

# THE . . . KINGDOM OF GOD.

By JAMES BOYD.

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**I**T is not because I think there is anything new to be said on this subject of the kingdom that I take up my pen to draw the attention of the reader to it; but because a very great deal of precious truth, that has in the infinite grace of our God been recovered for His people, by men raised up and gifted by Himself, is still unknown to the mass of His beloved saints; and even many who have profited by means of this work of God's Spirit have little or no knowledge of the history of that movement that in the mercy of God brought to them the little light they have. It is to that which we have already received I seek to call the attention of the reader.

I need scarcely say that all the light we possess was, in the first instance, given by the Lord through the Apostles and Prophets who were raised up and called to this work by Himself, and who by the Holy Spirit left upon record those Sacred Writings in which is contained all that we need to know. But for many centuries of the present dispensation, in spite of the fact that the Scriptures were in the custody of those that professed the name of Christ, the people of God were very ignorant of much of that holy Revelation.

But less than ten decades ago it pleased our ever gracious God to raise up men of His own choice, who were nothing in themselves, and to instruct them by His Spirit into the truths of His own Revelation, and to set those truths forth in their preachings, and in their writings, and in their practical lives, in such a manner that the Scriptures have become a new Book to many, who have emerged out of comparative darkness into marvellous light.

To-day we are beset on the right hand and on the left with all kinds of new-fangled and infidel notions, so that we require to be more than ever well instructed in the truth of God, and always on the alert against surprises by the enemy, that we be not robbed of that which we have through grace received through the ministry of men like John Nelson Darby and his associates; men whose names, like their Master's, have been so banned by the hierarchy in Christendom, that many who have profited by their writings hesitate to openly confess by whose instrumentality they have gained the light they possess.

This is a day in which a man is of little account unless he can scratch the itching ear of the brainless crowd, and, alas, that which obtains in the world has its counterpart in the family of God. The man who can tell the people something they never heard before is the only man that will get the ear of the mass, even of saints; and the number of the professed servants of the Lord who lay themselves out to minister to that unhealthy state of mind is uncountable. To "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance" (2 Pet. iii. 1) is usually thankless work, and is looked upon as the occupation of the brainless and ungifted.

Men have arisen up suddenly, like mushrooms in a night, and have written volumes, in which there is not a sentence worth the ink, that cannot be found almost verbatim in the writings of the men of God to whom I have referred above. But the popularity that their writings have achieved seems to have so thoroughly unbalanced their better judgment, that they consider they have got a mission to bring out something that we have never before heard of, but this is only to manifest how utterly unacquainted they are with the subject they have undertaken to handle, as well as with the whole range of Divine Revelation. If we were only content to be in the hands of the Lord, to let Him take us up and use us in His own holy service, not thinking we are something, when we are nothing, how well it would be with us, and how profitable it would be for those with whom we come into contact. We may be well assured that whatever is new is not true, and that whatever is true is not new.

I do not say that the writings of uninspired men are perfect. There is nothing perfect but Scripture itself. We learn, if we are submissive, a great deal through teachers, and we can thank God that He raises up men who are faithful to the trust committed to them, and who hold fast to the faithful Word, but nothing should be received by us on their word alone; nor will faithful men desire us to take for granted what they say, but will ever direct us to the inspired Word itself. And surely if we have a complete revelation of the will of God, we should not neglect to test by it the pretensions of the babel by which we are surrounded.

Certain papers have been sent me lately by post on the subject of the kingdom of God, and because of the erroneous views on this subject put forward by the writers, I would, with God's help, bring before the reader some of the various ways in which this subject is viewed in Scripture. The kingdom is spoken of under various titles; territorial extent and characteristics varying, according to the term used in bringing it under our notice.

We read of:—

*The kingdom of God,*  
*The kingdom of Christ,*  
*The kingdom of His father David,*  
*The kingdom of heaven,*  
*The kingdom of their Father,*  
*The kingdom of the Son of Man,*  
*The kingdom of His dear Son,*

This is not a complete list of the terms used in Scripture, but it will suffice for the object which I have at present in view.

That which is in Matthew's Gospel called *The kingdom of heaven* is in the other Gospels called *The kingdom of God*, and this term embraces every aspect under which the kingdom is regarded; for surely God is "The only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. vi. 15). The kingdom of God is the authority and power of God put forth for the deliverance of the creature from

the evil by which he is oppressed, and for the subjugation of everything to His beneficent rule. It was manifest here on earth, in the mighty works wrought by our Lord in the days of His flesh. He could say: "If I by the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you" (Luke xi. 20). It was a present power upon earth in His person; though no one could see it except he were born again (John iii. 3). All could see a Man doing great works of power, but only a man born again could see in this the intervention of God for the deliverance of the poor afflicted creature, and to see this is to see the kingdom of God.

We are told in 1 Cor. xv. that flesh and blood cannot inherit this kingdom. This, I judge, has reference only to the heavenly side of the kingdom, for in Luke ix. where we have a vision of this kingdom, we see the Old Testament saints, represented by Moses and Elias, in glory with the Lord, and the earthly saints in their flesh and blood condition on the earth, overshadowed by a bright cloud, the Divine Presence. Not only that, but our Lord speaks of this kingdom being preached since John, and He says: "Every man presseth into it" (Luke xvi. 16).

