

God's Present Kingdom

(1919)

Philip Mauro

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INTRODUCTION

There seems to be a need at this time for a book dealing with the subject of the Kingdom of God as it exists in the present dispensation. This volume is issued with the desire to meet that need, at least to some small extent. And however much it may fall short of accomplishing the aim of the writer, we are at least confident that every reader will find profit in examining the Scriptures which will be brought to his attention herein. “We are deeply convinced of God’s power to speak to the simplest of His people directly ‘out of the Scriptures’; and we bear in mind also that ‘he that is of God heareth God’s words.’”

In writing the book entitled *After This: or, the Church, the Kingdom and the Glory*, which was an attempt to examine God’s work in this present age as an introduction to the millennial age to come, the writer found the subject of the Kingdom lying directly in his pathway, and demanding investigation. It was a subject he had never set himself to examine; though he had been at various times troubled and perplexed by current teaching on the subject, which teaching he had received with favor because of the deservedly good repute of those who propagated it. But now he was constrained to set aside all preconceptions, and to seek with unbiased mind, and *without consulting any authorities or commentators whatever*, the testimony of the “Word of God on this great subject. The result has been that he has had to modify, in some important particulars, the views previously held, as will be seen by any who are sufficiently interested to read the book referred to above.

“When that book was about ready for the publisher it was suggested to the writer to put forth a concise pamphlet confined to the single question: “What is meant by ‘the Kingdom of heaven?’” Accordingly the booklet *The Kingdom of Heaven; What is it? and When? and Where?* was written and published.

The abovementioned books left, of course, many questions untouched. But they served the desired purpose of awakening interest in this subject, and of prompting many of the people of God to inquire into it, and to examine *for themselves* the grounds of their individual views and opinions. They also served to draw forth contributions to the discussion from various quarters, and to procure for the writer the benefit of a great mass of comments, suggestions and criticisms. This has been useful in compelling him to examine carefully all the Scriptures cited, and the inferences which various students of the Bible have drawn from them, and in compelling him also to view the subject from every angle. And the result of it all has been to bring out of the Scriptures much positive truth — “things new and old” — touching THE KINGDOM OF GOD. And let it be remembered that the *Kingdom of God* was the subject of the risen Lord’s instructions to His disciples preparatory to their worldwide mission (see Acts 1:3), and was also the subject of Paul’s testimony and preaching to the end of his days (Acts 20:25; 28:23, 31).

The fruits of all these investigations we now seek to present to the household of faith in a manner that shall be free, so far as possible, from controversial character; and happily this can be done to a very large extent. There remains, however, the unavoidable necessity, in presenting what we deem to be the teaching and testimony of Scripture on this subject, of examining current teachings which are in conflict therewith. This we shall seek to do with all proper consideration and respect for those whose views it is needful to discuss.

Among current teachings which come under review is one that presents itself in diverse forms, and

of which the basic idea is that the preaching of John the Baptist, and of Christ and His Apostles, was the announcement or "offer" to Israel of the earthly kingdom, involving the breaking of the yoke of Roman dominion, the promotion of Israel to the foremost place among the nations, and in general the fulfillment of all God's promises concerning the throne of Israel, the Holy Land, and the earthly Jerusalem. Such, it is said, was the character of the preaching until the proffered Kingdom was rejected by the leaders of Israel, whereupon (according to this view) God withdrew the "offer" and postponed the era of Israel's earthly greatness to a future dispensation.

According to some, this change of plan on God's part, or "dispensational change" as it is termed, took place about the time of the events recorded in Matthew, chapters 11 and 12, when (it is claimed) the Kingdom of heaven, previously announced, was set aside and replaced by what is called "the Kingdom in mystery form."

But there is an extraordinary diversity of opinion as to *just where* the "dispensational break" occurred. Some say the final rejection of the earthly kingdom of Israel occurred when the Savior was crucified, which implies that the "offer" of the kingdom had not up to that time been withdrawn.

Others hold and teach that the Apostles, after the Lord's resurrection and the coming of the Holy Ghost, still continued to offer the earthly kingdom to Israel until the stoning of Stephen, and that the "break" and "change of dispensation" occurred at *that* time.

Still others maintain stoutly, and with much show of reason, that the kingdom dispensation continued until Acts 28; and that, when Paul said to the Jews at Rome "Be it known to you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it" (Acts 28:28), *then* the "break" occurred and the new dispensation of grace began. According to this last stated view (which we are bound to say is the only logical and consistent view when once the premise of an offer of the earthly kingdom to Israel is admitted), the "gospel" preached by Peter, Paul, and other apostles to the Israelites, was "another gospel," and the "Church of God" which Paul persecuted (1 Corinthians 15:9) was a different "church" to that mentioned in Ephesians and Colossians. And, moreover, all the churches spoken of in the Acts and in the earlier Epistles of Paul, belonged to a past dispensation, along with Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The most important consequence of the foregoing doctrine, which for convenience we will term the "postponement theory," is that it detaches a portion of the New Testament — greater or less according to where the "break" is located — from the rest, and assigns the detached portion to the Jews. According to the view of the most conservative teachers of this theory, the earlier chapters of Matthew, *including the, Sermon on the Mount*, belong to the past dispensation of law, and are not for the Church. A leading exponent of that theory says: "The Sermon on the Mount is *law*, and that *raised to its most deathful and destructive potency.*"¹ This doctrine is so novel, so startling, and so exceedingly serious in its consequences that we are most assuredly bound to test it with all possible care. The Lord Jesus said of His own words that "they are *Spirit* and they are *life*" (John 6:63). But here is an authority who declares that they are "*law*" and "deathful" to the most extreme limit. In 2 Corinthians 3:6, 7 the Old Covenant is described as the Covenant of *law* and *death*, and the New Covenant as the Covenant of *Spirit* and *life*. To which of these do the words and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ belong? There is for the believer no question more important than this; but it is an astounding thing that any *question* should arise about it.

Obviously, those who locate the supposed dispensational change at a later time than the events of Matthew 12, detach a proportionately larger part of the New Testament Scriptures from this present dispensation.

Since we are now only stating the situation that prompted the writing of the present volume, we

1 "Dispensational Place of Synoptic Gospels," by C. I. Scofield.

would simply raise at this point the question whether the difficulty our friends have in agreeing as to where the supposed “break” occurred may not perhaps be due to the fact that *there was no “break” at all?* If so, then all the conflicting groups would be correct in so far as they deny the existence of any “break” where the other parties say it occurred.

One of the main principles by which we seek to be guided in searching the Scriptures for their witness on this subject, is that great fact for which the Lord Jesus thanked His Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, namely, that it had pleased Him to hide these things from the wise and prudent and to reveal them unto babes (Matthew 11:25). By this fact we are assured that the testimony of Scripture in regard to *these very things into which we are now searching* will be found expressed in “words easy to be understood” (1 Corinthians 14:9); and that the *true* meaning of passages bearing upon them will, ordinarily if not invariably, be the *simple* and *evident* meaning thereof.

For example, the statement, “the Kingdom of heaven is at hand,” should be given the simple meaning which it has always had until the sudden springing up, in our day, of the postponement theory. And this principle constrains us — when God announced a certain “kingdom” as “at hand,” and then set about immediately to introduce a *kingdom* among men, calling it by *precisely the same name* as that which He had announced — to hold that the kingdom which God introduced was the one He said He was about to introduce. This we are bound to assume, unless we find clear statements of Scripture declaring the contrary to have been the case, and declaring in fact that God did not announce the kingdom He was about to introduce, nor introduce the kingdom which He had announced.

This principle of interpreting a passage according to its plain and simple meaning is of the utmost importance in the inquiry we are now making, for the reason that the advocates of the postponement theory do not even pretend to offer proof from Scripture in support of it. They rely for its acceptance solely upon the claim that by their theory it is possible to explain passages which (they say) are otherwise obscure, or to harmonize passages which (they say) are otherwise conflicting. But we are bold to say (and refer our readers to the following pages for ample proof of what we now assert) that the supposedly obscure passages (as Matthew 10:23) stand in need of no contrivance, such as the postponement theory, to explain them, and that the supposedly conflicting passages require no such aid to harmonize them. In fact the theory introduces far more and far greater difficulties than those it essays to remove.

Furthermore, this principle is “simple,” and is therefore suited to “babes.” But its very simplicity seems to be the reason why it is not acceptable to those who advocate the view we are discussing. Thus, we read in the paper quoted above:

“Perhaps the average pastor would suggest Matthew to a young convert as the best first book in Bible Study.”

And surely the place in which God has set the Gospel of Matthew and the character of its contents I would naturally lean to that view. But not so, according to our authority, who says:

“The Gospel according to Matthew is, taking into account the preconceptions and misconceptions which are in the minds of people” — that is, people who do not hold the postponement theory — precisely the most difficult book in the Bible for a beginner.”

Here is presented to us a very sharp difference of opinion between “the average pastor” and the leading advocate of the postponement theory. Which is right according to the Scriptures?

And further our author says:

“It (Matthew’s Gospel) *ought to be* delightfully simple.”

To this we say “Amen.” Seeing it was specially intended for “babes,” most certainly it *ought to be* delightfully simple.” And we confidently add, so indeed it *is* to those who are willing to *be* simple.

We are well aware that in past days, and still largely now, there is confusion and misunderstanding

as to the Kingdom of heaven, arising from the fact that the parables of the *Kingdom* have been regarded as if they were parables of the *Church*. But that confusion was completely cleared up by the studies and writings of godly men of the generation just passed, men who at the same time stood most uncompromisingly for the direct application of the Sermon on the Mount, and all the other "words," "sayings," and "commandments" of the Lord Jesus Christ, to God's children in this present era.

And this brings us to another preliminary point. We have referred to the postponement theory as something quite new in our day. And so it is. But many believers have become so familiarized with it, and so accustomed to regard it as long and well-settled truth, that they are surprised at its being called into question. Indeed the present writer has been told that the position taken in his former books is "revolutionary." But it is just the other way. The doctrine that every believer is in the Kingdom of heaven, and that only those who are born again, becoming as little children, can enter it, is simple truth, and elementary truth, too, which lies on the surface of the Gospels. The view that the Kingdom of heaven as announced by the Lord Jesus Christ, with the laws of that Kingdom uttered by Him, are "Jewish," and belong to another dispensation, is a view that is entirely new and could be properly described as "revolutionary," But some of our friends who oppose us are well aware that, as regards the particular point now under consideration, we are not advancing anything new or revolutionary. In fact it is spoken of in a current magazine as "this *old* theory."

We are sometimes told that the postponement theory is found in the writings of godly men who now have ceased from their fruitful labors, such as J. N. Darby, C. H. McIntosh, William Kelly, F. W. Grant, and others who were greatly used of God in teaching His children. The present writer has therefore deemed it his duty to consult the writings of those men of God, so far as their writings were accessible. The results of his investigations fully confirm our statement as to the entire novelty of the postponement theory; and this will be shown herein (Chapter 18 and following).

Finally, we have sought to examine patiently every Scripture and every deduction from Scripture that has been brought to our attention as tending in any way to support the postponement theory. And it has been a matter of surprise to us that such arguments as have been advanced and have been repeated over and over, should ever have been put forth at all. Again and again we have been constrained to wonder whether the advocates of the postponement theory have ever examined their own arguments in the light of the Scriptures. For our experience has been that the very passages to which they most frequently appeal prove to be, even upon a slight examination, directly opposed to their contention. Striking instances of this peculiar feature of the ease will be found in the following pages.

We do not, of course, undertake to explain every difficult passage or to answer every question that may arise. After we have done our utmost there will still remain abundant opportunity for investigations by others; for the subject is a large one. But what we *may* hope to accomplish is to set before our readers the *controlling facts and evidences of Scripture*; by which the *main issues* involved are authoritatively settled. Those evidences, as we confidently claim, prove beyond a doubt that "grace and truth" — not "*law* in its most deathful and destructive potency" (let the reader weigh well the meaning of those words) — "came by Jesus Christ." When that *basic fact* is firmly established in the reader's mind, and when he himself is firmly established in that basic fact, other connected matters will be readily apprehended by him, and all difficulties and perplexities will eventually be cleared away.

With no confidence in the flesh, but with supreme confidence in Him Who uses the weak things of this world in the accomplishment of His great ends, this humble effort in His service is submitted to those who tremble at His word, and who delight greatly in His commandments.

1

“The Fullness of the Time”

The coming of the Son of God into the world was the beginning of a new era in God’s dealings with men. It is the era of “the Gospel of God, which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures” (Romans 1:1, 2). It is that long expected “acceptable year of the Lord” (Isaiah 61:2; Luke 4:19). And it naturally follows that the era which had its beginning in the coming of that glorious and blessed One should be both different in character from all previous dispensations, and far more glorious in its accomplishments than they.

His coming was at a time divinely chosen — “the fullness of the time was come” (Galatians 4:4, 5). Those words assure us that conditions in the world were then fully matured for the purpose of His mission. But they do more than that; for they also tell us what that purpose was, namely, that He came “to *redeem* them that were under the law, that we might receive *the adoption of sons*” — that is, in order that they who believe in Him might, through His redeeming work, be brought into the exalted relationship of *sons unto God*. And then, as a further result of His work (continuing the quotation) — “because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

These inspired words put before us, in a comprehensive way, the characteristics of the age introduced by the coming of God’s Son into the world. And, as we have seen, the time was ripe for God to do a work wholly different in kind to all that He had previously done, and for which all His previous dealings with the world had been but a preparation. For man had been fully tested under God’s holy law, with the result that every mouth was stopped and all the world had become “guilty before God” (Romans 3:19). Moreover, all the world was in “bondage.” Gentiles were “in bondage to them which by nature are no gods”; and Jews were “in bondage under the elements of the world” (Galatians 4:3, 8). And all, both Jews and Gentiles, were “under sin” — *i.e.*, in sin’s bondage. There was none righteous, no, not one (Romans 3:9).

In other words, the world was ripe for judgment. Condemnation, therefore, would have been appropriately the next thing in order. The “promise” which stood in line for immediate fulfillment was that given in the last words of the Old Testament — “a curse.” The promised One was coming indeed; but He must needs “come and smite the earth with a curse,” unless *something be done “in the way of righteousness,”* to avert that well-merited judgment. God is *righteous*; and though He would act in grace toward men, yet His righteousness *must be maintained*. Grace can reign *only* “through righteousness” (Romans 5:21). The Kingdom of heaven, which is that heavenly realm where grace reigns supreme, can be established only *through righteousness*. Hence He Who came to establish it must needs first “fulfill *all righteousness*” (Matthew 3:15). And that demanded His death and resurrection.

It is, therefore, our unspeakable privilege to contemplate the steps whereby “the God of *all grace*” proceeded to establish a kingdom of grace, — a kingdom in which reconciliation of enemies is effected, all sins forgiven, and eternal life bestowed as a free gift, — and that in a world which was under the dominion of sin and death, and was fully ripe for the well-merited “curse.”

The first step in the direction of introducing such a kingdom was to be the *turning back to the Lord* of the *hearts* of a remnant of His people Israel. Therefore, John, the Lord’s forerunner, was sent “in

the way of righteousness" to turn the hearts of many Israelites back to the Lord their God, and thus "make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Why this *turning of hearts* to the Lord was a divine necessity "in the way of *righteousness*," in order to prepare the way for a reign of *grace*, we do not now stop to inquire. We would only take notice of the *fact* plainly declared in the last words of the Old Testament; and then would take notice also of the *fulfillment* of this necessary condition, as recorded in the first pages of all four Gospels. There *must needs be* some men whose "hearts" had been divinely *turned* to God, in order that their presence in the world might serve to avert the stroke of judgment; men who should be, in the Lord's words, "the salt of the earth." And, so long as these "righteous men" are in the world, He will not "smite the earth with a curse." That which hinders must first "be taken out of the way" (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

Therefore, according to Old Testament prophecy, this first essential step "in the way of righteousness," this turning movement, or *repentance toward God*, was to be accomplished by a *special messenger*. For reasons which will presently appear, this messenger (who was to go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways of grace abounding where sin abounded) was called in prophecy "Elijah the Prophet," though among men he was to be known as "John." There was to be no failure in the mission of this predicted forerunner of the Lord. His ministry was foreordained to be a complete success; and it *was* a complete success, fully accomplishing its intended purpose. The promise was "Behold, I *will* send *you* (Israel) Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he *shall* turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5, 6).

The initial step having been accomplished by John's ministry (to which we purpose to return for detailed examination), and a people having been made "ready," by repentance and confession of sins, and "prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17), the Lord Himself suddenly appeared publicly upon the scene, associating Himself with a company of confessed transgressors in baptism, the sign of death and resurrection. Thus His first public act, *before He began His preaching*, declared impressively His own approaching death, burial, and resurrection. And His first recorded utterance, in the order of the books of the New Testament, as we have them (doubtless by divine arrangement) declared that "thus," *i.e.*, by death and resurrection, "it becometh Us to fulfill *all righteousness*" (Matthew 3:15).

"John came *in the way of righteousness*," and the Scribes and Pharisees *believed him not* (Matthew 21:32). There was no offer or announcement of an earthly kingdom for Israel in John's message; and, in the nature of things (as the inspired record plainly shows), there could have been none. That such an idea could ever have obtained currency among the people of God merely shows how easily men of superior intelligence can be led away when their minds are not fully controlled by the "Word of God, and can then be the cause of leading the many astray also. But happily the clear testimony of God's Word abides with us to show us our way, and to direct our wandering feet back to the lighted pathway again.

Thus, when the Lord Jesus, the Messenger of the New Covenant (Malachi 3:1), appeared on the scene, He found "a people prepared" for Him, who were "ready" to "receive Him" and to whom He could give power to become the sons of God, His Father (John 1:12); to whom also He could declare the Father's Name (John 17:6; Hebrews 2:12); to whom, moreover, He could give *the Words and Commandments* which the Father had given Him to speak (John 8:28; 14:10; 17:8, etc.). And all this was before Him even in childhood; for His first recorded utterance (in point of *time*) tells us that, at the age of twelve years, His heart was filled with the fact that He *must* be about His *Father's* business (Luke 2:49).

Summing up these great events, and the purposes for which God sent His Son among men, the Apostle declares that "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," that is, the place of sons in the family of God (Galatians 4:4, 5). And then, having "sent forth His Son" to *accomplish redemption* ("to redeem them that were under the law"), and *to give to all believers the place of sons unto Himself, the Father*, God thereupon also "sent forth *the Spirit* of His Son into their hearts, whereby they cry Abba, Father" (verse 6). Thus we have the great facts of

this present dispensation of grace put before us in a few clear words, the most prominent of those facts being that, through the work of God’s beloved Son, “Who was “made a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13), we who believe on Him enter into the relation of sons to God, being regenerated by His Spirit; and we are furthermore caused to *know* that relation, because He has sent forth the Spirit of His Son *into our hearts*, so that we can intelligently address God as “Father.”

These facts, if clearly fixed in our minds, will safeguard us from all misleading theories; and where we have been heretofore confused by such theories, as most of us have been, a little attention to the plain Bible facts concerning the mission for which God sent forth His Son, will deliver us from such confusion. It is of the very first importance that we keep clearly in mind the fact that the purpose for which the Son of God came among men — “His Father’s business” — was to “fulfill all righteousness,” to the end that God might have a kingdom composed of obedient children (“children of the kingdom”), subject to His commandments which He “has spoken unto us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:2). Such a kingdom of heavenly-born children could be obtained only in one way, namely, by a *new birth*; and, since men “*must be born again*” in order to enter the Kingdom of God, it follows that “the Son of man *must be lifted up*” to die on the cross (John 3:5,14,15).

The words “the fullness of the time was come” could mean only one thing, namely, the time for the great work of redemption that had been planned before the foundation of the world; the time for God’s righteousness to be manifested and for His salvation to go forth — when all the ends of the earth should see the salvation of our God (1 Peter 1:20; Isaiah 51:5; Psalm 98:3, etc.). The sufferings, the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ were, moreover, the fulfillment of that special promise of God to the fathers of Israel which is frequently referred to as *the promise* (Luke 24:49; Acts 2:33, 39; 13:32, 33; 26:6, 22, 23; Romans 1:2; Galatians 3:14; Ephesians 1:13; Titus 1:2, etc.).

To the accomplishment of that great purpose and promise of God the Lord Jesus Christ was wholly committed and consecrated at the time of His first coming to earth. This fact makes it quite impossible that the establishing of the earthly kingdom could have had any place at all within the scope of His mission *at that time*. And no word or act of His, or of His forerunner, ever gave the slightest foundation for the thought that the millennial kingdom was then at hand — but quite the reverse. All this, we confidently expect, will be quite clear to those who may read the following pages, and who are not irrevocably committed to the postponement theory.

In the Epistle to the Galatians this dispensation of “the grace of Christ” (1:6) is clearly exhibited as that wherein *the Holy Spirit is in the world regenerating all who have faith in Jesus Christ*. For the Apostle says to the churches of Galatia, “Ye are all the children of God *by faith in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:26). Those who are born of the Spirit are, moreover, subject to God’s *government*. They are set “free” in order that they may obey Him instead of obeying “the law of sin.” In other words, they are in His kingdom; and hence they are called upon to “fulfill the *law of Christ*” (Galatians 6:2). Some of His commandments are given in this Epistle. But what is mainly to our immediate purpose is that the Apostle here explains very fully and clearly that the coming of the Holy Spirit, and all that the Holy Spirit accomplishes in and through believers in the Lord Jesus Christ among all nations, is *the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham*. It is most important to grasp the significance of this. What did God have in mind when He made “the promise” to Abraham? The Epistle to the Galatians gives the full answer to that question; and it is very easy to understand.

In the first place it should be noted that, although God made several promises to Abraham, the Apostle speaks of *one particular* promise as “*the promise*.” He says, “And if ye be Christ’s, *then* are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to *the promise*” (3:29). Again he says that the law was given for a specified purpose “till the Seed (Christ) should come, to Whom *the promise* was made” (3:19); and again, “the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that *the promise* by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe” (3:22).

In Chapter 3:8 we are told that the particular promise here spoken of as “*the promise*” is the one given to Abraham and confirmed *by an oath*, after his obedience had been manifested in his willingness to offer, at God’s command, his only son Isaac (Genesis 22:18), namely, “In thee shall *all nations*

be blessed." This, as the Spirit tells us through Paul, is "the Gospel" in prophecy; for the Gospel was "promised afore by the prophets" (Romans 1:2). Accordingly we read: "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before *the Gospel* unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall *all nations* be blessed. So, then, they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (Galatians 3:8, 9).

Moreover, we now learn a great fact which was for centuries wrapped up and carefully hidden in those words of promise, namely, that "the blessing" which God purposed to bestow upon the nations of the earth (the heathen or despised "Gentiles") was nothing less than *the gift of the Holy Spirit*, which is now given, through Christ the "Seed" of Abraham, to every believing Gentile as well as to every believing Jew. And we learn also that, in order that this covenanted "blessing" might come to believing Gentiles, it was necessary that Abraham's Seed should first be made a "curse" "by being hung upon the tree. The words are plain: "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).

It is clear, then, that "the blessing" promised by God to Abraham, which was to come upon the nations of the world through Abraham's "Seed," was the promise of the Holy Spirit, Who regenerates believing sinners (regardless of their nationality), Who causes them to *know God as Father*, and Who enables them to keep the commandments of God given them by the Son.

It is clear also that, in order that the way might be prepared in perfect "righteousness" for this promise and purpose of God to be accomplished, the promised Seed of Abraham *must be made a curse* by dying on the tree. Therefore, instead of coming "to smite the earth with a curse," the Lord came to be made a curse Himself, and to be smitten in our stead. Thus it behooved Him to fulfill all righteousness, and to open the way for the promised blessing to the Gentiles.

With these plain facts in mind we cannot be mistaken as to the significance of the first words of the Gospel of Matthew, which words fix the character of that Gospel, and fitly begin the new era that God was to introduce "in the fullness of time." What is signified in the words "Son of Abraham" is a matter about which there is no room for doubt or uncertainty. The very first verse of Matthew announces in the clearest terms the era of *blessing to the Gentiles*; and hence, instead of calling that Gospel "Jewish" as some mistakenly do, there is warrant rather for calling it "Gentilish." And to this we will return. It is enough now to take notice of the great fact that "the fullness of the time" was come for God to send forth His Son to accomplish all that was needed to be done in righteousness in order that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, that we might receive *the promise of the Spirit* by faith.

It is very easy to see that John's ministry was a *preparation* for this work which God sent forth His Son to accomplish. For John came "in the way of righteousness," to "*prepare* the way of the Lord," Who came to "fulfill all righteousness." John's baptism was "from heaven," and thereby those who came "confessing their sins" were baptized "for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4). John pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," and also announced Him as the One Who should baptize with the Holy Ghost. John's ministry had to do solely with those who were moved to repentance by his preaching, and who came to his baptism "confessing their sins"; whereas, if he had been the herald of the earthly kingdom, his business would have been with the leaders of the nation; and, moreover, in that case the scene of his ministry would have been Jerusalem, where, as a priest, his natural calling would have taken him, instead of in the wilderness where he was to cry the solemn message of Isaiah 40.

2

THE BUILDER OF GOD'S HOUSE

We have seen that the words "Son of Abraham" point unmistakably to the long foretold era of "blessing" to the Gentiles. But, more than this, the New Testament begins with the careful tracing of a genealogical line of forty-two generations from Abraham to Abraham's "Seed." That, of course, could have no other meaning than that the time had come for the fulfillment of the promise, and that the Person had come by Whom the promise was to be fulfilled. Thus the first page of the Gospel of Matthew has a decidedly "Gentilish" complexion. And the last words of that Gospel bear out this view; for they are the words whereby the risen Lord sent forth His disciples to "all *nations*" with instructions which bring all who receive them by faith, into the unspeakable blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven.

We have now to take note of the significance of the words "Son of David," also found in Matthew 1:1. In so doing we shall come to a right understanding of the peculiar place and purpose of Matthew's Gospel as the beginning of the New Testament.

It seems to have been taken for granted that the reference to David in the first verse of the New Testament implied the *throne of Israel*, and that the presentation of Jesus Christ as "Son of David," indicated that He had appeared for the purpose of asserting His claim to that throne. But let us notice that the reference to David in the New Testament Scriptures signifies something other than, and quite different to, the throne of Israel. Sufficient proof of this is found in the fact that Paul connects *his* Gospel, just as Matthew connects his, directly with Christ as the *Son of David* (Acts 13:22, 23; Romans 1:4; 4:6; 2 Timothy 2:8), and as the Son of Abraham (Romans 4:13; Galatians 3:8, etc.). In order to correct the wrong impression referred to, it is only necessary to point out that the Scriptures make known to us a subject with which King David is closely identified, and which is of vastly greater importance than any earthly throne. It is the failure to take notice of this Davidic subject that has caused many of our best instructors in the truths of Scripture to go astray.

That great subject is *the House of God*; and the Scriptures plainly show that David's conspicuous place in God's promises is connected with the thought that sprang up in his heart to *build a house for the Lord his God*. Here is a lesson of the first importance from which we can all derive great advantage. That we should have a thought for the House of our God is *a great thing in God's eyes*. Let the reader turn to the two descriptions given to us (2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17), noting the marvelous response which the Lord made to what was, as yet, but a mere impulse in the heart of His servant David. That mere impulse of the heart was, however, the crowning event in the life of the sweet psalmist of Israel, the event that meant so much for David's "house and lineage" (Luke 2:4). Referring to it on a subsequent occasion, David said to his assembled princes and people: "Hear me, my brethren and my people: as for me, I had *in mine heart* to build an *house of rest* for the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God" (1 Chronicles 28:2).

What momentous consequences flowed from that one thought of David's heart! The temple reared by Solomon, with its grandeur and magnificence, was the immediate consequence; but that building, though "exceeding magnificent," was but a faint shadow of that "spiritual house" to which the true Son of David was, in due time, to devote His labor, His wisdom, and His exhaustless wealth.

The key, therefore, to a right understanding of the character of Matthew's Gospel is found in the promise which God made to David concerning His Son, and which is recorded in these words: "*He shall build Me an House, and I will establish His throne forever*" (1 Chronicles 17:12). Those words, together with the words of verses 13 and 14, will richly repay the closest study. We do not at present enter upon a full exposition of their precious contents, being desirous for the moment merely to guide our readers' minds to the significance of the words "Son of David" in the Gospel, both as announced by Matthew and also by Paul. Manifestly, the words chosen by the Spirit of God for the beginning of the New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ declare the advent of the promised Seed of David Who was to build the eternal "habitation of God" (Ephesians 2:22). And this is confirmed by the declaration from the Lord's own lips, recorded a few pages further on, "And behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:42).

When we look closely at the record in 1 Chronicles 17 we see that the promises concerning the Son of David were not fulfilled in Solomon. The "Son" there spoken of was One whom God would "raise up" *after* David's decease, as it is written, "And it shall come to pass, *when thy days he expired* that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will *raise up of thy seed after thee*, which shall be of thy sons; and I will *establish* His kingdom. He shall build Me an house, and I will establish His throne *forever*. I will be His Father, and He shall be My Son" — see the express application of these words to Christ in Hebrews 1:5 — "and I will not take My mercy away from Him, as I took it from him that was before thee. But I will settle Him *in Mine house* and in My kingdom *forever*; and His throne shall be established *for evermore*."

These words settle in the clearest way (and other Scriptures furnish a great mass of concurring testimony) certain matters touching which various eminent expositors in our day have contrived to produce extraordinary uncertainty and confusion. Our immediate purpose has to do with the fact, *first*, that the principal thing foretold of David's Son was the building of the House of God; *second*, that in the order of events as clearly predicted, the Son of David was *first* to build God an house, and *then* God was to establish His — the Son's — throne.

This gives us, therefore, beyond all doubt, the significance of Matthew 1:1. But a further item of convincing proof should be noted in this connection. The promised Son of David was to be also *the Son of God*, according to the words: "I will be His Father, and He shall be My Son." Therefore, when, in reply to the Lord's question "But whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter was enabled, by a special revelation of the Father, to reply: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," the Lord at once declared the chief purpose for which He had come into the world. That purpose was to fulfill the promise made concerning David's Son, "He shall build Me an House"; for the Lord thereupon said: "Blessed (or happy) art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon *this Rock I will build My Church*; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:16-18).

The force of this, as proving that Christ had come as the promised Son of David to *build the Spiritual House* which is to be God's eternal Habitation, is irresistible; and it will surely carry conviction to every mind that is open to conviction by Scriptural evidence.

There is a further matter of much interest to be found in the above quoted words of our Lord, and which it is relevant to point out in this connection. The Lord's words concerning Simon Peter himself show that He has the authority to give to His disciples a *new name*; and, of course, when God gives a name it answers to the *nature* of the one who receives it. Moreover, He Who has authority to change our name, has power also to give us a *new nature*. "Simon" was by nature the son of Jonas ("Bar-Jonah" — *Bar* meaning *son*). The name "Simon," which means *hearing*, suggests faith, indicating that he was a son of believing Abraham, for "faith comes by hearing." But, when Simon gave utterance or *confession* to the great Rock foundation truth of God, the only and all-sufficient basis of saving faith, namely, that Jesus of Nazareth is "the Christ, the Son of the living God," the Lord Jesus instantly gave to this believing disciple a new name, and in giving it He showed what the effect is of believing in Him and confessing to His Name. "Peter" (or Petros) means a rock, being a word of *kindred meaning* to the word "*Petra*" — the great eternal Rock on which God builds, and on which "sal-

vation rests secure.” This latter word, *Petra*, is the word which Christ used of Himself, saying “on this Rock (*Petra*) will I build My Church.” It is the same Rock whereof the Apostle Paul says “And that Rock (*Petra*) was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4). That was David’s “Rock” to which he so often sang in his inspired psalms of praise.

The blessedness of this great truth to all who, by faith, are standing upon that Rock lies in the fact that to every one of them Christ gives *the same eternal life* and the same *new nature*. Each becomes a *Petros*, that is to say, a living stone, partaking of the life and nature of the eternal *Petra*.

And a further truth to be discerned in these important words of the Lord is that “the House of God, which is the Church of the *living God*” (1 Timothy 3:15), is builded of “living stones,” that is to say, of those to whom the life of the risen Christ has been given. This truth is unfolded by Peter himself in those beautiful words of 1 Peter 2:4–6: “To Whom (Christ) coming, a *Living Stone*, disallowed indeed of men,¹ but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as *living stones* are built up, a *Spiritual House*, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he *that believeth on Him* shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore *which believe* He is precious.”

Following a little further the Lord’s words on the great occasion of Simon Peter’s confession, we observe that He not only announced Himself as the Builder of the House of God, according to the promise given to David, but He also indicated that, before the work of building the House could begin, He *must* undergo the predicted “sufferings of Christ,” that “He *must* go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (Matthew 16:21). Those words state in plain speech what the Lord’s baptism had declared in symbol. Thus we have the first clear showing forth of the mighty truth that the foundation of the Church, the House of God, was to be laid in the death and resurrection of the Lord of glory. This gives point to the words “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” that is, against the purpose of Christ to build the House of God. For, though He was to die, and to enter the place of the dead, “the gates” of that region would not be able to detain Him; for it was “not possible that He should be holden of it” (Acts 2:24).

The Apostle Paul, that great minister of the Church (Colossians 1:24, 25), whose ministry is linked so closely with that of the Lord Himself, continues this wonderful subject for us in his Epistle to the Ephesians, where he shows *the manner* wherein the risen Christ — having ascended up on high, taking captivity captive — is now carrying on the age-long work of building the “Habitation of God.” Briefly, the great work is accomplished by the risen Christ *through His members*, to *each one* of whom grace is given, according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Ephesians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 12:7). Thereby each member of Christ’s body, or in other words every believer in Him, is qualified to take part in “edifying” (that is, *building up*) the Church, the Body of Christ, the House of God. Thus the great Building is slowly but certainly growing up to its full dimensions and perfect form. In a truly wonderful way, requiring the eye of faith to perceive it, the Building is really *building up itself*. For both the supplies and also the “gifts,” or skill to labor, come from Christ above, “From Whom the *whole body* (fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part) *maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love*” (Ephesians 4:16).

Thus we see that the line of God’s purpose, which is clearly indicated in the first verse of the Gospel of Matthew, is carried straight forward, without any deviation whatever, taking exactly the predetermined course, according to which the building of the House of God was to *precede* the setting up of

1 It is a noteworthy and characteristic fact that the Lord Jesus is “disallowed” by the Church of Rome as the Living Foundation Stone, which honor this Church gives to Peter, just as the one sacrifice of Christ as the ground of salvation is “disallowed” by the Church of Rome, and the “dead works” of perishing men are substituted therefore, or added thereto.

the earthly throne of David. And we see further that this line is carried on by the revelation of the Spirit through the Apostles Peter and Paul, so that we can trace it through this long age, wherein the House is being builded "in love," and into the next age, when Christ, Who "loved the Church and gave Himself for it" will "present it to Himself a Church of *glory*, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

From first to last there is no sign of any "break" in the purpose of God so clearly indicated in Matthew 1:1, no sign, that we can detect, of any change of plan whatever. Nothing of what God had purposed in sending forth His Son, "Who was made of the Seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:4), and nothing of what *God had announced by John the Baptist and by Christ Himself*, was changed in the slightest degree because of the rejection of Christ by the rulers and chief priests, and by the mass of the Israelites whom they incited against Him. On the contrary, the very things which the Lord suffered at their hands were *necessary* to the accomplishing of what is indicated in the first chapter of Matthew, and was announced by John the Baptist. For when the latter proclaimed, concerning the Coming One, that He should baptize with the Holy Ghost, he virtually foretold not only the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, which *must be* before the Holy Spirit could come upon the disciples and qualify them for the Work of the Lord, but he announced also the building of the Church, for that is being "builded for an habitation of God *through the Spirit*" (Ephesians 2:22). Closely connected with the purpose of God regarding the building of His House, is the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning "the sure mercies of David," which were promised to those who should come into the blessings of the "everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 55:3). The Apostle Paul takes up this promise in his address in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, showing that its fulfillment required the death and resurrection of Christ (Acts 13:34). Hence according to Isaiah 55:3, as well as according to Psalm 16:8–11, the promised Son of David was to die and rise again before He could take the throne.

3

THE EARTHLY KINGDOM BESTOWED IN HEAVEN

The words we have quoted from 1 Chronicles 17:11–14 sweep away completely the idea that the Son of God and Son of David came to announce an earthly kingdom, or to seek acceptance of Himself as Israel’s King. No such unworthy thought as that can be read out of any part of the Word of God, either the Old or New Testament. We wonder that such a thought of the Lord’s mission among men could ever have found lodgment in the minds of those who make a study of the Scriptures. To dispel that unworthy and unwarranted idea is one of our objects in writing these pages.

Let it be noted then that God’s word is “He shall build Me an house, and *I* will stablish His throne. I will settle Him in Mine house, and in My Kingdom forever.”

God Himself undertakes to do this, and the doing of it, *in its due time*, will not depend in the slightest degree upon the disposition of the Jews, or of any other people. There will be no preaching of the earthly kingdom. The kingdom of heaven — God’s *present* kingdom — is the only one that is to come into being by preaching, that is, by the sowing of the “good seed” of God’s Word in the hearts of men. The earthly throne will be set up *in power*: “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father, with the angels.” And “when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, *then* shall He sit on the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations” (Matthew 16:27; 25:31, 32).

His coming will be sudden and startling; for “the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And that will be the dramatic ending of earthly power, which then will be in the hands of Antichrist, “that wicked” or lawless one, “whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness (the flashing effulgence) of His coming” (2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8; 2:8). Many Scriptures declare, and in the plainest language, that the setting up of the throne of Christ on earth will be a work of divine *power*, overwhelmingly crushing down all opposition. The novel idea that the earthly throne will be introduced by the preaching of Jews (some talk about the marvelous effect of the preaching of 144,000 Apostle Pauls! who are to preach “the gospel of the kingdom” during the great tribulation) has no Scriptural basis. This idea, which has caused much perplexity and confusion, rests solely upon human authority. A Bible teacher (a lawyer by profession) writes as follows regarding the author’s pamphlet, “*The Kingdom of Heaven*”:

“I only wish it (this pamphlet) could have a very wide circulation, especially among those whose minds were muddled on the subject by what appeared in the _____ Bible, as mine was. I felt that such an *authority* as Mr. _____ was, must be right, and yet, try as I would; I failed to comprehend his idea of the Kingdom being in abeyance. Furthermore, his idea that the Sermon on the Mount is ‘pure law’ I could not at all square with my; own convictions.”

Another, who is a missionary and Bible teacher, writes:

“We are deeply grateful for your book on the Kingdom. One wonders what possible reply can be made to it. I have used Dr. _____’s notes a great deal and owe much to them,

but I never could understand his treatment of the subject of the Kingdom. I laid that, however, to my own dullness of mind.”

Another brother in the Lord, a preacher of the Gospel, who until reading the above mentioned pamphlet was a firm believer in the postponement theory, now writes:

“I thank you for your clear exposition which has shattered for me, and I trust will for many others, the ‘postponed kingdom’ theory. That theory deprives the believer of the Beatitudes, the ‘Lord’s Prayer’ (so called of Matthew 6) and even takes away the ‘Great Commission.’ It is destructive of the truth of Scripture and divisive in its influence among brethren in the Lord. I thank God I am free from that theory.”

