

The Kingdom Of Heaven.
What Is It? And When? And Where?

“The Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence”
(Matthew 11:12)

(1918)

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PREFACE

It may seem strange that there should be any need, at this late day, to seek an answer to the questions proposed in the title to this book. If, however, we follow the order in which the Truth of God — long lost from view during the “dark ages” of this era — has been recovered, bit by bit, beginning when the light of the “Reformation” (so-called) dawned upon the Egyptian darkness of the middle ages, we shall not be surprised that the truth concerning the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN should be the last portion to be recovered. For that is the *primary truth* of the age wherein we live. Hence it is quite in harmony with the course of events that the Kingdom of Heaven should be the last item in that “whole counsel of God,” (which was revealed to the Apostles of Christ) to be restored to its rightful place; and along with it the ministry of the Lord’s forerunner, John the Baptist, the Sermon on the Mount, and the entire Gospel of Matthew, which truly is the Genesis of the New Testament.

Should the following pages be used of the Lord in the furtherance of that purpose, be it to ever so small an extent, the writer will be humbly thankful therefor.

Acknowledgment is due, and is gratefully made, to a tract entitled “The Kingdom of Heaven, and the Kingdom of the Son of Man,” by Mr. John James, by which my attention was first directed to the fact that the Kingdom of heaven belongs wholly to *this present age*, occupying that long period of time which extends from the first coming to the second coming of Christ; and that, at the latter event, it will give place to the “Kingdom of the Son of Man.” That tract came into my hands several years ago, and it impressed me at the time as being in full accord with the Scriptures. But, because of illness and for other reasons, I have been unable until lately to examine the matter carefully in the light of the Word. Having now done so, I am surprised that I could have missed for so long a time a truth which lies conspicuously upon the page of Scripture, or could ever have entertained the idea that the Kingdom of Heaven — which God announced through John the Baptist and through the Lord Jesus Christ Himself — was the *earthly* kingdom promised to Israel, and that it had been withdrawn and postponed, in consequence of the refusal of the Jews to accept it.

The question discussed herein is by no means one of academic interest merely. On the contrary, momentous consequences hinge upon it. Therefore, we are bold to ask the careful attention of God’s people to what is set forth in the following pages.

There are collateral matters of great interest involved in the main question, and which we do not discuss herein. Among these may be mentioned the interpretation of the parables of the Kingdom, the connection between the Kingdom and the Church, and the distinction between the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God (where they need to be distinguished). A discussion of these matters will be found in the writer’s forthcoming volume, shortly to be published, God willing, by the Fleming H. Revell Co., entitled “*AFTER THIS: or The Church, The Kingdom and The Glory.*”

July 1, 1918.

1

**JOHN THE BAPTIST:
HIS GREATNESS AND HIS MINISTRY**

The first book of the New Testament presents the *Kingdom of Heaven* as its prominent subject. A special messenger was sent by God to proclaim the advent of that Kingdom. What is said of this messenger, both in the Old Testament and in the New, marks him out as a person of great importance. In fact, the Lord Jesus Christ said of this man, John the Baptist, that he was more than a prophet, and not only so, but that, among those born of women none greater had arisen than he (Matthew 11:9–11).

Moreover, John the Baptist is remarkable in that his coming was foretold, and his ministry described, by *two Old Testament prophecies* (Isaiah 40 and Malachi 3). He is remarkable also in the manner of his birth and of his preparation for the great service to which God had called him. As in the cases of Isaac, of Samson and of Samuel, God — in order to show Himself as the living God Who is not dependent upon the flesh for the accomplishment of His mighty works — prepared for Himself an instrument out of the very failure and impotence of nature. John's parents were, like Isaac's, "as good as dead" (Hebrews 11:12); and the circumstances attending his birth — the angel's message to his father, the miracle of the latter's dumbness and of his recovery of speech, the pre-naming of the child, the grand prophecy of Zacharias, and the Nazarite seclusion of John in the desert for thirty years, "until the day of his showing unto Israel" — all combine to give to the forerunner of our Lord a place of unique importance in the Scriptures, and in human history.

