laws (government) given at Mt. Sinai and this functioned for a time in Canaan. The dominion of Israel in that land was always circumscribed by their own weakness and rebellion, only reaching a human or earthly glory under David and Solomon. Now all is gone.
- E. The prophets had told of the coming of the King all during these inchoate fulfillments of God's purpose for man to have dominion. Their language doubtless was not as clear or pointed as some would have liked – prophecy is designedly obscure – but there is little question but that man's dominion and literal rule was meant.
- F. While their language surely embraces more than the literal, there is no doubt that literal promises of health, wealth, peace, and prosperity abounded in their prophecies. And there is no way to spiritualize some of these promises. They are literal.
- G. Faith demands that we believe them to be real and literal, only adopting the other or spiritual sense when authorized by the passage and especially by an inspired explanation in the New Testament. For example, the promises were to Abraham and his seed, but the New Testament explains that the Seed is Christ (Galatians 3:16) and goes on to show how Gentiles may become children of Abraham (Galatians 3:26-29) while Israelites in the flesh may cease to be children (Romans 2:28, 29; Romans 9:7; Romans 11:21, 25).

- H. On the other hand, the "throne of David" on which the Christ should sit is not spiritual, but real, but the rulership there from is certainly to be "spiritual" (Isaiah 11:2-4). It was on the earth and will be "set up" there again, though it (the tabernacle, house, throne) be presently fallen down (Amos 9:11, 12; Acts 15:15-18).

### **In the Regeneration**

- A. This restoration or restitution is so complete and transforming as to be called a "regeneration" (Matthew 19:28), a "new birth" or such a making new as can be described by a birth. This "regeneration" is a birth of the whole creation (Romans 8:21) and this is our blessed hope (Romans 8:24).
- B. The Old Testament pinpoints the resurrection under this figure of a "birth" (Isaiah 26:17-19; Isaiah 66:7-9; Micah 5:3). This explains why Nicodemus should have understood about the new birth (John 3:10).
- C. This "regeneration" finds a miniature and counterpart in the "making new" of each individual who surrenders in faith (Titus 3:5), but the ultimate application of the language is to be the full change in and after the resurrection. And the connection of resurrection to this "regeneration" explains why baptism is such an appropriate symbol, since it depicts both a washing of the body (Hebrews 10:22) AND a burial and RESURRECTION (Romans 6:4, 5).
- D. The mere act can neither cleanse the body nor make alive (1 Peter 3:21), being only a figure like the flood, but the faith which motivates the act is honored by the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) and He both cleanses and makes alive unto God. At the same time, a man who has faith to declare his "old man" dead is "washed" and the act "shows" it to his brethren and the world (Acts 22:16).
- E. In introducing his resurrection theme to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15:8), Paul referred to himself as one "born out of due time." The time of the "regeneration" is when the Father shall send Jesus and it is then when Zion is to travail and bring forth her children, so Paul's experience

was likened to an "abortion" inasmuch as it illustrates how God can make Israel alive.

#### **Faith Restored**

- A. This "restoration" or "restitution" shall make the earth like the garden of Eden (Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 36:35) and man shall have dominion over it all (See Isaiah 11:6ff.).
- B. Then truly Israel shall be "the head and not the tail" (Deuteronomy 28:13), a blessing which Israel forfeited in their not keeping God's commandments but which shall be restored when God pours out His Spirit on them (Zechariah 12:10; Isaiah 32:15; Ezekiel 36:6-15; Ezekiel 37:11-14; Joel 2:28, 29).

#### **Israel Restored**

- A. The RESTORING of the kingdom to Israel means the tribes back in their own land (Ezekiel 36:24-28), though the "rebels" shall be purged out first (Ezekiel 20:37, 38) and the rest brought into the bond of the covenant.
- B. It means the reign of "David" as God's Shepherd king (Ezekiel 34:23-25) in peace and "David shall be as God" (Zechariah 12:8) for this is a figurative use of David's name for the Christ, even as the Christ shall sit on David's throne. (This identification of the Christ with His people – individuals, nation, and church – is one of the beautiful truths of the Bible.)

#### **Judges Restored**

This restoring further means the "restoring of the judges as at the first (Isaiah 1:26), an obvious reference to the sharing of God's kingly authority with His people or Bride (Revelation 5:10) on the basis of their faithfulness to Him (Revelation 2:26, 27; Romans 8:17; 2 Timothy 2:12).

#### **Worship Restored**

- A. Then there is certain restoring of the worship prescribed at Sinai. The priestly ministry is to go on, at least during the 1,000 years (Revelation 5:10; Isaiah 61:6; Isaiah 66:21). There is no doctrine of "the priesthood of all believers" in

the Bible, just as there is no "universal church" in the Bible.