And to show how, when once we are put on a line of truth we begin to find for ourselves ample corroboration from the Word of God, we quote the following enlightening comments from the same letter:

“Christ came the first time to suffer and to die. There is absolutely no hint that He came to overthrow the reigning political powers or to sit on David’s throne. In Matthew 21:5 it is written: ‘Behold thy King cometh unto thee meek and riding upon an ass.’ Those words are a quotation from Zechariah 9:9. Turning to that passage we find that the next words in the prophecy are: ‘*Just and having salvation (victory).*’ The Holy Spirit purposely *leaves out* these words from the record in Matthew 21:5; for Christ came the *first* time as the ‘MEEK’ One; and He is coming the *second* time as the ‘JUST’ ONE. Between the first and second comings of Christ there is the age of grace, ‘the acceptable year of the Lord,’ the period of *the Kingdom of the heavens*, when Christ is ‘the King invisible,’ but nevertheless a *King*.”

Another, also a teacher of the Lord’s people, writes, expressing thanks for the author’s books on the Kingdom, and saying:

“It seems to me that you have been enabled to establish the fact that the Lord’s dear people are truly the subjects of the Kingdom of Heaven as well as members of His body — the Church. It therefore follows that we should gladly submit ourselves to the laws of the Kingdom, for in no other way could we *practically and truly own our Lord Jesus Christ as our King*.”

“I have been hearing much lately about ‘bringing back the King’ — referring to our Lord’s second coming — but your line of ministry is ‘bringing back the King’ to our hearts *now*.”

“It appears very strange that many of us have been led to believe that as *King* He was dethroned at the very time He was enthroned (Revelation 3:21; Psalm 110:1). What could the word ‘throne’ symbolize but a kingdom and a king? How could we ever have believed that the Lord said to Peter, ‘I give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of heaven’ when He knew that nearly two thousand years would pass ‘ere that Kingdom would be established — as would be the case if the modern theory were correct — and then not by Peter using the keys, but by His own (Christ’s) second coming in power? It evidently is more reasonable to believe that Peter used one of the ‘keys’ at the day of Pentecost, when three thousand entered the door into the Kingdom, and the other key; at the house of Cornelius, when all who heard Peter’s address entered the Kingdom. The Church was formed by the baptism of the Spirit — the Kingdom by the preaching of the Gospel, or the use of ‘the key of knowledge.’ Pentecost was the birthday of the Kingdom, because no one can enter a door until the key is used that unlocks it. The Holy Spirit said, ‘Ye are a *holy nation*’ (1 Peter 2:9). Yet our minds were so muddled that we thought there was no *national life* now, no laws of government, no king till the new age. Many other strange things are involved; but I am writing too much now. From some your testimony will

probably bring opposition. The ‘tradition of the elders’ must be upheld, even though they ‘make void the Word of God’ thereby.”

It appears from the above, and from many like letters, that when the saints are put on the right track they are enabled to find for themselves ample confirmation of the truth in the Scriptures.

An editor of a magazine, having read “*After This*,” writes:

“I was so much pleased with Chapter 4 (about the *Kingdom of Heaven*) that I felt like writing and telling you how glad I was to find someone *expressing* what I have *felt* for a long time.”

The author has had the encouragement of numerous additional testimonies expressing the great relief that the simpleminded people of God have experienced in being delivered, through the plain truth of the Scriptures, from the confusion of the postponement theory. Some of these are touchingly thankful for *something they can understand*, in lieu of the bewildering “mysteries” into which their instructors had led them.

The Scriptures leave no room whatever for speculation as to the manner in which the Kingdom of the Son of man — the earthly throne of David — will be set up in its time. The Son of man will receive the throne of Israel and of the world *not on earth but in heaven*. The evidence of Scripture on that point is clear and convincing. *Negatively* we have the statements, often reiterated, that the Son of man came to earth “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10; Matthew 18:11, etc.) — not to seek an earthly throne. He (“the Son of man”) was “made a little lower than the angels” — not to obtain earthly greatness, but — “for the suffering of death” (Hebrews 2:9). Such Scriptures are enough to exclude the idea that He sought acceptance by Israel as their earthly Sovereign, or stooped to negotiate any favor Himself. It was *His Father’s* business that brought Him into the world as “Son of man.” He sought nothing for Himself. ‘

But we have, additionally, the *positive* statements of many Scriptures, both in the Old and the New Testaments, which tell precisely how *and where* He will receive the earthly dominion. We have quoted some pertinent words from His own lips. A further word of proof is found in the parable recorded in Luke 19:11–27, which He spake “because He was nigh to Jerusalem,” the place of the earthly throne, “and because they (the multitude) *thought* that the Kingdom of God should immediately *appear*,” that is, should be manifested in power. In the course of that parable the Lord said:

“A certain nobleman went into a far country *to receive for himself a kingdom* and to return,” showing that He is to receive the kingdom, or dominion, *in heaven*, and is to bring it with Him when He returns.

This connects itself with Daniel 7:13, 14. In that chapter is recorded the vision given to Daniel in which he saw four wild beasts coming up from the sea, which, as interpreted in verse 17, represent four great kingdoms, or world powers, which were to arise out of the earth. And, continuing the account of his vision, the prophet says: “I saw in the night visions, and behold, One like the *Son of man* came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (verses 13, 14).

We cite this important prophecy (which throws light, and increasingly so, upon the great political events of our day) merely to call attention to the fact that the dominion over the earth is received by the Son of man *in heaven*.

To the same effect is the testimony of the Second Psalm, which Paul cites in Acts 13:33 as fulfilled (so far as concerns the words “Thou art My Son, this day I have begotten Thee”) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The opposition of the kings of the earth and its rulers against Him is foretold in verse 2; and this, according to Acts 4:26, 27, was fulfilled, partially at least, when “both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together” against

“God’s holy child Jesus.” But “He that *sitteth in the heavens* shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak to them in His wrath, saying, Yet have *I* set My King upon Zion the hill of My holiness”; thus making it evident once more that the enthronement of Christ on earth will be the act of God the Father, and will not depend upon the favour of any people of the world, Jews or Gentiles.

We have also the clear testimony of Psalm 110:1, 2, in the words: “The Lord said unto my Lord, sit Thou at My right hand until *I* make Thine enemies Thy footstool. The *Lord* will send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion: rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies.”¹

The meaning of these words is clear; and they show, moreover, that the period of Christ’s reign on earth was to be *preceded* by a period when He should sit on God’s right hand *in heaven*. That period is this present dispensation. Thus we have in this Scripture one of many infallible proofs that the earthly kingdom was not in contemplation at the first coming of Christ.

Verse 4: “The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedec” — proves, as interpreted by Hebrews 5:6–10; 6:20, etc., that the Lord was to take up the office of *Priest* on behalf of His people before taking *the throne* to reign over men on earth. The unchangeable order of His successive offices is given in the words, Prophet, Priest and King. He was the “Prophet” on earth in the days of His flesh; He is the “High Priest” now, in heaven; and He will be earth’s “King” when He comes again. This was settled from all eternity.

Finally we cite the testimony of Revelation 11:15: “And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices *in heaven* saying: The kingdoms of *this world* are become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.”

Thus again are we informed that the establishment of His throne will be settled “*in heaven*.” Earth will not be consulted about it at all. And this was always the Divine program. For in Chapter 10:7 it is stated that “in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God shall be finished, *as He hath declared to His servants the prophets*.”

And this suggests another absolutely convincing proof of the view we are presenting. For when it was a question of restoring again *the Kingdom to Israel*, the Lord said that *that* was a matter “which the *Father hath put in His own power*” (Acts 1:7). And again, referring to the coming of the Son of man *in the clouds* (as seen in Daniel 7:13, 14) He said: “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, *but the Father*” (Mark 13:26, 32).

These sayings of the Lord Jesus absolutely forbid the thought, if His words have any weight with us, that John was authorized to announce the restoration of the kingdom to Israel at the first coming of Christ. *That* is, and was, a matter that the Father keeps in His own power. We have the clear testimony of the Son to this fact. Hence it is not to be for a moment supposed that John or the Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed the imminent establishment of the earthly throne of David.

Surely enough proof has been offered to warrant the conclusion, as a matter beyond all doubt or question, that Jesus Christ came into the world, not to claim the earthly throne, but to build the House of God.

1 We understand that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the convincing proof of His Sonship, which thereby was triumphantly manifested. His Deity is shown by Psalm 2:12, where kings are called upon to submit to Him, and a blessing is pronounced upon all that put their trust in Him. To trust in other than God is idolatry.

4

“ELIJAH WHICH WAS FOR TO COME”

It is instructive for the purpose of our present study to observe how God's new revelation (which began just before the birth of Jesus Christ) joins on to the last words of the Old Testament. The very last words from heaven (preceding the interval of silence which lasted about four hundred years after Malachi) were these: “Behold, I will send you (Israel) Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth, with a curse” (Malachi 4:5, 6).

The *very next words* from heaven fit this promise in a striking way, and the significance of the fact is clear. In them, that is, in Gabriel's message to Zacharias, we have manifestly a direct continuation of the subject of the last words spoken by God through Malachi. For the angel Gabriel's words to Zacharias, while he, a priest, was exercising his office in the Temple (Malachi 2:5–7) and were the *next words* sent from heaven to earth. This is the record:

“And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias; for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John, and thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. And *many of the children* of Israel shall he *turn to the Lord their God*. And 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 1:11–17).

It is transparently clear that the purpose of Gabriel's message was to announce the great person promised in the last words of Malachi, who should perform the Elijah ministry of *turning the hearts* of a number of Israelites (“fathers” and “children”) to the Lord their God, thus making ready a people “prepared for the Lord.” The words of the angel concerning this child, who was to be miraculously born, and was to be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, and be endowed with “the *spirit and power* of Elijah,” are explicit, “He shall go before Him” (the Lord), he shall “turn the hearts,” he shall “make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Every word of this announcement foretells the complete success of the coming Elijah-like prophet. His birth was to be the cause of rejoicing to “many,” and “*many of the children of Israel*” should be “turned” by him to the Lord their God.

There is quite enough in these words alone to abolish the idea that John's mission was to offer an earthly kingdom to the nation of Israel. That idea makes John's mission a pitiable and contemptible failure, utterly barren of result, and without imaginable purpose. Furthermore, the completeness of the angel's description of John's ministry leaves no room for the insertion into it of the supposed offer of an earthly kingdom. Such a distortion — amounting to a complete falsification of the angel's words — is wholly unwarranted. To offer an earthly kingdom to the nation of Israel is a very different thing from turning “*many of the children of Israel* to the Lord their God.”

The Lord Jesus bore testimony to the “greatness” of John’s ministry, and also declared explicitly that John was “he of whom it was written, Behold, I send My messenger *before Thy face*, which shall *prepare thy way before Thee*” (Matthew 11:10, citing Malachi 3:1). We know, therefore, that John fully accomplished the great work entrusted to him of preparing the way of the Lord.

It is distinctly stated in the Scriptures that John the Baptist “came *for a witness to bear witness of the Light (Christ) that all men through him might believe*” (John 1:7). And the Lord confirmed this, saying of John: “There is another that *beareth witness of Me*”; and He described John as “a burning and a shining light,” or lamp — that is, a bright witness to Himself.

John himself also bears witness to this as recorded in the Gospel of John (3:25–30). Some of John’s disciples came to him saying that “He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him.” John’s reply shows that this was precisely what his ministry was intended to bring about: “Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am *sent before Him*. He that hath the bride is the Bridegroom: but the friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom’s voice. This my joy therefore is *fulfilled*. He must increase, but I must decrease.”

John here likens the people which he had “prepared for the Lord” to a bride, made ready for, and presented to, the bridegroom. And John’s joy was “fulfilled” in the complete success of his mission.

The very words in which the Spirit describes John’s appearance and food (Matthew 3:4) help to identify him with Elijah the Tishbite (2 Kings 1:8), and prepares our minds for the proof that the Elijah of history was but the prototype of that greater “Elijah which was for to come.”

The next words from heaven after the angel’s message to Zacharias, were those spoken by the angel to her who was to be the virgin mother of the Lord Jesus, and who was not, like Zacharias, dumb through unbelief, but responded in humble faith and thanksgiving at the coming of the One Who was to be her “Savior,” saying: “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luke 1:46, 47). It was the prospect of a “Savior,” not a king that rejoiced her spirit. Hence Elizabeth’s words: “And blessed is she that *believed*, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord” (verse 45).

Following this we have the inspired words of Zacharias, when his dumbness was removed, which declare that the new era which his son John’s ministry was to introduce was to be an era of pure *grace* (verses 76–80). For John was to “*go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins.*” This is a radically different thing from offering an earthly kingdom to Israel; and, moreover, in the words “*remission of sins*” we recognize that great purpose of God, for the accomplishment of which “the Son of man *must be lifted up*” on the cross to die for sinners. “Without shedding of blood there is *no remission*”; and hence these words from the father of John the Baptist clearly proclaim him, John, to be the *herald of the cross* — not of the earthly throne!

And this “knowledge of salvation by (in) the remission of sins,” which later on became, by Christ’s command, *the gospel message for all the world* (Luke 24:46, 47), was the display of “the tender mercy of our God, whereby (literally, *in which*) the Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

“We do not see how any words could be chosen that would more clearly or more beautifully announce the character of the era of which John was the divinely chosen herald. It is the era of “the tender mercy of our God,” the era wherein the Spring of Day — the light of the dawn of the “day of salvation” — has visited a sin-cursed world. And for what purpose? To set up in it an earthly kingdom? Far, far from that; but rather “to *give light* to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,” and furthermore to guide the enemies of God into “the way of peace” — the way which they have “not known” (Romans 3:17).

He must be blind indeed, or hopelessly possessed by preconceptions, who fails to see that the ministry of John, as described in these inspired prophecies, *tallies exactly* with the era which was then

about to be introduced by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

God's new age of grace, then (as "promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures" (Romans 1:2), was to begin with a great heart-turning movement. This was to be brought about by a ministry Elijah-like in character; and that important and *necessary* ministry was to be entrusted to a specially trained prophet. That servant of the Lord, whose coming was thus definitely foretold, was to "make ready" a special company composed of "many of the children of Israel," who were to be, by his ministry, "prepared for the Lord." This prepared remnant of Israel, gathered out from the mass of the people, and made ready for the Lord as a bride is made ready for the bridegroom, was to constitute the beginning of the Kingdom of heaven. For to them the Lord could speak the laws of the Kingdom, to which all His people are to yield willing obedience — obeying "from the heart." (See Romans 6:17.)

That spiritual "Kingdom" was to be, and is, composed of an out-gathering from among Jews and Gentiles of those who, in their hearts, *receive* Jesus Christ, and acknowledge Him as *Lord* (John 1:12; Acts 2:21; Romans 10:9, 13).

The new era, moreover, was to begin with "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," and the burden of that "cry" was to be "all flesh is grass ... the grass withereth, the flower thereof fadeth, but *the word* of our God shall stand forever" (Isaiah 40:6–8). This foretells first a *bringing down* into death of all that is of nature, "the flesh," preparatory to the *raising up* of something new by "the Word of God"; and that Word, says Peter, in explaining this passage, "is *the Gospel*, which is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:25).

It is manifest that the foreordained work of God signified by the "cry" of Isaiah 40 is utterly incompatible with the setting up of the earthly throne of David, and the exaltation of the earthly people Israel. It proclaims just the reverse.

We see that in Malachi (as also in many other prophecies) God foretold a work which He would do "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord," that work being, of course, the work of grace in this "acceptable year of the Lord." And, what is more particularly in point, we see further that the work of this age was to begin by an Elijah-like work of *turning* of the hearts of "fathers" and "children," which ministry was to be entrusted to a special "prophet," to whom the name "Elijah" is given prophetically. The words "before the day of the Lord" are not to be taken to mean "immediately before" the coming of that day. And furthermore it is in accordance with Old Testament prophecy to disregard the length of time of this dispensation, and to speak of events belonging to the second coming of Christ as if they followed closely upon the events of His first coming. That the "Elijah" of Malachi's prophecy was John the Baptist, and not Elijah the Tishbite, is perfectly clear from the Lord's unambiguous words, words that were well "understood" by His disciples (Matthew 17:12,13). But to this point we will return.

It is also clear from the angel's words already quoted, and from other references, such as Mark 1:6, that the name "Elijah" was used by Malachi *descriptively*. By this usage of the word "Elijah" as a figure of speech (as is commonly done both in the Bible and in ordinary usage) the character and effect of the ministry to be entrusted to the Lord's forerunner is vividly indicated. Now, what chiefly impresses us is that this Elijah ministry foretold by Malachi, and announced by the angel Gabriel, was deemed *necessary* in God's eyes to the end that He should not "come and smite the earth with a curse." These words point clearly to a work that was to be done by the promised "messenger," and that would have the effect of averting judgment. The work thus predicted, and which was accomplished through John's ministry, was utterly incompatible with the announcing or offering of earthly dominion to Israel. Nothing could be further than that from the purpose of God and from the necessities of the case.

It is manifest also that the words of Malachi convey the positive assurance that the coming Elijah would *fulfill* his appointed ministry in turning the hearts of a company of Israelites to the Lord. And the subsequent events fully justified the prediction. The ministry of John gathered a company of repentant Israelites, who were baptized by him "unto the remission of sins" (Luke 3:3), and were sub-

sequently handed over to the Lord Jesus Christ, to be disciplined by Him.

In Luke's Gospel this company of repentant Israelites who were gathered out from the mass of the people through John's ministry, and were thus "prepared" and "made ready" for the Lord Himself, is distinguished in the sharpest way from the Pharisees and doctors of the law, and from their followers. Of the former (*i.e.*, those who were baptized with the baptism of John) it is said that they "*justified God*"; whereas the Pharisees and lawyers *rejected the counsel of God against themselves*, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7:28, 29).

Thus we see, first, that the mission of John was something wholly inconsistent with the offering of the millennial kingdom to the nation Israel; for the purpose of John's mission was to gather *out of* the nation Israel a special company of persons who, by confessing their sins and accepting John's baptism, "*justified God*." And we see, *secondly*, that John's ministry accomplished fully its intended purpose. Every pertinent word of Scripture testifies to the "great"ness of John, and to the importance of his ministry; and from Malachi 4:6, we learn that the great turning of heart which his preaching was to accomplish should have the effect of intervening between the earth and the curse that would otherwise have fallen upon it.

Finally, we learn from the last quoted Scripture that what the nation of Israel "rejected" was not the offer of an earthly kingdom, which indeed they never had an opportunity to reject; but that what they really "rejected" was "the counsel of God *against themselves*." which is quite another thing.

That John's ministry was one of mercy and grace which God interposed between the guilt of man (especially of His people Israel) and His righteous wrath, is made evident by many Scriptures. Thus, John's own exhortations, as recorded most fully in Luke 3:1-18, bring that character of his ministry clearly into view. The announcement "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (compare Isaiah 46:13; 49:5-8), declares most forcibly the character of the age which his ministry was ushering in. His word to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from *the wrath to come*," shows that his ministry was connected with an era of mercy interposed between the earth and "the wrath" which was decreed, and was fully due. Those words explain the words of the Lord through Malachi: "Lest I come and smite *the earth* with a curse." For the people who turned to God as the result of John's preaching were those to whom the Lord afterward said "Ye are the salt of *the earth*." Their presence *on earth* did for *the earth* what the presence of ten righteous men would have done for Sodom (Genesis 18:16-33).

In fact it is impossible to read those words of John which the Spirit of God has recorded for our enlightenment (provided, of course, we read them with a childlike mind, willing to be taught contrary to our cherished opinions) without perceiving that they contradict and utterly refute the idea that John was offering the earthly kingdom for the acceptance of the nation Israel. It is as clear as daylight that he was calling *individuals* to repentance, and to amendment of their ways, with a view to "making ready a people" who should believe on that Mightier One whom he announced, a people who should receive from Him, in due time, the promised baptism with the Holy Ghost. John made no "offer" to the nation; but, on the contrary, the record plainly declares that "he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching *the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*" (Luke 3:3).

5

THE ELIJAH MINISTRY FORETOLD BY MALACHI

We have now to inquire as to the *time* of the fulfillment of Malachi's prediction of the coming of Elijah the prophet. For it is held and taught by not a few prominent expositors that Elijah himself (meaning Elijah the Tishbite) will come during the great tribulation and will then fulfill Malachi's prophecy by turning many Israelites to the Lord. In fact this assumption is one of the main props of the "postponed kingdom" theory. Hence it challenges close scrutiny.

The idea that John did not fulfill the Elijah ministry foretold by Malachi rests upon a very curious interpretation of Matthew 11:14. We quote verses 12–15 inclusive:

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive (it), this is Elias which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear let *him* hear."

We freely admit the difficulty of the passage, with which many able expositors have wrestled to little or no purpose. But we nevertheless look hopefully for an understanding of the meaning of the Lord's statement concerning John being "Elijah which was for to come," And we believe that the *real* meaning is that which is most simple and obvious — that to which the words of the text most readily lend themselves.

The words directly connect John with the predicted "messenger" of Malachi 3 and 4. In fact, the Lord quotes Malachi 3:1, saying of John: "For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee"; and if there could be any doubt that the words "I will send My messenger" (Malachi 3:1) and "I will send you Elijah the prophet" (Malachi 4:5) refer to the same person, the statements of the Lord Jesus Christ would remove the doubt.

The advocates of the postponed kingdom theory say that John *would have been* "Elijah which was for to come" if the Jews had been willing to "receive" it; but (they say) since they (the Jews) would not "receive it," therefore John was not the "Elijah" whose coming was foretold by Malachi. This view will not stand careful scrutiny. In the first place we are dealing with a matter of *fact*; for John either was or was not the predicted "Elijah"; and the fact, whichever it be, cannot depend upon whether or not the Jews recognized him as such. Jesus Christ was the One Whom "Elijah" was to go before and announce, and the fact that the Jews "received Him not" (John 1:11) did not, and could not, make any difference. The same argument applies to John.

In the second place, there were some, indeed "many" who *did* "receive" it; and this fact has led some of the very ablest expositors (not advocates of the postponed kingdom idea) to the strange conclusion that John *was* the promised "Elijah" to those who received his testimony and ministry, and to all others he was not! And this view might be admissible in the very limited sense that John was not "Elijah" to those whose hearts were not "turned" by him to the Lord, in that they derived no benefit from him.

"We are convinced that the idea that John was only a *conditional* "Elijah" stands on a very precari-

ous footing, and that no reasonable ground can be found for the supposition that there is another "Elijah" who is yet for to come, and that such supposititious "Elijah" will appear during the period of the great tribulation.

But this is not all; for we are asked to accept something which has even less support than the above. It is argued that *because* John was only a *conditional* Elijah (which has yet to be proved) *therefore* the announcement by him of the Kingdom of heaven was only a *conditional* announcement, which would be true *only* in case the Jews would "receive it." This argument, which is manifestly invalid, is frequently advanced in support of the postponed kingdom theory. Whatever be the force of the words "if ye will receive it," which the Lord used concerning John, it is only necessary, for the purpose of overthrowing the argument we are examining, to point out that there is no "if" whatever in the announcement of the Kingdom of heaven by John and by the Lord Jesus. Hence it will not benefit the postponed kingdom theory in the least to assume that John was only a conditional "Elijah," or that he was "Elijah" only to those who "received" his message.

But we return to the question whether John was, or was not, the "Elijah" whose coming was predicted by Malachi, our purpose at this point being to indicate our reason for the view that, while John was not indeed a reincarnation of Elijah the Tishbite, he *was* the "Elijah which was for to come." The name "Elijah" was, in our opinion, used in this prophecy in order that we might have a key to the unlocking of important truth (some of which we shall endeavor to unfold herein) regarding the character and work of that one whom the Lord declared to be "more than a prophet." We are confident that the view we take is sustained fully, *first* by the results accomplished by John's ministry in making ready a people prepared for the Lord and in averting the threatened "curse" from the earth, and *second* by the Lord's own statement which we will now examine.

Our expositors admit, as they must, that John *might have been*, and, but for the refusal of the Jews to "receive it," *would have been*, the "Elijah" of Malachi's prophecy. It is admitted, therefore, that the mere circumstance that the Lord's forerunner bore among men the name "John," and not that of "Elijah," does not forbid that he should be the fulfiller of Malachi's prophecy. So no objection can be founded upon that circumstance.

Moreover, upon a close examination of the Lord's words found in Matthew 11:12-15, especially in the light of the entire chapter, it will be seen that those words amount to a positive assertion that John *was* "the Elijah which was to come." They intimate also that only such as have "ears to hear" would understand it. In any other view of the matter the very significant words, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (words which are used *only* by the Lord Himself, and by Him *only* to call attention to matters of unusual importance), would be wholly without meaning here. "We think that the question which will really be tested by this Scripture is not whether John was the promised Elijah, but — *whether we have ears to hear what the Lord is here revealing concerning John and his ministry.*"

We wish, therefore, to point out that the "if" does not indicate any uncertainty as to John being the promised Elijah, but indicates uncertainty as to whether those addressed would "receive" what was being witnessed to them. This point is further elucidated by the Lord's next words (verses 16-19), in which He likens that generation to capricious children playing in the public square. The peculiar wording of verse 14 is plainly intended to throw upon those addressed the responsibility for *receiving* the testimony of John and of Christ. He says in effect, "If you will *receive* the testimony given you, well and good; *but in any case, this is Elijah which was for to come.*" The words of verse 19, "but wisdom is justified of her children" are clearly explained by the words of the corresponding passage in Luke 7:24-35, where it is said that those who heard John, and were baptized of him "justified God." As "children" of Wisdom they justified the "Wisdom of God."

But, by the many, the Lord's words were, of course, not understood. Apparently even those who were truly His disciples had not *at that time* their ears opened to understand His reference to the greatness of John and his ministry. And the same dullness of hearing afflicts many of the Lord's people to this day. But later on, the Lord spake again on this point; and on *that* occasion He spake so clearly that "*then* the disciples *understood* that He spake unto them *of John the Baptist.*" The incident

we now refer to derives greater point from the fact that it occurred when the Lord and His disciples were descending from the Mount of the Transfiguration, where Elijah the Tishbite had appeared in company with Moses. This is the record:

“And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said, 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 unto them of John the Baptist” (Matthew 17:9–13).

These words are too plain to admit of any misunderstanding on the part of those whose minds are not occupied by preconceptions. The language is simple and unambiguous, being quite free from the intentional obscurity with which the Lord enveloped the statement which He made in the hearing of the multitude. So “*then* the disciples *understood* that He spake to them of John the Baptist.” And there is little or no excuse if we do not understand likewise, especially as we have the words of the angel (Luke 1:16, 17) and other Scriptures to assist our understanding.

It is noticeable that the Lord connects John’s ministry with the prophecy of Malachi, quoting the words “Behold, I send My messenger *before Thy face*, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee.” Since it is apparent that the predicted “messenger” is the “Elijah” which was for to come (compare the words “I will send My messenger,” Malachi 3:1, and “I will send you Elijah the prophet,” Malachi 4:5), the words “which shall prepare Thy way before Thee” clearly foretell the *successful* accomplishment of the work of “preparation,” which was to precede the Lord’s coming. Those words which are repeated in substance by the angel Gabriel, forbid the thought that John’s ministry was a failure, and they utterly exclude the idea that his ministry consisted in a fruitless attempt to negotiate the acceptance, by Israel as a nation, of the offer of national deliverance from Caesar.

John’s Reply to the Priests and Levites

But, it may be objected, John himself when asked by the priests and Levites: “Art thou Elias?” answered, “I am not” (John 1:21).

As to the question of the “Elijah which was for to come,” we have the Lord’s “*I say unto you*,” which must be accepted as final. John’s statement, even if in contradiction of what the Lord said, cannot be taken to raise any doubt about the matter. Hence it only remains for us to discern, if we can, why John answered as he did. On this point the following explanations suggest themselves:

First, it may be that John did not know that he was the fulfiller of Malachi’s prophecy. In all the accounts which John gave of himself he referred to *Isaiah*’s prophecy of “the voice crying in the wilderness.” He did not connect himself with *Malachi*’s prophecy at all; whereas it was the Lord, Who, after John’s ministry was completed, and John himself was in prison, soon to be beheaded, declared him to be the fulfiller of Malachi. At the time the delegation of priests and Levites came to John it was too soon for him to know whether the Jews would “receive” his testimony or not; hence, in no view of the matter could he have said *at that time* that he was not the Elijah of Malachi’s prophecy.

Second, it is evident from all the Gospel records that God’s way of presenting Christ and His promised forerunner to Israel was to let their words and works declare who they were, rather than to announce them by name. Just as it is recorded of Christ that “He was in the world ... and the world knew Him *not*” (John 1:10; Acts. 13:27), so the Lord said of John: “But I say unto you that Elias is come already, and *they knew him not*” (Matthew 17:12). Evidently it was not God’s purpose to announce John as the promised Elijah. John claimed no greatness for himself, his part being solely and simply to bear testimony to the Mightier One Who was about to come. In perfect keeping with this was it for him to take the question of the Jews as referring to Elijah the Tishbite, as doubtless it did in fact. Therefore, John could consistently and truthfully answer, “No.”

At all events it is clear that the Lord purposed to conceal from "the wise and prudent" what He afterward revealed privately to His disciples, namely, that John was the "Elijah which was for to come," and was a different person from Elijah the Tishbite.

The view we have here presented does not, of course, exclude the possibility that there may be yet another "Elijah," who will accomplish a further and a final fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy. Hence, any who wish to do so are free to look for such a further and final fulfillment. All we have to say about that is that we see nothing in Scripture to support such expectation.

6

TURNING THE HEARTS

The word “Elijah,” as applied symbolically and prophetically to the Lord’s forerunner puts In our hands the key to truth of deep interest. And this, of course, is what is intended. It also leads to information that helps us appreciate the greatness of John’s ministry. The study of his ministry begins, in type, at 1 Kings 17, where Elijah the Tishbite appears suddenly upon the scene of the Northern Kingdom, which was to be later, the scene of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first words of Elijah announce the closing of the heavens from sending dew or rain for a period indefinitely stated as “these years.” But our special attention is directed to that period, and its duration is stated, by the Lord’s own words (Luke 4:25), and by James 5:17, to be “a space of *three years and six months*.” It cannot be regarded as a mere coincidence that the period of time thus mentioned in two New Testament Scriptures is exactly that of the last half of Daniel’s 69th week. For the striking fact is that the period of the cessation of rain at Elijah’s word was exactly the same in duration as that which ran its course from the sudden appearance of John announcing the Kingdom of heaven as “at hand,” to the day of Pentecost, when the Kingdom began, with the outpouring of that “abundance, of rain,” which is “the Promise of the Father,” sent down by the Lord Jesus glorified in heaven.

Then “the word of the Lord came to him” (Elijah), sending him to the brook Cherith, that is *before Jordan*; just as “the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness, and he came into all the country *about Jordan*” (Luke 3:2, 3). John was of the priestly family. He was entitled to minister *in the temple*, and to be supplied out of that which was offered in the temple to the Lord. Had his ministry been in connection with the earthly throne, the temple would have been the place for him to meet God’s King; and he would have met Him as a priest with the *anointing oil* (1 Kings 1:45; 2 Kings 11:12, etc.). But it was a *totally different Kingdom* which John was sent to announce, and of which his ministry was the introduction. And this is strikingly indicated by the fact that the appointed place where the Killer of that Kingdom was to be received and made manifest to Israel, was not Jerusalem, the city of the great king, where were the temple and the house of David, but the banks of the Jordan, the waters of judgment.¹ And it is specially significant that what awaited the Lord Jesus at the appointed place where He was to “be made manifest to Israel,” was not the priest or prophet with the horn of anointing oil, but the priest who was “*more than a prophet*” with the symbol of death, burial, and resurrection.

One must needs close his eyes firmly in order to miss seeing the significance of the fact that the Lord Jesus began His public manifestation to Israel by *baptism in Jordan*; and that then the “Anointing” which came upon Him from heaven was in the form of a dove — a sacrificial creature.

In this connection there is special significance in Peter’s words when, preaching in the house of Cornelius, he recalled “How God *anointed* Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him”

1 Notice that John states that the reason why he came baptizing with water was in order “that He (Christ) should be made manifest to Israel” (John 1:31).

(Acts 10:38).

The incident of Elijah's sojourn at the house of the widow of Zarephath (Sarepta) is referred to by the Lord Jesus as a prophetic occurrence, indicating a time in which blessing was to be withdrawn from Israel, and was to come to *Gentiles* (Luke 4:25).

Furthermore, Elijah's presence in Zarephath brought the woman's sin to remembrance in causing the death of her son, and thus *cutting off her house*. This shows us that God does not overlook the sin of Gentiles; and it reminds us that the consequence of sin is death (Romans 5:12 — 14). But God's salvation, whether for Jews or Gentiles, takes the form of resurrection, as signified by the resurrection of the widow's son, after Elijah had stretched himself upon the child "three times" (the number of resurrection). The baptism of the believer (which is the monumental sign that God has set up as marking this age) is into *the death of Christ* (Romans 6:3, 4). Thus baptism has *no meaning* apart from death, inflicted as the consequence of *sin*. Furthermore, that which baptism represents has *no value* apart from the resurrection of Him Who, though He "knew no sin," was "made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Further and pertinent instruction may be found in other incidents of Elijah's remarkable ministry; but we pass on to the great climax upon Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18), which seems to have been brought to pass and recorded in order that a wonderful prophetic picture might be given of the ministry of that "Elijah which was for to come." The mighty event on Mount Carmel, closing with the "sound of abundance of rain," brings to an end the period of three and a half years, corresponding to the period, which began with the ministry of John the Baptist, introductory to the "rain" of Pentecost. At that point Elijah's *typical* life was ended through the hatred of a wicked queen, as John's *actual* life was ended. Thereafter, Elijah's ministry is no longer illustrative of John's; though it leads into that of Elisha, which so abounds in miracles resembling those wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The appearance of Elijah was at a time of apostasy in Israel, when the rulers had "forsaken the commandments of the Lord" (1 Kings 18:18). So likewise, in John's day, the rulers of Israel had made void the word of God by their tradition (Mark 7:9). Elijah was the only one who spoke for God in his day, though the prophets of Baal were numerous.

In this state of things Elijah came forward with a command to gather unto him *all Israel*; for his ministry was to the whole nation. "With this we may compare Paul's description of John as having preached "the baptism of repentance to *all the people of Israel*" (Acts 13:24). The preaching in each case was to *all* the people, with the object of turning the hearts of *some*.

Elijah then "repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down," significant of the ruin of the worship of the true God; "and Elijah took *twelve stones*, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name." Thus "all the house of Israel" was brought into remembrance before God, assuring us that, however divided the people of God may be, He ever regards them as one household. And in this connection we would recall Peter's words in Acts 2:36: "Therefore let *all the house of Israel* know assuredly."

Then we have the sacrifice "laid on the wood" (1 Kings 18:33), which speaks of Christ as the Sacrificial Victim on the tree, dying "for that nation" (John 11:51); and then twelve barrels of water were poured upon the sacrifice and upon the wood; and "the water ran round about the altar and filled the trench also with water."

This drenching of the sacrifice with water was, in a sense, a baptism. But after no little meditation upon this feature of the scene, and considering that we have here, in the sacrifice laid upon the wood, a vivid setting forth in shadow of the Lamb of God on the tree, it seems to us that the thrice pouring of four barrels of water on the sacrifice speaks of the *perfect innocence and purity* of the spotless Lamb that was slain for sinners. The washing of the hands did not signify purification from guilt, but the assertion of innocence (Deuteronomy 21:6; Psalm 26:6). Likewise Pilate, in sending Christ to the cross, washed *his* hands in water, seeking thus to declare *his* innocence, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this Just Person" (Matthew 27:24); whereas the only *innocent* Man Who ever breathed stood

before him.

The Man Jesus Christ was the one and only Man whose perfect innocence might have protected Him absolutely from the fire of heaven's wrath and from the righteous judgment of God; and this, as it seems to us, is foreshadowed by the sacrifice so thoroughly flooded with water as to make it seemingly quite safe from fire. The very last place in the world where the fire of judgment should have fallen, the place that was the most secure from its effect, was the middle one of the three crosses on Calvary's hill. Yet there is where "the fire of the Lord" came down in all its consuming intensity. For there "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse *for us*, — that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the *promise of the Spirit*" — the abundance of rain — "through faith" (Galatians 3:13,14). Accordingly it is written (returning to 1 Kings 18:36): "And it came to pass, *at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice*, that Elijah the prophet came near and said: Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all this according to Thy word." In this prayer Elijah appealed to the Lord in the name of the fathers of Israel, and as their God. And then there comes to view the great purpose of it all, namely, *a turning back to God of the hearts* of some of His people. For Elijah's prayer thus ends:

"Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast *turned their heart back again*."

It was then a far-off look to the time when the nation Israel shall gaze upon Him Whom they pierced, and shall turn to Him indeed, never to apostatize again. But that day is drawing near; and *all* the purposes for which the Son of God, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot unto God, will soon be fully accomplished.

The completeness of the judgment that He bore is indicated by the words: "Then *the fire of the Lord fell*, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench" (verse 38).

What assurance these words should bring to every believing sinner (whose sins Christ bore in His own body on the tree), that the judgment was *fully* borne, and every sin answered for to the satisfaction of God's perfect *righteousness*, as well as to the eternal praise of the glory of His *grace*.

And after "the curse" was borne by Him, "the blessing" was quickly poured out upon those who caused His sufferings and death. A foreshadowing of "the blessing" that followed so closely upon the Sacrifice of Christ is clearly given in the great scene on Mount Carmel. For now Elijah can say to Ahab (the representative of Israel): "Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain." And thereupon Elijah "went up to the top of Mount Carmel" to pray, suggesting the ascension of Christ into heaven, and soon "the heaven was black with clouds and *wind*, and there was a *great rain*." (See Acts 2:2.)

This ministry of Elijah, culminating in the great sacrifice followed by the "great rain," is full of instruction and interest; and its main significance can hardly be missed in view of the fact that the words of the Angel Gabriel to Zacharias, and later the words of the Lord Himself on several occasions, point to Elijah's ministry as a type of the greater ministry of John. To "make ready a people," and make them "prepared for the Lord," was indeed a ministry of the first importance. And we cannot too often remind ourselves that the most conspicuous feature of John's ministry, more conspicuous even than his preaching, was *baptism*, the divine symbol of death and resurrection.

In baptizing Christ Jesus ("Who voluntarily took His place among repentant and confessed sinners and thus *associated Himself with them in the symbol of death*), John enacted in figure the work of this era of salvation. For the salvation into which believing sinners are brought by means of the Gospel of God's grace, is, in fact, *union with Jesus Christ in resurrection!*

Thus John's ministry is identified and connected in the clearest way with God's work in the present era. And what is the alternative view? — That John was miraculously born, was divinely hidden until

the day of his showing unto Israel, that "the Word of the Lord came to him," that he preached, received penitent sinners, baptized them, and turned the hearts of many of the children of Israel, making them ready, as a bride for a bridegroom, and thus had "a people prepared for the Lord"; and that all this extraordinary work of preparation, described at least eight times in the Bible, was in order to bring them into — *nothing at all* — a phantom "kingdom," proclaimed and immediately "withdrawn"!

It is impossible, we think, for any one, after realizing what John's ministry was designed to accomplish, and what it *did* accomplish according to the plain statements of Scripture, to entertain the idea that it had to do with extending to the Jews an offer of the earthly dominion promised them in prophetic Scriptures, only to meet with rejection at the hands of the people. This latter view makes all John's ministry a nullity; whereas it is impossible not to see that he actually *prepared* a people for the Lord, by turning their hearts, leading them to repentance, to confession of sins, and to humble submission to baptism, the symbol of death.

Here are two contrasted views of the ministry of John: One view is that he was an ambassador sent of God to offer to His people, Israel, that national deliverance and earthly supremacy among the nations of the earth which certain prophetic Scriptures foretell, and that his mission ended in complete failure, since the supposed offer he brought to the Jews was refused by them.