But all these extraordinary events, by which God has invested His servant John with such high honor and dignity, were not for the purpose of calling attention to *him*, but were to impress upon our minds the stupendous importance of John's *message*. For the message is greater far than the messenger. Wherefore, though John be the greatest among those that are born of *women*, the Lord has further declared that the "*least* in the Kingdom of heaven," which John was sent to announce, "*is greater than he*" And this we can understand in the light of the fact that "the children of the Kingdom" are all "*born of God*"; for the least of these is greater than the greatest of those that are "*born of women.*"

The greatness of John's message, that is to say, his proclamation of the Kingdom of heaven, which God was then about to introduce into the world, is further manifested by the fact that, as soon as the proclamation had been made, and "the way of the Lord" prepared by the baptism of confessed sinners, the messenger himself was quickly removed from the scene. The imprisonment and death of John contribute the most impressive testimony to the importance of that wonderful Kingdom which it was his mission to announce. The circumstances attending John's death were as remarkable as those attending his birth and their significance has doubtless been generally overlooked. We would note at present but one point, namely, that, in the circumstances of John's death, the *character* of that Kingdom which John himself had preached is clearly revealed. For they show that it was the Kingdom of *Heaven* indeed. It was not destined to displace or interfere in the least with the kingdoms of earth and their rulers. To such an extent was this the case that not even was the Idumean (Edomite) occupant of David's throne to be restrained from committing wanton murder on the person of God's own messenger at the behest of a wicked and vindictive woman. Yet, on the other hand, God did not

permit His honored servant, John the Baptist, to be removed from this scene until he could say: "This, my joy, therefore is fulfilled" (John 3:29).

Thus the birth, the life, and the death of John bear the clearest and strongest testimony to the greatness of the Kingdom of heaven; and they serve furthermore to exhibit the *heavenly character* of that Kingdom. For John was the true herald of this age — the age of "grace and truth," the "day of salvation," the "acceptable year of the Lord."

In one word, John's ministry was *to introduce Christ, the Son of God*; and therein lay his (John's) greatness. To introduce the Christ of God at His coming is the greatest of all human ministries; and that is true without regard to the particular character in which the Lord came into His creation — whether as Israel's promised and expected King, or as the Redeemer of men, the Messenger of the New Covenant. But the fact is that John not only heralded the Lord's personal coming, but he also announced definitely the precise character in which He came. For John proclaimed Him, not as the promised King of *Israel*, but as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of THE WORLD, the One Who baptizes repentant and believing sinners with the Holy Ghost.

The proclamation of the Kingdom of heaven, or Kingdom of God (which for present purposes *mean the same thing*), was taken up by the Lord Jesus Christ in Person, Who "went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom." Moreover, He chose twelve apostles whom He sent forth to preach the gospel of the Kingdom (Matthew 10:7); and later on, when on His way to Jerusalem to fulfill the prophecies of His suffering and death, He sent other seventy also to preach the same message (Luke 10:7-9). So, from first to last, the Kingdom was the subject of His preaching. From the prominence thus given by all the four Gospels to the subject of the Kingdom, we may gather something of the importance which God attaches to that subject. It would be well for us to bear in mind, in this connection, that those four Gospels were written under inspiration of God, and were given to His Church, *long after Christ had died and risen again and ascended into heaven, and the Holy Spirit had come down to fulfill His age-long ministry*. From this fact it is quite clear that the subject of the Kingdom of heaven was just as important in God's eyes after Pentecost as before.

John's Announcement

We turn then to the inspired record of John's announcement, the first words of which are — "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." These words are simple, and they announce, unqualifiedly and unconditionally, that the Kingdom of heaven was about to be introduced.

But here, at the very beginning of our study, questions are raised which involve matters of the utmost importance. *What is meant by "the Kingdom of heaven"? And what is meant by "at hand"?*

Those questions confront us because of a view that has been advanced by prominent expositors of the Bible, who say that the proclamation of the Kingdom of heaven by John and by the Lord Jesus Christ was in reality an "offer" to the Jews of *national deliverance*, and of *earthly* supremacy over the nations — of THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM in a word — as promised by the Old Testament prophets.¹ Moreover, according to this view, the supposed "offer" of an earthly kingdom to the Jews was merely a *conditional offer* which was to be effective only in case the Jews should accept it. Thus, to begin with God's *unconditional* announcement of something as "at hand," and which by His sovereign will and at His appointed time was shortly to be established, is transformed into a *conditional* offer to the Jews of

1 True, the Millennial Kingdom will come in due time, according to the sure Word of prophecy. But the Millennial Kingdom was *not* the "Kingdom of heaven" proclaimed by John. The Millennial Kingdom was by no means "at hand" when John was sent "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." The Kingdom of heaven is something distinct and separate, and was not revealed to the Old Testament prophets at all. This is what we undertake to show in these pages.

something which (as the event proved) was not “at hand” at all. For we are further told that, the Jews having rejected the proffered Kingdom, God withdrew the offer and turned, as an alternative plan, to the building of the Church, the Kingdom being in the meantime “in abeyance.”