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## THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST, AND THE KINGDOM OF HIS FATHER, DAVID.

These two aspects of the kingdom refer to the kingdom under heaven, and may be well looked at together, though the authority of David never embraced the whole world. Israel and Judah formed the limits of his kingdom. But the Christ shall have the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession (Ps. ii.). This is the kingdom that was looked for by all the people of God, and the glories of which were glowingly described by pen of prophet and by sacred song. Before Him the gates of Zion shall lift up their heads, the King of Glory shall enter in, and Israel shall learn in that day that Jesus is

Jehovah of Hosts (Ps. xxiv.). He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and to the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him, and His enemies shall lick the dust.

*“ Kings shall fall down before Him,  
And gold and incense bring;  
All nations shall adore Him,  
His praise all people sing.”*

His name shall be excellent in all the earth, and it shall be continued as long as the sun; men shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed (Ps. lxxii.).

This is the kingdom that filled the Jewish mind, and to which they looked forward with expectant hearts. But their deplorable moral condition blinded them to the testimony of the prophets, that when they should see Him there would be no beauty that they should desire Him. There would be nothing about Him that would commend Him to their proud hearts. He would not be what their carnal minds had pictured Him to be, and therefore would He be despised and rejected.

The accumulation of witnesses to His Messiahship was overwhelming. Speaking of John, the angel says to Zacharias: “ He shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord ” (Luke i.). Now Elias was clearly the forerunner of the Sun of righteousness, who was to rise for them that feared the name of the Lord (Mal. iv.). But what does John himself say of this? When the Pharisees ask Him: “ Art thou Elias?” He says: “ I am not ” (John i. 21), and instead of Mal. iv. he takes up Isa. xl. as the basis of his mission. But what does the Lord Himself say? We read in Matt. xvii. that His disciples ask Him: “ Why then say the Scribes that Elias must first come? ” The answer of Jesus is: “ Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of

Man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that He spake to them of John the Baptist."

What are we to make of this apparently contradictory testimony? We have not to wander far for an explanation. In Matt. xi. Jesus says to the multitude: "All the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias which was to come." Here we have the simple elucidation of the whole difficulty. John came in the spirit and power of Elias. He was spiritually and potentially Elias, and *if the people received him*, no other Elias was needed; if they did not, he was not Elias. In the Gospel of John Christ is viewed as rejected from the very first: "His own received Him not" (chap. xi.). Therefore John was not to them Elias. But to the disciples who had received his testimony, and had believed on Christ no other Elias was necessary in their case.

To Mary the angel says: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father, David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever: and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke i.).

And Zacharias: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David: as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began; that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He sware to our father, Abraham, that He would grant us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life." I would remind the reader that *redemption* and *salvation* here do not refer to that of the soul by blood, as we get in 1 Peter i. 9, 18, 19). Temporal deliverance from their enemies, and from those that hated them, was all that was looked for by them. And this mighty deliverer was now raised up for them in the house of David. It is the King who is to effect this deliverance.

The Magi: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him" (Matt. ii.). And these men were divinely guided by God, and were in His mind regarding this wonderful event. But His own people, instead of being delighted at the report, and ready to give Him a right royal welcome are in consternation. Herod and all Jerusalem with him are troubled at the news, and Herod seeks to destroy Him.

Nathaniel says: "Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." He came to them announced by angelic messengers, confessed and pointed out by God's watchmen, and in the way marked out by the prophetic word. The demons confessed Him to be the Christ, the Son of God (Luke iv. 41), His enemies mocked Him with the title, Pilate wrote it on His cross. He rode into Jerusalem fulfilling the Scripture: "Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt" (John xii. 15).

But why multiply texts of Scripture? From the heights of heaven, from the depths of hell, from the manger, from the cross, from the faithful hearts of the saints of God, from the venomous throat of His brutal accusers, from the Jew, the Greek, the Pharisee, the sinner, comes the confession of His kingship. The domain of death, the sphere of life, the hearing ear, the seeing eye, the liberated captive, the forgiven sinner; all join in one united and all-powerful testimony to the King come with salvation (Zech. ix. 9). His birth bears witness to this, His word decides it, His works declare it. It was the cause of His rejection, the ground of His condemnation, the instrument by which the Jews overcame the scruples of the Roman Governor.

The King was in the midst of the people to whom He had been promised. The kingdom, for which they looked, had been brought near to them. Its powers were exhibited before their eyes. They had only to accept Him, and all the promises made to their fathers would have been at once fulfilled, for they were all deposited in His person. It is in vain to say that the kingdom was not presented to

them. Was HE presented to them? Did they say, We will not have this Man to reign over us? Who asked them to have that King? Did they say, We have no king but Cæsar? Who had offered them any other king? And yet to find people impudent enough to tell us that there is no Scripture that sets forth Jesus as presented to the people in His kingly character! And to tell it to us with such a flourish of trumpets, as gives one the impression that they imagined the earth was trembling at the sound of their voices. It were well if the energy with which they send out their papers on this subject were directed in the cause of truth, rather than in that of error.