The other view is that John was sent with a message and ministry whose purpose was — not to offer anything whatever to the people of Israel, but — to *turn the hearts* of "many" of the people *to the Lord*, and thus to *prepare* a people for Him; and that his mission was a complete success, fully accomplishing what God intended to accomplish by it.

It is for the reader to judge which of these views is right, according to the Scriptures.

7

“THE BAPTISM OF JOHN”

Questions have doubtless arisen in the mind of every reader regarding John’s baptism, as to just what it was, and wherein it differed from that commanded by Christ. It would be appropriate, therefore, at this point, to see what answer the Scriptures make to those questions.

It is certain that John’s ministry was an important one, and that baptism was the prominent feature thereof. And since John was to make ready a people *prepared for the Lord*, we must assume that his baptism was *preparatory* to the Lord’s own ministry. That it was “from heaven” is evident from the Lord’s words in Matthew 21:25, where He said: “The baptism of John, whence was it? *from heaven*, or of men?” The fact that it was “*from heaven*” shows it to be of great importance. “What we therefore desire to ascertain is whether the preaching and baptism of John were connected with the dispensation of the earthly kingdom, or whether they belong to this present dispensation of grace. And this information is given in the Scriptures with unmistakable clearness.

After asking the above question, which put the chief priests and elders into such a dilemma that they refused to answer, the Lord spake the little parable of the man who had two sons whom he bade go and work in his vineyard, one of whom said, “I will not,” but afterward he *repented* and *went*; while the other said, “I go, sir”; and went not. And the Lord applied this parable to the two classes of people who heard John’s ministry, one of whom, including publicans and harlots, *repented* at the preaching of John, and the other, including the chief priests and elders, *repented not*. “Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you that the publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and ye *believed him not*: but the publicans and harlots *believed him*: and ye, when ye had seen” (it)¹ “*repented* not afterward, that ye might *believe* him.”

From this we see clearly that the effect of John’s ministry on those who believed him was to bring them along “the way of righteousness,” and to prepare them (even though they had been publicans and harlots) to “go into the Kingdom of God.”

From this it also appears (and other Scriptures confirm it) that John’s ministry left his disciples *still outside of the Kingdom*. Not until the Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost was the Kingdom of heaven really begun.

Turning now to Acts 18:24–28 we read the interesting account of the ministry of Apollos at Ephesus: “This man was instructed *in the way of the Lord*, and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught diligently *the things of the Lord*, knowing only *the baptism of John*.”

The “way of the Lord,” in which Apollos was “instructed,” “is evidently the “way of righteousness,”

1 The word “it” following “seen” is supplied by the translators. It seems likely this refers to Christ Himself. Even “afterward” *when* the rulers had seen Him, they repented not that they “might believe Him.” But if the whole passage applies to John the effect, for our present purposes, would be the same. The fault of the Pharisees was that they did not repent and believe.

in which John came; and the things which Apollos spake and taught were “the things of *the Lord*”; but his knowledge in regard to those things was limited.

From this we learn clearly that John's baptism was an introduction to Christ; though it did not bring those who received it into the full truth of Christianity. The baptism of John was counted as among “the things of the Lord” even in the days of Paul's ministry, and the whole incident proves in the clearest way that the ministry of Paul was linked directly with that of John the Baptist. It is impossible, therefore, without doing violence to this Scripture, to detach John's ministry from Christianity, and to link it with the era of the earthly kingdom.

Pursuing the subject of Apollos and his ministry we read: “And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom, when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them and expounded unto him *the way of God more perfectly*.” Thus we find that what Apollos needed was — not to learn that he was altogether on the wrong track (for such was not the case), or that he was teaching a kingdom that had been discarded and postponed to another age, but — to be taught the way of God *more perfectly*, or completely. Aquila and his wife Priscilla had previously entertained Paul at their house, and had received his testimony “*that Jesus was Christ*” (verses 1–5), Thereupon they took Apollos to their home, and communicated the testimony to him. And the effect of it was that Apollos went to Achaia, where he “mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures *that Jesus was Christ*” (verse 28).

This makes it very clear that what was lacking to the disciples of John was the testimony that Jesus, crucified and risen from the dead, was verily *the Christ of God*. To believe that fact is to be born again, and to receive the Holy Ghost. And what immediately follows in the Book of Acts affords a conclusive demonstration of this. For when Apollos had gone from Ephesus, Paul returned to that city: “And finding certain disciples he said to them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” (literally, “having believed did ye receive the Holy Ghost!”). “And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.”

Had they believed in Jesus raised from the dead and “glorified” in heaven, as *the Christ*, they would have received the Holy Spirit, as the Lord Himself had said, speaking of the Spirit — “*Which they that believe on Him* should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39). And other Scriptures, as Acts 10:44, and Galatians 3:2,14, testify clearly that the Spirit is received “by the hearing of faith” in the Crucified One.

Therefore Paul questioned them to ascertain what they had believed, asking, “*Unto what* then were ye baptized?” Christ had commanded His disciples to baptize “unto the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,” which Name expresses the full revelation of God given in this era. That complete revelation of God is the result of the death and resurrection of Christ, of His exaltation to the right hand of the Father, and of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The truth comprehended in the Name of God, now fully revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is, in one word, *Christianity*. And the questions put by Paul to those disciples presupposes that they who are “baptized *unto Jesus Christ*” (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27), are believers in the truth of Christianity — the risen Son of God on the right hand of the Father, testified by the Spirit of God come down from heaven.

Accordingly Paul's next question was “*Unto what* then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.”

This question and answer strongly imply that baptism is connected with some *definite truth* or *doctrine*, or *revelation* of God to which the person baptized has committed himself. And, without reviewing the passages in detail (which the reader can readily do for himself), we would call attention to the fact that the baptism commanded by Christ is connected with the truth or doctrine of His own death and resurrection, with that of the identification of the believer therein, with that of the forgiveness of sins, and with that of the receiving by the believer of the Holy Spirit as his life. To be “baptized unto Christ” presupposes *faith in Christ raised from the dead*, whereby the believing sinner receives complete pardon of all his sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Or more concisely, no one is or can be baptized “unto Christ” until he is a believer *in Christ*, and as such has been regenerated by the Spirit of

God.

The reply of those disciples (who evidently were the fruit of Apollos’ ministry) indicates that the term “John’s baptism” signified the *truth or doctrine preached by John*; and this is confirmed by Paul’s next words. “Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the (or a) baptism of repentance, saying unto the people” — and here we have a concise description of the preaching of John — “that *they should believe* on Him which *should come* after him”; and Paul’s next words state clearly what was lacking in John’s preaching, saying “that is *on Christ Jesus*.”

This is very clear and illuminating as regards baptism in general, and as regards the baptism of John in particular. What is, possibly, of first importance is the fact that, in order to be baptized “unto Christ” it is necessary that a man “should *believe on Him*.” Even though John’s baptism was “from heaven,” and even though it was “unto remission of sins” (Luke 3:3), and even though John preached that men *should believe* on Him that was to come after him, yet the acceptance of the truth preached by John did not suffice for the purpose of the baptism commanded by the Lord; for the reason that, although John preached the coming of Christ, and that repentant sinners “should believe on Him,” his preaching did not bring them to the place of *actually believing on the risen Son of God*. This completely shuts out every form of infant “baptism” (falsely so-called), including “household baptism,” and the baptism of any unconverted person whatsoever, which “baptisms” are not by any means “from heaven,” but are from a very different source.

Paul’s words further show that John’s ministry was indeed (“verily”) a *preparation for Christianity*, since it was a baptism of repentance, and it separated those who received it from the unbelieving Israelites and made them ready to “receive” the Christ, and to “believe on His Name” (John 1:10–12).

“What was plainly lacking in John’s preaching and baptism was the great truth of *resurrection*; and the thought of resurrection is absent from John’s baptism. It was given him to declare the approaching era of the New Covenant — the remission of sins; — to proclaim the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world; and to announce the soon coming baptism with the Holy Ghost. Thus all the great features of this era of grace were embraced in John’s preaching. Moreover, it was given to him to baptize confessed sinners with a view to (unto)² the remission of sins. His ministry went *that far*, and *no farther*. Not until the Lamb was slain, “the blood of the New Covenant” shed, the Sacrifice for our sins offered, and not until He “Who” died unto sin once for all” was raised from the dead, and the Holy Spirit was come down from heaven, could the risen Jesus be preached to all the world as the Christ of God, and believing sinners be brought by faith in Him into the Kingdom of God.

We have already quoted John 7:39 and Galatians 3:2 as proving that the Holy Spirit is given to *those who believe* in the crucified and risen Christ. It is also an indisputable fact that *remission of sins* is likewise received, through His Name, by all who believes in Him. The words of Peter in Acts 10:43, and of Paul in Acts 13:38, 39, prove this beyond the possibility of a doubt. Baptism, therefore, does not effect any change whatever in the person baptized; but is, on the contrary, a “figure” (1 Peter 3:21), of a change which *has already taken place*. Baptism is, therefore, not essential to salvation — which is by grace through faith. But it *is* essential to *obedience*, and disobedience always involves loss. The case of the first Gentile converts (given undoubtedly as a revelation and a pattern to us throughout the age) affords the clearest proof of this. When Peter had preached the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the remission of sins through His Name, the Holy Spirit fell upon all them *which heard the Word*; and signs were given to convince the Jewish believers of that startling fact. “They of the circumcision which believed were astonished” but they could not doubt the fact; for Peter referred to those newly converted Gentiles as “these which have received the Holy Spirit *as well as we*.”

2 In the passages relating to baptism the proposition *eis* is variously translated unto, into, in and for. In order to bring out the meaning more clearly, we have, in this chapter, uniformly rendered it unto.

It is certain that baptism could not confer anything upon those who had already received the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, Peter "*commanded* them to be baptized, in the Name of the Lord." It requires no effort to see from this fact that baptism *unto* Christ is commanded to those who, having believed *in* Christ, have received the Holy Spirit. This also gives point to Paul's question to the disciples at Ephesus: "Having believed, did ye receive the Holy Ghost?"

Peter's words also show that in those days baptism was viewed very differently from the way in which many believers view it today. *Then* it was deemed a high *privilege* to be associated by baptism in the figure of Christ's death and resurrection; and accordingly the question concerning those who have been saved by Him was "Can any man *forbid* 'water?' or (as in Acts 8:36), "See here is water, *what doth hinder me* to be baptized?" But in our day the question is often heard: "Is baptism essential?" or — "Will it not suffice that some drops of water were sprinkled on my head when I was an unconscious infant, or when I made a profession of Christianity?" To such questions the writer can only say that he would not dare take the risk of refusing obedience, as a believer in Christ, to the command concerning baptism. For the Word of God is still with us, and it still *commands* those who have believed in Jesus Christ, and have received forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, "to be baptized in the Name of the Lord," that is to say, upon His authority as "Lord of all."

Paul's question: "*Unto what* were ye baptized?" and the reply, "Unto John's baptism," lead to some further inquiry, since we have the expressions "baptized *unto* Christ" (Romans 6:3, and Galatians 3:27), and "baptized *unto* Moses" (1 Corinthians 10:2). Evidently we have, in the latter expression, a reference to the fact that the Israelites were cut off by the separation of the cloud and the sea from their old subjection to Pharaoh, and were committed irrevocably to the authority and leadership of Moses. In like manner, the baptism of a believer represents, as a "figure," his separation from the bondage and the law of sin and death, and his union with Christ in death and resurrection. The truth is that Christ's death has come in, to separate the believer from the old servitude and all its associations, and that Christ's resurrection has brought him into a new Kingdom, where he is to "walk in newness of life." And this truth, which applies to every believer in Christ, is what "baptism unto Christ" represents.

Like all commands given to the children of God, the one regarding baptism is addressed to the *heart* (Romans 6:17; John 14:15), there being no penalty attached for disobedience. The Lord Himself passed through the *reality* of what baptism represents and He asks us only to endure the "*figure*" of it. Shall we then hesitate and seek a reason for evading the mere type of that which saves us, when He did not turn aside nor draw back from the awful *reality* of it?

Peter's exhortation on the day of Pentecost to those Israelites who were "pricked in their *heart*" by the message of the resurrection, is instructive and interesting. "When they asked: "What shall we do?" he replied: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is unto you and to your children," etc. The first impression from those words might be that the remission of sins was to be the consequence of baptism; but to accept that view would put this Scripture in contradiction to the many passages which declare that remission of sins is given to all who repent and believe in Jesus Christ. We must take the whole sentence in order to get the meaning, and the important word is "Repent," The call is the same as in verse 19 of the next chapter: "Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Baptism is mentioned incidentally, as in Mark 16:16 — "He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." We have only to put strong emphasis on the word "believeth" to get the sense of the passage. In both cases baptism is introduced, not as indicating that baptism is essential to salvation or to the remission of sins, but as showing that the Lord does not contemplate that any who believe on Him and confess Him as Lord will refuse obedience to His command as to baptism.

In 1 Corinthians 1:13 Paul asks with indignation of some who were setting him up as a leader independently of Christ, and of some who were setting up Peter and others: "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized *unto the name* of Paul?" These questions have not lost their pertinence with the lapse of centuries; for some modern pamphlets that we have read with sorrow

and concern might fitly be inscribed with the text “I am of Paul” The expression “baptize *unto the name*” occurs here and in Matthew 28:20, and it is easy to see that the idea

conveyed by it is that of a union or fellowship with the person named. It is interesting in this connection to observe that recently discovered papyri containing writings of the common people in the Apostolic days show that the expression “to the name” was quite common in the ordinary speech of those days. It was used in connection with people or things that were devoted, in some formal way, to a god, or to the emperor, or to some other exalted person. To be consecrated “to the name” of a person, meant that the thing was *exclusively for the person named*. So, in being baptized unto Christ, we declare that we are exclusively His.

We conclude, therefore, from the Scriptures we have examined, that those who believed John’s message, and who received his baptism, were brought thereby a *certain distance along* “the way of righteousness” leading to the Kingdom of heaven. It needed, however, the knowledge of Christ Himself (for which John’s ministry had prepared them), and faith in Him crucified and risen, to bring them *actually into* that Kingdom, and to procure for them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We conclude further that baptism is not the “key” to the Kingdom of heaven, nor to anything at all. The Word of God reveals no such thing as a sham Kingdom, or a “sphere of profession.” The words “Buried with Christ in baptism” cannot possibly be applied to any who are yet in their sins; and if baptism be not that it is nothing, and far worse. For baptism is the God-given “figure” of that which is *already true* of those who have been born from above. It is given to those whom God has *already translated* into the Kingdom of His dear Son, and it admits to nothing at all.

Paul and the “Mystery”

It is astonishing to find how prevalent has become the idea that the Church was a “mystery” first revealed to the Apostle Paul, and of which the other Apostles were ignorant, until Paul made it known. We meet this idea again and again in current writings, and when we ask what basis there is for it, we are referred to Ephesians 3:1–13; and Colossians 1:23–29. But we are unable to find a trace of that idea in those Scriptures.

In the first place the “mystery” (whatever It be) whereof Paul is there speaking, was *one* that, according to his own testimony, had been revealed *not* to him exclusively, nor to him primarily, nor to him in any special way. It was “the mystery of Christ which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is *now*” — *in this age* — “revealed unto *His holy Apostles and prophets by the Spirit*.” Paul thus claimed neither exclusiveness nor preeminence in the knowledge of this mystery. The Spirit of God revealed it to God’s “holy apostles and prophets,” Paul being simply one of a number to whom the revelation had been given.

The mystery itself was that Gentiles were to receive “the unsearchable riches of Christ” on precisely the same terms as Jews — the ancient “middle wall of partition” that God had placed between Jews and Gentiles having been removed by the death of Christ (Ephesians 2:13–16). As stated in Ephesians 3:6, the mystery consists in this, “that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the *same* body and partakers (literally, *joint* partakers) of His (God’s) promise in Christ by the Gospel.”

Peter had acted upon this “mystery” in preaching Christ to the Gentiles at Cornelius’ house before Paul began his ministry; which fact is enough in itself to dispose of the idea that Paul was the first to receive knowledge of it.

The passage in Colossians is precisely to the same effect. “The hope of the Gospel” was “preached to every creature (or in all creation) under heaven,” and not to Jews only. Of that Gospel Paul “was made *a minister*” — simply one of many. He also had become “a minister” of the Church; and this was, to quote his words, “according to the dispensation of God which is given to me *for you* (Gentiles) to fulfill the word of God, even the *mystery* which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is *made manifest to His saints, to whom* God would make known what is the riches of the glory of *this mystery among the Gentiles which is Christ among you* (Gentiles) the hope of glory.”

This, we think, requires no explanation, the meaning being quite evident to those who give proper attention to the language. (See *After This*, Chapter 7.)

8

“THAT PROPHET”

We have seen that John was to go “before the face” of the Lord to prepare His ways. The expression “before His face” signifies that the Lord was already, so to speak, facing, and coming after, His messenger. (See also Luke 10:1.) It was suited to Him to be thus preceded by a messenger who was charged to do what He deemed proper in preparation for His own coming, and for the mission which *He Himself* had undertaken. What was that mission, and in what way was John’s ministry a preparation for it?

Our present inquiry is as to the *capacity* in which the Lord was coming into His creation. For obviously the *preparatory* work must have a direct relation to His own appointed mission. It is needful to be very definite regarding this, because of confusion which widely prevails and which could readily have been avoided by *merely taking note of the specific purpose* of the Lord’s coming. Thus, we meet with the argument that, because the Jews rejected Christ (as predicted of them), and because Christ always was, and is, and ever will be, the rightful “King,” that therefore the Jews rejected the earthly *kingdom*.

As an illustration of this confusion, we quote from an esteemed and able writer who seeks to persuade us that even *after* the Lord’s death and resurrection, and when Peter was preaching the Gospel “with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,” as in Acts 3:12–26, the Apostle was really renewing to the *nation* of Israel the (supposed) offer of an earthly kingdom. And after quoting Peter’s call to individual repentance, which was to the end “that *your sins may be blotted out*,” our friend says:

“Now surely none will deny that this was another gracious stretching out of the hand to that nation.”

It was certainly “a gracious stretching out of the hand” to everyone who heard the Apostle’s word. But the question is *what was in that outstretched hand?* And the inspired record leaves us in no uncertainty as to that. The hand that was extended to those Jews contained God’s gracious offer of *the forgiveness of sins*. Peter was fulfilling his Lord’s commands in preaching *repentance* and *forgiveness of sins in His Name*, beginning at *Jerusalem* (Luke 24:47). The Lord’s plain instructions to His disciples contained no hint of offering the earthly kingdom. On the contrary, His commands effectually shut out such a thing. And *no trace*, we repeat, not *the slightest trace*, of such an offer is found in any of the recorded utterances of the Apostles. If the call to *repentance* and *faith*, with the promise of the *forgiveness of sins*, which is what Peter preached that day, be the offer of the earthly kingdom, then it necessarily follows that the earthly kingdom has been offered every time the Gospel has been preached from that day to this! And why not maintain that view? For those who are able and ingenious enough to read the offer of the earthly kingdom into the message of John the Baptist, and into that of the Lord Jesus, and of Peter, would be equally able to read it into *every gospel message* that has ever been preached on earth.

It ought to be a comparatively easy matter to deliver the Lord’s people from these ideas; and it *will be*, if only they, on their part, will give attention to the plain statements of God’s word.

And now the point to be noted is that, when the Son of God came into the world as Man, He came

not as the promised *King*, nor as the promised *Priest*, but as the promised *Prophet*. He came as the bearer of God’s message, to “speak the words of God,” to be, indeed, “*the Word*, made flesh.” The fact is as plain as the sun in the heavens on a cloudless day; and by simply taking notice of it, the Lord’s people will be guided into important truth — truth whose greatness, indeed, it would be hard to exaggerate.

The character in which the Lord came among men, as an Israelite *by birth*, was that foretold by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15–19, which we quote in part:

“And the Lord said unto me — I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will *put My words in His mouth*; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto *My words which He shall speak in My Name*, I will require it of him.”

That the Lord Jesus Christ was, at His first coming, the “Prophet” here foretold, is expressly stated by Peter in Acts 3:22, 23; and by Stephen in Acts 7:37. And this clear testimony not only establishes affirmatively that He came as the anointed Prophet, but it establishes negatively that He did *not* come as the anointed King. We cannot emphasize too strongly the fact, to which great prominence is given in the Scriptures, that the principal part of the Lord’s ministry as a Man among the Israelites, on His pathway to the cross, was to *utter the words which God put into His mouth*. Nor can we emphasize too strongly the *infinite worth of those particular words*, to the children of God. This is the most important matter involved in the present discussion; and our contention is with those who would rob God’s children of their Lord’s words, or who would dampen their interest in those words by assigning them to another era and to another people.

God gave His holy law and commandments with His statutes and judgments, to the Israelites by the hand of Moses. But, for the “children,” whom He was to beget unto Himself through Jesus Christ, that is, for those who were to know Him as “FATHER,” He reserved some special “words,” concerning which He gave a singular promise fifteen hundred years before they were uttered. Those special words, which He invested with peculiar importance by calling them “My words,” He purposed to entrust to His OWN SON, Who, in order to be the Bearer of them, assumed the office of Prophet. God declared that He Whom He should send would speak faithfully “*all that I shall command Him*”; and He most impressively announced the supreme value of the words to be spoken by that Prophet, by saying that “whosoever will not hearken unto *My words*, which He shall speak *in My Name*, I will require it of him.” And the Holy Spirit, by the lips of Peter, makes this last clause definite by rendering it: “*shall be destroyed from among the people.*”

What it meant to the Lord Jesus Christ to have this responsibility put upon Him may be gathered from the frequent references He made (recorded mainly in John’s Gospel) to the words which the Father had given Him to speak. (See John 3:34; 5:24, 40; 6:63; 7:37; 8:25, 46, 47; 12:47; 14:10.) And the importance He attached to this part of His mission appears also in the account He gave to His Father the last night He was in the world. He then said: “Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee. For I have *given unto them the words Thou gavest Me*, and they have received them.” And again, “I have given them *Thy word*” (John 17:7, 8, 14).

It is a very striking fact in this connection that the Apostle Peter, in the very passage into which our friends read the offer of an earthly kingdom to the nation (whereas he is really preaching the Gospel for individual repentance and faith), supports his exhortation by citing the Scripture which foretells Christ’s coming as the *Prophet*; whereas, if they were right, he would have cited one of the kingdom prophecies. And Peter concluded his discourse with these plain words: “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers” — what covenant? that of the earthly kingdom? So it would read, of course, if our friends were right, but listen — “saying *unto Abraham*, And in thy Seed *shall all the kindreds of the earth* be blessed.”

Let the reader note how clearly Peter here proclaims — not the era of Israel’s earthly dominion, but — the era of blessing to *all nations* through Abraham’s Seed. Could anything be plainer? “We may

say without exaggeration that, if these words can be construed into an offer of the earthly kingdom, then any and all words are open to that construction.

And then the final words of the Apostle, whereof the meaning is transparently clear: “Unto you *first*,” *i.e.*, first among the kindreds of the earth, according to the principle stated by Paul in the words “to the Jew first” — “God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you” — how! in offering you an earthly kingdom? Not so, but — “in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:22–26).¹

Seeing then that God was about to utter, through the lips of His own beloved Son, those wonderful words of promise, which are “spirit” and “life,” to whom shall they be spoken? Shall they be spoken to any chance crowd that may gather! Such was not the divine plan; for a special company of people was to be “made ready,” in a special way and duly “prepared for the Lord,” so that they might be in a proper condition of heart to receive those priceless words. To “make ready” such a people “prepared for the Lord,” was the ministry entrusted to John the Baptist. The preparation was that of *the heart*. As Ezra “*prepared his heart* to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it” (Ezra 7:10), just so, for the reception of “the law of Christ” there must needs be a preparation of heart, to the end that the “seed” of the word might fall into “an honest and good *heart*” (Luke 8:15).

This makes it plain why God entrusted to John the ministry of *preparation* in “turning the hearts” of certain of the children of Israel. Those whom his ministry reached, and who by means of it were separated from the unbelieving mass of Israelites, were those whose hearts were contrite, and who “justified God” by confessing themselves sinners worthy of condemnation, and by submitting to the symbol of death and judgment (baptism in Jordan).

When one gets a glimpse of the purpose of God in sending His Son to speak His new covenant commandments (which Deuteronomy 18:15–18 puts in *direct contrast* with those spoken from Mount Sinai), and in sending a special forerunner to “prepare the way of the Lord,” it is clearly seen that there is no room whatever in that plan for any dealings with the rulers of Israel in regard to the earthly kingdom. Our brethren rightly say that, in the matter of refusing the supposed offer of an earthly kingdom, the *leaders* of Israel represented and acted for the nation. That fact tells strongly against their theory: as indeed every pertinent *fact* needs must do. For John’s message was plainly intended for, and took effect upon, the *poor and contrite ones*, whose hearts condemned them, and who bowed in repentant faith under the hearing of God’s word. The Lord’s own saying (uttered in the early days of His ministry), “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matthew 9:13), declares plainly that His message was not to the leaders of Israel, to whom, as our brethren admit, the offer of an earthly kingdom must needs have been made, if made at all.

When the leaders of Israel, the Pharisees and Sadducees came to John, he greeted them with no word about the earthly kingdom, but with words which absolutely exclude the possibility of such a thing. For his greeting to *them* was in these words: “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from *the wrath to come*?” Salvation from “the wrath to come” was the character of the new era for which John came to prepare the hearts of a remnant of Israel; and, as we all know now, this salvation

1 In this exhortation addressed to the multitude — (it was not to the rulers; to them Peter spoke in the next chapter) — the Apostle, so far from suggesting the idea that Christ would immediately return and set up the earthly kingdom if the Jews would repent (which he could not possibly have said, since Christ had declared that to be a matter which the Father kept in His own power) — stated explicitly that “the heavens must receive Him” (Christ Jesus) “until the times of restitution which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” Whatever may be the meaning of the words “when times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord,” etc., which we do not stop to discuss, it is certain they do not mean that Christ would immediately return and set up the earthly kingdom if Israel would repent nationally.

was to be secured through Jesus Christ for all who *repent* and *believe*. Paul speaks of the very same salvation when he writes to believers at Rome, saying: "Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be *saved from wrath* by Him" (Romans 5:9); and he also writes to the Thessalonian converts, speaking to them of God's Son, "Whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, Who delivered us *from the wrath to come*" (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

Our readers can judge if we are right in saying that it would be difficult to find words which more effectually exclude the idea of an offer of the earthly kingdom than the words with which John greeted the rulers of Israel. Christ spake to them afterward, reminding them of John's message and of how they received it; and His indictment of them was — not that they had refused the earthly kingdom, which they never did, nor would have done, but — that when John came "*in the way of righteousness*" they "*believed him not*"; and even afterward, when they had seen publicans and harlots believing John's word, still they "*repented not*" that they "*might believe*" (Matthew 21:31, 32). From the very first preaching of Christ, whether He was preached by John as the Coming One, or by Himself as having come forth from God, or by His disciples as having risen from the dead, it is, from first to last, a call to *repentance* toward God and *faith* in Him Whom God has sent for the salvation of sinners, to deliver them "from the wrath to come."

The Lord's own description of Himself and His mission, as the "Sower" Who "went forth to *sow*," which descriptive parable is found in three of the Gospels, presents Him clearly as "that Prophet." The parable, with His own explanation of it, makes it clear to the least intelligent saint, that the work which the Father gave Him to do consisted in sowing the "seed," which He variously describes as "the word," "the word of God," and "the word of the Kingdom," showing that those expressions all mean the same thing. We speak here, of course, of His work *among* men, as distinct from His redeeming work *for* men, as the Sacrifice offered to God on their behalf. Speaking the words of God for obedience *from the heart* was the work He came to do. It was not an offer of national deliverance for Israel, to be accepted or declined by the leaders of the nation — anything but that — but a word sown in individual *hearts*, to be received with submission and willing obedience; and which *was* so received by those whom John's ministry had "made ready" for Him.

All this gives startling significance to the opening words of Matthew 5. Because of His miracles "there followed Him great multitudes from Galilee and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan. And seeing the *multitudes*" He proceeded to sift "His disciples" from them by going up into a mountain. "And when He was set, *His disciples* came unto Him." And now we have His real ministry, which was, neither to heal nor to work miracles, but to *speak the Father's words to those whose hearts were ready to hear them*. God had said of that Prophet: "I will put My words *in His mouth*" (Deuteronomy 18:18).

And now the Prophet is come, and His "disciples," sifted from among the "multitudes," are gathered around Him, and then "He *opened His mouth* and taught *them*, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven."

It seems quite clear that only they whose heart prompted them to climb the mountain, heard those words of priceless worth — words which test the heart indeed, since He said at a later time, "If a man *love Me*, he will *keep My words*"; and again "He that *loveth Me not* keepeth not My sayings; and the word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's Which sent Me" (John 14:23, 24). Let the reader judge whether it is "keeping" His sayings to dismiss them to an imaginary company of "Jews," in another era, either past or future.

The "multitudes" followed Him as He went about the cities and countryside, "healing all manner of sickness and all manner of diseases among the people." And when He was come down again from the mountain, after speaking the Father's words (which are for those, and those only, who truly confess Jesus as Lord, and do the Father's will as made known by the Son, Matthew 7:21), the "great multitudes" again followed Him about (Matt. 8:1). But those words of grace and power were heard only by the people whose *hearts* were drawn to Him; and these are distinguished from the "multitudes" (or crowds) by the term "disciples." When He was set "His *disciples*" came unto Him.

The words of Matthew 8:1: “When He was come down from the mountain great multitudes followed Him,” do not mean that the great multitudes followed Him coming down the mountain; but that, after He *had* come down again to their level, the great crowds began again to follow Him. The tense of the verb requires the reading “when He *had* come down.”

There is a most important lesson in this. We may truly say that, even now, in order to hear from His lips the Father’s words which He intended for His children, it is necessary to leave the level of the “crowds,” even of those who, for one reason or another, follow Him about, and to *climb the mountain*, and to *come to Him*. And the difference between those who draw near, and who sit at His feet, and listen submissively to His words with a view to *keeping* them, and the “crowds” who follow Him for various causes, is entirely a *matter of the heart*.

The Lord Jesus brings the benefits of His Gospel down to the lowest levels of humanity, where the “great crowds” of wretched sufferers from sin’s ravages are to be found. And He has words of life and healing for them. But there are *other* words, the Father’s special words to those who have been brought into His household, and who have received the place of *sons*, which are to be heard only by those who leave the plane of earthly things, and ascend to where He sits, and where He “opens His mouth to teach” those who come to Him. Here is His test for our *hearts*. Let us not shrink from it. “God Who spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken *unto us* by His SON.” “Therefore *we* ought to give the *more* earnest heed” (than they gave) “to the things which *we* have heard.” “For if every transgression and disobedience” on their part “received a just recompense of reward, how shall *we* escape if *we* neglect so great salvation which at the first began to be spoken *by the Lord?*” (Hebrews 1:1; 2:1–3). So great was the importance that God attached to those words which were to be committed to His Son, that He gave notice of them fifteen centuries beforehand. And it is to be observed that, in foretelling them, He compared them with the “words” which had been spoken from Mount Sinai, in the hearing of the Israelites — the words from which they shrank in dismay, asking that they be not compelled to hear that Voice any more.

This request God granted, coupling with it, however, the promise that He would speak to them His own “words” again, by putting them in the mouth of the Prophet, concerning Whom Moses said:

“Unto Him ye shall hearken; according to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in the day of the assembly” (*i.e.*, at Mount Sinai) “saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will put *My words* in His mouth,” etc.

By this is seen that the “words,” which God reserved for the lips of that Prophet, are in some respects of like nature, being words of *command*, to those He spake from Mount Sinai. In both cases the words were spoken *audibly*; but what an inestimable mercy it is, that we are “*not* come to the Mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire,” and where “so terrible was the sight that even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake” (Hebrews 12:18–21); but that we are come to the heavenly Mount, and to the Father’s teaching, imparted to His own children by the lips of His blessed Son! And shall *we, too*, shrink away and say in our hearts: “Let us not hear that Voice any more — it is ‘Jewish’ and ‘legal’ — it is ‘the law in its deadliest potency’ — it is not for us, but for some people of a past day or a coming day, we care not which, so long as we can dismiss these words from ourselves”? Is that to be our attitude? This is the great point involved in the present discussion; and we feel that the Lord’s true-hearted people need only to have it made clear to them that such is the matter in issue between us and those whose teaching we are combating. We feel confident as to what their decision will be.

To take away from us our Lord’s *words* is to take away the Lord Himself; and there would then remain to us no real submission to His Lordship, but only an empty saying of “Lord, Lord.”

9

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

The character and the immediate application of the “Sermon on the Mount” (to adopt a familiar though not an inspired title) are determined unmistakably by the word “Father” which pervades it. That word, beyond anything else, is its prominent feature. That word also fixes definitely the character of Matthew’s Gospel, where we have the ministry of the Son of God revealing the Father’s Name, and bringing those who “received Him” (Christ) into the relation of sons to God His Father. There we find the Lord leading on to the fulfillment of Psalm 22:22: “I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren; in the midst of the congregation (or *Church*, according to Hebrews 2:12) will I praise Thee.” And to this agree the Lord’s words to His Father that last night on earth: “I have manifested *Thy Name* unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world” (John 17:6). God had spoken of “My words which He shall speak in *My Name*” (Deuteronomy 18:19).

That we have, in the Sermon on the Mount, the *Father’s* commands to His “children” admits of no denial or dispute. “We have never seen the slightest attempt to meet this fact or to explain away its significance. Nor can it possibly be disputed that the children of God are those who believe on His Son (John 1:12, 13; Galatians 3:26; 1 John 5:1, etc.). It follows, of necessity, that these commandments and sayings are primarily, if not *exclusively* (as we think), for believers of this dispensation. And the chief harm that the postponed kingdom theory has wrought is that, in postponing the Kingdom of heaven to another dispensation, those words of our Lord are “postponed” with it. And in order further to discredit those words in the estimation of God’s children, we are told that the Sermon on the Mount is “law and not grace,” and again that it is “law raised to its most deathful and destructive potency.” Manifestly, if these statements be untrue, as to which we think there can be no doubt; they are harmful and mischievous in a high degree. For all must admit that, whosoever the persons may be to whom Christ’s words have been given by the Father, it would be a most grievous injury to them to be robbed thereof.

“We repeat, and without fear of successful contradiction, that the Name “Father,” which is here for the first time *revealed* (*i.e.*, made known in its *true significance*) in the Word of God, establishes the fact that the words of the Sermon on the Mount are for *God’s own children*. And the force of this is not diminished in the slightest because the first persons to be born again through faith in the Name of the Lord Jesus were Jews by natural birth, and because, on that account, some of the Lord’s words (it is remarkable how few) are more directly applicable to their natural circumstances, than to those who were, by nature, “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel” (Ephesians 2:12). And even those infrequent references which have a “Jewish” complexion (as indeed *all* the Scriptures have, and for the best of reasons — see Romans 3:2), are seen, upon closer study, to contain lessons for all the household of God.

As has been pointed out by spiritual men of a past generation, the Sermon on the Mount does not reveal, and was not intended to reveal, how a sinner is saved and becomes a child of God. Its purpose was to make known the Father’s commandments to those whom He purposed to make His children through the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost — “the promise of the *Father*” (Luke 24:49; Galatians 4:6) — Who soon was to be given. As said by William Kelly:

“There is a great secret which does not come out in this Sermon. First of all there is a load of unrighteousness on the sinner. How is that to be dealt with and the sinner made fit for and introduced into the Kingdom of heaven? *Through faith he is born again*; he acquires a *new nature*. It is upon this *new nature* that God acts and works by the Spirit this practical righteousness” (required by Matthew 5:20 for admission into the Kingdom of heaven). “So that it remains in every sense true that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven. But the Lord does not here explain how this would be. He only declares that what was suitable to God’s nature was not to be found in *human Jewish righteousness*, and that it (*i.e.*, what is suited to God’s nature) *must be for the Kingdom.*”

This is a clear and spiritual comment. It shows that Mr. Kelly understands the Kingdom of heaven to be *this present dispensation*; that in order to enter it one must become a child of God, by being born again, thus obtaining a new nature; that the commandments composing the “Sermon on the Mount” are for God’s children of this present dispensation; and finally that it is *only they who have the new nature given to the children of God* that are *able* to keep those commandments, and to attain to the practical righteousness which they demand.

In a recently published article entitled “What Kingdom”¹ we have a good example of the sort of argument by which it is sought to give support to the postponement theory. The argument is derived from the words “Thy kingdom come,” which occur in what is commonly called the “Lord’s Prayer.”

In order to base any argument at all on those words it is necessary to *assume* certain things which are not according to the facts of Scripture; and then, even if all the assumptions be granted, the argument based thereon is found to be worthless. But we will examine it, nevertheless, not merely for the purpose of refuting it, but because in so doing we shall be able to gain possession of positive truth of no little value.

For the purposes, then, of our brother’s argument it is necessary to assume (and indeed he boldly states it as a *fact*) that the Lord “taught His disciples a *form* of prayer”; whereas the Scripture says the Lord bade them pray “after this *manner*,” at the same time cautioning them *not* to use “vain repetitions as the heathen do” (Matthew 6:7–9). So, to begin with, the prayer taught by the Lord to His disciples is not a “form,” indeed in giving it He expressly warns them against the use of “forms of prayer.”

Having laid down as his basis the above statement, our brother then says: “In vain do we look in the Acts of the Apostles for a single instance when this prayer was used.” And *this* lack of any record that the Apostles made use of “the Lord’s Prayer” as a form is offered as proof that a “break” had meanwhile occurred, and a change of dispensation had taken place. But surely we should not be surprised that there is no record of the use of that prayer, seeing the Lord had commanded His disciples *not* to use it as a form; and seeing also that the Scripture does not contain a full record of the Apostles’ prayers. For how can we say what the Apostles *did not pray* unless we have access to a complete report of all their prayers, public and private? Surely it is asking much of us to demand that we accept theories of a radical nature upon such arguments as these. And yet the fact that such arguments are advanced shows that no better ones exist.

But, granting all the foregoing unproved assumptions, how do they tend in the least to show that the earthly kingdom had been originally offered to the Jews, and subsequently postponed? Even if such were the case, are not God’s people in every era to desire and to pray that the reign of lawless-

1 Article by Arno C. Gaebelein in “Our Hope,” December, 1918. (A prominent evangelical, dispensational magazine in America from 1894 to 1945, “Our Hope” magazine was edited by Arno C. Gaebelein, one of the six consultants employed by C. I. Scofield for his *Reference Bible* — Editor.)

ness on earth might end, and that God's will might be done here on earth, instead of man's will and the devil's?

But this is not all. Our brother further states that, *during the time the Kingdom of heaven was being preached, the Apostles prayed this prayer*. He says in so many words: "And preaching they prayed 'Thy Kingdom Come.' "It is absolutely necessary to his argument to prove that the disciples did indeed use the Lord's Prayer *as a form* during the time the Kingdom was being preached. But where, we must ask, is there any record of such a thing? Making use of our brother's own words, we may truthfully say of the Gospels what he said of the Acts: "In vain do we look in the Gospels for a single instance when this prayer was used." And does he point to any instance? No, he does not even attempt to do so. Therefore, his argument, if it does anything at all, destroys his own case.

But still we have not reached the end of this argument. For our brother, having told us about the supposed use (or non-use) of the Lord's Prayer during the days of the Lord's ministry, and during the days following His resurrection, now proceeds to tell us with equal confidence and with equal absence of even a shadow of proof, of its *future* use during the great tribulation. He says: "After the true Church has left the earth, in the interval between the coming of the Lord for His saints and with His saints, Jewish believers, the sealed remnant, will *no doubt* use this prayer form again." Is there any proof or hint of such a thing? Not the slightest. "Why then are we to believe it? The answer would seem to be, we *must* believe it, else what will become of the postponement theory?