This view, and the consequences that are necessarily involved in it, are of such great importance as to demand a careful examination in the light of Scripture. For if (as we maintain and confidently undertake to prove) the Kingdom of heaven belongs to *this* age and is the principal work of God to which the age is devoted, then obviously it is an exceedingly serious matter to set the Kingdom aside, with all that pertains to it. What that involves we shall endeavor to show herein. But at this point we need only to indicate that the setting up of the throne of David at the Lord’s first coming would have involved the total elimination of “the day of salvation” — “the acceptable year of the Lord” (which is what Christ Himself said He came to announce, and which He *said* was “fulfilled” by His coming) (Luke 4:18–21). Moreover it would have involved the nullifying of the prophecies which foretold the sufferings and death of Christ, the setting aside of the Cross and of all that depends upon it, and the bringing in at once of “the day of vengeance of our God.” It would have meant also the promised *glories* of Christ without the predicted *sufferings* which they were to *follow* (1 Peter 1:11).

But our expositors say that God, of course, knew beforehand that Israel would not accept the offer of the Kingdom, but would reject and slay their King. That suggestion, however, does not help matters in the least. For it puts the Lord in the position of *offering* to do that which would have falsified the Scriptures, and of announcing in the most unqualified way that something was “at hand” which He knew all the time to be actually thousands of years off. The conditions being what they were, and the eternal truth being that “flesh and blood *cannot* inherit the Kingdom of God,” Christ could not have offered, in good faith, an earthly kingdom to men of flesh and blood. Therefore, the theory under consideration imputes bad faith to the Lord, though, of course, those who hold it are not conscious thereof.

Other advocates of the view stated above say that, if the supposed offer of an earthly kingdom had been accepted by the Jews, the work of Redemption, which necessarily involves the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ, would have been accomplished *in some other way*. To such imaginings as these it is only necessary to reply that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself knew of *no other way*. To Him the predicted sufferings and death on the cross were the things which “must be” (John 3:15; Matthew 16:21, etc., etc.). *His* reply to such suggestions was: “How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it *must be*?” (Matthew 26:54). And moreover, His agonizing prayer: “If it *be* possible, let this cup pass from Me,” proves that it was *not possible*. There was no other way.

But the question we are discussing is a *question of fact*. If therefore, the Lord did *in fact* offer to the Jews of His day the earthly kingdom promised to David, then the Scriptures will contain a record of that offer. And where is that record? We have diligently searched the Gospels for it, and have found no trace or hint of any such “offer”; but we have found, on the contrary, abundant and overwhelming evidence that nothing of the sort occurred or was ever contemplated. The truth of this assertion is readily put to the test. Let the reader review carefully the early chapters of the four Gospels, seeking a record of some occasion on which the offer of an earthly kingdom was made to the Jews, or for an occasion that could by any possibility be construed into an offer of that character. For one of the most surprising things about this theory of a conditional offer of the earthly kingdom to the Jews of Christ’s day is the fact that there has never been advanced (for there does not exist) so much as a scintilla of Bible evidence in its support. What a search of the Gospels, such as suggested above, will reveal, is that only on one occasion in the early days of the Lord’s ministry was there any talk of His being made King of the Jews; and on that occasion (which was after the miracle of the loaves), so far from there being any offer of Himself as their King, He Himself frustrated the attempt. This is the record:

“Then those men when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and *take Him by force to make Him King*, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone” (John 6:14, 15).

The many occasions also on which the Lord forbade that He be announced as the Christ of God, furnish additional and strong evidence that He came into the world, even as He said, not to reign over unregenerate men, but “to give His life a ransom for many.” The term by which He habitually described Himself was — *not* the Son of David, but — the Son of *man*. The significance of this will be considered later on.