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## THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

The King has been presented to the nation of Israel, and has been rejected, and this rejection—while it puts off the establishment of the kingdom as a visible power upon earth, with the King sitting upon the throne in Zion, and for the moment makes impossible the manifestation of the glory which all flesh shall see (Isa. xl. 5)—opens the way for the unfolding of other and greater blessings, which lay in the counsels of the Father, and which were stored up in the person of the rejected King. I refer to the kingdom in its present mystery form, and the Assembly that is being builded by the Son of the living God.

It is denied that the present form of the kingdom is in mystery. Is it then a public and manifest power in this world? Who knows that there is such a kingdom in existence? What indication is there that Christ has got any kingdom whatever? The kingdom subsists in such a fashion to-day, that except a man be born again he cannot see it. The fact of its being revealed in the Gospel does not prove it to be less in mystery. The Church has been taught to the saints of God, but still it is spoken of as a mystery (Col. i. 27; Eph. vi. 19). Some people are very clever! but their cleverness is of little value in the things of God.

The fact is, it is the rejection of the King that has caused the kingdom to take its present mystery character. It is not one kingdom to-day, and another when the Son of Man is revealed; both are viewed as one in the Scriptures. Even in the Sermon on the Mount, which portrays the characteristics of those who have the right of entrance, its future character is kept ever in view. And in the epistles its future aspect is ever before us. It is a kingdom that we must enter through great tribulation (Acts xiv. 22), but we do not enter the kingdom in its present aspect through tribulation. Whether in the present time or in the age to come the kingdom is the same though the form of it shall differ immensely.

At present it results from the sowing of the Son of Man, and therefore has He all authority in it; and when He takes it in an open and manifest way, He will deal with all the evil that is found in it. At present it is the fruit of the preaching of the Gospel, or as viewed in the hands of the servants of the Lord, the result of their fishing in the sea of nations, and hence in its sphere is included all who in presence or in faith confess Jesus as Lord. But when the King appears, and the kingdom takes an open and manifest form in the world, the wicked will be gathered out of it, and dealt with in the righteous judgment of God.

It is asserted that it is not out of the kingdom of heaven that the "*things that offend, and them which do iniquity*" are gathered, but out of the kingdom of the Son of Man. And our attention is drawn to this in order to substantiate their error, that into the kingdom of heaven nothing can find entrance but that which is of God; and this is the trap in which the unwary would easily be caught. Let us look into this.

I would refer the attention of the reader to the parable in which the tares are said to be sown among the wheat. The servants are told to "let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." Now we are told that the field being the world, as

the Lord says, the tares are not in the kingdom: they are in the world. How then is all this a likeness of the kingdom? And are we to suppose that the servants of the Lord are to trouble themselves about wicked men being in the world? Did ever any true servant of Christ desire to destroy the whole unconverted world that the kingdom of heaven might be pure on the earth? Cannot anyone see that it is the sown portion of the world that is referred to as the field; that is, it is where Christianity is confessed? The tares are those who are in the sphere of the kingdom, and who have been introduced there by the devil. And these are the ones that the angels will find in the kingdom of the Son of Man, and whom they will deal with under His direction.

And if heaven has not come into the kingdom and corrupted it, how can this parable be a likeness of the kingdom? And if the kingdom has not become a huge monstrosity, how can the parable of the mustard tree be a likeness of it? And if the net cast into the sea, which gathered all kinds of good and bad fish, be not the outward aspect of the kingdom as it is to-day, how can the parable be a likeness of the kingdom? And if all the evil that has come into the sphere of the kingdom be not the evil that the Son of Man shall deal with through His angels, why is it introduced into the teaching of this chapter, so that it seems to form part of the whole subject with which the Lord is dealing?

It is perfectly true that to be rightly in the kingdom one must be converted, and become as a little child; nevertheless it is also true that evildoers have found an entrance therein. They have no right to be there, and when the King shall come to sit upon the throne of His glory He will deal with such in judgment. But still they are there, and in every, or in almost every, likeness of the kingdom they are found (Matt. xxii. 10; xxv. 1-13, 14-30). They were introduced by the devil, found an entrance while men slept, or gathered together like fish caught in a net. And they will be there until the end of the dispensation.

It is the kingdom of heaven now in mystery, but when Christ shall take the throne at His appearing it will be the kingdom in display. Now its rightful

subjects have their place in it by virtue of having believed the Gospel, but then the whole earth will come under the government of the King. Zion shall be the metropolis, and the throne shall be there; but this will not make it any less the kingdom of the heavens, for the heavenly city shall rule, and the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it (Ps. ii. 6; Rev. xxii. 3). The nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the leaves of the tree of life shall be for the healing of the nations. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel shall be written on the gates. These shall not be shut at all by day, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour into it. We have the order of blessing for that day in Hos. ii. 21, 22: "And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord; I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil: and they shall hear Jezreel."