Now what are the Bible facts about the Lord's Prayer? In the first place, it is a *pattern* given to God's *children* to guide them in the "manner" in which they should pray to their Father. For the Lord said: "After this *manner* pray ye." And the first point to which the Lord directs their attention is that there is no occasion for them to make lengthy statements as to *their own material needs*. "For," the Lord tells them, "Your Father *knoweth* what things ye have need of before ye ask Him." Such being the ease, our personal needs are to have a very small place in our prayers, and are to have, moreover, a secondary place. One brief petition for the bread for a single day will suffice for that. And our Lord continues: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father, "Which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." The word "therefore" connects with the preceding verse, telling us that, since our Father knows our needs before we ask Him, "therefore," they; can wait while we give the first place and the largest place in our petitions to *His* matters. And in order to direct our thoughts definitely, three great things are put before us: His Name, His Kingdom, and His Will. Each one of these words can be expanded in prayer; and furthermore the Spirit will show us what things to pray for (Romans 8:26) as we consider what *His Name* is, what is due to it, and what it means to *Him* that His rule or sovereignty be established in the world. What glory will be His when the Son shall at last have put all enemies under His feet, and when all things shall be subdued unto Him, "that God may be all in all"! (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). What will it be to have *His* will, which is "good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2) done on earth, precisely as it is done in heaven! Limitless possibilities for prayer are here opened out to the children of God. Who, we would like to know, can enter into the *Father's* purposes, and the things connected with His own glory, if it be not *His own children*? Could any greater violence, therefore, be done to this pattern of prayer, which God has given for the guidance of His own children, than to treat it as a "prayer form," and to dismiss it to some imaginary "Jewish disciples" in a coming day?

In this connection we recall that the writings of Mr. F. W. Grant are sometimes referred to in support of the postponement theory. But, whatever correction may be needed in Mr. Grant's views regarding the Kingdom of heaven (and we purpose referring to them later on), his writings give no support, but just the contrary, to the views we are discussing touching the Sermon on the Mount.

In regard to the Lord's Prayer, and the difficulty that some have had in reconciling its expressions with the characteristics of this age of *grace*, Mr. Grant rightly says: "The whole prayer is addressed to God *as Father*"; and "The simple fact that it is to *the Father* removes every difficulty." "This seen there is no contradiction to the *grace* of Christianity" (Grant's *Numerical Bible*, page 91).

And why should anyone wish to find in it a "contradiction to the grace of Christianity"? To this we

can only say, because the postponement theory demands it.²

We have pointed out that the statements upon which the argument we are now examining is based, are made without a word of proof being offered in their support; and yet our brother says "all this is clear." How did these things, whereof the Scripture says not so much as a word, become "clear" to him? Here is his own account of the matter: "All the great truths we love and preach *burst upon us* in their fullest meaning when we understood *the Jewish dispensational character* of the Gospel of Matthew, when we learned that 'the Kingdom of heaven' in the opening chapters of the Gospel of Matthew is not the present dispensation, nor the Church. And we but give the *experience* of thousands of others."

Is this satisfactory? Must we give heed to, and accept as "great truths," matters whereof the Scriptures have nothing to say, simply because an esteemed brother assures us that they "burst upon" him? And even if it be true that such has been "the *experience* of thousands of others" what are *we* to do, to whom no such experience has been given, and who can only "see" what is plainly revealed to "babes" in the Scriptures?

2 So much is made to depend upon the ability which some claim, to "see the Jewish dispensational character of Matthew's Gospel," that we deem it necessary to examine the point with some care. A discussion of it will be found in Chapter 14.

10

THE LORD'S PRAYER

It is a matter of so great importance to the Lord's people to understand the teaching of Christ in connection with what is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer" found in Matthew 6:9–13, that we are impelled to give it further consideration.

Comparing this prayer with that found in Luke 11:2–4, we learn *first* that the Lord gave His disciples during the *last* days of His ministry the same petitions in substance as at the *beginning*, thus showing that there had been no change meanwhile, particularly as regards the prayer "Thy Kingdom come"; and *second* that the prayer is not a form, since there are verbal differences between the two.

Attentive consideration of Matthew 6:5–34 shows that the entire passage is the Lord's own explanation of the series of petitions which form "The Lord's Prayer." First we have the warning in verses 5 and 6 against praying in such manner as to "be seen of men," for the purpose of gaining a reputation for piety, or to attract attention to oneself; and then the warning of verses 7 and 8 against using "vain repetitions" — that is, repeating forms of prayer, as the heathen do. Unhappily the "Lord's Prayer" has been so abused in this way by some of the sects of Christendom that there has been a reaction against it, resulting with some believers in almost total neglect of it.

Then the Lord tells us that the reason why we are not to give prominence, when we pray, to our own needs is that our Father knoweth what things we have need of, before we ask. This knowledge is most valuable, if we grasp it; for it sets us free from all care as to our own needs *so that we can give our energies in prayer, like Elijah and Daniel of old, to the mighty purposes of God.* (See James 5:17,18; Daniel 9:1–19.) The Scriptures make it very plain that *God uses the prayers* of His weak people in the accomplishment of His great plans.

The fact which lies at the foundation of the Lord's Prayer, namely that "*Your Father* knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him," is a fact that concerns *the children of God*, and them alone. Therefore, we are bold to say that any and every attempt, no matter what or by whom, to take this information away from them, is a grievous wrong, both to God's Word and to His children. "Whoever snatches away from the children of God their Father's words, brought to them by His Son, will have to answer for it; and we see not the smallest excuse for any uncertainty as to whom the words "Your Father" are addressed.

The Father's Name

The Lord's teaching at this point is really a call to all the household of God to unite, by the effectual power of believing prayer, with the Father, in the doing of all He has purposed to do in sending forth His Son. And the first place is given to the *Father's Name*. That brings us into fellowship in heart and desire with the Lord Himself, Who, in the supreme hour of His approaching sacrifice, cried, "Father, glorify *Thy Name*" (John 12:28). The place which the Father's Name had in the ministry of the Son is something we all should seek to know. In His last words on earth He said — "I have manifested *Thy Name* unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." And again He prayed, "Holy Father, keep through *Thine own Name*, those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are" (John 17:6,11). It is certain that none but the *children of*

God can pray "after *this* manner."

The Father's Kingdom

In addition to the Father's Name, the Son has assumed responsibility for the Father's Kingdom. That is to say, the work which the Son of God undertook in coming into the world as Man, was to recover the whole creation from "the bondage of corruption" into which it had fallen, and to reconcile *all things* unto Him (Colossians 1:20). This part of His work will not be consummated until "He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, *even the Father*; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power" (1 Corinthians 15:24). Hence the prayer "Thy Kingdom come," when wrought into our hearts by the Spirit of God, brings us into fellowship with a work of vast importance, which our Lord has undertaken for His Father's glory, and for which He laid the everlasting foundation by His death on the Cross. Therefore, we say again, that a grievous wrong is done, and the work of God is hindered, when His children are turned aside from their part in this great work of restoring the sovereign rule of God over His creation, by teaching them that the prayer "Thy Kingdom come" is for "Jewish disciples."

The Father's Will

The next words, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven," bring before us the vast subject of the *Will of God*. What is comprehended in those words would require volumes to unfold; and we can do no more at present than merely to call attention to the immensity of the subject that is here given us. What a great responsibility, and what a high privilege, to be called to share with our blessed Lord, in the accomplishing of the *will of God, His Father!*

What we chiefly desire, in the little space we can give to this great theme, is to remind our readers of what the Will of God was in the thoughts of the Lord Jesus. In coming into the world the purpose of His heart was expressed in the words: "Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me) to do THY WILL, O God" (Hebrews 10:7). And the *highest* "will" of God could be accomplished only by His death on the Cross. Hence there never was a prayer on which so much depended as that uttered in those melting words — "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And again — "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, *Thy will be done*" (Matthew 26:39–44). How much it would have meant to Him in that hour of deepest agony to have had even a few of His disciples to join Him in that prayer! We hear Him say to Peter — "What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?" But the enemy found means to put His disciples to sleep then; and alas! the same thing is being repeated now. But let us heed the warning, so often uttered by the Lord and His Apostles, and let us *awake out* of sleep, and WATCH and PRAY without ceasing "after *this* manner"!

And above all things, in this connection, let us observe most carefully that the seeking of the Father's Will is to *manifest a family likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself*. His words on this point claim our most earnest attention. When told that His mother and His brethren stood without, desiring to speak with Him He said unto him that told Him, "Who is My mother, and who are My brethren?" and since none could answer such a question as that but Himself, "He stretched forth His hand toward *His disciples*, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall *do the will* of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister, and mother" (Matthew 12:46–50).

By these words the Lord associates with Himself, in the most sacred family relationships, those who love and who seek to do the *Will of God*. And it is certain that if our hearts are filled with desire that the Father's Will might be done on earth as in heaven, so that we are really led out to pray "Thy Will be done," we will not stop there, but will set ourselves to *do* it.

And this brings us to a conclusive proof that the family of God, who are associated with the Son of God in doing the Father's will, are those who have *entered the Kingdom of heaven*. For in Matthew 7:21 we have the Lord's clear statement: "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*."

From these clear Scriptures we learn beyond a doubt that the prayer "Thy Will be done" is for the children of God and for none other; and also that none but the children of God are in the Kingdom of heaven.

Forgiveness of Debts

The words "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" are also of great importance; for by those words we are reminded that the essence of the Kingdom of heaven is the forgiveness of all trespasses. In our comments on the parable of the Unforgiving Servant it is pointed out that the Lord's teaching in regard to the forgiveness of *trespasses*, or debts, has nothing to do with the remission of our sins, which are put away when we are born again. It relates solely to our trespasses *as children of God*, and in regard to which we need the *Father's* forgiveness. The condition of remission of sins is that we believe on the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 10:43, etc.). But the condition of forgiveness of our trespasses *committed after conversion* is that we freely forgive those who trespass against us. And this is so important that the Lord explained this part of the prayer, saying, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14, 15). As pointed out by Mr. Grant the word "Father" makes the meaning and application of this teaching perfectly clear. It is for the children of God, and none other.

Frequently we have noted, since beginning our study of the Kingdom of God, that important teaching (like that we are now discussing) given by the Lord at the *beginning* of His ministry is repeated *at the end thereof*. It would appear that the Lord, foreseeing the attempt in the name of "advanced truth" or "dispensational truth," to deprive His people of the teaching which is of the greatest importance to them and to Himself, had in this way safeguarded His doctrine. So, in this particular matter, the Lord has made it *impossible* to say that a (supposed) change of dispensation had occurred when His (supposed) offer of the earthly throne had been rejected by the Jews. For, a few days before His death, He said to Peter and the other disciples: "Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying *forgive* if ye have *ought* against *any*; that your *Father* also which is in heaven may forgive you your *trespasses*. But, if ye do not forgive, neither will your *Father* which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:20–26).

How many prayers of God's children have failed of effect because they withheld forgiveness from others? And who can measure the danger in this respect alone that has resulted from the grievous teaching that the Lord's words on this vital subject are not for us, but for some imaginary "Jewish disciples"!

Our Daily Bread

Returning now to Matthew 6, we would point out that verses 19 to 32 are an explanation of the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," which is the only "give us" in the entire prayer. That petition not only limits us in asking for our own needs to *a day at a time*, but it also brings us before God *every day* in this matter; just as the Israelites were dependent upon the living God for a new supply of manna every day. Hence the words — "Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth;" for the laying up of treasure for ourselves on earth has the effect of making us independent of our Father in heaven. Thus the "mammon of unrighteousness" becomes a rival of God in stealing away the confidence of His children. Money thus takes the place of God; for "covetousness is idolatry."

Verse 21 declares the great principle that "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"; and it is the *hearts* of His children that God desires for Himself, Whatever tends to steal away their hearts from Him is a deadly enemy.

The same great truth is further developed in verses 22, 23, where the importance of the "single eye" is declared. If our treasure, in which we trust (see Mark 10:24), is on earth, then our "eye" will be on *that*, as our resource and our provision for the future. We will be looking to our riches to do for

us what our Father promises to do. And the result will be spiritual darkness within. What God desires of His children is a continued, day-by-day, dependence on their part upon Him, for the unfailing supply of every need. Whatever destroys that sense of dependence upon the living God is evil.

Again in verse 24 the Lord continues to unfold the same truth in pointing out that *no* man can serve *two* masters, and hence that *we* cannot serve both God and mammon. First it was a matter of the *heart*, the question being, “whom or what are we trusting?” Then it was a matter of the *eye* — “where are we accustomed to *look* for help and needed supplies?” Now it goes deeper. For when one begins to trust in riches, making mammon his god, he presently becomes a slave to the acquisition and keeping of riches. In this state of bondage, or doing service, to mammon, he *cannot* serve God. Verse 25 shows the way of deliverance from this idolatry and slavery. It is to “take no thought (or literally, be not careful) for your life (*i.e.*, soul or *natural* life) what ye shall eat, nor what ye shall drink; nor yet for your *body*, what ye shall put on.” To be in such close communion with our Father in heaven, through Christ Jesus, as to be free from anxiety concerning our needs in this world, means to be absolutely free from desire for earthly riches. And this liberty comes only through Jesus Christ; “for if the Son shall make you free, then are ye *free indeed*” (John 8:36).

Verses 26–30 enforce the same lesson by referring to God's care for the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field. We are “of little faith” indeed if we do not trust our Father for those common necessities. And let us remember that “without *faith* it is impossible to please Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Those common necessities are the very things after which the Gentiles (who have no knowledge of God as Father) seek; but we are set free as to all that; for, as the Lord says in verse 32, “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things,” thus repeating the words which He spake when about to tell them how to pray (verse 8).

But we are set free from seeking things needful for soul and body in this world in order that we may “seek” the things which are *in the purpose of God, which His Son came to accomplish*. So He adds: “But seek ye first” — *i.e.*, before everything else, and particularly before our own personal needs and desires — “the *Kingdom of God and His righteousness*; and all these things shall be added unto you” (verse 33). These words lead our thoughts again to God's Kingdom, and the doing of His *will* in earth as in heaven, which is briefly, “His *righteousness*.” These are the great ends for which God is, and has been working; and it is the high and blessed privilege of His children to have part, by prayer and by such other service as He may give them, in bringing them to pass. To have our minds filled with anxiety about temporal needs, and to be so occupied therewith, that they take the first place and the largest place in our private and public prayers, is to render ourselves practically useless to our Father in heaven in the accomplishment of *His* purposes. So we have a final “therefore” in verse 34: “Take *therefore* no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

In thus briefly reviewing the teaching of this important passage, what has chiefly impressed us is that we ought to trust God fully in regard to our temporal needs not merely in order that we may enjoy freedom from anxiety and distressful fears for ourselves (though that result *is* involved), but rather that we might be free from such worries in order that we may give our hearts, our thoughts, our prayers, our daily lives and service continually, and without hindrance or distraction, to those great and mighty purposes of God — the sanctifying of His Name, the establishing of His Rule, the complete doing of His Will to the last detail in earth — for which His Son came and lived, and died, and rose; for which He now lives and ministers and intercedes; and for which He soon is coming to earth again.

Can any but God's own children enter into these things?

Can any but they pray “after *this manner*”?

11

“THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE”

The Holy Spirit has administered, through the Apostle Paul, severe reproof to those who? in their teaching, “consent not to wholesome words, even *the words of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Timothy 6:3–5).

Upon examining closely the word rendered “consent not,” it is found to have the literal meaning “draws not near unto.” or according to the Greek text favored by Tregelles, “*cleaves not unto.*” We would therefore do well to ascertain from the Word of God the importance of cleaving unto “*the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

The Scripture we have quoted admonishes the people of God to beware of any “teaching” that has the effect of separating their hearts from the words spoken by the Lord, and which the Holy Spirit has recorded and preserved for us. The Lord Jesus Himself said concerning those words which proceeded from His lips, and were composed of the very breath of His mouth, that “they are *Spirit*, and they are *life*” (John 6:63). And the Apostle Peter set his seal to this testimony, saying: “Thou hast the words of eternal life” (verse 68).

It is easy to see, indeed it is impossible not to see (for the evidences stare us in the face), that the postponement theory is a “teaching” of the kind rebuked by the Holy Spirit, as stated above, and that it has the disastrous consequence of misleading the people of God, to the end that they should not “consent to,” “*draw near,*” and “*cleave unto,*” the words uttered by the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ; but should cast them off as being for another people, and hence of relatively little importance to God’s own children, to whom they are in fact directly spoken.

“We have read from the pen of men of high repute, men justly regarded as sound in the fundamentals of our faith, comparisons between the words written under inspiration by Paul, and the words uttered by the lips of the Lord Jesus (Who left us not a line of His *writing*), which comparisons were all in favor of the writings of Paul, and in disparagement of “the words of eternal life,” which at the first were “*spoken by the Lord*” (Hebrews 2:3). We are told, for example, that it is “impossible to reconcile the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles,” and that “if we go back to the Gospels we lose the heavenly calling of the Church to deliver us out of this present evil age.” Manifestly it is not possible to get farther from the truth than this, as regards the point under discussion. Nowhere in Paul’s Epistles is the separating power of the cross so strongly stated as in the Lord’s own words in passages such as Matthew 16:21–27, and John 12:23–26. And what could be more harmful than the statement that it is “impossible to reconcile the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles”? Truly there be those even in our day who say “I am of Paul,” and who need to be faced with the questions of 1 Corinthians 1:13.

We would also keep before the reader’s mind statements that are now accepted by tens of thousands on high human authority to the effect that “the Sermon on the Mount is law and not grace”; and that “the doctrines of grace are to be sought in the Epistles, not in the Gospels.” The harm done by such statements is incalculable in extent and often disastrous in character. Yet those statements are actually printed *along with the text of Scripture itself*, and by means of them the real truth of Scripture is woefully obscured for thousands of God’s people. And even worse, if it were possible, is the *note*, which appears in the “Reference Bible” referred to, introductory to 2 Corinthians, where we read the

following shocking words:

“It is evident that the really dangerous sect in Corinth was that which said ‘I am of Christ.’ They rejected the *new revelation* (?) through Paul of the *doctrines of grace*; grounding themselves probably on the *Kingdom teachings of our Lord* as a ‘minister of the circumcision,’ seemingly oblivious that a new dispensation has been introduced by Christ’s death” (italics ours).

Apart from the fact that there is not the slightest warrant for the foregoing speculation, which makes it *commendable* to say, as in effect this author and his school say, “I am of Paul,” and “really dangerous” to say, “I am of Christ,” there is need for an earnest protest against the suggestion that those who ground themselves upon the teaching of our Lord reject the doctrines of grace given through Paul. The statement quoted above is equivalent to saying that Christianity was not taught by Christ, but only by Paul.

To begin with, we would point out that the Holy Spirit *never* speaks of the “*teachings*” of Christ (in the plural), as if it were possible to separate His doctrine into several parts or sections, and to call part of it “Kingdom *teachings*,” and part of it something else. The Spirit gives us “the *teaching* (or *doctrine*) of Christ” in the *singular*, doctrine that is one and indivisible, and says: “Whosoever transgresseth (literally, goes *beyond* the word), and *abides not in the doctrine of Christ*, hath not God. He that abideth in the *doctrine of Christ*, he hath both the Father and the Son” (compare John 14:23). “If there come any unto you and bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not into your house, neither “bid him God-speed” (2 John 9, 10),

The Scripture speaks of “doctrines (plural) of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1) and of “doctrines” which are “commandments of *men*” (Matthew 15:9; Colossians 2:22), and of “diverse and strange *doctrines*,” by which the people of God are often “carried about” (Hebrews 13:9); and we are now discussing a case that is very much in point. For error is diverse and multiform. But truth is ever *one*, and is always consistent. Hence the invariable expression of Scripture as regards the doctrine of God, is: “My doctrine shall drop as the rain” (Deuteronomy 32:2); “I give you good doctrine” (Proverbs 4:2); “My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me” (John 7:16); “He shall know of the doctrine” (John 7:17); “They continued in the Apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42); “words of faith and of good doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:6); “the doctrine which is according to Godliness” (1 Timothy 6:3); “they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:3); “the doctrine of God, our Savior” (Titus 2:10).

The point of all this is that the Son of God came into this world for the purpose (among other things) of giving with His own lips “His doctrine,” the “doctrine of Christ,” in order that, coming from His own lips, it might have *for that reason* the highest possible claim upon the reverence and obedience of God’s children. And we repeat, His *doctrine*, which He says “is not Mine, but *His that sent me*,” is one complete, perfect, indivisible whole; for “TRUTH (and not merely *truths*) came by Jesus Christ.” Surely then we can see the hand of the enemy of truth in seeking to belittle and disparage the doctrine of Christ by speaking of it as “Kingdom teachings,” and by the audacious statement that they who ground themselves thereon are a “really dangerous sect” We are bound to look most carefully into this. Let us ask, therefore, how could *grace* in practical behavior be more perfectly exemplified than by the man who fully lives out the Sermon on the Mount? The trouble which God’s children find with “the doctrine of Christ” given in that great discourse is — not that the standard of grace which it requires is too low, and hence should be discarded to be observed by some imaginary “Jewish disciples,” but — that it is *so high* (mountain top teaching indeed) that *only* through the continued putting to death of the flesh, and through the continued enabling of the indwelling Spirit of God, is it possible to carry out that exalted teaching!

We receive God’s communications through Paul and through other earthen vessels as being truly “the commandments of the Lord,” and to be revered and obeyed as such. Yet we must carefully note the difference which the Scripture makes between divine communications given through the *pens* of fallible men, who received an occasional and *strictly limited* inspiration for that particular purpose — men who, but for the comparatively brief moments when the Holy Spirit controlled their tongues and pens, were just as liable to err as we are (see Galatians 2:11 for example) — and those

particular words which were actually formed by the lips and living breath of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. For *He* ever and *always* spoke “the words of God.” For God gave not the Spirit “by measure” unto Him (John 3:34). Whereas, to every servant of Christ, grace for ministry is given “according to the *measure* of the gift of Christ” (Ephesians 4:7), “the gift of Christ” being, of course, “the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

It is indeed the same God Who spake in time past to the fathers of Israel by the *prophets*, Who has in these last days (wherein God’s revelation is completed) spoken to us by *His Son* (Hebrews 1:1, 2). But the fact that to us has been given a special communication of God (“My Words”) by *His Son*, is urged by the Spirit as a reason why “*we* ought to give the *more earnest heed* to the things which *we* have heard” (2:1).

God’s revelation to men reached its crowning point in those special and choice words which He had reserved to be uttered by His own Son. And it should be evident, even if we had not the express statement of Scripture for it, that the special message brought by God’s own Son would, for that reason alone, have the very highest claim upon our attention and our submission. It follows that it is the enemy of Christ and His people who would seek to east discredit upon His words.

The inspired writer of Hebrews therefore continues to draw this comparison and distinction between the words spoken by angels or messengers (whether human or angelic) and the words “spoken by the Lord,” saying: “For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall *we* escape if we neglect *so great salvation* which at the first began to be *spoken by the Lord*, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard (Him); God also bearing (them) witness” — that is, confirming their word with signs following, according to Mark 16:20 — “both with signs and wonders, and (also) with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His will” (Hebrews 2:2–4).

There are several statements here which we would do taking them separately:

1. The entire communication which God has given us by His Son is called the “so great salvation”; and salvation, in whatever form it comes, is pure *grace*. The “doctrine of Christ” in its entirety, constitutes the completeness of God’s salvation, for spirit and soul and body, for time and for eternity. To “neglect” any part of a salvation “so great,” and which was spoken by One so High and Holy, Whose perfections are declared in the preceding chapter of Hebrews, must necessarily lead to consequences which we cannot expect to “escape.”

2. This salvation “so great” is that which, at the first, began to be “spoken by the Lord,” which expression stands in marked contrast to the expression “*spoken by angels*,” in verse two. What the Apostles wrote and spoke was merely a *confirmation* of what they had heard from the Lord. It was first “spoken by the Lord,” and subsequently brought to their remembrance by the Holy Spirit. For Christ said: “These things have I *spoken unto you*, being yet present with you; but the Comforter, Which is the Holy Ghost ... He shall *bring to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you*” (John 14:25, 26). And what the Lord was there specially mentioning was His “words” and “commandments.” Thus the Apostles are put in the subordinate place of witnesses, or reporters of the words of Christ.

3. This special communication, which is God’s “great salvation,” and which “began to be spoken by the Lord” — that is to say, the new revelation of grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ — was deemed of such importance that “God also” bore “witness” in an extraordinary way, namely, both by signs and wonders (unusual occurrences calculated to attract attention), and also by various works of power, and also by distributions of the Holy Spirit according to His (the Spirit’s) will. (See also 1 Corinthians 12:4–11.) This tells us clearly the divine purpose of signs, wonders, miracles, and special gifts of the Spirit, which purpose was to *bear witness* to the word of God’s salvation, and had no reference whatever to the earthly kingdom.

The words and commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ, which constitute “the doctrine of Christ,” have been presented in an impressive way in Matthew’s Gospel, Chapters 5–7, which contain that

great utterance commonly called “the Sermon on the Mount.” The parallel between those “sayings” (*logos*) and the sayings spoken by God on Mount Sinai, as indicated in Deuteronomy 18:18,17, has been already pointed out; but we would recall the important fact that, as the prophecy makes evident, God purposed in a coming day to displace the law uttered on Sinai, which was given only “till the seed (of Abraham) should come, to whom *the promise* was made” (Galatians 3:19), and to substitute another law, which should be written in the *hearts* of an obedient people — a people that should “obey *from the heart* that form (or pattern) of *doctrine* delivered to them” (Romans 6:17). For in this Kingdom of heaven there is no *compulsory* obedience. Those who come under Christ’s yoke must do so *voluntarily*, responding from their *hearts* to the gracious invitation, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.” And all such will find that “His commandments are not grievous,” though indeed they are impossible to the mind of the flesh.

The parallel between Christ’s words spoken on the Mount, and the words of the Law spoken on Sinai, is most instructive. God brought a people out of the house of bondage in Egypt by blood redemption, and by works of power, saving them at the Red Sea, which they crossed “by faith” (Hebrews 11:29). This was done because “He remembered His holy promise, and Abraham His servant.” Therefore, “He brought forth His people with joy and His chosen with gladness: and gave them the lands of the heathen,” to the end “that they might observe His statutes, and keep His laws” (Psalm 105:42–45). It was, in fact, a *Kingdom* that God had in view; for the essence of a Kingdom is the subjection of a governed people to the law of the Ruler. For what God has had in view from before the foundation of the world was to have *a people of His own*, a people who should know and own Him as their God, who should serve Him and obey Him in all things. Moreover, in the full light of revealed truth we know now that the kind of obedience which God seeks, and the only kind that will satisfy Him, is *willing* obedience, such as rendered by His true “Servant,” who could say, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart” (Psalm 40:8). Therefore, in pursuance of His purpose, God brought the people of Israel to a mountain and gave them there His “fiery law” with the “statutes and judgments” which they were to keep according to the express terms of the Old Covenant. (See Exodus 24:3, 7.)

But that covenant was broken because of the “weakness “ of the flesh; and subsequently the New Covenant was promised (Jeremiah 31:31), which New Covenant was to be characterized by forgiveness of sins, by eternal life {*knowing God* as He was to be revealed in Jesus Christ), and by laws written in the *heart*; this last condition being now fulfilled through the indwelling of God’s Spirit in those who “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1–4). And those who “walk after the Spirit” are those who obey “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” That “law,” of course, is found in the commandments of Christ. The New Covenant was, in fact, the covenant “of the Spirit” — a covenant of “life” and “righteousness,” as clearly shown in 2 Corinthians 3:6–11, where it is contrasted with the Old Covenant of “condemnation” and “death.” Hence, *in announcing the baptism with the Holy Ghost, John the Baptist was proclaiming the New Covenant.*

Accordingly, when the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messenger and Mediator of the New Covenant, came to gather out from Jews and Gentiles a people for His own possession *zealous of good works* (Titus 2:14 — and notice the references in the text to “sound doctrine,” even “the doctrine of God our Savior”), a people who were to be redeemed by His blood, and born again, through faith in His Name, He likewise took *them* to a mountain, and gave them there *His* words and commandments, which are to be observed in the Kingdom, which He was then preparing. For those “disciples” were the beginnings of the Kingdom of heaven. And His words, which were not to pass away, spoken in their ears, are spoken in ours also. And the Spirit of God has placed them at the very beginning of the new revelation that is given to God’s people of this dispensation of grace. To *that* mountain we are brought so soon as we find Him Who came to “save *His people* from their sins”; and there we learn from His lips the Father’s Name; there we learn our relation as children to the Father, which relation is secured eternally by the cross and resurrection of His beloved Son; and there we receive the Father’s commands which He has given for the government of His children.

The Son of God there takes the place which is His “over His own house”; and as the true Lawgiver

He speaks “with authority,” even as regards the law of Sinai, saying: “Ye have heard that it was said by (or unto) them of old ... but *I say unto you*” —

Is it therefore to be wondered at that need should arise to “contend earnestly” for these words, which are truly “the faith once for all delivered unto the saints,” and for the Kingdom whereof they are the substance and the law? It would be strange, indeed, were it otherwise. And we would only ask our readers to note how perfectly the enemy’s purpose in this regard would be attained by the simple device of introducing a “dispensational break” at *some point subsequent to* the Sermon on the Mount — and the farther from it, the better for his purposes.

It is easy to see the effect of “dividing the word of truth” in such manner as to connect the earthly ministry and “the words of our Lord Jesus Christ” with the *old dispensation of law*, and of leading God’s people to believe that the *real* dispensation of “grace and truth” began at a later time, and is connected with the ministry of Paul, rather than with that of Paul’s Master and Lord!

12

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST

(Romans 15:8)

There is perhaps no Scripture that has been more misused in the interest of an erroneous theory than Romans 15:8. Again and again we meet in current writings the statement that “Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision.” And this partial quotation is used to convey the idea (which exactly reverses the meaning of the Scripture itself) that the ministry of the Lord Jesus was for the Jews only. The necessary consequence of this is that His great and wonderful ministry is dismissed from the consideration of God’s people today as being of comparatively little importance to them, and they are taught to look to the ministry of Paul as something of a different and superior order.

It is most needful that the Lord’s people should know the meaning of Romans 15:8; and happily (as is always the ease with Scriptures that are of unusual importance) it is quite easy to understand. The words are these:

“Now I say that Jesus Christ was (literally, *has become*) a minister of (the) circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; and that the *Gentiles* might glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to Thee among the *Gentiles*, and sing unto Thy Name, And again He saith, Rejoice, ye *Gentiles*, with His people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye *Gentiles*; and laud Him all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign *over the Gentiles*; and in Him shall *the Gentiles trust*” (literally, *have hope* — the *Gentiles* by nature “having no hope”).

Now it is clear upon a mere glance at the passage that its whole point is the setting forth of the results of Christ’s ministry to the *Gentiles*. Paul, who describes himself in verse 16 as “the minister of Jesus Christ *to* the *Gentiles*,” and refers in verse 18 to the things which Christ wrought by him “to make the *Gentiles* obedient” is, in the above passage, declaring to Gentile converts the blessed consequences of Christ’s ministry to *them*. And it simply destroys, or rather reverses, the meaning of the passage, to quote (as is constantly done) the words “Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision,” intentionally giving the impression that *Jews* were the exclusive objects of His ministry.

But, by looking more closely at the passage, we shall find much profitable and pertinent information in it, especially as we consider the particular “promises” referred to therein.

Let us bear in mind that “ministry” is *service*, and that a “minister” is simply a “*servant*.” This should be remembered in order that we may properly connect this Scripture with those prophecies which foretell the coming of Christ specifically as the “Servant” of Jehovah. And incidentally we shall see clearly that His coming as “Servant” had nothing to do with the earthly kingdom, but was for purposes quite incompatible with it. Indeed, there is all the difference possible between presenting oneself to a nation as a *king* and as a *servant*!

In the first place we must point out that the words “minister of the circumcision” are made to mean that the Lord Jesus was a minister *to*, or for the benefit of, the circumcision. But what the passage

says is that He was a minister *of* the circumcision *for* the truth of God, “to confirm the promises made unto the fathers,” which promises had special relation *to Gentiles*. Jesus Christ was “*of* the circumcision”; that is to say, as stated of Him in Romans 9:5, “*of whom* (Israel), as concerning the flesh, Christ came.” Jesus Christ, Who in the prophecy of Isaiah here quoted, is said to be *God's salvation to the ends of the earth*, was *of Israel*; for, as He Himself said to a Samaritan: “Salvation is *of the Jews*” (John 4:22). But salvation is not *for* the Jews exclusively. It is equally for Gentiles.

A parallel expression is found in what Paul says of himself in verse 16, “that I should be the minister *of* Jesus Christ *to* the Gentiles.” Here we see the difference between the source of ministry and its *object*. The *object* of Christ's ministry was to confirm the promises of God which had in view blessings both to Jews and Gentiles; whereas that of Paul was mainly to the Gentiles. The passage further tells us that Jesus Christ became (or was made) a minister of circumcision (identified as to His flesh with Israel) on behalf of *the truth of God*. From these words it is seen that the Lord's ministry was *worldwide*, and that it had a special purpose with respect to *Gentiles*, of whom it was said in chapter 1:25, that they had “changed *the truth of God* into a lie, and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed forever.” Thus we find that an important object of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ was to recover the Gentiles from their idolatrous condition, and bring them to the knowledge of the true God. (See 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10.)

Further, our Scripture says that the purpose of the Lord's ministry was “to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.” Here we have, then, the full scope of our Lord's “service”; and we find that, instead of being a very restricted ministry (which is what the advocates of the postponement theory try to prove by the device of a partial quotation), it is a ministry of great compass. An equivalent statement is made in 2 Corinthians 1:20: “For *all the promises of God* in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”

This brings into view the immense number and the infinite variety of “the promises of God,” *all* of which are included in the scope of the Lord's “ministry.” “Whereas it seems to be forgotten by those who uphold the view we are discussing that there were “promises of God” other than, and of far greater importance than, those relating to Israel's earthly dominion. There were, moreover, promises of the *chastening* and *scattering* of Israel throughout all the nations of the world, and these must needs be accomplished before the promises of Israel's earthly greatness could be fulfilled. In fact, when we recall all the predicted punishments and afflictions of Israel, including especially “the time of Jacob's trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7) which is yet future, we must realize how impossible it was that the earthly kingdom should have been announced at the Lord's first coming. Moreover, the prophecies of both Old and New Testaments make it abundantly clear that, when the Lord comes to fulfill the promises which pertain to Israel's greatness, He will *not come as a Servant*, but with regal dignity and state, in great power and glory.

We are inquiring just now into the purposes for which He came as a Minister or Servant, concerning which He Himself said that He came “not to be *ministered unto*, but to *minister*, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28), which includes many Gentiles.

Briefly, then, “the promises of God” which the Lord Jesus came, as a minister of circumcision, to confirm, are promises *relating to the Gospel*. This is what the Epistle to the Romans especially takes up and unfolds, namely, “the Gospel of God which He had *promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures*, concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Romans 1:1–3). The promises of God that He would do a work of worldwide salvation are found in passages too numerous to mention; and it was in confirmation of *those* promises that Jesus Christ became a Minister of the circumcision, on behalf of *the truth of God*. Just before leaving His disciples to return to heaven, He spoke to them, saying: “And behold, I send *the promise of My Father* upon you”; which He did in pouring out the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. And this, as we have already pointed out, is *the great promise* which He came to fulfill. Peter spoke of those promises in Acts 2:38, 39; and Acts 3:25, 28; and Paul refers to them in Acts 13:23, 32, 33. Many other Scriptures speak of them, and make it clear that, although the Jews had the first place, in point of time, as regards the blessings of this age of grace, the Gentiles came into those blessings through the same

“Door,” and on exactly the same terms, as Jews.

The Lord’s ministry in this world is briefly but clearly set forth in His parable of the Good Shepherd; by which it appears that He came to Israel — not to be crowned as King, but — to *lead out His own sheep* from that sheepfold (John 10:1–6). “Within the great mass of Israelites were some who had been “made ready” by John the Baptist, and who would *hear the Shepherd’s voice*. This “remnant” was the true “Israel” of God, constituting the beginning of that “little flock” which was to embrace all believing Gentiles along with believing Jews. To them (the Gentiles who should believe on His Name) the Lord also referred, saying: “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold (not of Israel): them also I must bring, and they shall *hear My voice*; and there shall be *one* flock (not *fold*) and one Shepherd” (John 10:16). And in this connection we have the words: “As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep” (verse 15).

It should be abundantly clear from such Scriptures as these that the Lord’s “ministry” was utterly incompatible with the restoration of the nation Israel to political greatness in the world; and indeed that the character of “minister” is incompatible with that of *King*.

But, proceeding with our examination of Romans 15:8–12, we would point out that the special “promises of God,” which the Apostle there had in mind, had to do chiefly with *Gentiles*; and not only so, but the prophecies themselves are quoted in such a way as to give great prominence to that fact. Such being the case, it is exceedingly hard to account for the persistent misquotation of this Scripture in such a way as to reverse its plain meaning.

The title “My Servant” is given to the Lord Jesus in that part of Isaiah’s prophecy which includes Chapter 53, where His sufferings and death are so definitely foretold. This portion of prophecy (than which there is surely none more important) begins with Chapter 40, where the coming and ministry of John the Baptist are foretold. Then, at the end of Chapter 41, is the definite promise: “I will give to Jerusalem One that bringeth good tidings” (verse 27); and then follow the words: “Behold *My Servant*, “Whom I uphold; I have put *My Spirit* upon Him. He shall bring forth judgment *to the Gentiles*. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto *truth*. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth: And the isles shall wait for *His law* ... I the Lord have called Thee in righteousness, and will hold Thine hand, and will keep Thee, and will give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the *Gentiles*,” etc. (42:1–8, 13, 21).

In all this portion of Isaiah, which speaks so definitely of the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the character of “Servant,” there is no hint at all of restoring *Israel* to earthly dominion (but the reverse, as we shall see); and on the other hand the purposes of God with reference to the *Gentiles* are given great prominence. That the foregoing passage is quoted in Matthew 12:16–21 gives special point to what we are now saying, and also illustrates the great scope — we might even say the “Gentilish” character — of Matthew’s Gospel!

Another notable fact in this connection is that, in this great prophetic passage, the Lord Jesus is *closely identified with Israel* — so closely in fact that He is even called “Jacob” and “Israel.” This gives point to the words of Paul that “Jesus Christ became a Servant of the circumcision”; and enlightens us as to the reason (or at least *a* reason) why the Lord Jesus was identified with that nation, as regards His flesh. The Lord Jesus became Man to fulfill every purpose of God in which the natural man had failed. Israel as a nation had failed to accomplish any deliverance in the world, or to bring glory to the Name of the Lord, their God. Hence One was to come *of Israel* Who should accomplish, as the Servant of Jehovah, all that Israel failed to accomplish. Thus, in Isaiah 49 we find a reference to Israel as the Servant of God, in the words: “Thou art My Servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified” (verse 3). But the succeeding verses make it plain that the “Israel” here spoken of as the Lord’s Servant was Christ Himself. And then follow those striking words which the Spirit of Christ spoke in the prophet, in which the ministry, or *service*, of Christ is so marvelously foretold:

“And now, saith the Lord that formed Me from the womb to be *His Servant*, to bring Jacob

again to Him: Though Israel be not gathered yet shall I" (or, that Israel may be gathered to Him and that I may) "be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and My God shall be My strength. And He said: It is a light thing that Thou shouldst be *My Servant* to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give Thee for a Light to *the Gentiles*, that Thou mayest be *My Salvation unto the end of the earth*" (Isaiah 49:5, 6).