The message and ministry of John the Baptist furnish the most conclusive evidence (and evidence, moreover, which it is quite easy to understand) that the preaching of the Kingdom of heaven as being at hand, was *not* the offer of an earthly kingdom to the Jews. The promised restoration of the Kingdom to Israel, foretold in many Old Testament prophecies, will surely be fulfilled in its season, and, when God’s hour for that Kingdom shall at last arrive, the action and attitude of the Jews will not influence the matter in the slightest. *That Kingdom* never has been “offered” to them and never will be. The manner of its introduction is indicated in prophecies such as Psalm 110; Ezekiel 37:21–25; Zechariah 12:1–10.

The fulfillment of those prophecies belongs to the second coming of Christ, and it *always* belonged there in God’s unchanging plan. But the Kingdom of heaven, announced at His first coming, is a very different affair. *That Kingdom was not foretold in the Old Testament at all*, for God had seen fit to keep it hidden in His own secret counsels “from the foundation of the world.” There it lay in God’s immutable plan, though not revealed to the sons of men until, “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law” — not to establish or to offer an earthly kingdom, but — “to *redeem them that were under the law*, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4–5). For one of the wonderful features of the Kingdom of heaven, announced by John the Baptist and by the Lord Jesus Christ, is that its subjects are all *redeemed sinners*, to whom has been given the place of “sons” unto God the Father, as the result of the redeeming work of His own Son.

In the accounts which the Scriptures (both Old and New Testaments) give us of John’s preaching, there is very scant reference to the Kingdom; and in speaking of the One he came to announce, the title “King” is never once used. The Lord is called by John, and in connection with John’s ministry, “The True Light,” “The Dayspring from on high,” “The Lamb of God,” “The Son of God,” “The Lord,” “The Bridegroom,” “The Baptizer with the Holy Ghost,” “The Salvation of God,” “He that should come,” “The Mightier than I.” All references to the King and the throne of David seem to be carefully avoided; and moreover, the details of John’s preaching are (as we are about to show) incompatible with the announcement of the earthly kingdom. *That subject* had no place whatever in John’s preaching, and cannot be read into it without displacing the vital features of his message. In fact, even the word “Kingdom” appears *only once* (Matthew 3:2, not in the other Gospels or in the Epistles at all) in connection with John’s ministry.

By Mark and Luke John’s ministry is described as “preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,” which connects it directly with the New Covenant. And it is highly significant that Paul applies the same descriptive term to John’s ministry (Acts 13:23–24; 19:4), and in the first of these citations connects John’s preaching with God’s promise to Israel, not of a King, but, of “a Savior, Jesus” (cf. Matthew 1:21). All the other detailed descriptions of John’s preaching given in the four Gospels agree with the proclamation of a coming Savior, and not with the announcement of an earthly King. (See also the announcement of the angels in Luke 2:11). In fact, if there be one subject that we might say is conspicuously shut out of John’s ministry, that subject is the earthly reign of the Lord Jesus Christ as Son of David. Whereas, the thing most conspicuously announced by John (the outpouring of the Holy Ghost) involved the sitting of Christ upon the Father’s throne *in heaven* in fulfillment of Psalm 110.

The foretellings of John’s ministry in Isaiah 40, and Malachi 3 and 4, also by the Angel Gabriel and by John’s father Zacharias, when “filled with the Holy Ghost,” contain no reference whatever to the Kingdom promised to Israel, nor to national deliverance. On the contrary, every one of those prophecies describe the ministry of John, and the work of the Lord which John came to announce, in terms

which effectually exclude the earthly kingdom, and declare that the Lord was about to appear for the work of “salvation.”

Leaving the reader to examine those passages in detail we quote at this point only from the words of Zacharias. He, in the first words of his prophecy, speaks of the Lord’s coming to *redeem* His people, and to raise up “an horn of *salvation* for us in the house of His servant David”; and at the close he says:

“And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt 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, through the tender mercy of our God whereby the DAYSPRING from on high hath visited us, to GIVE LIGHT to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to GUIDE OUR FEET INTO THE WAY OF PEACE” (Luke 1:67–79).