The idea of the kingdom of God is that all authority and power centre in the Godhead; the idea of the kingdom of heaven is that the heavens rule; the idea of the kingdom of Christ is that the Anointed of Jehovah has all authority under heaven; the kingdom of His father David refers to His reign over the house of Jacob; the kingdom of the Father has reference to the heavenly side of the kingdom, from which the righteous shine forth upon the wide earth; the idea of the kingdom of His dear Son is the sway that He bears over His own during the time of His rejection, and while He sits upon the throne of His Father: it is the sway of love; the kingdom of the Son of Man refers to universal domination; all things being put under His feet (1 Tim. vi. 14-16; Dan. iv. 26; Ps. lxxii. 8; Luke i. 32, 33; Matt. xiii. 43; Col. i. 13; Heb. ii. 6-8).

It is in the kingdom that one finds salvation. Indeed this is the object of the kingdom. I may say it is the object of all kingdoms (1 Sam. ix. 16; Isa. xxxiii. 22). When our Lord takes the throne: "A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the

shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isa. xxxii. 1, 2). And again: "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King: He will save us." The confession of Christ as Lord gives the scope of the kingdom, for "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 9), only there is such a thing as *saying*, Lord, Lord, and being rejected.

Where one has entered by faith in this present time, his place in the kingdom is assured to him in the day when it is displayed in power; but in that day he will have his place in the heavenly sphere, not in the earthly; but with Christ in the heavenly, He will reign over the earthly, for if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him 2 Tim. ii. 12).

As born into this world the King was presented to the responsibility of the people. This was the final test that was applied to man in the flesh. John the Baptist was sent before Him to prepare His way. He announced Him as the coming King. I am told he did nothing of the kind. What then does he say? He says: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." I am told that this says nothing about a king. A kingdom says nothing about a King! We live and learn.

Let us look at Isa. xl. from which the basis of his mission is taken. It begins with these words: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Next we have the Baptist's testimony, and then: "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid, say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God."

Is this not the announcement of the King? Is not this the end of the sorrows of Zion? What other meaning could be taken out of such words,

than that the King was at hand? Could the sorrows of Zion be ended without the presence of the King? What is the Scripture we are looking at but the good news of the kingdom? John was here putting the people in a suitable moral state for the advent of the King in person, lest they should reject all that was to be presented to them by Him. And had they received John, they would not have rejected Jesus. I need not say that this had nothing to do with the new covenant, for when that covenant is made with the nation, they will have been delivered from their enemies, and from the yoke of every foreign power, under the reign of Christ, with the rebels purged from among them by the judgment of God (Jer. xxi. 31; Ez. xx. 38).

The King was coming. He was already in their midst, and about to show Himself to them, and in a way that could leave no doubt on any honest mind that the King was indeed there. But He shows Himself to them in ways that are not calculated to disturb their relations to the power, under which, on account of their sins, they had been subjected by God. All that could have come later, when they had shown themselves willing to receive Him, as come in the name of the Lord. He showed Himself to them as One able to deliver them from the power of the devil, and from all the disabilities from which they suffered. Death was seen to give up its prey at His word of command. Lazarus was raised up though he had been four days dead. What then was to hinder the return of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the saints that had previously passed away?

What an opportunity was given to the favoured nation! And yet we are told there was no presentation of the kingdom to the nation. What then was presented to them? What would have happened had they received Him? Oh we are told He would not commit Himself to those who would have made Him a king (John vi.). And this is given as proof that the kingdom of Christ was not held out to them. But He would not commit Himself to those who believed on His name, when they saw His works of power in Jerusalem, during the pass-over (John ii. 24). Why was this? We are told in both cases what the reason was. In John ii. it

was because He knew them, and that there was no moral foundation in their souls upon which anything divine could be erected. In the other case (John vi.) they sought Him only because they had eaten of the loaves and were filled. It was such as these that later on cried: "Away with Him, Crucify Him." He must have the kingdom from those who had authority in the nation, the wise and prudent, or not at all; the crowd could not be trusted.

He was not in their midst to assert His rights, to break down all opposition by the sword, unless haply the leaders of the people had given Him a wholehearted and godly welcome. Had they done this, the enemy would have been very quickly disposed of, and an age of blessing would have been introduced, never to come to an end. But the cut-throat Barabbas was more to their liking than the Son of the living God.

But though He did not come to them, saying in so many words—I am the promised Messiah, your King, your long foretold Saviour; I am come to deliver you from your enemies, and to establish you in peace and power and blessing, and to restore the kingdom to you—He did say all this in a more powerful way than it could have been said to them in mere words. And the fact that He was there in their midst as their Messiah and King was borne home to their minds and consciences is evidenced by their determination that He should not be allowed to reign over them. Who told the disciples that He was the Christ, and that the kingdom was His? Who told the Scribes, the Priests, the Pharisees? Why did Pilate write it on His cross? All seemed to feel that He was making this claim. The death of Stephen was the message sent after Him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. Who asked them to have Him as King? Had He not been presented to them as One who had the claim to reign over them, it would not have occurred to them to send such a message after Him.