This Scripture tells us plainly that the ministry which Jesus Christ assumed on behalf of Israel was to *bring Jacob again* to God. And this necessitated His suffering and death on the cross. As Peter said: "He suffered once for sins, the Just for the unjust *that He might bring us to God*" (1 Peter 3:18). This proves, what every other pertinent Scripture confirms, that the coming of Christ as "Servant" had the cross, not the crown, as His goal. And it was so "from the womb." There never was (and could not have been) anything else in contemplation. He came "to bring Jacob again" to God; and the only way to do that was to suffer for Jacob's sins, as foretold in Isaiah 53. And this result has been already accomplished in that remnant of Israel which received Him, and to whom He gave power to become the sons of God. And eventually it will be accomplished for "all Israel," according to Romans 11:26, 27.

But while this ministry of Jesus Christ began with Israel, it did not stop there, but extends to believing Gentiles also, in fulfillment of the promise "I will *also* give Thee for a light to the *Gentiles*, that Thou mayest be My Salvation unto the *end of the earth*."

This is so clearly a foretelling of the work of God in this age as to call for no further comment. To *bring Jacob to God*, and not to give Jacob dominion over the nations, was the "ministry" undertaken by Jesus Christ as God's "Servant"; and this makes it impossible to regard the proclamation of the earthly kingdom as the purpose of His coming. Yet these great foundation truths concerning the ministry of Jesus Christ are obscured to many, or completely hidden, by the unhappy consequences of a theory which makes the restoring of the earthly kingdom to Israel to be the immediate object of the ministry of Jesus Christ, and to be the subject of the announcement made by John, by the Lord Himself, and by the twelve Apostles.

Another important fact to be noted in this connection is that what came into the world by Jesus Christ was "grace and *truth*." We need not speak further at this point concerning "grace"; but it is desirable that we should understand in some measure at least what is meant by that great word "*truth*," since the ministry of Christ was in behalf of "*the truth of God*" and since He testified before Pontius Pilate saying: "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto, the Truth" (John 18:37). Truth is the *reality* of all that God *is* and of all that God has purposed to do for the salvation of sinners through Jesus Christ. All this lay in the law in promise, type and shadow; for the law had a "shadow of good things to come" but "not the very image of the things" foreshadowed. The fulfilling of all those things is the "truth" which came by Jesus Christ. Immanuel, God manifest in the flesh, is the *Truth*. The Spirit of God "Who has come down from heaven to bear testimony to Him is "the Spirit of Truth." The word of God concerning Him is "the word of the *truth* of the Gospel." To "know the Truth" is to be made "free indeed"; and hence it is God's will for men that all "should be saved and come unto the knowledge of the *Truth*."

Another important Scripture which the Spirit quotes through Paul in Romans 15:8–12 is Isaiah 11:1, 10: "There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over *the Gentiles*, in Him shall *the Gentiles* trust" (have hope). To which the prayer is joined "Now the God of hope fill you (Gentile converts) with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."

Here again we see that the house of David is referred to by Paul as that from which *salvation* should come to *the Gentiles*. This repeated linking of the house of David with Paul's Gospel shows that the mention of David is not the warrant for assuming that the earthly throne is in view.

To the same effect are the words of Zacharias' prophecy: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an *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” (Luke 1:68–70), Zacharias saw that the era of redemption and salvation had come, which had been the theme of the prophets of God “since the world began.” This would include the first of all prophecies, namely, that concerning the Seed of the woman; and other promises that were given before there was any nation to which earthly promises were made. This “horn of salvation” was to arise in “the house of David,” as prophesied, for example, in 2 Samuel 23:3–5:

“The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And He shall be as the *light of the morning*, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although *my house* be not so with God; yet hath He made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.”

Manifestly “the sure mercies of David” are here in contemplation which, though covenanted only to Israel, are nevertheless, according to the “mystery” of God’s hidden purpose, offered now to Gentiles equally with Jews, on the ground of Christ’s sacrifice of Himself as “the Lamb of God Which taketh away the sin of *the world*.”

“The Lost Sheep”

We are sometimes referred, in support of the postponement theory, to the words spoken by the Lord to His disciples, when the woman of Canaan cried out to Him and He at first made no reply. Those words were: “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). But we are greatly in error if those words, and the whole incident in which they occur, do not furnish strong evidence to the contrary.

That the Canaanitish woman should have recognized Him and addressed Him as the “Son of David” — a title which was but rarely given Him in Israel (see John 7:41, 42) — is a remarkable fact indeed. But it matters not what inference we may draw from the Lord’s silence when first addressed and His gracious response when she came and said: “*Lord?* help me.” It may be that He wished simply to bring out the “faith” which He knew was in that poor heathen’s heart. But we have to do with His words to the disciples: “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

There is no dispute, and could be none, as to the fact that the Lord was sent personally to Israel, and only to Israel. To them pertained the adoption, the covenants, and the promises. It was to Israel that Moses had said: “The Lord thy God will raise up *unto thee* a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him shall ye hearken” (Deuteronomy 18:15). It was to Israel that God had promised: “And I will set up one Shepherd over them” (Ezekiel 34:23). There is no controversy as to this at all. But the question is, *in what capacity and for what purpose* had He come to His earthly people? And the Scripture before us gives a clear answer to that question. Moreover, it is the same answer we have had again and again. It was for “the lost sheep” He had come as a *Shepherd*, and not to the *nation* as a *King*.

Connecting this passage with other Scriptures, such as Matthew 18:11, 12, we see that the “lost sheep” are the sinners whom Christ came “to seek and to save.” And this puts out of court the idea that there is any thought of the earthly kingdom in this passage.

Referring in this connection to John 10:1–18 we learn that the Lord came to Israel (the sheepfold) in order to *call out His own sheep* and to *lead them out* (verse 3). We learn further that He came to give them *life* (verse 10), and to give *His life* for the sheep. And finally we learn that the Lord, when coming to Israel as the Good Shepherd, had also in mind His “other sheep” (namely, Gentiles), who were not of that fold. To them He was not sent in Person, but nevertheless His coming was for them, as He said “them *also* I must bring, and *they* shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock” (composed of both Jews and Gentiles) “and *one* Shepherd” for all.

So we find that the passage we are examining (Matthew 15:24) utterly opposes the idea that the Lord, at His first coming, had the earthly kingdom in view; and proves, on the contrary, that His mission was to save, and to gather into one company, believing sinners out of every nation in the world.

13

“ANOINTED TO PREACH”

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself has given, in the most authoritative way, a statement of the purpose for which He was “anointed,” and “sent” into the world. That statement was made at the beginning of His ministry; that is to say, at the very time when He was preaching the Kingdom of heaven as being “at hand.” In the words which we are about to quote the Lord not only declared affirmatively the purpose for which He had come into the world, but He also spoke in such a way as to exclude the earthly kingdom, and what immediately precedes it (“the day of vengeance”), from the scope of His mission.

We quote from Luke 4:16–21:

“And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath *anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*

“*And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.*”

In these words the Lord tells (and so plainly that it seems impossible to misunderstand Him) precisely the purpose for which He had been “anointed,” and “sent.” If He had come to announce, or to “offer” to Israel, the earthly kingdom, He would certainly have mentioned it here, and would have read some of the promises of the Old Testament relating to that kingdom. The very book of the prophet Isaiah, from which He read, contains promises of that sort. But He turned to Chapter 61 of that book and read from it *words which precisely describe this present era of grace*; and then He said that *that* was what He had been anointed to preach.

In the passage read by Him, the words “to preach” occur three times, showing (as every pertinent Scripture shows) that His mission was a *preaching* mission; in other words, that He had come as the Anointed *Prophet*. He had been anointed and sent “to *preach* the Gospel to the poor,” “to *preach* deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind,” “to *preach* the acceptable year of the Lord.” And after reading this last quoted clause, He closed the book, thus shutting out the words that follow therein.

Probably no one would deny that the things which the Lord said He had been sent to preach are the characteristic things of this present dispensation. Certainly there is no room for dispute here; for the Apostle Paul, some thirty years after, was inspired to write: “*Now is the accepted time*” (2 Corinthians 6:2), an expression corresponding to “the acceptable year of the Lord”; showing that the present era is what the Lord had been “sent to preach.” The fact that among the things mentioned, by Him as those which He had come to preach, the earthly kingdom is not found, is quite enough to forbid the

thought that His mission had to do with that kingdom. But the case is far stronger even than this. For the passage whereof the Lord read a part (Isaiah 61:1–7) contains certain matters which are to be fulfilled at His *second* coming, along with those which belonged to His first coming. The passage is a good example of what the Apostle Peter referred to in saying that the Old Testament prophets had sought diligently to comprehend and to distinguish the *time* of the things revealed to and through them by the Spirit of Christ, when He “testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow” (1 Peter 1:10–12). But when Christ Himself “opened the book” and “found the place” which contained prophecies that He was then about to fulfill, He knew how to divide rightly the word of truth. Accordingly He read *so much of the passage as pertained to His first coming* (in which portion is no reference to the earthly kingdom and no room for such reference); and then He *closed the book* with the emphatic statement, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

What next follows in the prophecy is the clause: “And the day of vengeance of our God”; and following that are distinct references to the blessings of the earthly kingdom — “beauty for ashes” to them that mourn *in Zion*; “the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness”; the rebuilding of “the old wastes”; the raising up of “the former desolations,” and the repairing of “the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.” These are works of *reconstruction* which belong to “the times of restitution,” spoken of by Peter in Acts 3; 21. In this portion of the prophecy we also read: “Ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves,” etc.

The meaning of this is so very plain that we regard the testimony of this Scripture as being quite sufficient in itself to overthrow the idea that Christ came to announce the earthly kingdom.

As we read the further words spoken by the Lord on that day in the synagogue at Nazareth, we find a distinct reference to the fact that His mission aimed at blessing also *to the Gentiles*. The saying, “No prophet is accepted in his own country,” indicates His rejection by the nation of Israel; and following that saying He refers to the fact that Elijah (who had the word of the Lord in his day) was sent *outside of Israel*, to a woman of Sidon, who cared for him. Here we have a suggestion of what was soon to happen, and what, at a later day, Paul declared was about to take place, when he said to the Jews at Rome: “Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it” (Acts 28:28). The Word of God (the Gospel), after having been refused by the mass of the Israelites, was to be received, as it has been, and was to be given a place of respect among the Gentiles.

Furthermore, the Lord's reference to the fact that Naaman, the Gentile, was healed, though there were many lepers in Israel who were not cleansed, pointed also to the cleansing work of the Gospel among the Gentiles during this era, in which the mass of the Jews are blinded and hardened.

We can be very sure that, had the Lord on that occasion told the people that He had come to restore again the kingdom to Israel, and that the only thing required was the consent of the people and their leaders, His message would have been received with intense satisfaction. But the effect of His actual announcement was that “all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong. But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way.”

The manner in which His message was received is proof positive that He did not offer the earthly kingdom. And here we have one of the most astonishing of the many inconsistencies and absurdities of the postponement theory. It is claimed that there was, at that time, a “widespread expectation” on the part of the Jews that Messiah was about to come and to set up again the throne of David. Then it is maintained that both Christ and His promised forerunner did come and announce exactly what the people and their rulers were expecting. And finally, the claim is, that when the very thing which they were expecting¹ and longing for was offered to them, they rejected it with aversion and violence!

“The Gospel Promised Afore”

The promise of One “Who should come bringing “good tidings” (the Gospel), and publishing salvation (Isaiah 40:9; 52:7, etc.) is one of the foremost of all the promises in the Old Testament. The era of

the Gospel — “the acceptable year of the Lord” — which was to be introduced by the sufferings and death of Christ as a Sacrifice for sins — was the subject of all the Old Testament Scriptures (Luke 24:27, 45, 46). The Apostle Peter said that “*all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days*” (Acts 3:24). The idea that the promise of the earthly throne was the only promise which God had to fulfill, or at least was a promise holding precedence over all others, has nothing to support it; but quite the reverse.

Again the Apostle Peter, speaking this time to Gentiles, said: “To Him” (Christ crucified and risen from the dead) “*give all the prophets witness, that through His Name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins*” (Acts 10:43).

It appears, therefore, that the era of the remission of sins to everyone that believes in Christ Jesus, was the theme of “*all the prophets.*”

And to the same effect the Apostle Paul speaks of “the Gospel of God, which He had promised afore by *His prophets* in the Holy Scriptures.”

Also in his plea before Herod Agrippa Paul declared that he had continued from the time of his conversion until that day, “witnessing to both small and great, saying *none other things than those which Moses and the prophets did say should come; that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people and to the Gentiles*” (Acts 26:22, 23).

This was the great promise which Christ came to fulfill, and in view of which His forerunner was sent to preach repentance and to baptize confessed sinners, preparing them (by faith in Him Who was to come after him) for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven.

The Incident of the Young Ruler

From the incident of the young ruler, and from the Lord’s teaching to His disciples following thereon, we may gain a clear idea as to the Kingdom — of what sort it was — that the Lord was announcing.

Three of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) contain accounts of the incident, which occurred during the last days of the Lord’s ministry, as He was approaching Jerusalem to die there. From those records the following facts clearly appear: 1. That the Lord was still announcing, and teaching about, the Kingdom. 2. That the Kingdom of heaven, of which He was speaking at that time, was the same Kingdom of which He began to speak at the first. 3. That the “Kingdom of heaven” and “Kingdom of God” which the Lord was announcing, and for which He was preparing His disciples, are one and the same.

The Lord had just rebuked those who sought to prevent children from coming to Him, and had said, “For of such is the Kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:15; Luke 18:16, 17). Then came the young ruler and asked the question, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” This young ruler was a man of exemplary life, as is evident from his answer in regard to the commandments. Yet, for all that, he “lacked” the *essential thing*. That essential thing was to “come” and to “follow” Christ. And this lack the Lord pointed out to him in the faithfulness of love. For we read those touching, yet so solemn, words (quoting from Mark 10:21): “Then Jesus beholding him *loved him* and said, One thing thou lackest ... ” How sad the state of one who is loved by Jesus Christ and who yet rejects the words in which that love is expressed! How utterly vain to such a one is all his morality and good works!

The Lord, in speaking His message of love to that young man, not only told him plainly what the one essential thing was which he lacked, but He also pointed out what it was that hindered the young man from taking the necessary step. He said: “One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and *Come, take up the cross, and follow Me.*”

We would note, in passing, the words: “thou shalt have treasure in heaven,” which connect this

saying directly with the Sermon on the Mount, showing there had been no change meanwhile in the Lord's teaching.

But the young man would not "come" to Christ. The way of the cross did not attract him. "For he had great possessions" in this world, and his heart trusted in his wealth. This is evident from the Lord's comment concerning "them that trust in riches" (Mark 10:24).

Then, after the young man had gone away sorrowing, the Lord turned to His disciples and said: "Verily I say unto you that a rich man shall hardly (*i.e.*, only with difficulty) enter into the Kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:23, 24).

That young man's riches, or rather his love of them, had prevented him from accepting the love of Christ, and had drawn him away from the Son of God. The Lord's comment on this, and the instruction He gave His disciples in view of the incident, shows that, in refusing to come to Him, the young man had turned away from the Kingdom of heaven (or Kingdom of God). His riches had hindered him from entering that Kingdom. Hence it was a thing then present, or immediately at hand. It had not been withdrawn nor postponed.

The lesson for our day which the Lord drew from this incident is made the more impressive by the following words, recorded by Mark (and not by the other two evangelists): "And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answereth them again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that *trust in riches* to enter into the Kingdom of God."

The Lord here exposes clearly the fact that trust in riches, the mammon of unrighteousness, is a most serious obstacle to the acceptance of the Gospel message. This caused the disciples to ask: "Who then can be *saved*?" And the Lord's reply confirmed their understanding that to enter the Kingdom of heaven, and to be "saved," are one and the same thing. For He said: "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible." Nothing but the power of God, acting in sovereign grace, can deliver the heart of man from the idolatry of covetousness. But with God even this is possible.

14

THE "CHARACTER" OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

"And a river went out of Eden to water the garden;
and from thence it was parted and became into *four heads*" (Genesis 2:10).

The river of God's revelation runs from Genesis to Malachi for almost its entire length in *one* channel. The exception is in the significant case of the history of the House of David, where we have the two parallel accounts, one in Samuel and Kings, and the other in Chronicles.

But, with the opening of the New Testament, the river is parted, and becomes "into *four heads*." Why is this! Doubtless there are various things to be learned from it, and which we may with profit inquire into, provided we keep our imaginations under control. But one thing will certainly be suggested by the striking fact we have noted, namely, that it witnesses to the dignity of the Person "Whose words and deeds form the subject of the Gospels. It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit, Who came to testify of Him (John 15:26), to give us a *fourfold testimony* of His sayings and doings; and it has further pleased Him to give the foremost place in that testimony to the Gospel by Matthew.

It has become quite common in recent times to attribute to Matthew's Gospel a "Jewish" character, treating it as having been specially designed and written to present to the Jews the idea of the earthly Kingdom. But why a Gospel should have been specially designed for that purpose some thirty years, or thereabouts, after the supposed offer of the earthly kingdom had been (according to the views of those who hold this idea) entirely set aside, it is hard to conceive. The idea in itself might be passed over as comparatively harmless; but when it is made to serve as the basis of doctrines of a radical character we are bound to subject it to careful scrutiny. And if the idea be true and Scriptural, it will be all the better for a thorough examination.

The effect of assigning a particular "character" to one Gospel, and a different "character" to another, applying the first to one class of people, and the second to a different class, is to weaken the *combined* effect of the Spirit's fourfold testimony concerning Christ. The fact is that *all* the Gospels, and *all* the other New Testament Scriptures, were given by the *One* Spirit to the *One* Church of God. The Gospels, one and all, and all the Epistles, are given and are addressed to each and every member of Christ's body. All that is revealed *of Him*, whether through one human vessel or another, is equally for each and every one to whom Christ has been given. We are aware of nothing to suggest that the Gospels or other Scriptures are to be apportioned between different classes of persons, according to their condition as *natural men*. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, nor are there any "Jewish" and "Gentilish" distinctions in the New Testament Scriptures.

Even Epistles that were expressly addressed in the first instance to some particular church or individual are in fact the Word of God to *His entire* household. If the Epistle that was actually addressed to the Romans is not to be styled "Romish," and thus belittled in importance to saints of other nationalities, how very wrong it is to style Matthew "Jewish" when it is not addressed to any special class of people! This principle, if consistently applied, would make havoc of the Word of God. The simple fact of the matter is that the New Testament, *in its entirety*, is the continuation and completion of God's revelation of Himself begun in the Old Testament; and since the oracles of God were committed to the Jews (Romans 3:2), *every* part of the New Testament, even the Epistles to Gentile churches,

abound in references to the Old Testament Scriptures and Old Testament characters — the fathers of Israel.

If there were any special significance in New Testament references to the Old Testament, it might be claimed that the opening chapter of John's Gospel has a more distinctively Jewish, or Israelitish coloring than that of Matthew. For in the first chapter of John we have the declaration of John the Baptist that he had come baptizing with water in order "that He (Christ) should be made manifest *to Israel*" (verse 31). We have also the statement of Andrew, "We have found *the Messiah*" (verse 41); and the statement of Philip, "We have found Him of Whom *Moses in the law and the prophets* did write" (verse 45). Then we have the Lord's reference to Nathanael as "An *Israelite* indeed" (verse 47), and Nathanael's confession, "Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the *King of Israel*" (verse 49).

The inevitable consequence of accepting the idea that Matthew is specially a Gospel for the Jews is to lessen its value in the eyes of those who, by nature, were "sinners of the Gentiles"; and this is the disastrous effect of the doctrine we are seeking, in this volume, to refute.

What chiefly impresses us about the Gospel by Matthew is that it links the *entire New Testament* with Abraham and David, putting before us, in its very opening words, the One Who was "promised afore by God's prophets in the Holy Scriptures" (Romans 1:2), and Who now had come for "blessing" to the Gentiles (which is what is meant by the reference to Abraham), and for the building of the House of God (which is what is meant by the reference to David), Those opening words introduce us, in the most unmistakable way, to the era of the Holy Spirit, Who was "the promise" which God made to Abraham through his "Seed," and Who also is the One in Whose power the "Habitation of God" is being built (Ephesians 2:22).

Matthew's Gospel also brings us *at once* to the "Seed" of the woman, whose "heel" was to be bruised by the serpent. Thus the first book of the New Testament connects in the closest way with the first book of the Old. Fulfillment answers to promise both in regard to the Seed of the woman, and in regard to the Seed of Abraham; and all this is without the slightest reference to any of the *earthly* promises concerning the nation Israel. Those promises are less in evidence in Matthew's Gospel than in any of the others; and especially are they crowded out of sight by the great events of *world-wide* import that are brought clearly into view *on the first page of Matthew*.

Let us observe one thing more, and that a thing of deepest interest, namely, the *covenant* expressed in the *Name* that was given to the Lord before His birth, and which is explained in the words: "For He shall save His people from their sins." This, we say, is a *covenant*; in fact it is the "*New Covenant*," the essential feature of which is that, through the efficacy of the blood of Christ, *the forgiveness of sins* is secured for all His "people." This is expressed in His own words recorded by Matthew (Matthew 26:28): "This is My blood of the *New Covenant*, which is shed for many for *the remission of sins*."

Thus the very first page of Matthew sets forth in a striking way the grand and conspicuous features of this present dispensation of grace; and it worthily introduces the blessed Person by Whom all those eternal purposes of God are secured. And is this not precisely what we should expect to find in that book which the Holy Spirit has placed at the beginning of the New Testament?

Such is the "character" which the Spirit of God has impressed upon the Gospel of Matthew; and we earnestly protest against any attempt to mar that heavenly impress, and to deprive God's saints of much of the value of this leading book of the New Testament, by giving it a fictitiously "Jewish" character.

We meet again and again in current writings such expressions as these: "The Jewish dispensational character of the Gospel of Matthew": "The dispensational and prophetic character of the First Gospel." These expressions are not "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth," and were never known in Biblical exposition until our day. Hence they have no definite meaning. For our part we do not claim to understand them, and we have no use for them whatever. Instead of being a help to an understanding of Matthew's Gospel and the other Scriptures, they have been a positive hindrance. They are intruders, which have no place in the vocabularies of God's people; and we should be well pleased to

hear the last of them. But not only are they accepted in certain quarters as expressing unquestioned facts, but the most radical conclusions are drawn from them; the most serious consequences of this being that the children of God are thereby robbed of their Father's commandments, for the delivery of which the Son of God Himself assumed responsibility; and thus His mission on their behalf is, to that extent, nullified by vague and unscriptural terms.

As an illustration of the results of this method of dealing with the first Gospel, we call attention to a current interpretation of Matthew 10:23; and in so doing we shall find useful information from the Lord's instructions to His twelve Apostles, recorded in that chapter.

We are informed ¹ that the words "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come," are so puzzling that "those expositors who do not *see* the dispensational and prophetic character of the Gospel of Matthew *are unable to give an intelligent explanation of this statement.*"

Is this really the case? Is the meaning of the above verse really hidden except to those who have the gift, never granted to any till our day, "to see the dispensational character of Matthew"? This is well worth looking into. And we are not afraid to invite comparison between the explanation given by our brother, and obtained through "seeing" the dispensational character of Matthew, and a very simple explanation which has at least the advantage that it can be "seen" by simpleminded "babes," who have to be content with what the Father is pleased to reveal to them through the Scriptures.

First let us look at our brother's explanation: To begin with, he says that "the coming of the Son of man of which our Lord here speaks is His *second* coming." Is any proof offered of this assertion? None whatever. But, lest any should venture to question it, our brother says: "To deny this would be folly." But when a positive statement is made and no proof whatever given what can we do but deny it, or at least ask for evidence? And now come some astonishing statements. We are told that the testimony of those "Jewish disciples" (meaning the twelve Apostles) to the cities of Israel "was a testimony of the promised Kingdom"; and that this "testimony of *Jewish believers* is to continue till He comes again." But one would naturally ask, how can that be, seeing that there are now no "Jewish believers" testifying in "cities of Israel" and that there have been none for eighteen centuries? This presents no difficulty to those who "see the dispensational character of Matthew." To them the following facts, not hinted at in the Scriptures, have in some unexplained manner become known: **1.** the testimony of those "Jewish believers" (whom the *Bible* calls the twelve Apostles of Christ ²) was "interrupted by the rejection of the message they brought to the cities of Israel"; **2.** "After the Lord Jesus had died and risen from the dead the *same offer of the Kingdom was made to Israel, only to be rejected again.*" (We note the change from "the *cities* of Israel," which was the point of the Lord's instructions in Matthew 10 to "Israel"); **3.** "After the rejection of this (latter) offer, *this present era began.*" **4.** The interruption of more than eighteen centuries is *unnoticed* in Matthew 10, and must be *read into it.* **5.** After this age is finished, then "Jewish believers" — (will they be the twelve Apostles, we wonder?) — "will take up the *unfinished testimony* to the nation and preach the same Gospel of the Kingdom, which John the Baptist heralded."

Again we ask, is any proof offered to support any of these five statements? Not a word. Does any exist?

And now let us, in childlike simplicity, read our Lord's plain statement in the light of the Scriptures which He has given us; and let us remember His words recorded for us in the very next chapter, where He thanks the Father because He had "hid these things from the wise and prudent, and re-

1 *Our Hope*, October, 1918.

2 And let it be remembered that in Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision." Not a particle. And this is what our brother calls an "intelligent explanation," such as cannot be given by "those expositors who do not see the dispensational and prophetic character of the Gospel of Matthew."

vealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

The plain facts of the matter as stated in the Scriptures are these: The Lord willed to "come" personally to "the *cities* of Israel." As He said in another place: "I must preach the Kingdom of God to *other cities* also; for *therefore am I sent*" (Luke 4:43). We need not stop to inquire *why* He was sent to the *cities* of Israel, it being sufficient for the present to know that it was the purpose of God to give a special announcement to the cities of Israel, as appears by the prophecy of Isaiah 40:9: "O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings" — or, as in the margin, "O thou that bringest good tidings unto Jerusalem" — "lift up thy voice with strength; lift up thy voice, be not afraid; say unto THE CITIES OF JUDAH, BEHOLD YOUR GOD!" So we see it was a matter of His coming to *those* cities at *that* time. There is no hint of His coming to any other *cities* at any future time. At that moment He was about to depart from where He was, in order "to teach and preach *in their cities*" (Matthew 11:1). It suited Him, and was fitted to His dignity, to send messengers *before His face* to the "*cities and places*" to which He Himself was about to "*come*." Such was His custom, as appears by the sending forth of the "other seventy also" for the same purpose, and to whom He gave *identical instructions* (Luke 10:1–16). The following words require no explanation: "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two *before His face*, into every *city and place*, whither He Himself *would come*" (literally, "was about Himself to *come*"). What the word "come" meant is obvious to any child; and the idea that it meant His second coming is simply an impossibility. The Lord was about to make a tour of the "cities of Israel," and He sent the Apostles as messengers before Him, to each city, to announce His coming. In Luke 9, verses 1–6, moreover, we read of His sending the twelve through the *cities and towns*; and in Luke 10 of His sending "other seventy also ... into every city and place whither He Himself was about to *come*." (See also Luke 9:52.)

In Matthew we have a fuller account of the sending of the *twelve* and *no* account of the sending of the "other *seventy*." Minute directions were given as to their entrance into *cities* (verses 11, 14, 15, 23). Verse 23 is the one to which our brother refers; but when quoted in its entirety it is not so very puzzling after all. The Lord said:

"But when they persecute you in this *city*, flee ye into *another*: for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over (margin: shall not end or finish) the *cities* of Israel until the Son of man be come."

The first part of the verse makes it quite impossible to think that the Lord was speaking of His second coming. And, moreover, it is doing great violence to the Lord's words to assert that what He said to His *twelve Apostles* was not meant to be true of them at all, but was meant for "Jewish believers" of a time which was then two thousand years off.

The simple meaning is that *He* was to *come* after them, and was to follow them so closely that (especially as the time for executing this mission was short) they were not to linger in any city where they encountered persecution; for in any case they would not have completed *all* the cities of Israel till the Son of man should come Himself,

Looking now more attentively at the Lord's instructions to the twelve Apostles, recorded in Matthew 10, we would say in the first place that we can discern in it nothing to the effect that the testimony of the Apostles to the cities of Israel was interrupted by the rejection of their testimony; nor anything to suggest that the supposedly interrupted testimony was to be resumed after an interval of some thousands of years. And indeed we are quite unable to comprehend how a mission of that sort *could be* resumed and completed after an interruption of centuries.

And in particular we ask attention to the fact that the instructions given by the Lord to His Apostles contain no word as to offering the earthly kingdom, but, on the contrary, they are of such a nature as to preclude reading that offer into them — were it in any case lawful so to do. The purpose of the mission plainly was to sift and select out of the various cities of Israel those people to whom power was to be given to become the sons of God. It is recorded in John's Gospel that "as many as *received Him* to them gave He power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). It thus appears that God was seeking

children for His household, and that the matter of any Israelite becoming a son of God (and thus entering the Kingdom of heaven) depended upon *receiving the Christ of God*.

Therefore, according to the instructions which the Lord gave to His Apostles, the receiving of the Apostles was equivalent to *receiving Him*. He said: “He that receiveth you *receiveth Me*, and he that *receiveth Me, receiveth Him* that sent Me” (Matthew 10:40). Thus we have clear light as to the character of the “Kingdom of heaven” which the Lord was announcing at that time. It is such as is entered only by those who “received Him,” and to whom He gave “power to become the sons of God ... who were born of *God*.” It is the new birth again, the *only* way of admission into the Kingdom.

And we have here an important principle, namely, that they who receive His messengers *receive Him*; and the link with the Father is completed by the fact that they who receive Him receive the Father “Who sent Him.

Thus we see that, in the very mission which is held to be a definite offer of the earthly kingdom to the nation of Israel, the Lord was in reality selecting *from among* the children of Israel, those who, by *receiving Him*, should obtain the power to become the children of God. And of such *is* the Kingdom of heaven.

Chapters 8–10 of Matthew’s Gospel will repay the most careful examination; for they cover the period wherein, according to all who hold the postponement theory, the definite offer of the earthly kingdom was made, and before there was any “rejection” thereof. Consequently it is here that evidences of such an offer will be found, *or nowhere*. Let us, therefore (having commented sufficiently on Chapter 10), note such parts of Chapters 8 and 9 as may throw light upon our inquiry.

In Chapter 8 are recorded first the healing of the leper, an Israelite; and then the healing of the servant of the Centurion, a Gentile. If these incidents reveal anything to the point it is that the blessings which Christ brought were for both Jew and Gentile, with priority to the Jew, And since sickness (and especially leprosy) is a type of sin, or of sin’s effects, those incidents suggest (what a similar incident in Chapter 9:2–6 expressly declares) namely, that the Lord’s ministry had to do with *the remission of sins*. Furthermore, Chapter 8:10 shows that the blessings of the Gospel are for those who have faith in Christ. For He said to them that followed Him (speaking of the Centurion): “Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, in the Kingdom of heaven. But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness.”

These words (the only reference to the Kingdom in Chapters 8 and 9) suggest a kingdom in which “many” Gentiles will be associated with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And this agrees with the character of this dispensation, and not at all with that of Israel’s earthly greatness.

To “sit down with” is literally “to recline at table with.” It is a common Bible figure for sharing or partaking together; or in a word for communion or fellowship. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob stand for the true Israel of God — His believing people who inherit the promises by faith, of whom it is written that “they desire a better country, that is an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God” (Hebrews 11:13–18). Hence, under the figure which the Lord uses in this verse (Matthew 8:11), we have a clear picture of this dispensation in which Gentiles come into the Kingdom of heaven and *partake equally* with the true Israelites. It is precisely the same truth as is stated in Ephesians 2:12 and 19, where Gentiles who were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise” are made by grace, “no more strangers and foreigners, but *fellow-citizens* with the saints (Israelites) and of the household of God.” The same truth is also stated in Ephesians 3:5,6 as “the mystery,” namely, “that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs (with believing Jews), and of the same body (the same with Jews), and partakers (with Jews) of His (God’s) promise in Christ, by (means of) the Gospel.”

It has been asked, “If only born again ones are in the Kingdom of heaven, how can ‘the children of the Kingdom’ be cast out?” The answer is that the fact that only born again ones enter the Kingdom of heaven is not a matter of inference, but rests on the Lord’s direct statements. Hence it is not open

to debate. But it is plain that, in the above passage, the term “children of the Kingdom” means Israelites, who were all the children of the Kingdom in the sense that they were the children of *all* the covenants and promises. As Peter said to unconverted Jews in Jerusalem: “Ye are the *children of the prophets*, and of the *covenant* which God made with our fathers” (Acts 3:24). And this agrees with the Lord’s words to the Pharisees: “Therefore say I unto you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a *nation* (cf. 1 Peter 2:9) bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Matthew 21:43). It is particularly to be noted in this connection that the Lord does not say in Matthew 8:12 that the Israelites are “the children of the Kingdom of *heaven*,” which is the Kingdom we are discussing.

The expression “with Abraham,” etc., is similar to Galatians 3:9: “So then they which be of *faith* are blessed *with faithful Abraham*.” It was the centurion’s “faith” which brought him into association with the blessing promised to Abraham, the man of faith. That blessing is, as we have seen, fulfilled in this era through the coming of the Holy Spirit, So we have here another proof that the Lord was at that time preparing for this present dispensation of grace, which is the Kingdom of heaven.

Other incidents of the eighth of Matthew, particularly the Lord’s reference to Himself as “the Son of *man*” (its first occurrence), and His statement that He had not where to lay His head in His own creation, identify Him clearly with the work of salvation, and not with that of introducing an earthly kingdom. The quotation of Isaiah 53:4 is particularly significant.

The incidents of Chapter 9 are to the same effect, particularly the healing of the paralytic. That miracle was wrought for the express purpose of making it publicly known that He had “power on earth to forgive sins.” This unmistakably connects His work *at that time* with this present era of grace, whereof *the forgiveness of sins* is the principal characteristic; and with the Name given Him before His birth (Matthew 1:21).

Then we find Him immediately associating Himself with publicans and sinners, and thereby exciting the disapproval of the Scribes and Pharisees. This action of our Lord *at that time* when the postponement theory demands that He be occupied in offering earthly dominion to those very rulers of the nation, is most significant. In fact it seems to us, especially with all the other incidents of like import, decisive of the question. And how can the Lord’s words to those rulers be conceivably reconciled with the idea that He was then — (and it was then or *never*) — offering them the earthly kingdom? He said, when they questioned His eating with publicans and sinners:

“They that be whole need not a *physician*, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (verses 10–13).

Is it possible to debate about the meaning of these words? The Lord says He had come — not as a King to the nation, but — as a *Physician* to the *sick*. And then He put His meaning into plain words, saying He had not come to call the “righteous,” but *sinners* to repentance.

Thus at the very time when He should be addressing the rulers about the earthly throne, He *dismisses* them from His presence, saying — “Go ye” — and declaring that He had not come to “call” them to anything.

We confess, we do not see how our Lord could have more plainly declared what the purpose of His mission was and what it was not; or how He could have stated any more plainly that He had *no* business (much less business concerning the *throne*) with the rulers of Israel. The heart instinctively turns from the thought of His offering Himself to that “generation of vipers” in any capacity, or seeking acceptance at their hands. That closed His interview with the Scribes and Pharisees.

Then came to Him the disciples of John (a very different class of people) with a significant question. Now if John’s message had been what our brethren claim, how is it his disciples came to Christ with a question about *fasting*, instead of something about the earthly kingdom? And why did John teach his disciples to *fast*? And why was there a difference in this respect between the disciples of John and those of Christ?

Incidentally, we would point out that if those disciples of John had become, as they should have done, disciples of *Christ*, they too would have been “children of the bride chamber,” and it would not have been a time for fasting for them either.

However, the question gives the Lord an opportunity *first* to announce that the days were coming when He should be taken from His disciples, and that then they should mourn and fast, which is quite incompatible with the idea that He was then announcing the earthly kingdom; and *second* to declare, by two brief parables, the nature of the new dispensation which He had come to introduce. “No man,” said He, “putteth a piece of new cloth into an old garment” — signifying that He had not come with His “new cloth” — the message He brought from God — to patch up the decayed system of Judaism. Man under law had failed in regard to that at which the law aimed — righteousness (Romans 9:31). Hence, there must be a complete new garment, God’s perfect righteousness, “the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Philippians 3:9); “even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe” (Romans 3:22). This saying of the Lord Jesus is inconsistent with the thought of the earthly kingdom; but on the contrary it very plainly agrees with the present dispensation. And since this saying was uttered at the very time when the Kingdom of heaven was being announced, it tells with certainty what the nature of that Kingdom was to be, bringing to view its chief characteristic — righteousness.

The illustration of the “new wine” which could not be put into the old wineskins, speaks to the same point. It tells — not of a continuation of God’s dealings with Israel in the flesh, which is here likened to old wineskins, but — of an entirely new dispensation (that of the Holy Spirit) demanding entirely *new receptacles* (converted or reborn men). There is a reminiscence of this saying of the Lord Jesus Christ in the remark of some on the day of Pentecost who, seeing the disciples filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking various foreign languages — said: “These men are full of new wine” (Acts 2:13).

We believe that Chapters 8, 9 and 10 of Matthew’s Gospel, which should contain clear evidence of the proclamation of the earthly kingdom to Israel, if the view we are discussing were correct, proves clearly the contrary. And we believe that this fact is easily seen by the most simpleminded believers. The instructions to the disciples found in Luke 10 were long subsequent to the supposed rejection of the Kingdom and its withdrawal. It was “when the time was come that He should be received up,” and when He had “steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). And we see by the next verse that His custom ever was to send messengers “before His face,” even through the villages of the Samaritans. But what we wish specially to point out is that the preaching of the Kingdom did not cease; nor was that preaching diminished in amount or emphasis. On the contrary, whereas, earlier in His ministry He had sent forth *twelve* disciples to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, He now, at the end, sent other *seventy* also, instructing them to say “The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you” (Luke 10:10, 11).

15

“MORE THAN A PROPHET”

We welcome an effort that has lately been made to find Scriptural arguments in support of the idea that John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed, or offered, to Israel the earthly kingdom foretold in Old Testament prophecies.¹ This affords us a much desired opportunity of bringing that idea (as set forth by one well qualified to present it) to the test of Scripture. In so doing, we shall find occasion to study important passages of the Word, from which we may expect to derive instruction profitable to the people of God at this time.

The writer of the article referred to has confined his attention practically to the subject of John the Baptist’s ministry, in the belief that the definite settlement of *that* matter would go far toward the settlement of all disputed points concerning the Kingdom of heaven. And in this we concur.

The precise question then is: What era or dispensation did John proclaim when he came preaching and baptizing? And specifically, what did he mean by the exhortation, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”? Did he mean that spiritual kingdom of regenerated persons which actually *was* at hand, and to which the Lord subsequently referred in His parables, or did he mean the earthly kingdom of Israel which was not at hand?

We should bear in mind that John was, by the Lord’s own testimony, a prophet and “*more* than a prophet.” He had been, moreover, miraculously born, and had been “filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother’s womb.” Furthermore, before he came preaching to Israel, “the Word of God” had come to him. He was, “sent from God ... to bear witness of the *Light* ... that all men through him *might believe*.” Are we then to suppose that John had been thus prepared and sent from God for the vain and futile purpose of telling the Jews that God was about to introduce the era of Israel’s earthly empire, when in fact that era was several thousand years in the future, and when, on the contrary, God was about to introduce an era of a radically different sort?