The Scriptures being what they are, it must be regarded as a remarkable fact, very difficult to account for, that the idea has gained so wide an acceptance that the earthly kingdom was the sum and substance of John’s preaching. For it is clear that the subject had no place at all in John’s message, the essence of which was *repentance* toward God, with a view to faith in Jesus Christ, which is the essence of God’s Gospel for this age.

As regards the preaching of the Lord Jesus Himself we may be sure that, if He had indeed offered to the Jews an earthly kingdom, and especially if (as is taught) that was the purport of all His public message, then there would be abundant evidences thereof in the subsequent apostolic references to His ministry. But, in all the records that have been preserved to us, we find no hint of such a thing. On the contrary the records abound in statements which effectually exclude the idea that Christ offered to the Jews deliverance from Caesar and an earthly kingdom. Thus Peter, in the house of Cornelius, gives a summary of the Lord’s ministry, saying: “The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, *preaching peace* by Jesus Christ: He is Lord of all; that word ye know, which was *published throughout all Judea and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached*” (Acts 10:36–38). Peter thus appeals to Cornelius’ knowledge that Christ had preached *peace* to the people, not insurrection against Caesar. And to this agrees the testimony of Paul that Christ “came and *preached peace*” (Ephesians 2:17), which, of course, we understand to mean peace with God secured through Jesus Christ by all who believe in Him.

To the same effect we are reminded in Hebrews 2:3 of that “*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 witness with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.*”

With testimony so abundant and so clear as to the subject of God’s message through John and through the Lord Jesus Christ (and there is more to the same effect that could be cited) it is not easy to comprehend how the idea that the subject of that message was the overthrow of Caesar’s dominion and the restoration of the kingdom to Israel ever gained currency among those who read their Bibles.

Christ’s Work as Announced by John

The announcement of John the Baptist makes clear beyond a shadow of a doubt what the distinguishing feature of the Kingdom of heaven was to be. Let us consider the meaning of these words:

“I indeed baptize you with water, 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: Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:11, 12).

It will be observed in the first place that the foregoing announcement contains no hint of any earthly kingdom, nor of any “offer” to the Jews of anything whatever; and in the second place that, in

stating what the Mighty Coming One was to do, the idea of an earthly kingdom is *absolutely excluded*. For the work which the Coming One was to do, according to John's plain announcement, was to *baptize with the Holy Ghost*, and also to baptize *with fire*. Those words exhibit John in his full and true character as *the herald of both the first and second comings of the Lord Jesus Christ*. For the Baptism with the Holy Spirit marked the Lord's first coming, and gives character to the age which He then introduced; and the Baptism with Fire will mark His second coming, as shown by many Scriptures. (See for example Matthew 13:42; and 2 Thessalonians 2:5–10).

The Lord's great work at His first coming was to do what "must be" done in order to bring into the world "*the gift of the Holy Ghost*." What that involved will be more fully stated in a subsequent chapter. But at this point we would only ask the reader to grasp the simple fact that John's announcement involved the promise that Christ would do *all that would be needed to be done in righteousness* in order that the Holy Spirit might come down from heaven, to carry into effect the work of this age, in giving power to the Gospel, bringing about the regeneration of believing sinners, and in accomplishing the building of the house of God. For the Kingdom which John announced was not an earthly kingdom, but was that very Kingdom whereof Paul says: "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink" (literally, eating and drinking, compare David's kingdom, 1 Kings 4:20; 1 Chronicles 12:39), "but righteousness and peace and joy *in the Holy Ghost*" (Romans 14:17).

Manifestly there was no change of plan on God's part between the first words of John the Baptist and the last days of the Lord Jesus on earth. For, during the forty days between the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and His ascension into heaven, He was occupied in speaking to His disciples of "the things pertaining to *the Kingdom of God*," which Kingdom He Himself then and there distinguished from the earthly kingdom by refusing to speak of *that*. And He used, at that time, the very same words that John had used in his first announcement, saying: "For John truly" (the same word that is rendered "indeed" in Matthew 3:11) "baptized you with water, but ye shall be *baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence*" (Acts 1:1–8).

In this connection we would bring to mind the fact, as shown by John 7:38, 39, and 16:7, that the Holy Spirit *could not* come down to earth, according to the purpose of God for this age of grace, until eternal redemption had been accomplished, and the foundation had been laid in righteousness, by the sacrificial death of Christ, for the preaching of the forgiveness of sins.