I have said that the rejection of Him by the nation opened the way for the unfolding of higher and greater mysteries. The secret operations of

the Father, which lay outside the responsibility of men, are seen to lead to entirely different results than the establishment in His hand of the kingdom of His father David. The things concerning Him were hid from the wise and prudent (those leaders of men's thoughts and actions) and revealed to babes (who were of no account in this world), and this meant His rejection and death. But before He is delivered into the hands of sinners, He presents Himself once more to the nation in the definite character of Zion's King. And "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. . . . And the multitudes that went before, and that followed after, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest" (Matt. xxi.). And when the Pharisees said to Him: "Master, rebuke Thy disciples," He said to them: "I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (Luke xix. 40). In these Scriptures He is presented as riding into the metropolis of the Jewish nation, and presented to the daughter of Zion as her King, the Son of David, and coming in the name of Jehovah. And yet we are told that He never was presented to the nation as King.

Now what would have happened had they received Him? Are we left in any doubt regarding the answer to the question? It is given in the same chapter (Luke xix.): "And when He came near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; *because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*" And another Scripture (chap. xiii. 34): "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee;

*how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not.* Behold your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." These words were said, but not by the rulers of the people, those set in responsibility as gods over the nation (Ps. lxxxii. 6), from whom alone He would take the kingdom.

We are told by one of the propagators of the error that I am seeking to expose, that the setting up of the throne of David at the Lord's first coming would have involved the total elimination of "the acceptable year of the Lord." It would have done nothing of the kind, as a glance at the passage in Isaiah will show. The literal fulfilment of the passage, and the establishment of the day of salvation, will be when He takes the throne of David. We come into these times of blessing in a spiritual way, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that the apostle can say: "Behold now is the accepted time. Behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2). But Isa. xlix., from which this passage in 2 Cor. is taken, refers to nothing other than the reign of Christ.

But we are told also, that the setting up of the kingdom would have meant, in addition to all those other things, the manifestation of the promised *glories* of Christ without the predicted *sufferings* which they were to follow. But supposing Israel had kept the law, how could the cross have come in? Moses says: "The man that doeth these things shall live in them." Had the nation accepted Christ in any way in which He was presented to them how could the cross have taken place? And had He not been presented to them, they could not have been blamed for rejecting Him; and yet they are condemned for this, and are to this day under the judgment of God on account of it.

There are two great lines of truth in the Holy Scriptures, that seem to be entirely overlooked by people of this stamp, who are always seeking to put forth some line of teaching that no one has ever heard before; and their notions are always put forth

with a swashbuckler kind of dogmatism, that always appeals to ignorant and unthinking minds; and they are put forth with an appeal to Scripture, that seems to give their ideas support, if one does not trouble to look up the Scriptures referred to. Error, as a general thing, looks quite reasonable to the natural mind, and, alas, a great deal more reasonable to the carnal Christian than does the truth of the living God. We require to be constantly on the alert, and with a critical, but prayerful, mind examine in the light of Scripture, and in dependence upon God, everything that comes before us with an unfamiliar form.

The two lines of truth to which I refer are *responsibility* and *purpose*. The purpose of God was always in connection with the last Adam, and everything that God had purposed to accomplish is that which in the end shall be brought to pass; and the Man of purpose is the Christ of God. But the responsible man is connected with the *ways* of God, and not with His purpose. These two principles were set forth figuratively in the two prominent trees in the garden of Eden. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the test of the responsibility under which man was placed, and by means of the fulfilment of which he maintained himself in life, and in the position in which God had placed him. As long as he fulfilled the trust committed to him he had access to the tree of life, but the moment he failed he came under death as the penalty of his disobedience, and he was debarred from the tree of life, and the Man of God's purpose was held out as the only hope for fallen sinners.

Again, the law raised the question of responsibility and life, and life was held out on the ground of the fulfilment of responsibility: "This do, and thou shalt live." But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant (Hos. vi. 7, R.V.), and therefore the law became to them a ministration of death and condemnation.

The sending of Christ into the world exhausted all the means that could be applied as tests to men, and from the outset He was despised and rejected. They could pride themselves in having the law, though it condemned and slew them; but they loathed

the only begotten Son, though He brought life to them in the grace and love of God. The filthy spittle in His face, the thorny crown, and the gibbet, crowned, completed, and perfectly manifested the incorrigible wickedness of the fallen heart of man. The blessed Lord says, regarding His presentation to this people: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin," and also: "If I had not done among them the works that none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they seen and hated both Me and My Father" (John xv. 22-24). The test would not have been considered complete had God not visited them in grace.

Then when the flesh of man had manifested its diabolical wickedness, and when sin had risen to its height, the judgment of God fell upon the sinless Sinbearer, and in the sight of the universe God's utter abhorrence of the evil in which man delighted was expressed. Sin was condemned in His cross, a way of salvation was opened for the whole human race, the sins of believers were atoned for, and the whole history of the responsible man was closed. In the resurrection and glorification of Christ the Man after God's counsels, in the place that was His in those counsels, comes to light. The responsible child of Adam is not now in any relationship with God whatever. God will judge him in the coming day, but he is already morally judged. There is little good in saying that if man had done this or that—kept the law and fulfilled his obligations or received Christ—what would have happened. He did not keep the law, neither did he receive Christ. The fact is, the power of the devil, the fall of man, the rejection of the Son of God: all these things have only conspired to the fulfilment of the eternal counsels of love. That men should have received Christ is perfectly true, but men have never yet done anything they should do.