We have here a case which calls for proof of the clearest kind; but our brother, Mr. J., can produce no proof at all. He can point us to no evidence that John ever offered or preached the earthly kingdom to the rulers of Israel (to whom, as all agree, the proposal must have been made, if the setting up of that kingdom was to depend upon the nation’s acceptance of it); or that he made such an offer even to the multitudes. In fact, our brother finds the word “offer” (which expresses *the very essence* of the matter) so embarrassing that he wishes to be rid of it altogether. “But let us,” says he, “omit the word ‘offer.’” And to this we cheerfully assent; for if it be found impossible to maintain that the earthly kingdom was “offered” to Israel, what remains of the theory we are discussing? Thus our brother casts overboard the idea that John or the Lord Jesus “offered” the earthly kingdom to the Jews; but he thinks nevertheless that Christ may have “presented Himself as King.”

1 See “*An Enquiry as to the Kingdom of Heaven*,” by F. C. J. in “*Our Hope*,” Dec, 1918, and Jan., 1919. [F. C. J. was Frederic Charles Jennings, a close friend of the editor of “*Our Hope*”, Arno C. Gaebelein)

In lieu of proof, then, whereof our brother can produce none, he asks us to *infer*, from circumstances to which he calls our attention that Christ presented Himself to the nation *as its King*. We will, therefore, examine those circumstances with all possible care. But first we must call pointed attention to the fact that we are now asked to *believe* an important matter for which there is confessedly *no proof*. This, we insist, is too much to ask. For when God sends His messenger with a definite message, He always gives words which make His meaning clear to those who have to act upon it. If, therefore, His message through John was to the effect that His promised King was about to ascend the throne of David, that fact would clearly appear in John's words. It would not be necessary to search, as with a microscope, for some obscure phrase, or some circumstance of doubtful import, from which the idea might possibly be inferred.

And if God did really mean to say to the rulers of Israel that the earthly kingdom was then at hand, and that the only condition to be fulfilled was that they, the rulers and leaders, should accept it, then surely the announcement itself, and also the condition on which it depended, would be found in plain terms in John's messages to those rulers. The fact, therefore, that there is no record of any offer of the earthly kingdom, or of any presentation of Christ *as King*, or of any condition to be fulfilled, warrants — nay, *compels* — that we refuse to accept the idea.

That, however, is but the negative side of the case. On the affirmative side we have many and clear records of what God *did* announce through John; and those records absolutely shut out the idea that the earthly kingdom was the subject of John's preaching, or that it had any place whatever therein.

And now we come to the statements which our brother lays down (without attempting at all to prove them) as the basis of his argument. He tells us that there was, in the days of John, "a widespread expectation among the people of the coming of the Messiah"; that it was "for His kingdom that the Jews waited"; and that the expected kingdom was "the consolation of Israel." As regards these statements, we would observe: (a) We do not know how widespread was the national expectation in the days of John of the coming of the Messiah, or just what "the Jews" of that day waited for; (b) that it is indeed written concerning *one man*, (Simeon), and he a man specially filled with and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, that *he* was "waiting for the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25); (c) that Simeon's expectancy was *thirty years before* the days of John's preaching; (d) that "the consolation of Israel" which *he* was awaiting was *not* the earthly kingdom, as the context clearly shows; and (e) that those who at *that* time were looking "for redemption" (not for the earthly kingdom) in Jerusalem were so *few* that a very aged woman was able to speak to them "all" (Luke 2:38). So much for the basic propositions which our brother asks us to take for granted; and as to those matters we will only say at this point that, in this case as in all others that have come to our notice, as soon as one begins to examine an argument in support of the "postponement" theory, it goes all to pieces.

Having asked us to accept the foregoing unproved assumptions, our brother next proposes that we should ascertain just what John was talking about — not by examining the records of his ministry contained in the Bible, but — by trying to imagine what *we* would have gathered from his "cry" had we been there to hear it. And in this experiment we are not even to consider John's words as recorded in the Scriptures (there being eight or more distinct accounts of his ministry), but we are to limit ourselves to a fragment of one sentence, namely, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand." This is what our brother quotes, and *all* he quotes, as the "cry" of John the Baptist — as if that were *what* he said, and *all* he said.

Our writer, at this second stage of his argument, asks us to assume that, had we stood "with that crowd on the banks of the Jordan and listened to the cry of John the Baptist, 'The Kingdom of heaven is at hand,'" we would have gathered from it "that he meant — not a kingdom such as they never heard of, but — the very kingdom promised to Israel by the prophets."

To which we need only say that, even if we could know with certainty just what we might have understood, under the conjectured circumstances, there is no assurance at all that our thoughts would have been correct.

Further, at this point our brother asks a string of argumentative questions, such as "Would he

(John) in thus speaking have referred to a kingdom such as they could have known nothing about? ... Would he refer to the kingdom of an absent King?” etc. And then our brother has the assurance to say, “These questions would appear to answer themselves.”

But these questions do not by any means “answer themselves.” For we see nothing to forbid the idea that God might have sent His messenger to proclaim a kingdom such as had not been foretold by former prophets. In fact, it seems to us quite in keeping with God’s ways to proclaim, by a special messenger, the *new thing* He was about to do (Amos 3:9).

Moreover, it is quite evident, from the bewilderment of Nicodemus, when the Lord declared to him the foundation fact concerning the Kingdom He was then announcing, that it was a Kingdom such as Nicodemus, though the “master of Israel,” had never heard of (John 3:7–10).

But happily we are not left to our own supposing in regard to the foregoing questions; for while they do not “answer themselves,” the Scriptures *do* answer them, and with a clearness that leaves nothing to be desired on the part of those who are willing to receive an answer from that Source. They show beyond a doubt that John was sent to announce a Kingdom such as never had been heard of or dreamed of before.

Furthermore, the words which our brother quotes as the “cry” of John the Baptist do not by any means give the substance of his preaching. The Scriptures contain eight or more accounts of John’s message and ministry — three in prophecy, four in the Gospels, and another through Paul in Acts. And in addition we have also the Lord’s own summary of the ministry of His servant John. Of these numerous records there is only *one* (Matthew 3) that even so much as uses the words “Kingdom of heaven” (and that only *once*); and in not one of the records does the word “King” occur in or in connection with John’s preaching. The fullest accounts of his message are found in Luke and John, where there are no references at all either to a king or a kingdom.

But this is not all. Even the few words from which our brother would have us “gather” the meaning of John’s message to Israel are but the *fragment* of a sentence; and the words omitted by him are important in determining the meaning of the sentence.

For John did not preach saying, “the Kingdom of heaven is at hand,” but saying “*Repent ye, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” That is to say, John’s message to Israel was, in one word, “*repentance.*” That was the burden of John’s “cry”; and it gives a very different significance to what might have been gathered from an announcement which merely said, “the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

The Lord Himself referred to John’s ministry and declared the character of it (see Matthew 11:7–11; 21:32; Luke 7:24–35); but in His references thereto we find no hint that it had anything to do with the earthly kingdom.

The Apostle Paul also has concisely summed up John’s ministry in Acts 13:22–26. Referring to the coming of Christ as of the seed of David, the Apostle said: “Of this man’s (David’s) seed hath God, according to His promise, raised up to Israel a *Saviour*, Jesus; when John had *first preached before His coming the baptism of repentance* to all the people of Israel.”

The whole matter is here stated with inspired brevity and clearness. The “promise” which God was about to fulfill when His word came to John in the wilderness was not the promise of a *King*, but of “a *Saviour*”; and as a preparation for this coming *Savior*, God sent John — not to offer a kingdom to the *rulers* of Israel, but — to “preach the *baptism of repentance* to *all the people* of Israel.”

The verses that follow in Paul’s address contain clear evidence to the point of our inquiry. We quote: “And as John fulfilled his course he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not He. But, behold, there cometh One after me whose shoes of His feet I am not worthy to loose. Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, to you is the word of this salvation sent.”

It will be observed that, according to these words of Paul, “John fulfilled *his* course,” just as Paul himself could say, later on, “I have finished *my* course” — using the same word (2 Timothy 4:7). The way whereby John was fulfilling his course was in announcing to Israel the coming of a “*Saviour*,” ac-

ording to God's "promise." And now Paul takes up in *his* preaching the *same subject*, saying to his hearers, "The word of *this salvation* is sent to you"; thus declaring (in effect) that he was continuing the same ministry as John, by preaching the same salvation — "*this salvation*" — which John had been sent to announce. The fact that Paul thus linked his own preaching directly with that of John proves conclusively that John and Paul belong to the same dispensation.

Again at a later time Paul gave, and the Holy Spirit recorded, a summary of John's message, stating that he said unto the people, "that they should *believe on Him which should come after him, that is on Christ Jesus*" (Acts 19:4). And in this case also Paul linked his own ministry directly with that of John in words which prove conclusively that John's ministry belongs wholly to this present dispensation.

Thus the Scriptures tell us again and again, and in the simplest language, that John *did not* invite the people of Israel to accept an earthly kingdom, nor to welcome the promised occupant of David's throne, but to "*repent,*" and to "*believe on the One Who should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus,*" which is precisely what is preached today by those who preach "the Gospel of God concerning His Son."

One of the most concise and graphic descriptions we have of John's "cry" is that found in Isaiah 40:6–8; and the substance of it is that "all flesh is grass — the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the Word of our God shall stand forever." In the light of New Testament Scriptures the meaning of this is quite clear. God was about to introduce a new era — that of "the Spirit of the Lord." The great outstanding characteristic of this era was to be the putting away of the "grass" humanity — "all flesh" — and the bringing in of a *new order of man*, born of the Word and Spirit of God. And God saw fit to introduce this new era by bringing about a *turning movement* or *repentance* on the part of a certain number ("many") of the children of Israel, who (the repentant ones) should thus become a people "prepared for the Lord." That turning movement was to be accomplished through "the Word of God" (Luke 3:2), sent by a specially fitted servant of God; for the words of the Lord Jesus concerning John make it plain that the preparing of a people for the Lord was a work of *immense importance*. When the time drew near for the making ready of a people prepared for the Lord, an angel was sent to announce the birth of a man to whom that work was to be committed. And in order that there might be no mistake as to the character of his mission, the angel described it in terms of perfect clearness, saying: "And *many of the children of Israel shall he turn* to the Lord their God. And 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 1:13–17).

It seems almost an impossibility to misunderstand these words. And surely they leave no room for our own imaginings as to the meaning and purpose of John's ministry, nor any room for the intrusion of the strange notion that John was sent to Israel with the offer of the millennial kingdom. Nothing could be more foreign to the real purport of John's message, as stated in many Scriptures.

This present era of grace is marked outwardly by two things, namely, *preaching the Word of God*, and the *baptism of confessed sinners*; and inwardly by the presence and working of *the Spirit of God*. Both *preaching* and *baptism* were prominent in John's ministry; and, moreover, the coming of the Spirit was announced by him, and was visibly manifested to him at the baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ. These features of John's ministry identify it plainly as belonging to this dispensation.

John's Words to the Rulers

When John saw the nation's leaders coming to his baptism he greeted them — not with the announcement of an earthly kingdom, which would have pleased them well, but — with the words: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from *the wrath to come?*" So *we* may ask in our turn: "Would John have *thus* offered to them the earthly kingdom?"

And furthermore, he went on to warn them that their claim to be the children of Abraham would not suffice to admit them into the kingdom which he was announcing. This word alone is enough to show with absolute certainty that, whatever he was proclaiming, it was *not the earthly kingdom promised to*

the nation Israel. That, at least, is excluded from the possibilities; and every intelligent Jew would have understood at least *that much* of John’s message.

And John proceeded to say to those rulers that “*Now* also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore, every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.” Again we might ask: “Would he *thus* announce to the leaders of the nation the earthly kingdom promised to Israel?” To us who have the light of all the Scriptures this word refers to nothing else than the present dispensation, in which all human greatness is set aside, and in which those who are *born* of the Spirit are enabled by grace to produce “the fruit of the Spirit.” And indeed this appears by the next recorded words of John (as found in Matthew 3:11): “I indeed baptize you with water unto *repentance*; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you *with the Holy Ghost* and with fire.” Surely we need no gifted expositor to tell us what these words mean. It is clear beyond all dispute that we have here — not the announcement of the period of Israel’s supremacy over the nations of the world, but — the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, which began at Pentecost, and which, by the mercy and longsuffering of God, continues until now.

And we might go on to impress upon our readers the plain significance of other words of John, such as that “all flesh shall see the *Salvation of God*”; and also those words of unmistakable Gospel significance, “Behold the Lamb of God, Which taketh away the sin of the world!”

Who among us would think of robbing those words of their plain meaning as proclaiming the hour of *God’s appointed Sacrifice*, which was to take away the sin, not of Israel only, but of THE WORLD? In other words, we ask, could the work of God, and the character of His dealings with men, in *this present era of grace*, be more clearly or more fittingly proclaimed than in those words of John the Baptist?

“The Lamb of God”

Well may our brother say that John’s proclamation of Christ as “The Lamb of God” affords the strongest argument which can be brought against the view he is trying to uphold. And how does he attempt to meet it? It is not easy to give a concise statement of his reply, for it is quite complicated. But the basis of it is found in the recorded fact that John’s announcement of the Lord as “The Lamb of God” was “*the next day*,” that is the day following Christ’s baptism. This (our brother says) makes a great difference, because the extraordinary events which took place at the Lord’s baptism *completely changed the character of John’s message*, insomuch that he entirely abandoned the preaching of the kingdom, and began to preach Christ as the Son of God and Lamb of God.

As we have stated, our brother’s argument becomes, at this point, involved and difficult to follow. Therefore, we will assist the reader by giving first a condensed statement of it, and then discussing it in detail.

Briefly, our brother claims that John had *two distinct and radically different messages*. The first was the announcement of the earthly kingdom, which he preached *before* the Lord’s baptism; the second was the proclamation of the Son of God as having come as the Lamb of God to die for the sin of the world, which message he preached *from and after* the Lord’s baptism. We are told that one day John preached the earthly kingdom, but “*the next day*” he put that message aside and proclaimed instead Christ as “The Lamb of God.” And the reason for this abrupt change was (so we are told) that John did not know “Who it was he had been sent to announce until the events of the Lord’s baptism had opened his (John’s) eyes to the true dignity of His Person. We are left to infer that John somehow made a false start, and that when he called the Israelites to repent because the Kingdom of heaven (meaning, as our friend says, the earthly kingdom) was at hand, he was but imperfectly informed as to the purposes of his mission; but that, through information conveyed to him at the Lord’s baptism (it does not appear how), John saw that the announcement of the earthly kingdom was not the right thing at all, and so he abruptly (overnight) changed it to a radically different message.

All this is very strange, very novel, and very confused to us; but, if true, it would locate the dispensational “break” (which our friends have much difficulty in fixing in a definite place) at the baptism of our Lord; and it would confine the supposed preaching of the earthly kingdom to an insignifi-

cant period of time prior to that.

In support of this view of John's ministry (a view we never heard of before), our brother calls attention to John's statement, twice repeated (John 1:31 and 33): "And *I knew Him not.*"

What our brother makes of this is that, when John said, "I knew Him not," he meant that he did not know Him "as both the Lamb of God and the Son of God" "That knowledge," says our author, "only came to him when he heard the Voice and saw the Spirit descending on Him like a dove, so that it served to open John's eyes to His divine glory." This caused John (as our friend says) to abandon his first message (which was the earthly kingdom, according to our friend's theory), and thenceforth to proclaim Christ as the Lamb of God.

And our writer proceeds to say that, since the knowledge of Christ as Son and Lamb of God was given to John "subsequent to His baptism," it was "consequently not in connection with the proclamation of the kingdom, which occurred before it; nor are we justified," says our brother, "in throwing back this later intelligence into the earlier testimony so as to alter the whole character of that testimony," (mark those words!), "and put into the kingdom an idea that it could not then possibly have had."

Our esteemed brother has certainly taken a long step in the right direction in thus frankly admitting that the proclamation of the Lamb of God is absolutely inconsistent with the proclamation of the earthly kingdom. But still he makes a desperate attempt to save at least a fragment of the postponement theory, and to give room for the preaching of the earthly kingdom for at least the small period of time preceding the Lord's baptism. To this end he brings forward the idea that the events which happened at the Lord's baptism were such as "to alter the whole character" of John's testimony.

It only remains therefore to show (and it can be shown beyond a doubt) that John's message was consistent from beginning to end, that the character thereof was not altered in the least, and that the "kingdom" preached by him was that *spiritual* kingdom which was about to be introduced by the Sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which was to follow.

And how *could* there have been any change in the character of John's message, seeing that his message was "the Word of God"? (Luke 3:2). Of course, it is impossible. And, moreover, the very record from which our brother quotes shows clearly that there was no change in the character of John's testimony. John declared that *when God had sent him to baptize with water* He had told him that the One coming after him was "*He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost*" (John 1:33); and that God had, at the same time, told John of the identifying *sign* which would be given from heaven at the proper time, namely, the descending of the Spirit in bodily form like a dove and abiding on that One before Whom John had been sent. The record makes it *perfectly clear* that John had been fully informed as to the Person he had been sent to announce, and that the sign was for the purpose of identifying positively the Person, not to inform John of His divine glory. Hence the actual happening of the sign told John nothing about Christ that he did not know before. It simply served, as was intended, to *identify the Person* in an unmistakable way, so that John could *now* say, and with absolute certainty, "THIS is He of Whom I said" (note that John was merely *repeating* what he had said *before* the baptism), "After me cometh a Man which is preferred before me; for He was before me" (verse 30). These words plainly declare Christ's eternal Deity, and declare also that the testimony of John was *precisely the same* before as after the baptism of Christ, so far as regards the Person he was sent to announce. The only difference was that *before* the promised sign had happened John could only say, "There standeth One among you, Whom ye know not; He it is Who, coming after me, is preferred before me, Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose" (verses 28, 27); whereas *after* the sign he could say, "THIS IS HE of Whom I said, After me cometh a Man which is preferred before me; for He was before me" — thus using of Christ the *identical words* he had used before the baptism.

Furthermore, John had, from the first, declared that he had been sent, in fulfillment of Isaiah 40, to "make straight the way of THE LORD" (John 1:23). And more proof could be cited, if need be, that John knew before he began to preach just Who that "mightier" One was Who was to come after him. (See the angel's message, the prophecy of John's father, etc.)

But in what sense, then, did John say, “I knew Him, *not*”? For it is apparent that John did “know” the Lord Jesus when He came to John to be baptized. That appears from John’s words, “I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?” (Matthew 3:14). And those words show further that John, even then, recognized Jesus as “He Who was to baptize with the Holy Ghost.”

The questions, therefore, were (1) what was the period of time to which John referred when he said, “And I knew Him not?” and (2) just what is the meaning of the word “know” in John 1:31 and 33? Clear answers to these questions can easily be found.

The mother of John was the “cousin” of the virgin Mary (Luke 1:36), who visited her after the announcement by the angel, and “abode with her about three months,” or until close to the birth of John (Luke 1:56, 57). The wonderful things which the angel had announced to Zacharias and to Mary, and also the wonderful things prophesied by themselves, were, of course, known and remembered in their families. Those facts, with the Scriptures that bear directly on the point, make it clear that John “knew” full well Who the coming One was.

But the next thing recorded of John after his birth was that he was “in the deserts till the day of his showing to Israel” (Luke 1:80). This was “the wilderness of *Judea*” (Matthew 3:1). But the Lord Jesus spent *His* days (up to the time of His baptism) in Nazareth of Galilee, whence He came to be baptized of John in Jordan (Matthew 3:13). This tends to show, and John’s words confirm it, that John had not *seen* Jesus Christ, to “know” Him in *that* sense, until he saw Him among those coming to his baptism. At what moment, and by just what means, John was first made aware of the identity of Christ does not appear. But it is clear he had a strong conviction as to that when the Lord came forward to be baptized; but not until the promised “sign” had taken place could John *publicly* say, “This is He, behold the Lamb of God.”

This is fully confirmed by the meaning of the word “knew” in John 1:31, 33. It is *not* the word used in John 1:10, “The world *knew* Him not,” which word (*ginosko*) means *to know the character of*. In *that* sense John “knew” the Coming One as well before seeing Him as after. But in the statement, “I knew Him not” (John 1:31, 33) we have a very different word (*oida*), which primarily means *to see*, and hence *to know by having seen*. (See *Young’s Analytical Concordance* or any Greek Lexicon.)

“With these simple facts in mind, the meaning of the passage becomes perfectly clear. It was fitting that John should state how he had derived his knowledge of the One he was heralding to Israel. Had his knowledge come by intimate personal acquaintance and companionship? Did he know Him “by sight,” as we say? Or was it by divine revelation? It had come *solely* by “the Word of God,” and not at all by personal acquaintance. In that sense John had to say, “I knew Him not”; and thus his preaching was placed *entirely* upon the firm basis of “the Word of God” which had come to him “in the wilderness” (Luke 3:2).

And here we call attention to another fact which is quite sufficient in itself to overthrow the idea our brother is defending. For we read concerning the Lord Jesus Himself, *after* His baptism and His temptation in the wilderness, that “From that time Jesus *began* to preach and to say, *Repent: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matthew 4:17). Thus the Lord Himself, *after* His baptism, took up the message which John had given *before* His baptism (and which our friend says John had discarded), *using identically the same words*. Comment on this is needless.

The Witness of Herod

While insisting, as we must, that we are to learn the meaning of John’s message *from the inspired accounts thereof given to us in the Scriptures*, and not by trying to imagine what the multitudes who listened to him thought about it; nevertheless, the fact is that we have no record showing that any who listened to John’s preaching supposed him to be offering or announcing the earthly kingdom. Among those who heard John gladly was King Herod (Mark 6:20). And we may be sure that had John uttered a syllable about restoring the throne of David to David’s Son, or had said anything that could be so understood, his preaching would have come to a sudden end. King Herod is, therefore, a strong and competent witness to the fact that John’s message contained no word or hint about the earthly king-

dom.

And further strong confirmation is found in the fact that when Christ was accused before Pilate of *that very thing* (namely, stirring up the nation and perverting it from submission to Caesar, Luke 23:2, 5), *no witness could he found to support the charge*, either before Pilate or Herod. Those rulers had never heard a whisper of what our friends say was *publicly preached* to multitudes.

The Testimony of John's Disciples

Attention is also called to the clear and convincing testimony concerning John's message, given by disciples who were at the place "where John at first baptized." It is found in the closing verses of the tenth chapter of John, where we read that the Lord Jesus escaped out of the hands of the Jews when they sought to take Him, and "went away again *into the place where John at first baptized*; and there He abode. And many resorted to Him, and said, John did no miracle; but *all things that John spake of this Man were true*. And many believed on Him there" (John 10:39–42).

Those disciples who were at the place where John *at first* baptized were they that heard John's *first* preaching. If then John had at first (as our friend now suggests in the attempt to save a fragment of the postponement theory) preached the earthly kingdom, then there would be many at that place who heard that announcement. And here we have the testimony of those men, saying, "John did no miracle: but *all things* that John spake of this Man were true." They could not have said this, if John had proclaimed that the Coming One would restore the kingdom to Israel, especially if that had been the universal expectation at that time. John, therefore, though he did no miracle himself, had foretold the works of power and mercy which the Lord would do. And so faithfully had John prophesied of Him that his hearers were constrained to testify, at the very end of the Lord's ministry, that *all things* that John had said of Him were true.

The concluding words, "And many *believed on Him* there," show us the purpose and the effect of John's ministry, which was to speak of Christ in such a way that his hearers would *believe on Him*, when He Himself should come.

The Lord's charge against the leaders of Israel was — not that they had refused an offer of the earthly kingdom, but — that they had *not believed John* when he came to them "in the way of righteousness" (Matthew 21:32). And Paul also declared of John's message, that he had said "unto the people that they should *believe on Him* which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus" (Acts 19:4).

The passage in John 10 is the last reference in the Gospels to the ministry of John the Baptist, and it puts his ministry in its true light. It shows that John's testimony was still producing its intended effects long after he himself had passed away.

Manifestly, if John's message had been what the advocates of the postponement theory wrongly impute to him, he would have been remembered with aversion as one who had proclaimed a false and delusive hope; and his preaching, instead of accrediting Christ to his disciples, would have had just the contrary effect.

But John had not made any false announcement to the people. For even at the time of the Lord's last visit to Jerusalem the chief priests and elders feared to say that John's baptism was not from heaven, because, as they themselves acknowledged, "All hold John as a prophet" (Matthew 21:26). Manifestly, none would have held him as a prophet, if he had falsely announced to them the desired earthly kingdom.

16

“THE CONSOLATION OF ISRAEL”

But there were at the time of the Lord’s *birth* (if not at the time of John’s ministry thirty years later) a *few* Israelites who had the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Of one of these it is recorded that he was “waiting for the *Consolation of Israel*, and the Holy Ghost was (or came) upon him” (Luke 2:25). Our writer uses the words “the consolation of Israel,” which words please us so well that we have chosen them for our chapter heading. But we ask attention to the fact that our writer removes those important and significant words from their context in the Scripture, and supplies for them a context of his own making, which is entirely different. *In the Scripture* those words are used of a man upon whom was (*i.e.*, came) the Holy Spirit, and to whom the matter was “revealed by the Holy Ghost.” But our writer says: “It was for His Kingdom that *the Jew* waited, it was the ‘*consolation of Israel*’ when, being delivered out of the hand of their enemies; they should serve the Lord God of Israel without fear.”

Thus our author takes what is said of one remarkable man, on whom the Holy Ghost came, and to whom a special revelation was given by the Holy Ghost, and applies that word to any and every “Jew”; and furthermore, he takes it upon himself to say in effect that “the consolation of Israel,” for which Simeon waited, was the earthly kingdom. But the Scripture tells us, on the contrary, and in the plainest terms, that “the Consolation of Israel” was none other than “the Lord’s Christ” in Person. For “it was revealed unto him (Simeon) by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death until he had seen *the Lord’s Christ*.”

And accordingly, in fulfillment of this promise for which Simeon “waited,” he came on a certain day “*by the Spirit into the temple*.” And there the Child Jesus, a Babe thirty days old, was brought in, and Simeon “took Him up in his arms, blessed God, and said ...” And *now* we may learn what was the “expectation” of one who knew by special revelation for what purpose the Son of God had come into the world. Simeon’s inspired words are quite enough in themselves to sweep away the idea that the Lord’s coming was in connection with the earthly kingdom. Simeon does not say, “Mine eyes have seen the King Who is about to ascend the earthly throne of Israel,” or anything capable of being so understood, but: “Mine eyes have seen *Thy salvation*, which Thou hast prepared before the face of *all people*, a Light to lighten the *Gentiles*, and the glory of Thy people Israel” (Luke 2:28–32). “What was revealed to Simeon was *God’s salvation prepared before the face of all people*, with special prominence given to the Light which was to LIGHTEN THE GENTILES. In a word, what Simeon announced was *this present era of grace to all the world*. And that was when the Child Jesus was but thirty days old.

And not only so, but Simeon indicated with sufficient clearness the manner whereby salvation was to be “*prepared before the face of all people*.” This appears by his words to Mary, “Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also.” And the significance of his further words, “Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a Sign which shall be spoken against,” is quite clear in the light of subsequent events. Some were to *fall* on Him, as on a “stumbling stone” (Matthew 21:44), and some were to *rise again* through Him into newness of life.

There was at that time also in Jerusalem the prophetess Anna, who was “of a *great age*,” who, “coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that *looked for redemption* in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:36–38).

Here then are a few spiritually-minded Israelites, whose thoughts have been shown to us; and we find in their hearts, which were enlightened by the Spirit of God, no expectation whatever concerning the earthly throne; but something of a totally different character.

That generation of waiting ones passed away; for thirty years elapsed ere "the Word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness" (Luke 3:2). As to whether there were any Simeons or Annas in the crowds that thronged to his preaching, the record does not inform us.

The Parable of the Vineyard

It seems hardly necessary to pursue further an argument which collapses so completely in its initial stage; but, not wishing to slight any point to which some reader might possibly attach importance, we will briefly consider what further is advanced by our esteemed author in support of the postponement theory.

In our former writings on this subject we have urged the innumerable passages of Scripture which declare that Christ Jesus came into this world to accomplish eternal redemption by dying on the cross, and *not* to ascend an earthly throne. And those Scriptures constitute very strong evidence in support of our view, since it is unthinkable that, coming into the world for such a purpose, He would *announce another purpose*, wholly inconsistent therewith. To this our brother replies in substance: "We know full well that our Lord came into the world to die; so why should this familiar truth be pressed upon us as if it were *something only newly discovered?*"

Our response is, that the purpose for which we bring forward those familiar truths is *not* to present them as things "only newly discovered," but to call attention pointedly to the fact that the postponement theory is in direct conflict with "those things which are most surely believed among us." And this is a weighty argument, as our brother seems to recognize; for at this point he seeks, and with some adroitness too, to make room, alongside of those familiar *truths*, for the *erroneous* idea that Christ offered the earthly kingdom to the Jews. Our brother, therefore, while admitting the truth that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," struggles to secure a footing, *along with that fact*, for the strange idea that, coming into the world for one purpose, to which His very Name — "Jesus" — pledged Him (Matthew 1:21), He nevertheless proclaimed publicly as His purpose something directly contrary thereto. But our brother struggles in vain; for no subtleties of human reasoning will avail to satisfy any simple-minded believer that the Lord came to do one definite thing, and then set about the doing of it by *announcing something wholly opposite*. What we maintain, and without fear of successful contradiction, is that every public utterance and act of John — who was "filled with the Holy Ghost *even from his mother's womb*" (Luke 1:15) — and every public and private utterance of the Lord Jesus, testifies the purpose for which He came into this world, and is in *perfect* harmony with that purpose.

"What our brother terms a "parallel truth" is not "truth" at all. It is *error*. And it is not "parallel" but is in direct conflict with the declared and admitted purpose for which God sent forth His Son. And we are sure this will be very evident to all who are desirous to know the truth of the matter, if they will but observe carefully the method by which our brother attempts to make room for his "parallel truth." To this end he appeals to the Parable of the Vineyard, and uses the words which our Lord, in that parable, puts into the mouth of the "Householder." We read that the Householder, when the time of the fruit drew near, sent servants to the husbandmen, "that they might receive the fruits of it"; but after those servants had been ill-treated and some of them even killed, the Householder "last of all sent unto them His Son, saying, *they will reverence My Son.*"

Having these words in mind, and intending to press them into his service, our brother ingeniously seeks to prepare the way by asking: "Has my reader ever heard one single true Christian contend that the Lord did not, in the determinate counsel of God, come to die? But, on the other hand, is that the whole truth? Is there not an equally true sense in which He came *not to die*, but *to be revered* as God's beloved Son, and welcomed with penitent faith *as the true King of Israel?*"

This subtle question is calculated to mislead. For the issue is *not* whether the Lord came into the

world “to be revered,” but whether, *having* come into the world to *die for sinners*, He went about telling His hearers that He had come to restore again the Kingdom to Israel, There is no question at all but that, *whatever the purpose of the Lord’s mission to His creatures*, they ought to have received Him with “reverence.” “Whether He came as the anointed Prophet, or as the anointed Priest, or as the anointed King, He was, in either case, entitled *to be revered*. Yet our brother asks us to accept the Householder’s words, “they will reverence My Son,” as proof that the Lord came into the world, not only to die for sinners, but to present Himself to Israel as claiming the earthly throne of David,

Our brother is, of course, aware that the words, “They will *reverence* My Son,” would not serve his purpose; so he adds to the argumentative question another clause as follows: “and to be welcomed with penitent faith as the true King of Israel.”

It is a primary rule governing inquiries of the sort we are engaged in that the *proof* must conform to the *allegation*. In this case the allegation contains two distinct clauses (1) that Christ came “to be revered,” and (2) that He came “to be welcomed with penitent faith as the true King of Israel.” But the proof corresponds to only *one* of these allegations (and not fully to that, as we shall show); and the particular clause of the allegation that is involved in our inquiry is the one to which the words cited from the parable of the Vineyard have no reference whatever.

And not only so, but it is evident upon even a casual reading, that the words, “they will reverence My Son,” do not at all express *the purpose* for which the Householder was sending forth His Son; but that those words merely express the natural expectation which a property holder would have that, even though his tenants had ill-treated the servants (bond slaves) whom he had previously sent, they would at least “reverence” (literally, “have respect for”) his *son*. In Lake’s account of the parable the intent quite plainly appears, the words being: “*It may be* they will reverence Him when they see Him” (Luke 20:13).

Does the parable of the Vineyard, then, prove anything to the point? We think it does; and especially when taken in connection with the parable immediately following — that of the Wedding Supper — and which forms part of the same discourse.

At the outset we call attention to the following facts:

- (1) that both parables have to do with the “Son”;
- (2) that the parable of the Wedding Supper is a parable of “the Kingdom of heaven,” whereas *that of the Vineyard is not*;
- (3) that in the parable of the Vineyard, God is represented (not as a *King* but) as a “Householder”; whereas in that of the Wedding Supper He is represented as “a certain KING.”

It is understood on all hands and fully agreed that God’s “Vineyard” is Israel (see Isaiah 5:1–7, with which the description of the parable tallies closely). Therefore, as far as this parable reaches historically, it does not bring us to the Kingdom of heaven. We have only God’s Vineyard (Israel), which He had so carefully cultivated, and from which He sought the “fruits.” Those “fruits” which He sought were, according to Isaiah 5:7, “judgment” and “righteousness”; but instead of “grapes,” He found “wild grapes,” as shown by the succeeding verses of Isaiah 5.

Now the point as to which we are inquiring is *the purpose for which God sent messengers to Israel*. Was that purpose in any way connected with setting up an earthly kingdom? Not at all. “He sent His servants to the husbandmen that they might *receive the fruits of it*.” But the husbandmen maltreated the servants (God’s prophets), beating some and killing others. “But last of all He sent unto them His Son, saying, They will *reverence* My Son” — that is, they will not treat Him as they treated previous messengers of lesser dignity. Obviously the words quoted do not indicate that the Son was sent to the Vineyard in order to receive “reverence”; for the fact plainly is that He came to receive *fruits*. Be it noted that He came on the business of His Father, “the Householder,” and *not to get for Himself* a throne or anything else. The idea that they would show Him reverence is purely incidental.

Translated into plain speech, the mission of God’s Son to Israel was similar in kind to that of the

prophets who preceded Him. The purpose of His mission was broadly the same as theirs, namely, to deliver to the people the message of the Lord their God. The parable of the Vineyard just as readily proves that the *prophets* offered to Israel the earthly throne as that Jesus Christ did so. In fact, the evidence of this parable, like all other evidence that bears on the matter at all, is *wholly against* the view our writer is attempting to sustain by appealing to it.

Passing on now to the parable of the Wedding Supper, we find very different conditions. The history of Israel in the flesh, as the acknowledged people of God, ended, as foretold in the parable of the Vineyard, by the putting to death of the "Son." The ending of the history of Israel in the flesh as God's acknowledged "people" on earth is followed *immediately* by "the Kingdom of heaven." In proof of this we have already cited volumes of evidence; and now the same fact is strongly witnessed in the parable of the Wedding Supper, which is introduced by the identifying words, "The Kingdom of heaven is like ..."

What, therefore, we find here foretold in these two prophetic parables is that, immediately following the death by violence of the Householder's Son at the hands of the custodians of the "Vineyard," comes an era in "which, according to our Lord's parable, we see a *King* preparing a wedding feast for His Son. It is a very telling fact, and it tells strongly against our brother's view, that not until the death of the "Son," is any mention made of a "King," but *immediately thereafter*, "the Kingdom of heaven," the "King," and the King's "Son," come prominently into view. What the parable gives us (and in the plainest way, so that none can well fail to see it) is a picture of *this present era of Gospel preaching* — the wedding invitation — sent to the Jews first (verses 3–6) and afterwards to the whole world.

It is a point of interest that the destruction of Jerusalem is foretold in *both* these parables.¹

The Rejected Stone

At the end of the parable of the Vineyard, the Lord spake some words to the Scribes and Pharisees which have an important bearing on our subject — words which show again just what it was that the rulers of Israel "rejected": "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The *Stone* which the builders *rejected*, the same is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?"

Here the Lord refers to Himself as the Foundation Stone of God's Salvation. As *such* He was "rejected." And in verse 44, He refers to Himself as that "Stumbling stone" of Isaiah 8:14, 15; confirming also the words of Simeon that He would be "set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel" (compare Paul's words in Romans 9:32, 33). The presentation of the earthly Kingdom would never have stumbled them; for they were eager for that. But they stumbled at the One Who came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

And in the same verse, Matthew 21:44, the Lord clearly describes how His *earthly* Kingdom will come, not by preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, but as a great Stone, crushing all opposition, as revealed in Nebuchadnezzar's vision.

It is striking indeed that the Scriptures to which even the most careful and conservative advocates of the postponement theory appeal, are found, when examined, to bear strong testimony against their views.

Christ's Last Entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1–5)

In connection with the parable of the Vineyard our brother appeals to the Lord's last entry into Jerusalem. Therefore we gladly turn to the record of that event, confident that it will fully support the truth we are presenting. In fact it seems to us that the events of the Lord's coming to Jerusalem,

1 For a further discussion of this parable see "After This," page 157.

there to undergo the sufferings and death of which He had been telling His disciples on the way, testify effectually against the postponement theory. And to begin with, this event (which was in partial fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9) occurred long after our friends — (or some of them, for they are not in agreement among themselves as to this) — tell us the kingdom offer had been rejected by the nation, and “withdrawn,” and that the kingdom was “in abeyance.”

The incident proves clearly that some of the people at least, indeed that “many” of them, were more than ready, even then, to accept the offer of the earthly kingdom (had any such offer been made), and to accept Jesus Himself as their King. Mark’s Gospel states that “many” hailed the Lord with the words, “Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord. Blessed be the Kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the Name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest” (Mark 11:9, 10). In Luke’s Gospel it is said that “the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; saying, Blessed be *the King* that cometh in the Name of the Lord: peace in heaven and glory in the highest” (Luke 19:37, 38). This acclamation of the “disciples,” in which the Lord was even saluted by the title “King,” bears out what is stated concerning their thoughts in verse 11 of the same chapter, namely: “He added and spake a parable because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because *they thought* that the Kingdom of God would immediately appear” (*i.e., be manifested*). This erroneous expectation persisted, and was expressed in the acts and acclamations of the “multitude of the disciples,” notwithstanding that the Lord had shown by the parable of verses 12–27, that He was going to heaven, *there* “to receive for Himself a Kingdom, and *to return.*”

In John’s Gospel we read that, “On the next day *much people* that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried, Hosanna! Blessed is *the King of Israel* “Who comes in the Name of the Lord” (John 12:12, 13).

Thus we see that there were many in the great crowd, gathered at Jerusalem to keep the Passover, who were eager to receive the Lord as their King, and were expecting Him to announce Himself as such. That attitude on their part gives great point to the fact that no offer of the kingdom, nor any hint of such thing, came from His lips. This fact alone ought to silence all efforts at supporting the postponement theory, for how could He have contradicted, by any word or act, His own positive statements that He had come to Jerusalem to suffer and die; and also the teaching of the parable He had just spoken?

And further we have the significant fact that, only a few days later, those same Pharisees who saw and heard all that transpired at His entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:39), were accusing Him before Pilate of “perverting the nation” and “saying that He Himself is Christ a King,” and that “He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place” (Luke 23:2, 5). Manifestly, had the Lord uttered a *single word* that could have been construed as a proclamation or suggestion that He was about to claim the throne, or would accept it, there would have been thousands of witnesses to prove the accusation. But there was no proof forthcoming. And be it noted that *anything which would prove today our friends’ theory would have proved then the accusation which the priests and Pharisees brought against the Lord before Pilate*. And this, as it seems to us, puts our friends in a serious position and the postponement theory in its *true light*. For the accusation which was brought against the Lord before Pilate, and the modern postponement theory, are virtually identical, inasmuch that what would prove the one would prove the other also; and conversely, what disproves the one equally disproves the other. Hence our Lord’s testimony before Pilate is a complete answer to this modern theory.