This line of truth, connecting the coming of the Son of God into the world with the gift of the Holy Spirit, as first announced by John the Baptist, was continued by Peter in his address on the day of Pentecost, when, after declaring the resurrection of Christ, and proving it from the 16th Psalm, he said:

"Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

Thus it clearly appears that John's first announcement, so far from conveying to the Jews an offer of national deliverance and the earthly kingdom promised to David, contained a promise which could be fulfilled only by the Lord's death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. It is therefore strictly in accordance with the facts to say that John's message proclaimed the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ.

Inasmuch as *the coming of the Holy Spirit from heaven* to regenerate those who believe in Jesus Christ through the preaching of the Gospel, is the *chief feature of the Kingdom of heaven*, we shall speak further of this. At present we desire only to point out that John announced, as the first and most prominent item of the Lord's work, the baptizing with the Holy Ghost, which fact alone disposes completely of the theory of a national and earthly dominion being offered to the Jews, and being subsequently withdrawn upon their rejection of it. The course of events in the Lord's life, death and resurrection followed exactly the line implied in the announcement made by John. There was no change of plan, no withdrawal of an offered Kingdom, no postponement thereof, or anything of that sort.

Furthermore, John's announcement, quoted above, not only declared how the Kingdom of heaven would *begin*, namely by the pouring out of the Holy Ghost by the ascended and glorified Christ, but also declared what will follow at the end of this age, namely the *baptism with fire*.

For, at the Lord's second coming, He will purge His Kingdom with fire. See Matthew 13:42; 2 Thessalonians 2:5–10, and note the references to the Kingdom in both those passages. See also Psalm 50:3; Isaiah 30:30, etc.

Furthermore we observe in John's announcement that verse 12 is explanatory of verse 11. What the Lord holds in His hand, for the doing of the work He came to do, is not a scepter with which to rule Israel and the world, but a *winnowing fan*, with which to purge His floor, separating the chaff from the wheat. And we learn that at the end of this work, He will gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

The last clause explains what is meant by the baptism with fire, and makes it quite clear that the two baptisms here mentioned mark respectively the beginning of this age and the beginning of the next.

The verse connects in the most unmistakable fashion with the parable of the wheat and tares. Both tell the same clear story of an age-long work of God, which is "like" the work of a harvest field, wherein the husbandman sows his seed and in due time reaps his harvest; and wherein, at the time of harvest, he first gathers the precious grain into his garner, and subsequently consumes the rubbish, weeds, etc., with a purifying fire.

Thus we find John the Baptist foretelling, briefly indeed, but with perfect clearness, the work which God had laid out for this age. That work was the introduction into the world of a Kingdom — the Kingdom of *Heaven* — utterly unlike the kingdoms of earth, and to be introduced by the preaching of a divine message, the Word of the Lord, the Gospel of God, preached "*with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven*," the effect of which preaching is that all who believe are given a new birth, being born of God, without which none can enter into that Kingdom.

2

JOHN'S MESSAGE IN PROPHECY: "WHAT SHALL I CRY?"

Going back to the prophecy of John's ministry which is found in Isaiah 40, we read:

"The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the Word of our God shall stand forever."

Then follows a reference to the Gospel ("glad tidings"; "good tidings"), which is to go forth from Jerusalem (see Luke 24:47); and then we have the striking announcement:

"Say to the cities of Judah, *Behold your God*. Behold, the Lord will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him. Behold His *reward* is with Him, and *His work* before Him."

The words of the Lord Jesus in speaking to Nicodemus (John 3:3–5), and the words of Peter in his first Epistle (1 Peter 1:23–25), show the meaning of the "cry" foretold by the prophecy of Isaiah to be that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. The flesh is but "grass." It perishes. Moreover, that which is *born* of the flesh is *flesh*. But the *Word of God* abideth forever. And they who are born of the Word and Spirit have *eternal life*. Such are "the children of the Kingdom." This is the "work" that was "before Him" when He came into the world.