John was here preparing the way of Jehovah, and Jehovah is Israel's King (Ps. xxiv.), and for the presence of this glorious person he was putting the people in a suitable condition of soul. He, by his baptism, placed the people that came to him on

the ground of confessed sinners, but in view of forgiveness, for this is the message to Jerusalem (Is. xl. 2). The nation was at that moment suffering for their transgressions, but deliverance was at hand. The promises made to the fathers were now fulfilled; the Son of David, and the Son of Abraham, was now among them.

In Matthew His lineage is not set before us in historical order. It is: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." Not the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, as one would have expected. It is David that is prominent because the kingdom is the prominent thing before the mind of the Spirit, and all the early part of the Gospel has reference to the kingdom. John speaks of Him as having His fan in His hand, and as One who would purge His floor, gather the wheat into the garner, and burn up the chaff with fire unquenchable. The *floor* was Israel, and this promise has no reference to anything outside Israel.

Will the people receive Him? The wise men from the east, as we have seen, bring tidings of His birth to Jerusalem, but instead of joy and gladness the city is troubled at the report, and Herod seeks to compass His destruction. The leaders of the people, from whom Christ is to have a suitable reception, if He is to be received at all, are by the Baptist characterised as a "Generation of vipers" (chap. iii. 7). He tells them not to flatter themselves that they were children of Abraham, for God would have reality, and was able to raise up children to Abraham out of the very stones. And further, no longer were they to be corrected for their evil deeds, while the Spirit of the Lord strove to lead them in the paths of righteousness, the axe was now being applied to the *root* of the trees, and every tree that brought not forth good fruit was to be hewn down and cast into the fire. The probation of man was about to be brought to an end, and not only the sins, but the nature that committed the sins, must come under the holy judgment of God. The tree is known by its fruit, and Israel cannot escape the axe of divine judgment, unless the fruit that is produced is good in the sight of God. The prophecy also of Joel would be fulfilled, they would be baptised

with the Holy Ghost and with fire. And it would come to pass, that whosoever should call upon the name of the Lord would be delivered: for deliverance would be in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem for the remnant that would be called by the Lord (Joel ii.).

From chapter five to seven the Lord sets forth the characteristics of those who are to enter the kingdom. But when He comes down from the mount a leper comes before Him, figure of the moral condition of the Jew; and that the blessing would go to the Gentile is indicated in the fact, that the faith of the Centurian exceeded anything that could be found in the favoured nation; and in the same chapter He speaks of Himself as Son of Man, for the first time, and declares that He has nowhere to lay His head. The King is in rejection.

In the sermon on the mount there is no hint of the Gentiles coming in. Indeed Israel is carefully distinguished from the nations (chap. vi. 32). But in chapter viii. we read: "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." In chapter x. He sends out His disciples to preach, and to heal all manner of diseases, but they were to avoid going to either the Gentiles or the Samaritans. This preaching goes on until the Son of Man shall come (ver. 23); therefore it must be taken up again when this dispensation has run its course. Chapter xi. shows His rejection everywhere, for the secret ways of the Father were not towards the establishing of the kingdom in an outward and visible manner. In chapter ix. 34, His power to cast out devils is attributed to the prince of the devils. This He passes by unnoticed, but in chapter xii. it is repeated, and then He says: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (ver. 32). Then He lets that "evil and adulterous generation" know that the only sign they shall get is His death. And then, in the close of the chapter, we find He will acknowledge no relationship with any, except with them that do the

will of His Father in heaven. He has broken with Israel after the flesh.

But in all these Scriptures the kingdom is viewed as at a considerable distance, for it was evident the people were not ready to listen to Him. His rejection is from the very outset a foregone conclusion. The state of the people forbade all hope of His reception. Hence it is impossible to read the sermon on the mount without seeing that it is the kingdom as a visible power that is contemplated, and a power not to be immediately established. Those that bear the character suitable for entrance are viewed as subjected to persecution in a world that hates everything that would be approved of by the King. They were not to resist evil, but to be smitten, robbed, and oppressed, and not only to take all patiently, but to meet the hatred of their enemies with the love of God. He does not address those who are already in the kingdom, but those who shall have a right of entrance when it is set up.

In the meantime it is put off. He whose right it is to reign is going away to the Father to receive from Him the kingdom, and to return (Luke xix. 12). And when He comes He will sit on the throne of His glory, and none shall be able to resist Him. The kingdom refused to Him by the Jews will be given to Him by His Father, and He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and those who have suffered with Him during the period of His rejection from this earth shall reign with Him. His throne shall be established on the hill of Zion, but it will not be disconnected from heaven, for then the heavens shall rule. I have already pointed out that the throne of God and of the Lamb is in the heavenly city. We have also in Ps. ciii. a psalm which refers distinctly to the reign of the Messiah in the age to come: "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all." This kingdom is said in Revelation to last for one thousand years; that is, as it is commonly called, the Millennial reign, but not so designated in the Old Testament, nor in connection with His advent into the world, for in these connections it is said to be for ever (Dan. ii. 44; Mic. iv. 7; Luke i. 33). The uniform testimony of Scripture is, that

the heavens rule: authority is centred there, whatever the aspect be in which the kingdom is viewed.