“The Faithful, and True “Witness”

Pilate heard the Lord’s own testimony touching this accusation, and he *believed it*. “And Pilate asked Him, saying, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And He answered him and said, Thou sayest it,” which is equivalent to saying “Yes.” For He surely was and is the King of Israel. But did He then claim the throne? Did He then offer the earthly dominion to Israel (which would have meant the

breaking of Caesar's yoke)? Certainly not; for, according to the fuller account given in John's Gospel, the Lord declared to Pilate *the character* of the kingdom which He had come to set up on earth. Let us have the complete record of that "good confession" which our Lord witnessed before Pontius Pilate: "Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus and said unto Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it to thee of Me?" — For He was entitled to face the witnesses, if there were any — but "Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me: what hast Thou done?" So there were no witnesses forthcoming to support the accusation, and therefore Pilate received the Lord's own testimony which was given in these words:

"Jesus answered, 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*" (*i.e.*, at that time then present) "is My kingdom *not from hence*" (John 18:33–36).

Here is a clear and simple statement to the effect that the kingdom which Christ came to introduce was "*not of this world*," being in fact "the Kingdom of *heaven*." And the character of that kingdom is shown by the words, "If My kingdom were of this world then would My servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews." It is a strictly *non-militant* kingdom, that charge was finally dismissed, there are found among the Lord's own people those who (however little they may be aware that such is the bearing of their assertions, and however free they may be from really thinking such a thing in their hearts) are actually reviving that baseless charge. For, no matter how carefully it may be phrased, the statement that Christ proclaimed to Israel nationally the earthly dominion, necessarily involves the assumption that He proposed the overthrow of Caesar's throne. In other words, it is precisely the false accusation which was lodged against our Lord at Caesar's judgment seat, and which was dismissed by Caesar's representative.

But we turn now to the use which our brother makes of the incident of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem. In attempting to avoid the force of the fact that John the Baptist, who gave many titles to the Lord, *never once spoke of Him as the "King,"* our brother asks more argumentative questions, thus: "But, we ask, does not the announcement of a kingdom as at hand involve the King of that kingdom being also at hand?" To which we might say, "Yes; but it does not tell us whether the kingdom so announced was '*of this world*' or '*of heaven*,'" which is the point inquired of. We quote further: "And who could that King be? The kingdom is to be discerned *in the King* (as when it is said 'the Kingdom of God is among you' — Luke 17:21) for *He* the King was there. Nor do we lack the simplest, clearest Scripture to answer this. "When the Lord made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, as told us in Matthew 21, it is written, '*But all this came to pass that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold thy King cometh* to such an extent that there could be no fighting even to prevent the delivering of the King Himself to His earthly enemies. The meaning of this is plain, as is also its decisive bearing upon our inquiry.

Continuing the questioning:

"Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a King then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King.² To this end was I born, and *for this cause came I into the world*, that I should *hear witness unto the truth*. Every one that is of the truth *heareth My Voice*."

Here again is a statement which is unmistakably clear. Christ is indeed "a King"; and to that end He became a Man. But *then* was not the time of His earthly rule; for He "came into the world" not to receive a kingdom, but to *deliver the message of God*, to bear the final and complete "witness to the truth" of God. This should satisfy us, seeing that it satisfied even Pontius Pilate; as the next words show.

2 According to Bagster's literal translation this reads: "Thou sayest (it)."

“Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth? And when he had said this he went out again unto the Jews and saith unto them, *I find in Him no fault at all.*”

This judgment of Caesar’s tribunal, dismissing all charge against the Lord of having sought or proposed earthly rule for Himself, or of having any political designs contrary to Caesar’s authority, ought to settle the matter, seeing the judgment of Caesar’s representative was *based upon the Lord’s own testimony*, “Who is “the faithful Witness.” How strange then is it that now, more than eighteen hundred years after the day when *unto thee, meek and sitting on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.*”

The only comment we would offer upon this, is that our brother evidently seeks to make it appear by these questions that the point of the inquiry is whether or not the King was here presented in Person. But it should not be necessary to say that that is not the question at all. We are not inquiring whether or not Jesus of Nazareth was and is the true King of Israel; but whether or not He *at His first coming offered* or proposed “to restore again the kingdom to Israel.” And we think enough has been said to show that the incidents of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem add further and weighty proof to the volumes already cited that the Lord made no such offer or announcement, but quite the contrary.

As to the prophecy of Zechariah, which is cited by both Matthew and John, it is a noticeable and significant fact that *but part* of Zechariah’s prophecy is quoted by the evangelists as having its fulfillment at the Lord’s entry into Jerusalem immediately before His betrayal and crucifixion. The whole verse reads: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; *behold, thy King cometh unto thee.* He is just and having Salvation; *lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass*” (Zechariah 9:9). Of this verse only the parts printed above in italics are quoted in Matthew (or John) as being then fulfilled. It was not then the time for the daughter of Zion to “rejoice greatly,” nor for the daughter of Jerusalem to “shout”; but rather the time for weeping and lamenting; as the Lord said, a few days later: “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children” (Luke 23:28; see also Luke 19:41–44). Nor was it the time for their King to come “having salvation” (or victory); for those words too are omitted; and this is most significant. What was then approaching was the *destruction of Jerusalem*, as foretold by the Lord at that very time; to be followed by the down-treading of that city until “the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:20–24). Manifestly, the “salvation” which Zechariah foretells, means the salvation of Israel nationally. So that here again is proof that the offer of the earthly kingdom was not in view at that time. ³

3 For this valuable suggestion as to the significance of the omission by Matthew of part of Zechariah’s prophecy I am indebted to a brother, a servant of the Lord, who once held the postponement theory but became convinced that it was unscriptural by reading the writer’s booklet on the Kingdom of Heaven.

17

“AT HAND” — SIGNS AND MIRACLES

Those who maintain the view we are discussing have found no little difficulty in reconciling the words “the Kingdom of heaven is *at hand*” with their theory, seeing that, if the *earthly* kingdom were meant, the words “at hand” would not convey the truth of the matter. For, however much these words may bear stretching, they certainly cannot be squared with the idea that another long dispensation was to begin, run its entire course, and end in a flood of judgments — “tribulation and wrath” — including the period of Jacob’s trouble, ere the Kingdom proclaimed as then “at hand” would actually appear. Nevertheless, our friends think to find some help as regards this difficulty in the fact that Paul wrote in Romans 13:12 “the day is *at hand*” — meaning, of course, the expected “day” of the Lord’s return for His people, which will end the “night” of His absence. Furthermore, in James 5:8 we have the statement that “The coming of the Lord draweth nigh”; and in 1 Peter 4:7 is the warning that “The end of all things is at hand.” These Scriptures, however, afford no help to the idea that when John and the Lord Jesus announced the Kingdom of heaven to be “at hand,” it was a very different kingdom which was really at hand, whereas the Kingdom they actually announced was *not* at hand. That is what our friends are attempting to maintain.

The Scriptures quoted are from Epistles written to saints of this era a number of years after the Lord ascended into heaven. They express, and indeed were *intended* to express, the outlook of the saints throughout this present age. It is one of the foundation principles of the premillennial hope of the Church that the Lord’s return for His people has been *always imminent* — always “at hand.” These Scriptures help to establish the truth that *the very next event for the waiting Church* is, and ever has been, the Coming of the Lord. They are the rock upon which we build our assurance that there will be *no intervening dispensation* — not even the brief “tribulation” period — between the Church at all stages of her history, and the Lord’s return.

It follows that the words, “the Kingdom of heaven is at hand,” forbid the idea that the *earthly* kingdom was here intended; for those words are inconsistent with the withdrawal of *that* kingdom, and the bringing in of an era and a kingdom of wholly different character.

It is appropriate to call attention at this point to another of the many inconsistencies involved in the postponement theory. Our friends maintain (and it is fundamental to their case) that the expression “The Kingdom of heaven is at hand” was an offer to set up the earthly kingdom *at that time*, in response to the (supposed) “widespread expectation” of the people of Israel; and that it was intended so to be understood. But, in order to escape from the consequences of the fact that the earthly kingdom was not set up at that time, they argue that “at hand” may be taken to mean “in a few thousand years.” Surely consistency demands that they shall adhere to one meaning or the other. They cannot have it first one way and then the opposite, as the exigencies of the case they are vainly trying to defend may require.

In other words: if our friends claim that the words “at hand” in the announcement made by John and the Lord Jesus, meant after the expiration of a long dispensation which was not yet even begun, then it is manifest that they abandon the position that the earthly kingdom was offered to that generation of Israelites. If, on the other hand, they maintain that the words “at hand” mean what they *seem* to mean, and what they have been always taken to mean until this theory sprung up, then they must

abandon the idea that it was the *earthly* kingdom of Israel's national greatness that was proclaimed at that time.

Signs and Miracles

A favorite argument with the advocates of the view we are discussing is based on the assumption that the miracles wrought by our Lord and His apostles were "the normal incidents of the earthly kingdom." One writer asks: "If the Kingdom of heaven is now present, where are the miracles which are its normal characteristics?" And we are confidently assured that "every announcement of the Kingdom of heaven, whether by the Lord Himself or by His messengers, was accompanied by beneficent works of power, *of a character in harmony with that announcement*" (italics in original); and that these works were not "mere credentials at the introduction, but continued the same to the end. They *characterized the Kingdom*, when He, the King, was here, as they will again, for they are called 'the powers of the coming age'" (Hebrews 6:5).

This statement comes into direct collision with several facts of Scripture. The statement about "every announcement of the Kingdom" being accompanied by miracles, clashes with the recorded fact that "John, did no miracle" (John 10:41). And the concluding statements clash with the facts that the Apostles wrought miracles of healing and raising the dead many years *after* the Lord ascended into heaven! Those who are logical and consistent, and who carry to its legitimate conclusion the error we are now combating, locate the change of dispensation in Act 28; and they use this very argument, pointing to Paul's miracles of healing recorded in Acts 28, as proving that the "Kingdom dispensation" was still at that time in existence. Thus they who hold this extreme view cut us off, not only from the ministry of the Lord and the twelve, but from that of Paul prior to Acts 28; and not only from the Gospels, but also from the Acts, and from all the Epistles excepting only the "prison Epistles" of Paul. Thus they make "the Church which is His body," mentioned in Ephesians 1:23, a different Church from that mentioned in Matthew 16:16, and in the Acts, Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, etc.; and do away entirely with baptism and the Lord's Supper. And our brother can take no exception to this so long as he relies upon the argument we are discussing; for *they* follow the argument to its legitimate end, whereas *he* merely makes a convenience of it.

But this argument would prove also that the time of Elijah and of Elisha was the Kingdom of heaven; for they wrought miracles freely — Elisha especially. Thus the argument is shown to be utterly worthless. When, however, we turn away from human explanations and listen to the explanation which Scripture gives concerning the miracles of healing, the matter becomes perfectly clear. We are not left to the speculations of men as to the reason why the Lord wrought miracles, for the Scripture tells us plainly that He did those works in; order "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet saying, *Himself* took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses" (Matthew 8:16, 17). It is highly significant that the portion of Isaiah's prophecy here referred to and quoted is that portion which *follows the "John the Baptist" chapter* (Isaiah 40), and which speaks of Christ's coming as the suffering "Servant" of Jehovah — a portion in which the earthly kingdom is not referred to. Here we read prophecies of the miracles which He would perform, and of the fact that He would "preach the Gospel to the poor" (Isaiah 61:1, 2, quoted and applied by our Lord in Luke 4:18, 19). Thus His "mighty works" were in fulfillment of prophecy, whereby He was personally accredited to the people of Israel as having come to be "a light to the *Gentiles*" and God's "Salvation unto *the end of the earth*" (Isaiah 49:5, 6, etc.).

The Lord's reply to John's question, "Art Thou He that should come?" forcibly confirms this. For, instead of giving a direct reply, the Lord said: "Go and show John again the things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk," etc. (Matthew 11:4–6). That was the most convincing answer. For those works *bore witness to Him* that the Father had sent Him (John 5:36; 9:3, 4; 11:15; 14:11; 15:24; Romans 1:4, etc.). The Scriptures repeatedly declare that the works He did accredited Him as the One sent of God. The idea that they have anything to do with the earthly kingdom is purely a figment of the human imagination, which the Scriptures thoroughly refute.

The Lord's words recorded in Matthew 9:6, and also in Mark and Luke, shed light upon this point.

He there expressly stated that His purpose in healing the paralytic was that “Ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth *to forgive sins*.” Let us take note of this. The Lord here declares that the miracles which He wrought were — not the sign of the earthly kingdom, but — the proof of His power to forgive sins! In other words, they were the sign of the beginning of the age of *grace*. When He comes to claim the earthly throne He will offer no proofs of His title and will ask no favor of any; for He will come with irresistible power. But when He came as a “Servant,” He took the lowly place of *seeking the sinner’s acceptance of the pardon and life which He offers freely to all*, and using His power to save from the results of sin.

As to the miracles wrought by the Apostles — (which were long after what our friends call “the Kingdom of heaven” had been “withdrawn” and “postponed,” as they say) — the Scriptures are equally clear. The Lord promised that “these signs shall follow them that believe” (Mark 16:17); and they did follow, so long as, in God’s wisdom, was deemed necessary for His purposes; for the record continues: “And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and *confirming the word with signs following*.”

Our friends say that the signs and wonders wrought by the Lord and His disciples were the marks of the earthly kingdom; but the Scripture says they were given in confirmation of *the word of the Gospel*. So that, in this matter, as in every other branch of the subject, the Scriptures are directly opposed to the postponement theory and to the arguments by which its advocates seek to support it. As regards the signs and wonders wrought at the beginning of this era of grace, although our friends state that those signs were indications of the presence of the earthly kingdom, they are at a loss to explain how the signs continued for a *whole generation* after the kingdom had been (according to their theory) withdrawn. The Scripture says, however, that the signs served as a confirmation of the Gospel of God’s salvation, whereby the *forgiveness of sins* is proclaimed. In other words, they pertained directly to *this dispensation*.

And with this agrees the testimony of Hebrews 2:2–4, where we read of the salvation “so great” which “at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him, *God also hearing witness with signs and wonders*,” etc. Nothing could be clearer.

Furthermore, just as the Lord, when He came preaching salvation through repentance and faith, wrought miracles to attest the Gospel, so He gave the Apostles power to work miracles in attestation of their Apostleship. Paul appealed to this as proof that *he* was an Apostle of Jesus Christ, equally with the twelve, saying: “For in nothing am I behind the very chiefest Apostle, though I be nothing. Truly *the signs* of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in *signs and wonders and mighty deeds*” (2 Corinthians 12:11, 12).

He refers also, in his Epistle to the Romans, to the things which Christ wrought by him to make the *Gentiles* obedient by word and *deed* “through *mighty* signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God” (Romans 15:18, 19). Here we have *mighty* signs and wonders accompanying the bringing of God’s Gospel to the *Gentiles*. Moreover, we find miracles, healings, and other *signs* in the Church at Corinth.

Again Paul writes to the Galatians, asking: “He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and *worketh miracles among you*, doeth he it by works of the law, or by *the hearing of faith*?”

Thus we have a full body of evidence that the working of miracles, signs, and wonders marked — not the earthly kingdom, but — the era of “*the hearing of faith*.”

Here is a very significant fact. According to the theory we are examining, the ministry of the Apostle Paul is in *direct contrast* with that of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of a much higher character. Volumes have been written to exhibit this imaginary contrast, and to show that Paul’s ministry brings those who receive it into a higher sphere of blessing than that into which the Lord Jesus brought His disciples. Paul, by this theory, is made the agent of the era of grace. Yet here we find him working precisely the same miracles as the Lord and the twelve, and which our friends declare are the ordinary accompaniments of the earthly kingdom. So, as usual, when we examine what is advanced as evi-

dence in support of the postponement theory, it is found to be directly to the contrary.

18

GOD'S PROMISES TO ISRAEL

We frequently meet with the idea that God was *bound* to offer the earthly throne to Israel, because He had promised it to them; and this supposed obligation of God toward Israel is sometimes referred to under the legal phrase “contractual relations.” “What then were God’s “contractual relations” with Israel? And did those relations obligate Him to offer the earthly throne to the nation Israel at the first coming of Christ?

There are various promises made *by* God to or concerning Israel. Some of these promises relate to blessings, and some relate to chastening. But we are not aware of *any* promise of God to offer, or even to announce beforehand to them, the setting up of David’s throne. There is a definite promise of God to *David* (not to Israel) and to David’s Son, that He would establish his throne forever. In Psalm 89:34–37 is a record of God’s oath to David, in which occur the words: “His Seed shall endure forever, and His throne as the sun before Me.” But this is a covenant *with David* and *This “Seed.”* It carries with it no obligation to consult the nation, nor to offer or announce the kingdom to them. Nor does it *set any time* for the fulfillment of the promise. And, on this point (which is the essence, of the matter), we must bear in mind the Lord’s words to His disciples, that the *time* of restoring again the kingdom to Israel was a thing which was *not for them to know*, seeing that the Father had placed it in His own power (Acts 1:7). That word alone overthrows the idea that the earthly kingdom was due at Christ’s first coming.

It is evident that *if the time had come* for the earthly kingdom to be restored to Israel, then God was, indeed, obligated to fulfill His word; and in that case, *He would have done it*, notwithstanding any opposition by the people to accepting the earthly dominion, of which opposition, by the way, there appears not the slightest trace. Hence, the fact that God did not at that time “restore again the Kingdom to Israel,” is *positive proof* that the time had not come, and that He was under no obligation at that time to restore it.

But there is one promise, and a promise of towering importance, which God had made to Israel. That promise was made in the most distinct way, and in the most explicit terms. It is as follows:

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a NEW COVENANT with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:31–34; quoted in Hebrews 8:8–12, and 10:16, 17).

Here is a promise of the most definite character. It was made *only* to “the house of Israel and the house of Judah.” There is no hint or suggestion that Gentiles were to have any share at all in that

“New Covenant,” much less was there any intimation that Gentiles were to share all its marvelous blessings on precisely the same terms as Jews. That was a “mystery” which it was reserved to the Lord Himself to make known; and it was first openly declared when He spoke the parable of the wheat and the tares and announced the great fact that “the field,” in which the seed of the Gospel was to be sown, “is *the world*.”

Upon examining the terms of the Covenant foretold by Jeremiah we find three great things which God pledged Himself to do for the people who should come under that Covenant. The one that stands first in importance to sinful men is *the forgiveness of sins* — “their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 10:17). That promise of the “New Covenant” is the one to which the chief prominence is given in the New Testament Scriptures in connection with the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the “Mediator” and “Surety” of the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:6; 9:6; 7:22), and also the Covenant Victim (called the “Testator” in Hebrews 9:16), in whose blood the Covenant was sealed.

There is no need to prove that this promise to Israel of the New Covenant was the promise which the Son of God came to fulfill. The first chapter of those Scriptures which are aptly called “The New Testament” (*i.e.*, New Covenant) bears the strongest evidence to that fact, and almost every subsequent page confirms it. The Name “Jesus” is the Lord’s New Covenant Name; for it pledges Him to “save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). That Name, which was given Him ere He drew His first breath as a Man, bound Him with cords even to the horns of the altar as the Sacrifice for the sins of “His people.” In the words “His people” we find the fulfillment of the promise “they shall be My people.”

It is a remarkable thing indeed, that with a promise so definite as this, with which the opening words of the New Testament correspond in such a striking way, it should have been taken for granted by so many eminent Bible teachers, that the only promise made to Israel had to do with their earthly empire as a nation, and that the coming of Christ must have had that object immediately in view.

A further convincing evidence that Christ came as “the Messenger of the Covenant,” Who, according to Malachi 3:1, was to come suddenly to His temple, preceded by that other “messenger” who was to “prepare the way” before Him, is seen in the ministry of John when he baptized those who came to him “confessing their sins.” They were thus “prepared for the Lord,” “Who alone has “power on earth to forgive sins.” And so His path led, from the moment of His birth, to the cross, where He bore His peoples’ sins in His own body (1 Peter 2:24), and in anticipation of which He appointed the cup to be drunk by them in remembrance of Him, saying: “Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the *New Covenant*, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:27, 28).

The *second* provision of the promised New Covenant was to the effect that God would put His laws in the hearts of His New Covenant people, instead of writing them upon tables of stone. This foretells one of the striking characteristics of this age of grace, upon which we have dwelt in the foregoing pages, namely, that obedience to Christ’s commandments is “from the heart” (Romans 6:17), being prompted by *love alone* (even as He said: “If ye *love Me*, keep My commandments”); and is not enforced by penalties for disobedience.

This feature of the New Covenant is fulfilled by the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit, as clearly pointed out by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:1–11, where the Old Covenant is shown to be that of the letter “engraven in stones,” and bringing condemnation and death; whereas the New Covenant is that “of the SPIRIT,” bringing righteousness and life. And in this connection Paul refers to the ministry of the New Covenant as something “written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables (tablets) of stone, but in fleshy tablets *of the heart*” (2 Corinthians 3:3). The significance of this is that God has not only forgiven the sins of His New Covenant people, but He also has done a work *in their hearts* as the result of which they have an inward prompting to obedience, rendering legal compulsions unnecessary. “For the love of God is shed abroad *in our hearts* by the Holy Ghost, Who is given to us” (Romans 5:5).

Therefore, this *second* promise of the New Covenant, which God declared He would make with the

house of Israel, is fulfilled in the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, Whose coming was announced by John the Baptist in the accomplishment of his ministry, as the herald of this dispensation of the New Covenant — the Covenant of grace and truth.

The *third* prominent feature of the New Covenant, as promised through Jeremiah, was that *all* the people of that Covenant should *know the Lord* — “from the least of them to the greatest of them.” This points clearly to the fact of conversion, or new birth, whereby a believing sinner comes to a real knowledge of the Lord by faith in Him as his personal Saviour. As Paul said to the Galatians: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ”; and then refers to this new birth as a coming to *know* the Lord, saying: “Howbeit then, when ye *knew not God*, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, *after that ye have known God*”:

To know the Lord, then, is to be born again, becoming a child of God, and receiving God's free gift of *eternal life* in Jesus Christ. This clearly appears by the Lord's own words: “And this is *life eternal*, that they might *know Thee*, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

Briefly, then, the “better promises” of that “better Covenant” whereof “He (Christ) is the Mediator” (Hebrews 8:6) were (1) the forgiveness of sins, (2) the work of God's Spirit in the hearts of believers, and (3) the gift of eternal life by a new birth. Those promises are fulfilled in this present age of grace, through the death and resurrection of Christ, for which purpose He came into the world, as definitely recorded in the opening chapters of the Gospels (Matthew in particular) and as announced by His forerunner, whose ministry prepared the way of the Lord.

Entering the Kingdom. The New Birth.

It was necessary, if the postponement theory is to be upheld, that an effort be made to do away with those passages which, as our brother frankly concedes, “speak so strongly of the new birth being needful for entry into the Kingdom of God.” And our brother attempts to do this by the assumption that “the Kingdom *as now going on*” is in a different condition to that contemplated by the Lord's words in Matthew 5:20, and John 3:3. Here again we have assumption given us instead of proof; and in this case the matter assumed is the very thing that is to be proved, namely, that the “Kingdom of heaven,” in Matthew 5:20, is a different thing to “the Kingdom of heaven” in Matthew 13 and later chapters, and is so different that what the Lord said *without any qualification whatever* in Matthew 5:20 would *not be true at all* of the Kingdom of heaven of which He spoke later on. And this assumption we are asked to make, notwithstanding that the Lord continued to all appearances speaking of the *same thing* “the Kingdom of heaven” — without giving the slightest indication that the term had completely changed its meaning. But it is very easy to demolish this argument. The Lord spoke in Matthew 5:20 of the righteousness required for entering the Kingdom; and our brother concedes that this is equivalent to the new birth. Now obviously it does not suffice, in order to escape the force of this Scripture, to say that the Kingdom of heaven *as now going on* is in a different “*condition*” to that contemplated by the Lord when He declared the truth recorded in Matthew 5:20. The Lord has not made His statement to be true of the Kingdom of heaven when in a certain condition, and not true when it is in some other condition; and it is sheer presumption for us to add to His words. As regards the meaning of Matthew 5:20 it matters nothing at all whether the *Kingdom of heaven* contemplated by the Lord in Matthew 5:20 is different in “*condition*” to the *Kingdom of heaven* contemplated in the parables of Matthew 13, which our brother concedes to be pictures of the Kingdom “*as now going on*.” What our Lord said was “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall *in no case* enter into the Kingdom of heaven.” In the face of such a strong statement as this shall we listen to one who says that in *some* cases unconverted persons, mere professors, and even children of the devil (“*tares*”) shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven? What does this make of the positive words of the Lord?

But the case is much stronger than this. For our brother, referring to the Lord's words to Nicodemus in John 3, says that this is a “chapter which, as we all agree, reveals the *conditions ruling during this present time*.” Our brother here parts company sharply with those bolder and more consistent advocates of the postponement theory who consign John 3:16 and all, to the “*Jews*” of some

other era than this. But no amount of hedging will save John 3 to us, if the postponement theory be accepted even in its most conservative form. For note that this conservative writer says that the Lord's words to Nicodemus reveal "the conditions *ruling during this present time.*" This concedes that the "Kingdom of God" which exists *now* can be entered *only by the new birth.* Therefore, according to our friend, the Lord was at that time announcing *two* distinct Kingdoms, one being a "Kingdom of *heaven*" which can only be entered by a new birth, but which He was about to withdraw and which is *not* "now going on"; the other being the Kingdom of *God*, which also can be entered only by a new birth, which Kingdom *is* now going on. And, besides this, to add further to the hopeless confusion, we have *still another*, "Kingdom of *heaven*" which Kingdom *is* "now going on," and which can be entered even by children of the devil. This surely is bewildering in the extreme. To think that we have in this era of "the simplicity which is in Christ," and when the truths of God are revealed to "babes," both a Kingdom of *heaven*, which everyone in Christendom is in, and also a Kingdom of *God*, which contains only those who have been born again; and also the announcement of another Kingdom of heaven, which has been "withdrawn" and "postponed." Small wonder is it that the ideas of the people of God concerning His present Kingdom are in a chaotic state. And small wonder, too, that so many are expressing deep thankfulness for *something they can understand*, and for being helped to see that they have to do with but *one* Kingdom — not three — and that "the Kingdom of heaven," or "Kingdom of God" which the Lord, at the beginning of His ministry said He was about to introduce, is the very same Kingdom which He actually *did* introduce by His death and resurrection, and by sending "the Promise of His Father" — the Holy Spirit.

One more Scripture will complete the proof of what we are here asserting. According to our brother and his school, the Lord, by His parables of Matthew 13, brought into view a different Kingdom of heaven from that He had announced previously; and this new "Kingdom of heaven" was one into which mere professors, children of the devil, and others, freely enter. At a later time (and in fact when the Lord was about going to Jerusalem to die there) the disciples asked Him "Who is greatest in the Kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:1). In reply the Lord called a little child and set him in the midst of them, and before replying to their question He *reaffirmed that it was necessary to be born again* in order to "enter into the Kingdom of *heaven.*" He then answered their question by telling them that the one who humbled himself as that little child was greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. We quote the well-known words:

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall *not enter into* the Kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of heaven."

This is clear proof that the condition of entrance into the Kingdom whereof the Lord was *then* speaking was *precisely the same* as that of entrance into the Kingdom whereof He spoke in Matthew 5:20.

Furthermore, by comparing this passage with Matthew 19:14, and with the corresponding passages of other Gospels (Mark 10:14 and Luke 18:16), it is made perfectly clear that the "Kingdom of heaven" mentioned in Matthew, and the "Kingdom of God" mentioned in the other Gospels are one and the same.

Therefore, in the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ we have, as regards this present age, but one Kingdom; and that is a Kingdom which is entered only by the new birth. The boundaries of that Kingdom are purely *spiritual*; for though *in* the world it is not *of* the world. Hence a child of the Kingdom may be in intimate family relations, or social relations, or business relations, with children of the devil. For Satan also has a kingdom and children in this world. But God's children are in *His* Kingdom, because they are subject to *His* laws and do His will (Matthew 7:21; 12:50; Ephesians 6:6); whereas the children of the devil, and the children of men, are in another kingdom, for they are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

19

ORIGIN OF THE POSTPONEMENT THEORY

Those who have been instrumental in spreading the postponement theory sometimes refer, in support of their views, to the writings of J. N. Darby, William Kelly, F. W. Grant, and others, now with the Lord, to whose labors the saints of the present generation owe an immense debt. Therefore, we have been at pains to examine the writings of those true and faithful servants of Christ in order to see to what extent, if any, they lend support to the theory we are now discussing. What we have found is that the writings of those men furnish abundant evidence that, if they were still among us, they would oppose as strongly as we do the principal features of that theory, especially the grievous doctrine that the words of the Lord Jesus are “law and not grace,” and are not for the members of His own Body.

It is, of course, true of the writings of those men, as of all merely human writings, that they contain errors and imperfections, which it is for us to discern and to correct by the infallible Word of God. But the fact that such are found in their writings does not in any wise lessen the value of the important truth which they brought forth from God’s treasure; nor should it lessen our esteem for men whom the Lord so honored and used. Moreover, it is easy to account for the errors to which we refer, and which our modern expositors have capitalized. To Mr. Darby and those associated with him fell the great task (and well did they accomplish it, according to the grace given them) of distinguishing the *true church or assembly* of God from the professing churches of apostate Christendom.

In the accomplishment of that exceedingly important task it became necessary for them to point out that the parables of the Kingdom of heaven, spoken by the Lord, gave no support at all to the idea that God contemplated the presence of unconverted persons *in His churches*, much less did He contemplate the presence there of “the children of the wicked one” (Matthew 13:38). The idea had been industriously propagated by the “clergy” of the professing churches that, because the parables spoke of “tares” among the wheat, of bad as well as good fish in the net, of “foolish as well as wise virgins, etc., we were therefore to expect to find children of the devil and unconverted “professors” in the assemblies of God. That idea, though glaringly contradictory to the Scripture, had become the faith of nominal Christendom; and the interest which the “clergy” had in maintaining it is obvious.

In combating that mischievous error, Mr. Darby and his co-laborers pointed out that the parables spoken by the Lord did not refer to the *Church*, but were expressly parables of “the Kingdom of heaven,” and that they were uttered for the purpose of telling what that Kingdom would be “like” during this age.

Thus it fell out that, in freeing the true Church from the reproach of harboring as “members” those who are dead in their sins — aliens and enemies of God by wicked works — our departed brethren unhappily left that reproach attached to the Kingdom of heaven; whereas, in fact, it properly belongs no more to the latter than to the former.

Therefore, we are but continuing the good work begun by those departed servants of Christ, in showing that men who are dead in sins — unpardoned sinners and unreconciled enemies of God — are no more “in” the Kingdom of heaven than they are “in” the Church of God. In fact, if the writers we have mentioned are to be accepted as “authorities” (which they themselves would be the last to

claim) we need not go outside their own writings to find the clearest possible assertions of the truth that *only* those who are born again by the Word and Spirit of God enter into the Kingdom of heaven. Nevertheless it must be admitted that, in expounding the parables and in attempting to explain some of the more obscure details thereof, those writers of the past generation did fall into certain errors and did make use of certain unguarded expressions, whereof advantage has been taken in propagating the postponement theory. And this, we protest, is most unfair to those departed saints, inasmuch as their writings, taken as a whole, contain far more that could be quoted in refutation, of that theory than could be quoted in support of it. And this we purpose to show, not only in vindication of the truth of God, but in vindication also of men who dearly loved the truth, and who "bought" it at a high price in personal sacrifice.

Mr. Darby's Views of the Kingdom

Mr. Darby's views regarding the Kingdom of heaven are found in his "Synopsis" of Matthew's Gospel. There is no need to present them at length, since a general summary, with a few quotations, will suffice to show what were that writer's thoughts on the points we are discussing. What Mr. Darby chiefly emphasizes in his comments is the great fact that the Gospels present *God Himself*, coming in Person among men, condescending in amazing grace to be associated even with the worst of men, manifesting Himself in words and works, and enduring even the contradiction of sinners against Himself. "He had governed a people on earth. He had given them His law, and bestowed on them, by means of the prophets, a growing light, which announced as nearer and nearer His coming, Who should *tell them all things from God*. But the presence of *God Himself*, a Man amongst men, changed the position of everything" (page 5).

Here we have a striking recognition, and most forcibly expressed, of the fact that "God manifest in the flesh" came as the *Prophet*, to "tell all things from God," and not as *King* to claim earthly sovereignty. Further Mr. Darby says: "First, the great subject, the dominant fact is that the perfect *Light* is manifested: God reveals *Himself*. But this light is revealed in *Love*, the other essential Name of God" (page 6).

Passages like this — showing a deep and spiritual apprehension of the fact that the Gospels reveal God manifested in purest grace among men — might be multiplied. And we all can see for ourselves that Matthew's Gospel does indeed, as Mr. Darby says, introduce us *at once* to Jehovah Saviour, the One "Whose pre-given Name committed Him to the work of saving His people from their sins — to Immanuel, God with sinful men, come to do, in grace, "what the law could not do."

Nowhere in Mr. Darby's writings (so far as our acquaintance with them goes) have we found any countenance for the unseemly thought that the Son of God came among men to negotiate, as it were, their support to His claim for an earthly throne, or to seek their acceptance of Himself as an earthly king. Much less do we find any support for, but on the contrary a complete refutation of, the destructive idea that the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere, were "law and not grace," and are to be relegated to another epoch than ours, and to another people than ourselves.

Thus Mr. Darby says:

"The character of the Kingdom is announced in the Sermon on the Mount, as well as that (*i.e.*, the character) of *the persons who should have part in it, the Father's Name being withal revealed*" (page 51).

"There is another principle that characterizes this discourse, and that is *the introduction of the Father's Name*. Jesus puts His disciples in connection *with His Father as their Father*. He reveals to them *the Father's Name* in order that they may be *in relation with Him* and that they may *act in accordance with that which He is*" (page 54).

"All these principles of conduct are given as *characterizing the Kingdom*, and as the *conditions of entrance into it*" (page 54).

One of the excellencies of such comments as these is that the Lord's people, even the most simple-minded, can see for themselves that they are according to the Scripture. Indeed it requires human ingenuity of a high order to confuse and pervert a matter which *the Word of God* makes so plain.

Let it be observed that the passages quoted from Mr. Darby's writings, and others to follow (which are but a few out of many) oppose utterly the idea that "the Kingdom of heaven," which the Lord announced as at hand, and of which He spoke in the Sermon on the Mount, was a different Kingdom, or a different "aspect" of the Kingdom, from that spoken of by the same title in Matthew 13 and subsequent chapters. We continue our quotations:

"Thus, in the Sermon on the Mount, we find the description of that which was suitable to the Kingdom of heaven, and even the assurance of *reward in heaven* for those who should suffer on earth for His sake. This description as we have seen is essentially *the character of Christ Himself*." 1 "It is thus that a heavenly Spirit expresses itself on earth. If the Lord taught these things it is because He loved them, because He *was* them and delighted in them. Being the God of *heaven*, filled as Man with the Spirit without measure, His heart was perfectly in unison with a *heaven* that He perfectly knew. Consequently therefore He concludes the character which His disciples were to assume by these words: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." All their conduct was to be in reference to their Father in *heaven*" (page 57).

This is a true testimony, and we commend it to our readers, not because Mr. Darby said it, but because it is true. Incidentally the recurrence of the word "heaven" in the Sermon on the Mount will suggest the reason why the Kingdom, whose subjects are governed voluntarily by these heavenly laws, is called "the Kingdom of *heaven*"

Commenting on the words, "Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world," Mr. Darby says:

"The disciples are brought into *relationship with the Father individually* — the second great principle of the discourse, *the consequence of the Son being there* — and yet a more excellent thing is set before them than their position of testimony for the Kingdom, They were to *act in grace*, even as their Father acted, and their prayer should be for an order of things in which all would correspond morally to the character and will of their Father. 'Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come,' is that all should answer to the character of the Father, that all should be the effect of His power, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' is perfect obedience" (page 59).

In many like passages Mr. Darby makes it plain that the quality of *grace* was manifested in all the Lord's life and words. It was *Himself*, though come in infinite grace that the Jews "rejected" — not the offer of an earthly kingdom, which offer He never made nor hinted at. The Son of David dispensed "the sure mercies of David," fulfilling all that is of *grace* enfolded in the promises concerning David's Seed, before the throne is set up for judgment and earthly rule in power. "Thus," says Mr. Darby, "we have *grace to sinners*, but (grace rejected) now comes at once a higher proof (in the raising of Jairus' daughter), that Messiah Jehovah was there and there *in grace*" (page 88).

Concerning the Parable of the Sower, Mr. Darby says:

"The Lord is here presented as commencing a work which is independent of all former relation between God and men, bearing with Him the Seed of the Word, which He sows in the heart by His ministry.

"This parable does not speak as a similitude of the Kingdom, though the word sown was the word of the Kingdom, but of the great elementary principle of *the service of Christ* in the universality of its application, and as it was realized in *His own Person and service*, while on earth, and after He was gone, though fuller subjects of grace might then be brought out.

“In the *six following* parables we find similitudes of the Kingdom.

“The first three of these parables present the Kingdom in its *outward forms in the world*” (pages 88, 89).

We are glad to find in Mr. Darby's writings so strong a confirmation of the view expressed in the book *“After This”* (published before we had consulted Mr. Darby's Synopsis) concerning the parable of the Sower, and the six parables which give similitudes of the Kingdom and its present form. We need only, in addition to what Mr. Darby points out so clearly, direct attention to the important fact that the Kingdom, in the form exhibited prophetically in those parables, was precisely that which had been divinely determined and kept secret from the foundation of the world (Matthew 13:35).

Commenting on Matthew 18, which is a passage of great importance, Mr. Darby says:

“In Matthew 18, the great principles proper to the new order of things are made known to the disciples.

“That which would be proper for the Kingdom was the meekness of a little child, which is unable to assert its own rights in the face of a world that passes it by — the spirit of dependence and humility. They must *become* as little children. In the absence of their rejected Lord this was the spirit that became His followers.

“Care for others, even the weakest, severity with self, was the rule of the Kingdom, that no snare or evil might be. As to offense, *full grace in forgiveness*” (pages 135, 136).

It is unlikely that Mr. Darby had even so much as heard of the modern notion that the Kingdom of heaven, which one must enter by being converted and becoming as a little child, was a Kingdom yet in the future.

“Another element of the character proper to the Kingdom, which had been manifested in God and in Christ, is *pardonning grace*. In this the children of the Kingdom are to be imitators of God and *always to forgive*. This refers only to wrongs done to oneself, and not to public discipline. We must *pardon to the end*; or rather, there must be no end; even as God has forgiven us all things.”

Such is the lesson enforced by the parable of the unforgiving servant, a lesson which lies so plainly on the surface of the parable that it seems almost impossible to miss it, or to pervert it. Mr. Darby was evidently quite ignorant of the strange idea that, according to this parable, the forgiveness of sins granted to those who enter the Kingdom of heaven is *conditional*, and may turn out to be no forgiveness at all.¹ Much less was he aware of the modern teaching that in the Kingdom of heaven one must himself forgive in order to be forgiven.