Much more is to be learned from this prophecy. But at present we wish only to point out that John's message, as foretold by Isaiah, heralded the coming of the Lord to do a work in which the *Word* and the *Spirit* of God were to be the Agencies. That work is, beyond a doubt, the work which was begun on Pentecost, and for which the foundation was laid in the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in His resurrection from the dead. In other words, the prophet Isaiah foretold that very work which John subsequently announced when he said: "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The New Testament narratives of what happened when Peter opened the doors of the Kingdom, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles, correspond wonderfully with these Old Testament prophecies regarding the *Word* and the *Spirit* of God. Thus in Acts 2:38 we read Peter's words: "Repent and be baptized ... and ye shall receive the *Holy Ghost* ... Then they that gladly received his *Word* were baptized." And in Acts 10:44, "The *Holy Ghost* fell on all them which heard the *Word*."

Very striking indeed is the form which the message foretold by Isaiah took as it came from the lips of John. In Isaiah 40:9, 11, 16, we read: "Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God ... He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young ... And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof for a burnt offering."

These prophecies give wonderful point and meaning to the words of John: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," and to the baptism of the Lord by John, which figured that

mighty Sacrifice, whereby results are accomplished which all the blood of beasts could not secure. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should *take away sins*. Wherefore, when He cometh into the world He saith, Sacrifice and burnt offering thou wouldst not, but *a body hast thou prepared me* ... Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) *to do Thy will, O God*" (Hebrews 10:4–7).

Baptizing With the Holy Ghost. Making Ready a People Prepared For the Lord.

From what we have thus far learned from the message of John the Baptist it is clear that the rejection of Christ by the Jews, so far from causing the Kingdom which John had proclaimed to be set aside, or "withdrawn" or "postponed" (as it is said) was in fact a *necessary step towards the introduction of that Kingdom*. This is quite simple and plain. Christ was "despised and rejected" indeed, as had been foretold in Isaiah 53:3, *not however as King*, for He did not present Himself in that character, but as the One Who came forth from God, Who spake the Words of God and did the Works of God. He was rejected, not because He offered an earthly kingdom to the Jews, but because He did *not* offer a kingdom of that sort. Had He offered national deliverance and earthly supremacy to men in the flesh (which is simply unthinkable) the offer would have been accepted with eagerness. Even the disciples that were closest to Him were ever on the alert for that. But when, instead, He offered to them *Himself* as the living Bread, with the gift of eternal life, and the forgiveness of their sins, proving by special miracles that He had power on earth to forgive sins, and to quicken the dead, then they accused Him of blasphemy, and attributed His mighty works to Beelzebub, and took counsel together to put Him to death through false testimony.

Mark 11:9, 10 which — describing His last entry into Jerusalem says: "And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord; blessed be the Kingdom of our father David" — shows how eagerly the people would have seized the idea of the earthly kingdom had the Lord ever offered it, or even given the slightest encouragement to that idea. But neither at that time, nor at any other, was there the slightest hint of such a thing from the Lord's lips. His teaching always recognized that the present age is the time of Caesar's governmental authority on earth (Matthew 22:21): for these are "the times of the Gentiles." The only crown in view for Himself at His first coming was a crown of thorns. Whenever He spake of His own earthly rule it was referred to as in the future, at His second coming. See Matthew 13:41; 16:27, 28; 25:31; 26:64; Acts 1:3, 8. And it should be noted that in the Lord's first reference to the earthly kingdom (Matthew 13) and in His last (Acts 1:8), the context clearly distinguishes it from the Kingdom of heaven (or Kingdom of God), showing clearly that they are different, and belong to different dispensations.

Every step in the course of events as recorded in the Gospels leads straight on to the fulfillment of John's announcement through the rejection of Christ, His betrayal to the Gentiles, His death and resurrection. The record is clear and plain, giving little opportunity for misunderstanding, and affording not the slightest foothold for the theory of an offer of the earthly kingdom to the Jews. That idea leads into hopeless confusion, necessitating constant exercise of human ingenuity to devise explanations for the removal of the difficulties to which it gives rise. For by the operation of the human imagination we have the idea of an earthly kingdom — the throne of David — read into John's proclamation, thereby completely changing its purport. This necessitates another effort of the imagination in order to get rid of the idea thus introduced; and the result is the astonishing theory that God, having started to bring in a Kingdom, and having announced it in unqualified terms as "at hand," withdrew His offer because the Jews would not accept it. But the serious consequences of this imaginary withdrawal of an imaginary offer of the earthly kingdom to Israel, is that the Kingdom of heaven itself is thereby, in the minds of those who accept this extraordinary view, set aside entirely, so far as this age is concerned. Moreover, subsequent Scriptures, which speak of the Kingdom as something *now existing*, are either robbed of their meaning, or are obscured and rendered valueless under the unscriptural and misleading term "the Kingdom in mystery form," to which further reference will be made later on.