In Matt. xiii. the Lord presents Himself as a Sower. In the end of chap. xii. He severs His link with Israel after the flesh. From that moment, however He might bear with the people, even up to the stoning of Stephen, His relations with the natural seed of Abraham are severed, never to be taken up again. Even when in the age to come He does resume relationship with those who are of that nation, He takes up none but a remnant who have faith, and who are born of God (Ezek. xxxvi. 24-38). They shall be of the seed of Abraham, but of the spiritual seed, and only as of faith shall they be taken up (Rom. xi. 19-23). It is no longer the law and the prophets, but the kingdom that is announced, and "every man presses into it." The result of that preaching is, that while there are those whose hearts, like good ground, receive the Word, and bring forth fruit, there are others who, when subjected to persecution, fall away, or that sink under the weight of the cares or riches of the world. Then there are also the tares, evil men that are the result of evil doctrines introduced by the devil. But all in the sphere that owns as Lord the earth-rejected Christ.

The field is the world. It is here on earth that the sowing is done, and here everything sown comes to maturity. But all worthless things in the kingdom are not necessarily tares. The tares are the children of the devil, and can never be anything else: they can no more become "children of the kingdom" than the children of the kingdom can become tares. But there are those in the kingdom that in the time of persecution are stumbled, and others that through worldliness become unfruitful. It does not say that they apostatise. They are mere professors and lifeless. They are not born of water and the Spirit. But they are not beyond the reach of the grace of God, and this is verified every day through the preaching.

People often forget that there is a sphere upon earth, a sphere of privilege, in which souls who have no vital connection with God, have yet a place full of spiritual advantages. The seven light-bearers

of Rev. ii., iii. are truly in a place of great privilege, and are recognised by the Lord as in that place, some of them servants of the devil, and others with only a name to live, without possessing one spark of divine life, and others so corrupt that they are ready to be rejected by the Lord. In the sphere of Christian profession such people are in multitude to-day, and as long as the age lasts they shall be found among the saints of the Lord.

In the parable of the net cast into the sea we have all kinds of fish, good and bad, gathered together. Where the work is carried out by human instrumentality we could not expect any other result, and the figure used is just to teach us this; for in fishing no discrimination can be used. It is only at the end of the age, when the net is brought to the shore; then the good shall be put into vessels, and the worthless cast out. Then the angels shall come forth, and separate the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire.

I have not the slightest intention of opening before the mind of the reader the wonderful fund of instruction that is contained in these parables. My object in referring to them is to point out the way in which the kingdom of heaven is brought to pass, and the character it assumes during the whole of this dispensation. It is brought into existence by the sowing of the seed of God's Word in this world. The devil sows his pernicious doctrines also where every grain of the Word of God falls, and the result is that his children are mixed up with the children of the kingdom, and in such a way as makes it impossible to have them separated by human instrumentality. They must be allowed to grow together until the harvest. The angels will be used to gather the tares together in bundles that they may be burned, and the wheat shall be gathered into His barn. I have no doubt that the gathering of the wheat into His barn will take place at the rapture of the Church; the tares will remain in the field in bundles for burning later on.

In the next parable we have leaven introduced, evil doctrines that permeate the mass, leavening and corrupting everything. The whole becomes leavened. That which is of God becomes obscured

by the place given to the fleshly mind of man. The sphere of the kingdom becomes a horrible mixture of truth and error; Judaism, Paganism, Philosophy, Ritualism; and every invention of the mind of unregenerate man found in the sphere in which one would expect to find nothing but the pure truth of God.

The next parable presents it as a great power in the world, a terrible monstrosity. It is no longer a little flock in the midst of a ruthless and persecuting world. It is no longer "the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him" (James ii. 5). The kingdom of heaven in its outer aspect presents the greatest power upon earth. There is no real power anywhere else under heaven.

And all this will go on till the end of the age, or rather until the harvest which shall bring this age to an end. Then the Lord will gather out of His kingdom everything unworthy to be there: the righteous will shine forth in the kingdom of their Father, the Son shall be established upon the throne of Zion, and He shall reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet.

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## THE KINGDOM OF THE FATHER.

This I take to be the heavenly side of the kingdom of heaven, for this it remains, though now the kingdom taken by the Son in power; that is, as regards the earthly side of it. The righteous "*shine forth*" in that kingdom, where Christ shall drink the new wine of earthly joy with His disciples under the rule of His and their Father (Matt. xxvi. 29), while both Christ and the righteous reign over the kingdom which is under heaven, for when He shall reign we shall reign with Him.

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## THE KINGDOM OF THE SON OF MAN.

This kingdom, while it refers to dominion over all nations under heaven, we must keep in mind that

under the Son of Man *everything* is to be put. The only exception to this is the One Who puts everything under Him (1 Cor. xv.). To Him every knee shall bow, of heavenly, earthly, and infernal things, and every tongue must confess Him to be Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. ii.). He is the One that shall judge the living and the dead, and subdue everything to Himself. And when He has done this He will give up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all.

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### THE KINGDOM OF HIS DEAR SON.