In one particular which, in view of later developments, turns out to be of considerable importance, we must record our dissent to Mr. Darby's views, and this is a particular in which, unhappily, he has been widely followed. We refer to the idea that Matthew's Gospel is, as they say, “dispensational” and “messianic” in character. Those terms are, to the simpleminded saints, bewildering rather than enlightening. But to persons of subtle intellect, who delight in weaving unsubstantial fabrics of human imagination, they afford a starting point for the elaboration of theories which can be

[All quotations from John Nelson Darby's Synopsis of the Bible were taken from the edition used by Philip Mauro at the time of writing *God's Present Kingdom*. I did not check it against the most recent edition of the Synopsis but the inquisitive reader could check it against the available volumes — Editor.]

1 See pages 263–268 herein.

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**VIEWS OF MR. WILLIAM KELLY.
WHEN DID THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN BEGIN?**

Mr. Kelly's ministry, both oral and written, has contributed much toward establishing the people of God in sound doctrine and in right views of truth. His "Lectures on Matthew", present his views on the Kingdom, which views, in the points of chief importance, are in accord with our own. Thus Mr. Kelly says:

"When Christ went up to *heaven*, and took His place as the rejected One here but the glorified One there, *the Kingdom of heaven began*" (page 51).

Mr. Kelly declares in the clearest language that the Kingdom of heaven is *now*; and he says that the very least in that Kingdom is greater even than John the Baptist, because the least in the Kingdom is born into *relationship with Christ in resurrection*, and into spiritual blessings and privileges, which John did not enjoy. Speaking of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Mr. Kelly says:

"The Kingdom of heaven then began. From the time that Jesus goes up into heaven till He comes back again the New Testament view of the Kingdom of heaven runs on; and in that sense the privilege of the feeblest soul brought to the knowledge of Christ *now*, transcends anything that ever entered into the heart or mind of men, or even of saints, before the Lord died and rose again."

Such is, indeed, "the New Testament view of the Kingdom of heaven," a view which begins to unfold itself in the first verse of the Gospel of Matthew (for it is enfolded in the words "Jesus Christ Son of David, Son of Abraham"), and which John the Baptist announced in unmistakable language.

Mr. Kelly points out the fact stated in our booklet "The Kingdom of Heaven," that John, in proclaiming the Coming One as He "Who should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire, was really proclaiming "the two grand features of the first and second comings of Christ" (page 61).

"The day of Pentecost was the *outpouring of the grace of God*, and the giving of the Holy Ghost to dwell in the saints of God, which referred to the power of the Holy Ghost going forth so as to bear testimony in such sort as would not bear a single evil thing in the heart of men, even while it showed out the grace of God. *This is Christianity* — the perfect love of God shown to a man that has no claim upon it" (page 61).

Such is indeed the case; so that it was clear to Mr. Kelly that what John announced (whether he understood it fully or not) was in one word "Christianity."

Mr. Kelly, in the course of some deeply spiritual comments on the Lord's baptism by John, rightly says that it signified the introducing of an era of "grace." The Son of God was come as Man in order by His death and resurrection (which is what baptism expresses) to "fulfill *all* righteousness"; and this was to the end that, "as sin had reigned unto death, even so might *grace reign through righteousness* unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:21; 6:3, 4).

A correct understanding of the significance of baptism in general, and of the Lord's baptism by John

in particular, is enough of itself to overthrow the idea that John and the Lord Jesus proclaimed or offered to the Jews an earthly kingdom. The Kingdom of *grace*, or in one word, *Christianity*, was in view from the beginning.

As regards the Sermon on the Mount Mr. Kelly is completely at variance with those who share the view of the "Scofield" Bible. To him that great discourse has been presented in such wise as:

"To give the whole moral unity of *the doctrine of Christ* as to the Kingdom of heaven and specially so as to *counteract the earthly views of the people of Israel*" (page 104).

Mr. Kelly, in his comments on the Sermon on the Mount, shows powerfully that all the commandments therein contained are spiritual in character, and that they speak directly to Christ's disciples in *this present dispensation*; and this is of capital importance. For instance, quoting "Blessed are the poor in spirit," he says:

"This is the primary foundation, the broad characteristic feature of all that belong to Jesus" (page 108).

Again, speaking further of the "Beatitudes," he says:

"The first four are characterized by intrinsic righteousness — the last three by intrinsic grace" (page 116).

He further shows that the words "Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world" apply to Christ's disciples *now*, in the time of His absence (pages 120, 122). And we are at a loss to understand how any other view could ever have found acceptance among the people of God. Mr. Kelly says:

"Calls to the unconverted we find abundantly elsewhere, and none can exaggerate their importance for the world; but the Sermon on the Mount is *God's call to the converted*" (page 122).

"Light is that which comes from God without admixture of men. Good works are the fruit of its action upon the soul (heart?); but it is *the light* which is to shine before men. It is the confession of *Christ* that is the point before God" (page 123).

Matthew 5:20 is a Scripture which has been most outrageously misused in certain modern writings. It has been said to teach that the Kingdom of heaven can be entered by "so low a standard of righteousness" as one that "merely exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees."

Against this doctrine, so dishonoring to God's heavenly kingdom, we would oppose the sound and spiritual comments of Mr. Kelly, only regretting that we cannot quote them more fully. Mr. Kelly says that, in the part of Christ's discourse that begins with Matthew 5:17, the Lord Jesus, while recognizing the full value of the law and the prophets, was now:

"About to open out the mind of God so much deeper than had ever been thought of before that this would henceforth be the great test.

"Hence He says, when referring to the practical use of these commandments of His, 'except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven' — an expression that has not the smallest reference to justification, but to the practical appreciation of and walking in the *right relations of the believer toward God and toward men*. The righteousness spoken of here is entirely of a practical kind. This may strike many persons sharply perhaps." (Is that why they wish to push these words of the Lord off to another era?) "They may be somewhat perplexed to understand how practical righteousness is made the means of entering into the Kingdom of heaven. But let me repeat, the Sermon on the Mount never shows how a sinner is to be saved."

We are in full accord with the statement that the verse above quoted is not intended to show how

the sinner becomes justified. But it is always to be remembered that the words of this discourse were recalled to memory by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26), and were written down for the government of a people who had been already regenerated by the Holy Ghost, justified on the ground of the death and resurrection of Christ, a people who had received the Holy Spirit as their power for a life of practical righteousness before men and of true holiness unto God. Mr. Kelly points this out with great cogency and clearness (but the passages are too long to quote — see pages 128–132), showing that God, Who enables a man to believe in Christ, and in believing to receive complete justification, gives him also His Holy Spirit to the end that, in the Spirit's power, he may live according to God. "How," asks Mr. Kelly, "does God accomplish the higher righteousness of Matthew 5:20 in those who believe on His Son?" And he answers the question by saying:

"There is a great secret that does not come out in this Sermon. First of all there is a load of unrighteousness on the sinner. How is that to be dealt with and the sinner made fit for and introduced into the Kingdom of heaven? *Through faith he is born again; he acquires a new nature, a life which as much flows from the grace of God as the bearing of his sins by Christ on the cross. There is the foundation of practical righteousness.*"

"What is the nature of that life?" (*i.e.*, the life bestowed as a free gift on the believer). "In its character perfectly righteous and holy. The man is then at once fitted for God's Kingdom. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.' But when he is born again he *does* enter there. 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' The Scribes and Pharisees were only working on and by the *flesh*; they did not believe that they were dead in the sight of God, and neither do men now. But what a believer begins with is that he is a dead man, that he requires new life, and that the new life which he received in Christ *is suitable to the Kingdom of heaven*. It is upon this *new nature* that God acts and works by the Spirit this practical righteousness; so that it remains in every sense true that 'except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven.'

"But the Lord does not here explain how this would be. He only declares that what was suitable to God's nature was *not* to be found in human Jewish righteousness, and that it must be for the Kingdom" (pages 130, 131).

This is spiritual, and is therefore most satisfactory. And in this connection we would point out that the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ as to practical righteousness, fulfilled through the Spirit in the believer, is developed by the Apostle Paul in such passages as Romans 8:1–4, Philippians 3:8–21, and the like.

Referring to Matthew 18, where the parable of the unforgiving servant is recorded (as to which modern commentaries are so unsatisfactory), Mr. Kelly directs attention to a fact which we have sought to emphasize in our former books, namely, that the Kingdom and the Church are joined together in the teaching of Christ and His Apostles. We quote:

"In Chapter 16 we had two subjects connected with the revelation of the Lord's Person to Simon Peter; one of them, the Church, entirely new or for the first time divulged; the other, the familiar subject of the Kingdom of heaven. We shall find in the chapter before us (Chapter 18) these two things again brought together — not confounded or identified. We are called to see *the Kingdom* and *the Church* in their particular bearing."

Commenting on the words, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven," Mr. Kelly shows that it means simply that none enter that Kingdom except those who are born again. And this we should have supposed, were it not for our modern commentators, would be obvious to all who are possessed of spiritual intelligence. Mr. Kelly says:

"A Christian is a man *born again*, possessing new life now that he had not before. *It is in this way he becomes a little child*" (page 357).

We should be glad if space permitted us to quote at length from this part of Mr. Kelly's excellent

commentary; but we must pass on.

As regards the parable of the unforgiving servant, Mr. Kelly points out (an obvious fact truly, though seemingly overlooked by many) that it teaches the duty of one *brother* to another. The question is "how oft shall *my brother* sin against me and I forgive him?" The parable therefore deals solely with matters arising between those who have equally received from God, for Christ's sake, the forgiveness of all their past sins. It is the same case as in Ephesians 4:30; 5:1; and, of course, we find precisely the same teaching. Briefly, that teaching is, in the words of Mr. Kelly, as follows:

"In the Kingdom of heaven — *not under law but under the rule of the rejected Christ — forgiveness is unlimited.*

"Our Lord insists that there really was *no end to forgiveness*. It is always to be in the heart of the Christian" (page 367).

Mr. Kelly's explanation of some of the details of this parable is not wholly satisfactory. But the main lesson is clear; and there must needs be in all human writings many things to remind us that there is but *one* inspired Book — but *one* "Authority."

It is to be regretted that Mr. Kelly, in his writings, expressed the idea that Matthew is "Jewish" in the sense that that evangelist presented our Lord "in such a way as best to meet the right or wrong thoughts and feelings of a Jew," and that he (Matthew) presented "that which the Jews needed to know." This idea in itself might be comparatively harmless, and (as we have shown) it was the farthest thing from Mr. Kelly's mind that from it could be deduced the destructive doctrine that Matthew is not for the Church, that the Lord's words recorded in it are "law and not grace," and that they are for another people in another epoch. In fact, Mr. Kelly is the strongest possible witness against the unscriptural and mischievous principles of the modern postponement theory; and there can be no doubt that were he living today, he would be prompt to accept any corrections that might be needed (and they are few and relatively of slight importance) in his own writings, in order to make them consistently opposed to this new teaching.

The Gospels are the fourfold testimony of the Holy Spirit to the Person and to the earthly ministry, the sacrificial death and bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, a testimony designed for *the entire world*, and for *all time*. *Each* of the Gospels is necessary to the completeness and perfection of that "testimony of God which He hath testified of His Son" (1 John 5:9); and it is an error, leading on, as we have seen, to disastrous consequences, to detach one Gospel from the others, assigning it to a special class (and in this case a very small class numerically) of persons, and giving it a merely local and temporary value.

The fact that *all* the Gospels (and none is conspicuous above the other three in this) have a decided "Jewish" complexion is easily accounted for by the fact that all the Scriptures, all the promises and covenants, the adoption, the glory and the service of God, are of the Jews (Romans 9:4, 5). The Lord Himself testified that "salvation is *of the Jews*"; and His testimony to that fact is found in what is supposed to be the least "Jewish" of the Gospels (John 4:22). Such being the case, it is inevitable that Jewish things should appear in the Gospels, as they do in each and all of them impartially. In the wisdom of God it required four Gospels, no more, no less, to set forth to the world that "great mystery of godliness: God manifested in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). Let us hold fast, therefore, to the unity and indivisibility of the fourfold testimony of the Spirit of God.

21

VIEWS OF MR. F. W. GRANT

Mr. Grant's writings, which are voluminous, bear witness to his deep appreciation of the Person and work of the Son of God, as also to his understanding of the truth of Scripture concerning the Church of God and the second coming of Christ. Mr. Grant's views regarding the Kingdom of heaven differ not a little in detail from those of Mr. Darby and Mr. Kelly. But he is in full accord with them in maintaining the sound doctrine that this present dispensation is the era of the Kingdom of heaven, and that the Sermon on the Mount and other commandments of the Lord are for the children of God in this era of grace. Moreover, there is no support to be found in Mr. Grant's writings for the error which is the root of the postponement theory, namely, that John the Baptist and the Lord Himself offered or proclaimed to the Jews of that day the earthly Kingdom. As to that matter Mr. Grant makes it very plain indeed that the Jews rejected — not the earthly kingdom, but — *the Lord Himself, and the Gospel.* (*Numerical Bible*, page 13 and elsewhere.)

Mr. Grant teaches that the Sermon on the Mount is “the unveiling of the Kingdom in its inner spirit and holiness” (page 50); and that “the Lord's words *cannot be less binding upon Christians of the present day,*” than upon those Jewish disciples to whom they were first spoken.

So far from regarding the Sermon on the Mount as “law and not grace,” Mr. Grant finds its teaching to be the very expression of grace itself. For, after quoting the words, “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven,” he exclaims, “and how responsible are they to whom *such grace* is given” (page 85).

Concerning the passage commonly called “The Lord's Prayer” (Matthew 5:9–11), Mr. Grant says:

“The whole prayer is addressed to God as *Father*: ‘Our Father Who art in heaven.’ What underlies this title given to God is in fact *a relationship never before made known in its true character,* between Him and the disciples of this blessed Teacher” (page 88).

And Mr. Grant rightly connects this with the Lord's own prayer to His Father (recorded in John 17), where He says, “I have declared unto them *Thy Name.*” This surely brings the words of the Sermon on the Mount fully into the sphere of Christianity. On the words “forgive us our debts,” etc., Mr. Grant says:

“The Lord could not mean to teach His disciples here that sins were only remitted from time to time in answer to prayer about them. Yet those ignorant of the settled acceptance which the Gospel teaches have used it, and continually use it, in this way. On the other hand, some would press, on account of such implication, the impossibility of the intelligent use, by the Christian, of such a petition. *Both views are wrong,* the prayer itself being in perfect keeping — how could it be otherwise — *with the fullest revelation of divine grace.* The simple fact that it is to *the Father* removes every difficulty. It is thus a *Father's* forgiveness that is besought by those who distinctly take the place of relationship. As between God and His creatures the precious blood of Christ perfects forever those who, in faith, have taken shelter under it; but that only brings such under a *Father's* government, Who ‘without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work,’ and

Who cannot but take notice of the conduct of His children, just because they are that, and of His love to them as that. We must forgive if we are to be forgiven. With an unforgiving spirit toward others we cannot enjoy communion with Him Whose nature is love, and Who must have His image reproduced in us. This seen there is no contradiction to the *grace of Christianity*" (page 91).

Thus does Mr. Grant, in his comments on the Sermon on the Mount, enforce the great fact that we have, in that utterance from the lips of our Lord, the laws of a *heavenly kingdom on earth*, which laws are for *children of the Kingdom*, who by grace are made subject to a *Father's* authority, and who are to yield *willing* obedience to the commandments which the Father has given them through His Son. This is what the Apostle Paul brings to mind in declaring that the *Father* has delivered us from the power (or dominion) of darkness, and has "translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). And again to the same effect it is written in Hebrews 5:8,9, concerning the Lord Jesus that "though He were a Son, yet learned He *obedience* by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey Him*."

How strange that any who claim to "know" (and even to teach others) "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 8:9) should seek to escape from the obligation that grace, known and accepted, imposes upon us to follow the example of the obedient One! And how very far are they from knowing "the *true* grace of God wherein ye stand" (2 Peter 5:12), who teach that His commandments are grievous, and that the keeping of them is "legality"!

To Mr. Grant the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ, recorded in Matthew 8 and 9, were *not*, as some say, "the normal accompaniments of the Kingdom age," but were the manifestation of His own characteristic *grace* — the manifestation of the presence of Him Who "has power on earth to *forgive sins*." We quote from Mr. Grant's comments on Matthew 9:14–16:

"But the Lord goes beyond this to speak of the change of dispensation that was *now at hand*, and for which they must be prepared: a change which would be still more complete and radical; not a mere patch upon an old garment. The garment of legal righteousness was in fact wearing out, and man was being exhibited as the prophet had declared him, 'all his righteousness but filthy rags' (Isaiah 64:6). What good in patching up what was so utterly gone? Between the new evangelical righteousness and the old legal one there can be only the strife of contradictory principles. There can be no fusion here. With all such attempts the rent is only made worse.

"Nor only this: *the spirit of the Gospel*, the free expansive power of *Christianity*, cannot be put into the old skins of ceremonial Judaism. Here both the wine will be lost, and the skins will perish; and this has been proved experimentally; the thing has happened; ritualism of every kind is just such an experiment, with the result that we have neither Judaism nor Christianity left" (page 111).

It is very much to the point to observe that, according to Mr. Grant, "the change of dispensation" that was then "at hand," that is to say, at the very time when the Lord was proclaiming "the Kingdom of heaven is *at hand*," was the change from *Judaism* to *Christianity*. This clearly identifies "the Kingdom of heaven" with *of the Kingdom in its present form*, as based fully upon the death and resurrection of Christ" (page 137); and in a footnote on page 138, Mr. Grant says of the word sown in the *heart* (Matt. 13) and of believing in the *heart* (Romans 10), that "the 'heart' in Scripture is not necessarily the affections, as we generally take it, but the man himself, the *real man*."

Again he tells us that "the children of the wicked one" are *not* mere professors, but are "those who are the offspring of his (the devil's) deception, by whom he seeks to antagonize the truth" (page 141). The importance of this will become more evident by our remarks, now to follow on Mr. Grant's "*Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven*."

The foregoing quotations show clearly that Mr. Grant's views are, as to all the more important points involved in our discussion, in full accord with the Scriptures, as we read and understand them, and as we are persuaded every simple-minded believer can see plainly for himself. But it should per-

haps be said that Mr. Grant gives, in the booklet entitled "The Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven" a very peculiar view of that Kingdom. A brief reference to that view will be, we think, both interesting and profitable to the Lord's people. Mr. Grant's views can best be exhibited by a condensed analysis, as follows:

1. The Kingdom of heaven (as Mr. Grant sees it) is presented to us in the Scriptures in *two forms*:

(a) The *present* form as it exists in this dispensation, called by Mr. Grant the "mystery form."

(b) The *future* form, as foretold by the Old Testament prophets, and as it will exist in the millennial age. (Mr. Grant does not definitely say whether or not the Kingdom announced by John as "at hand" was form (a), which actually *was* at hand, or form (b), which was very far from being at hand.)

2. The *present* form of the Kingdom has (as Mr. Grant sees it) two compartments or "spheres," namely, (1) an "outer sphere" and (2) an "inner sphere."

The *outer* sphere includes all who make a profession of Christianity, and is entered by *baptism*, which is its "key."

The *inner* sphere includes only those who are truly converted or born again, and is entered by *teaching*, its key being "the key of knowledge."

Thus "baptism" and "teaching" are the two "keys of the Kingdom of heaven." And (according to Mr. Grant) those keys were committed not to Peter individually, as the Scripture seems to teach plainly enough; but all the disciples of Christ, then and thenceforth, share that honor with Peter.

As to Part 1 of Mr. Grant's scheme we have only a slight correction to make, namely, that the future form of the Kingdom of God, as it will be manifested in power and glory during the coming millennial age, is not "the Kingdom of *heaven*," but the Kingdom of *the Son of man*. This correction affects only the *name* of the Kingdom.

As to Part 2 we are bound to take strong exception, to the idea of there being an "outer sphere" of the; Kingdom of heaven to be entered by baptism, or to which baptism is the key. "We maintain, and appeal to Scripture to sustain us, that what Mr. Grant calls the "inner sphere" is the *true* Kingdom of heaven; and that all who are not *within* it, that is, all who have not been *born again*, are *without*.

There is no *intermediate sphere* between the saved and the perishing, between those who have life in Christ and those who are dead in their sins. The line is drawn sharply and clearly in the Word of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." There is no middle state. "He that believeth on Him is *not condemned*; but he that believeth not is *condemned already*." There is no intermediate class.

Those who believe the Gospel are turned "from darkness to light," there being no sphere between, "and from the power of *Satan* unto *God*" (Acts 26:18). We do not see how there can be anything more contradictory to the plain truth of Scripture than the idea that there is a class of people who are neither saved nor lost, neither flesh nor spirit, but are in some intermediate sphere which God recognizes, and to which admission is given by baptism. God has not provided any "sphere" or any compartment of His Kingdom for "the sow that was washed" and which inevitably returns "to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Peter 2:22). For there is no change in man's relation to God until, by the power of God's Word and Spirit, he is regenerated and made a new creature in Christ Jesus.

To make "baptism" the "key" to any "sphere" of God's heavenly Kingdom is a very serious error indeed, particularly when it is remembered that baptism is, according to Scripture, for believers only, that is, for those who have already received the new birth, and have passed from death into life (John 5:24). Such are already *in* the Kingdom of heaven, and their baptism is into the death of Christ, being the voluntary "answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3:21). They were "buried with Christ in baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of *the Father* even so they also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). This could not be said of unconscious infants or other unconverted persons; and moreover, the word "Father" fixes the status of those who

are baptized.

Therefore, the immersing of unconverted persons in water is not baptism. Furthermore, to those who had "*received Christ Jesus the Lord*" the Apostle Paul writes: "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God Who hath raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:6, 12). They only are "risen with Christ" who have faith in the working of God Who raised Him from the dead, and to *them* it is the figure of union with Christ in His death and resurrection. To others it is not only without *effect*, but without *meaning*. Therefore, the fact that Mr. Grant, and the few who share his views, hold that baptism is the "key" to something, and that it admits to some imaginary "sphere" interposed between the perishing world and "the household of God" — merely proves that he and they have not been wholly delivered from the errors of the religious system from which they separated themselves. The idea that baptism has some sacramental effect, and that it changes in any respect the standing of the natural man before God, is a root of error so grievous and destructive that it is a duty to protest and warn against it, in whatever form it may present itself.

22

“HOW CAN THESE THINGS BE?”

(John 3:9)

The words spoken by the Lord Jesus to Nicodemus have an important bearing upon our subject; for in that interview the Lord revealed foundation truths concerning the Kingdom of God. It is evident that the subject concerning which Nicodemus sought information from the Lord was the Kingdom which He and His forerunner had been preaching. Whether the Kingdom had been mentioned before the first recorded words of Nicodemus were spoken; or whether the Lord addressed Himself to an unspoken inquiry in Nicodemus' heart (knowing “what was *in man*”) does not appear. In either case, He went at once to the subject, speaking plainly of those “heavenly things” whereof He was able to “tell” out of his own personal knowledge (verse 12).

The incident shows how ready the Lord was to declare the important facts about the Kingdom to any who sought Him for information. And it shows also (a matter which is directly to the point) that the facts which He revealed to Nicodemus, so far from putting before him a kingdom such as he was acquainted with from the Scriptures, were so strange to that inquirer as to draw forth the exclamation, “*How can these things be?*”

The conversation took place near the beginning of the Lord's ministry, while John was still preaching and baptizing (as appears from the latter part of the chapter) and at the very time when, according to the postponement theory, the Lord was presenting Himself as King to the rulers of Israel for their acceptance. It is therefore very useful for the purpose of our present inquiry to have the record of what passed between the Lord and one of the most prominent of those rulers. The subject, too, is the Kingdom; so we will learn from this passage, with absolute certainty, just what was the character of the Kingdom which John and the Lord Jesus were at that time proclaiming to Israel.

The Lord's first recorded words give the desired information, and in the clearest manner: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

These words prove conclusively that it was not the earthly Kingdom that was the subject of His ministry; for *that* will be a Kingdom which “every eye” can see when it comes, But here was a Kingdom such as never had been heard of; which answers a question that has been asked, namely, “Would John have proclaimed a Kingdom such as the Jews had never heard of?” Yes; he would, and he did. The Kingdom he proclaimed was of a character so strange that Nicodemus, “a master (or teacher) of Israel,” was astonished when its foundation principle was declared to him.

The Lord's simple utterance recorded in John 3:3, quoted above, sweeps away completely the idea that it was of an earthly Kingdom He was speaking in His public discourse. He Who, through His prophets of old, had “told them of earthly things,” was now come in the Person of the Son (Heb. 1:1, 2) to “tell them of *heavenly* things”; for it was of a *heavenly* Kingdom that He was speaking.

Moreover, had the Lord stated to Nicodemus that He was offering or announcing the promised earthly kingdom to Israel, and that He would immediately establish it if acceptable to the people and their rulers, Nicodemus would have had *no difficulty at all in understanding what was meant*. But the effect of the Lord's statements about the wonderful Kingdom which He had come to announce and to

introduce into the world, caused His hearer to exclaim: "How can a man be born when he is old?" and — "How can these things be?" Mr. Darby says of Nicodemus:

"He took for granted that he was, as a Jew, a child of the Kingdom, and would have teaching. The Lord meets him at once (for he was sincere and known of Him) by declaring that *the whole ground he was on was wrong*. He (Christ) did not teach *flesh*, nor had He come to do so. *God was setting up a Kingdom of His own*. To 'see' this, a man must be born again completely anew. The Kingdom was not yet come visibly, not 'with observation'; it was there among them; but to 'see' it a man must have a wholly *new* nature. Nicodemus, arrested by the language, does not understand how this could be, stops as a human reasoner (though sincere) at the present difficulty, and in truth *does not 'see' the Kingdom*."

But the Lord proceeds further to instruct Nicodemus concerning this heavenly Kingdom, and concerning the new birth which a man must experience in order to enter it, saying: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."

In these words the Lord declares that the Divine Agencies by which "a man" can be "born when he is old, and without which none can enter into the Kingdom of God, are the Word of God ("water" being a figure like "seed" in the parables, for the Word) and the Spirit (or Breath, or Wind) of God. And further the Lord proceeded to divide sharply between "flesh," which cannot take part in this Kingdom, and "spirit," which is that new nature possessed by those who are born of the Spirit. Without this new nature none can enter into God's heavenly Kingdom.

And yet, further, the Lord begins to indicate the *worldwide character* of this Kingdom by declaring the Sovereignty of the Spirit, Who breathes where *He wills* ("The wind bloweth *where it listeth*"). The work of God's Spirit in imparting the new birth and new nature to believing sinners was *not to be confined to Israel*. Quoting again from Mr. Darby:

"This clearly opens out the blessing *to the Gentiles*. 'Marvel not,' said the Lord to Nicodemus, 'that I said unto thee, Ye (Jews) must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth — so is *every one* that is born of the Spirit.'"

And from this starting point, which is the foundation truth concerning the heavenly Kingdom that Christ preached and introduced, the Lord went on to show to Nicodemus that, in order that the Spirit might come and regenerate believing sinners, the Son of man *must be lifted up*, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. The 'eternal life,' which the Spirit gives, is for those who believe in Him — the One Who was to be lifted up on the cross. And this gift of eternal life was not for believing Israelites only, but for everyone, "*whosoever*," in *the world* should believe the Gospel. "For God so loved *the world* that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish, but have *everlasting life*" (3:16).

This is, apparently, the first explanation that the Lord gave to any one concerning the Kingdom which He was preaching; and it is important to observe that, in this explanation, we find the Cross, the Word of God (the Gospel), and the Spirit of God, as the means whereby men were to be born again, and brought into the Kingdom of God. We find also that the Kingdom, which was the subject of the Lord's ministry, was not one that pertained only to Israel, but was for the whole "*world*." As in the parable of the wheat and tares, "the field is the *world*."

Especially is it to be observed that at the very beginning of *His* own ministry, and while John the Baptist was still preaching and baptizing, the Lord showed to an inquirer, who sought teaching from Him, that He had come to be "lifted up" on the cross, as a sacrifice for the salvation of perishing men.

The record of our Lord's interview with Nicodemus should be sufficient in itself to dispel from every mind the idea that the Kingdom which the Lord was then preaching publicly was the earthly Kingdom for which the Israelites were looking.

The Parables

The simple words: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,” draw the sharpest kind of a line between those who are within the Kingdom and those who are without. There is no footing at all, within the Kingdom, for that which is born of the flesh. The Lord’s words to Nicodemus should end all discussion as to the possibility that unconverted persons, whether professedly Christians or not, are in the Kingdom. It has been supposed by some that the contrary is to be inferred from certain statements found in our Lord’s parables. But it obviously is not permissible for us to draw from parables (especially those spoken to the unbelieving multitudes) inferences which contradict statements made in plain speech. But, with the light of what is said in plain speech, we may profitably examine the parables from which the inferences referred to have been drawn, and this we will do.

But first we would point out that the parables were spoken in order to foretell, by prophetic word pictures, what the Kingdom should be or become *like*. There is a difference between what the Kingdom *is*, and what it is *like*; that is to say between its real inward *character*, which is spiritual and heavenly, and its outward *appearance*. The difference is great; for the Kingdom is so unearthly in character that men who are not born from above cannot even “see” it; but all can see the great family of religious sects and systems which has developed as the *apparent* result of the preaching of the Gospel among the nations of the world. All that is needed in order to harmonize in our own minds the statements of the parables with the fact that only those who are born again are in the Kingdom of heaven is to realize that there is a great difference between the Kingdom of heaven and professing Christendom.

The Tares of the Field

We have already shown that the tares are not in the Kingdom of heaven, but in the kingdom of Satan. The Lord’s words declare this plainly. Both wheat and tares are in the same *field* (“the world”), but are not in the same Kingdom.

The Virgins

In order to draw from this parable the inference that unsaved persons are in the Kingdom of heaven, it is necessary to assume that the foolish virgins represent unconverted persons. If we accept that view then we make the parable to teach merely that the unconverted will not enter into blessing hereafter (or whatever we may take the wedding supper to represent). But surely there was no “mystery” about the fact that the unconverted who make an unreal profession will not enter into blessing at the Lord’s coming. That was not a *secret* which the Lord reserved for the last of all His parables; and to put that interpretation upon it renders it of no value. Furthermore, the whole point of the parable is the importance of *watching* and *being ready* at the time of the Lord’s return, whereas what the unconverted need is to be born again.

But even if we accept the view that the “foolish” virgins represent those who make a sham profession of Christianity, nevertheless it does not follow that such persons are *in* the Kingdom. It would follow only that there are some unregenerate persons who are in association with, and commingled with, real believers in Christy and who are so like them in appearance and behavior that the real difference is not revealed until the Lord comes. In neither view of this parable can it be regarded as signifying that false professors of Christianity are in the Kingdom.

The Wedding Supper

We have already discussed this parable (pages 194–200); so we need not dwell upon it longer than to point out that there is nothing to warrant the inference that the man without the wedding garment was in the Kingdom. It is agreed on all hands that the wedding garment stands for the garment of God’s perfect righteousness, which is offered by the Gospel “unto all,” but is only “upon all them that believe” (Rom. 3:22). There are those who seemingly respond to the invitation of the Gospel and

who (as it were) present themselves before God but in whose heart there has been no change — no real faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour, no regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Some of these may have been distinguished for apparent piety and religious works, thus wearing a garment which would deceive the eye of man. But human righteousness will not cover the unconverted man in that day.

There is no ground, however, for saying that the man without the wedding garment was in the Kingdom of heaven. It might even more plausibly be argued that the armies under the Roman general Titus, which destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70, were in the Kingdom; for in the parable those armies are represented as those of "the King." The Lord said: "But when the King heard thereof, He was wroth, and sent for *His* armies, and destroyed those murderers and burned up their city" (Matthew 22:7).

The Unforgiving Servant

(Matthew 18:23–35)

This parable has suffered much from those expositors who advocate the view that the Kingdom of heaven is merely the sphere of Christian profession. It has been said that "forgiveness *in the Kingdom* is not the full and absolute forgiveness which the Gospel preaches, but is conditional upon character." And again that "under the law of the Kingdom, no one may hope for forgiveness who has not first forgiven."

But such is not the teaching of this parable, or of any part of the Word of God. Indeed, such teaching is directly contrary to the primary truth of the Gospel. God's forgiveness to the sinner who repents and believes is immediate, free, and complete. "And when they had *nothing to pay*" (the condition of the confessed sinner who has no hope but in God's mercy) "He *frankly* forgave them both" (Luke 7:42). "Through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). "By Him *all* that believe are justified from *all things*" (Acts 13:39).

But the parable has no reference whatever to the forgiveness which God grants to the believing sinner. It deals *solely* with the ease of the trespasses of one *brother* against another. It is the Lord's answer to Simon Peter's question, "Lord, how often shall *my brother* offend against me and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. *Therefore*" — that is, because the law of the Kingdom is forgiveness without limit — "is the Kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants." This parable teaches in the most impressive way a lesson which is of the deepest importance to the children of God — the lesson of forbearance, longsuffering, forgiveness, and unfeigned love between brethren, that they should be "kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another," even "unto seventy times seven." There is nothing that more prominently characterizes the Kingdom of heaven than *forgiveness*; and conversely there is nothing that is so repugnant to the Spirit of that Kingdom as to be unforgiving. In the prayer which the Lord gave His disciples as a pattern it is brought home to the children of God that they are not to ask their heavenly Father's forgiveness of their own trespasses if they do not forgive trespasses against themselves.

The parable puts before us the extreme case of a man who owed his king ten thousand talents (reckoned as equivalent to about ten million dollars) and who, upon asking for mercy, received remission of all the debt. What corresponds to this is the fact that everyone in the Kingdom of heaven has received mercy on a like scale. But that same servant, *after* receiving forgiveness — (and that, not at all on the ground that he had first forgiven others!) — went out and found a fellow-servant who owed him a hundred pence (say about fifteen dollars) from whom he harshly exacted full payment. Then his lord called him and said: "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, *because thou desiredst me*. Shouldst thou not also have had compassion on thy *fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?*" This is in exact accord with Ephesians 4:32: "And be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, *even as* God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Continuing the parable we read: "And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till

he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his *brother* their trespasses.”

These words were spoken by the Lord to Simon Peter and others who were true disciples; and we all make a most serious mistake if we listen to those who say that the lesson does not apply to us. It is the *Father's* chastening that is here put before us to be feared by His *children*; and the last words of the parable remind us again that the subject is the trespasses of one “*brother*” against another. It is a serious thing for one who has received great mercy from God to refuse a little mercy to one of God's children, his own “brother.” Such is the lesson we are to learn from the parable; and if we “call on THE FATHER “Who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work” we should “pass the time of our sojourning here in fear” (1 Peter 1:17). It is thought that the words “delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due unto him” could not be applied to children of God. But why not! Those words occur in a parable, to which they are suited; and we are not to apply the exact words, but to learn the corresponding reality. That corresponding reality' is, as already stated, the Father's chastening, “whereof: all (children) are partakers.” For “if ye be without chastening, then are ye bastards and not sons.” “For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth *every son whom He receiveth*” (Hebrews 12:5–12).

Sometimes the chastening is very severe — and needs to be so, in order that the Father's purpose may be accomplished by it. Some of us know what it means to be “delivered to the *tormentors*.” But, for such faithful dealing, we can thank Him “afterward,” when it yieldeth “the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby.”

The case is like that of the misbehaving saints at Corinth to whom Paul wrote: “If *we* would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we *are* judged” — that is, when we do *not* judge ourselves — “we are *chastened of the Lord* that we should not be condemned with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:31, 32). It is easy to see that the principle of God's dealing in this case with His own children is precisely the same as that which is taught in the parable of the unmerciful servant.

Again we meet with the same principle in James 2:13: “For he shall have judgment without mercy who showed no mercy.” And to the same effect we read in 1 John 5:16: “If any man see *his brother* sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask (God) and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. *There is a sin unto death.*” Also in Romans 8:13 it is written to saints of God: “For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die.”

We have observed that our Lord's parable illustrates an extreme case. Another extreme case is found in the chastening appointed for the wicked saint in Corinth, regarding whom Paul wrote to the Church, saying: “In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the *power* of our Lord Jesus Christ, *to deliver such an one unto Satan* for the destruction of the *flesh* that the *spirit*” — which means that which is born of the Spirit, and is in every believer — “may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:4, 5).

To deliver a saint of God unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh is certainly quite as severe as to deliver such an one to the tormentors until he should pay all that was due. Clearly, the discipline of which the Lord spake in the parable is precisely the same as that applied in the case of the sinning believer at Corinth. (It is encouraging in this connection to notice that the believer so sorely chastened at Corinth was brought to repentance and was restored.) The chastening of God's children is inflicted now, while we are yet in the Kingdom of heaven; for we understand that the action of the parable does not extend beyond this present age.

The words, “till he should pay all that was due him,” do not necessarily mean that all the previously forgiven debt was reimposed upon the unmerciful man. It may mean simply the penalty adjudged to be proper in the circumstances of the case.

The Good and Bad Fish

(Matthew 13:47–50)

There is no ground for supposing that the “bad” fish represent some who are in the Kingdom of heaven, whatever the “net” may be taken to represent. If, as generally supposed, the “net” represents the efforts of the Gospel “fishers of men” to bring men to Christ, the fact that many respond to the call of the Gospel, and are in company with real believers, who yet are unsaved, would explain the presence of “bad” fish in the net. The parable, therefore, affords no reason for supposing that there are unregenerate persons in the Kingdom of heaven.

Conclusion

In the light, then, of all these Scriptures, it is not difficult to see what the Kingdom of heaven is. It is a heavenly sphere now on earth, governed by the authority of Christ, to “Whom *all* authority is given in *heaven* and in earth, and “Who is gone *into heaven*, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being subject unto Him” (Matthew 28:18; 1 Peter 3:22).

Its subjects are a “called people,” “the children of the Living God,” whose Father is *in heaven*; a “holy nation, a peculiar people,” whose “citizenship” is *in (heaven)*; a people dead to sin and risen with Christ, who “obey from the heart” “the law of Christ” — their “Master *in heaven*,” a saved people, who have “turned to God from idols to ... wait for His Son *from heaven*,” a people who have been “begotten again unto a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance reserved” for them “*in heaven*” (Romans 9:26; 1 Peter 2:9; Philippians 3:20; Romans 6:7; Galatians 6:2; Ephesians 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10; 1 Peter 1:3, 4).

Such was, and is, the Kingdom proclaimed by the messenger of God who was “more than a prophet”; the man who was sent to make ready “a *people* prepared for the Lord”; the man who went before “the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God.”

Such was, and is, the Kingdom proclaimed also by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and expounded by Him in His parables of the Kingdom of heaven and in His other sayings. It is the Kingdom whereof He Himself is the “Door” of entrance, made available now to sinners everywhere, through His atoning death and His resurrection from the dead; the Kingdom whereof He entrusted the keys to Peter, who in due time opened the Door by preaching the Gospel of Christ “with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,” first to Jews, and subsequently to Gentiles, to whom also God has now “opened the door of faith.”

We believe it has been clearly shown by the proof offered herein that, in consequence of erroneous teaching, the ministry of John the Baptist has been misunderstood and neglected; that it has been torn from this dispensation, to which it rightfully belongs, and cast off to some other age — past or future; and that with it has gone more or less of the ministry of the Lord Himself. The results of this mutilation of Scripture — unsettling as it does the very beginnings of this dispensation of grace (inasmuch that there are five or more conflicting theories as to when the present dispensation really began) — have been exceedingly harmful to the people of God, in robbing them, to a greater or less extent, of the benefit of the Lord’s own words and commandments.

We, therefore, pray the God of truth that our humble effort may, by His blessing, serve to make it plain to His children that the New Testament Scriptures, from the first line unto the last line thereof, belong to this present dispensation, and are addressed to the people of the New Covenant: — “even *us*, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles!” (Romans 9:24).