- B. But the priesthood is limited to the "special" or covenant people of God, the church today.
- C. Originally the priesthood was administered by the firstborn in every family in Israel but God extended this to some outside the nation and in due time, because of the sin in the nation, separated the tribe of Levi to the priesthood (Exodus 32:26-29; Numbers 3:12, 13).
- D. One of the rights of the firstborn was this priestly ministry; another was his authority to rule; another was a double portion of the inheritance of his father. Christ is the Firstborn – King-Priest. Those "in Christ" are His body (the church) and called "firstborn" (ones) (Hebrews 12:23; Romans 8:28, 29). These "firstborn" shall share the kingship and priesthood with Him as their Head and Chief.
- E. This priestly ministry has some of the same marks of the old Levitical order, but a change is made in the order (Hebrews 7:12). Priests were the voice of the Lord, teaching and warning and admonishing the people. This doubtless shall continue.
- F. They also offered sacrifices on behalf of the people (see Hebrews 5:1). But the sacrifices which the priests shall offer in the kingdom will not be that of animals. No blood or slain animals! Rather, they shall offer living sacrifices of obedient people (Isaiah 18:7; Isaiah 66:20).
- G. Sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving also (Psalm 107:22) are to follow the restoration (Psalms 107:3) like those which please the Lord today (Mark 12:33; Hebrews 13:16; 1 Peter 2:5). This worship is partially described in Zechariah 14:16-21.
- H. It is commendable to take the Scriptures literally, as long as this is consistent with the laws of language and with Truth. Some brethren, therefore, have considered that there shall be a restoring of animal sacrifices by Israel during the Millennium. They support this logic by reference

to the temple and worship described in Ezekiel 40-48.

- I. Others, just as sincere if not as able to see, use this as an argument against the literal millennial reign, saying that it is ridiculous to suppose that God will allow his holy nation to offer animal sacrifices in the kingdom, now that the Perfect Sacrifice of the Son has been made (Hebrews 10:10-14). Their point that no further animal offerings are needed is well taken.
- J. And even if the nation restores animal sacrifices during the time of their covenant with the antichrist (Daniel 9:27) there is an inconsistency if the Christ should allow this to continue after He sits on David's throne. But then how shall we understand the prophecy of Ezekiel and that which was predicted for Israel in those closing chapters?
- K. Careful study of those passages will reveal that this is NOT a picture of the situation during the 1,000 years as held by most Pre-millennialists. This prophecy has the very "Prince" giving burnt offerings (Ezekiel 45:17). It is erroneous to consider that the Christ need offer any sacrifice for Himself and certainly no burnt offering for others when His own offering of Himself is "once for all."

#### **God's Representatives**

- A. It should be remembered that God has consented to provide a "witness" to represent Himself to His people through the years. First it was confined to His own communing with man; then sin cut this out and sacrifices began as a testimony.
- B. These were prescribed and offered by the "patriarchs" as priests in each house, beginning with Adam and continuing through the first born. Failure of fathers in this area brought on the ministry of others, as Melchizedek and Jethro. Still, this was not enough and God separated the nation, then raised up a priesthood.
- C. Moses, of the tribe of Levi, served to stand between man and God and his tent became God's house and Moses was God's faithful servant (Numbers 12:7).

- D. Later the tabernacle became the special place of meeting and revelation. Still later it was the temple which Solomon built. This was destroyed when Nebuchadnezzar overran Judah and the people were carried as slaves down to Babylon. Now there was no specific house. It is in Babylon that the message to Ezekiel about the building of a house is given. Their sins have deprived them of their house of testimony.
- E. Now, it was ON CONDITION that they repent and be ashamed of these sins that God would grant them this new house described in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 43:7-11). But the nation was never ashamed.
- F. A pitiful remnant went back under Ezra and Nehemiah but the "temple" they built was so inglorious in contrast to the temple of Solomon until some of the old-timers who remembered the other wept at the sight of it (Ezra 3:12).
- G. The "house" which came next was the church (1 Timothy 3:15; Mark 13:34). It is made of "lively stones" (1 Peter 2:5) and far transcends even Solomon's temple, being a "spiritual house." The next will be the Father's house (John 14:1-3), the kingdom (see Psalms 122) and this is final.
- H. How about Ezekiel's temple; It was promised on condition and the conditions were never met. The nation was blinded and a "spiritual house" came in its place. The prophecy of Ezekiel to the nation in Babylon can never come to pass for God has turned to "take out from amongst the Gentiles a people for his name."
- I. We must look next for the New Jerusalem and the Bridegroom. There is no need of a "temple" there, for the lamb is the light of it. And there is no need of animal sacrifice for He was already made the perfect offering. The "fountain for cleansing" is opened (Zechariah 13:1), so no mere reminders and shadows are necessary.
- J. May the Lord hasten the day when Israel shall dwell safely, Jerusalem shall be at peace, and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the seas. This will be the "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."