This is evidently a present aspect of the kingdom, for we are giving thanks to the Father, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col. i.). His session on the Father's throne is the witness of the Father's good pleasure in Him. When the world refused Him His own throne, the Father called Him up to His throne, and on that throne He shall sit until the time when He shall take His own. Meantime we are brought under the rule of that throne; that is, under the sway of Divine love. But I leave this thought to the prayerful study of the reader. It seems to me to be very different from the kingdom in its present mixed condition.

All these apparently different kingdoms are but various aspects of the one kingdom set up by the God of heaven, for in all these various aspects the heavens rule. This was early intimated. At the beginning the sun was set in the heavens to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night. The moon and the stars are subordinate authorities set in the heavens to rule the earth during the absence of the sun. Thus was God telling man right from the beginning, that throughout the whole history of the earth the heavens shall rule. It would be well if the rulers of this world could learn this important truth, but, alas, the bestial insanity of the powers that be must continue until it is learned by them (Dan. iv. 26).

I have just received a paper on the subject of the kingdom, in which the writer in order to prove that no evil can come into the kingdom of heaven, draws a distinction between it and the Kingdom of the Son of Man, and refers our attention to the fact, that it is out of the latter kingdom that are cast the things that offend and that do iniquity (Matt. xiii. 41). But this is not said to be the case with regard to the net (v. 49). There the angels are said to "*go forth,*" and sever the wicked from among the just. But the writers to which I refer will easily get over that difficulty. I think, however, that they have overlooked the fact that the sower of the seed by which the kingdom was brought into existence, was the Son of Man, and the field in which the seed is sown is His. He is the man that sowed good seed in *His* field, and it is the sowing that has produced the kingdom, and I take it that He would naturally be the One that would have all to do with it. Besides, all judgment is committed to Him. And if it be replied to this, that it is out of *His* kingdom the evildoers are gathered, I can only say, that the kingdom of heaven will simply merge into the Kingdom of the Son of Man. The supreme authority is ever in heaven, and as I have already said, the Lamb has His throne in the heavenly city. Besides all this, those sent out with the Gospel of the kingdom of heaven are told by the Lord, that they shall not have gone over the cities of Israel until the Son of Man be come (Matt. x. 23).

In reading the Sermon on the Mount I see nothing to disturb the thought of one who expected the kingdom to be set up as a visible power on earth. Indeed that thought runs through it from first to last. We are told in some of those papers to which I have alluded, that new birth is the door of entrance into the kingdom, and I do not say it is not, but just look at the Sermon on the Mount. When does it say the kingdom is to be set up? It does not say. Before it is set up there has to be a time of persecution for the doers of righteousness, and when every wicked thing will be said against those who are followers of Christ. Moreover, the disciples were the salt of the earth, a city situated on the top of a mountain, the light of the world. Their

righteousness must surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, or they shall in no wise enter. Verily there seems a time of trial necessary, a time of persecution and affliction necessary, before their title to enter is proven. Even the forgiveness of their offences, which they might be supposed to have before they entered, would depend upon their forgiveness of others. Not every one who said, Lord, Lord, to Jesus would enter the kingdom, but he that does "the will of my Father who is in heaven." "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity."

"In that day." To what day does He refer? Has anyone the smallest doubt? "That day" is a technical expression occurring oftentimes in the Scriptures, and most commonly referring to the day of the Lord. In that day these spoken of will be denied a place in the kingdom. Therefore I see very plainly that this sermon leaves room for the setting up of the kingdom in the mystery form in which it is to-day, and in the mixed condition in which we see it, as resulting from the work of the devil in sowing tares, the faithlessness of those responsible to the Lord as watchers over its interests, witnessed in their going to sleep, the impossibility of keeping bad fish out of the net when dragging for the good.

As I have already said, the Sermon on the Mount gives us the character of those who shall have the right to enter when the kingdom is established in power; it is not a line of conduct marked out for those in the kingdom, for then all violence shall have been repressed: it will not be able to lift up its head. There will not be any persecution for the people of God in that age. In the psalms (xv., xxiv.) also we have the characteristics of the blessed in that day when the King shall reign, and they are in perfect harmony with the Sermon on the Mount.

But the kingdom of heaven as in Matt. xiii. is the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ (Rev. i.

9), and the great characteristic of that kingdom is *suffering*—suffering for righteousness, for Christ, for doing well—and the Sermon on the Mount, as well as the various epistles, show us how we are to conduct ourselves in these tribulations. Those listening to that Sermon would not of necessity have supposed the kingdom to be put off for a long period, but now that we see it put off for nearly two thousand years we are not bewildered, for we see plenty of room has been left for this space of time. The kingdom came in immediately in the way in which it is presented in Matt. xiii., and in this kingdom and patience we have to suffer until that day in which it shall be established in power and glory.

We have got a heavenly calling, and our place in that day will be in the Father's kingdom, the heavenly side of that sphere of glory, and in the kingdom of our Father we shall reign with Christ over the kingdom which is under the heavens. May we with expecting hearts be waiting for the blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of the great God our Saviour Jesus Christ, and may we not be afraid of suffering for Him during the day of His rejection, for if we suffer with Him we shall be glorified together; and the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed to us.

J. B—D

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