The theory we are examining involves further consequences that are subversive of important truth, as will be shown hereafter. But at this point we would confine ourselves to what is to be learned from the message and ministry of John, which surely contain quite enough to prove conclusively that God did not make a false start in sending John to announce the Kingdom of heaven, and did not have to begin all over again on another plan which led to the introduction of the Church instead of the Kingdom. We need go no further than John's own record for proof sufficient to dispose completely of a theory which makes his ministry — to which all four Gospels give great prominence, and the fourth Gospel the greatest of all — a futile and abortive thing. For this theory reduces John's ministry to a nullity, in that it sweeps away the very Kingdom which he was specially commissioned to announce. It is, however, manifestly impossible that the New Testament could have been written as we have it, with Matthew's Gospel as its "Genesis," and John the Baptist made prominent in all the Gospels as the great forerunner of the Messenger of the New Covenant, if the theory under consideration were correct.

The words of the angel to Zacharias, when he came to him with the promise of a son, tell clearly what John's mission was to be. It will suffice for our present purpose to quote the following:

"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 1:15–17, compare Malachi 4:5, 6).

These words show plainly that John's ministry had nothing whatever to do with an earthly kingdom, but looked rather to the introduction of a Kingdom characterized by *reconciliation, obedience, and the wisdom of those whom God has declared "just" in His eyes*. The "people prepared for the Lord" are repentant and believing sinners, who receive pardon and life through His Name, and have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of their sins. (Titus 2:14).

We are told that Matthew's Gospel is "Jewish," and therefore of relatively little interest to the Church; and of this we have something to say hereafter. But the fourth Gospel is generally referred to as being quite free from "Jewish" influences. It is, therefore, very significant that in the fourth Gospel we find, if anything, more prominence given to John the Baptist's ministry, than in Matthew. Here we read that John the Baptist came "for a witness, to bear witness of the Light that all men through him *might believe*. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light" (John 1:6–8).

Here is a distinct and clear statement of the object of John's mission. He was sent for this express purpose, namely, to bear witness of the Light, and to the end that "all men through him *might believe*." How anyone, in the face of such words as these, can maintain that John was sent to announce an earthly kingdom which God knew was not then, nor for several thousand years thereafter, to be set up, is hard indeed to understand. And John's testimony to the Lord Jesus as "He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" and as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," points most unmistakably to the cross, showing that the cross, and not the throne of David, the sufferings and not the glory, were in view all the time. It seems almost impossible to misunderstand the significance of John's message and ministry. Yet it has been completely misunderstood, even by commentators of the highest repute. And it has been set aside by them as having no relation to this present age. In this view of the matter we should have to regard John the Baptist as one who came prematurely upon the scene with a message which, as regards the present age and the work therein of the One whose "way" he prepared, was a complete misfit — a false beginning, which belongs, not to this age at all, but to that which is yet future. Nothing could be farther from the plain truth of Scripture than this.

It is instructive, in this connection, to refer to Paul's description of John's ministry, as found in Acts 13:23–25. According to Paul the proclamation of John was not that of an earthly king, but of a *Savior*,

in view of Whose coming he preached *the baptism of repentance*. For, after mentioning David, Paul said:

“Of this man’s seed hath God, according to His promise, raised unto Israel a *Saviour*, Jesus; when John had first preached before His coming the *baptism of repentance* to all the people of Israel.”

Thus we have Paul’s testimony that the “promise” whose imminent fulfillment was proclaimed by John was — not the promise of earthly supremacy for Israel, but — the promise of a Savior.

3

BAPTISM. THE NEW COVENANT.

There is another feature of John's ministry, and one which most conspicuously characterizes it, namely, Baptism. For John was expressly sent "to baptize with water" (John 1:33). The significance of this is great, and it has a decisive bearing on the question before us. Therefore we have reserved it for separate consideration.

The Lord Himself called His forerunner "John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11), thus directing our attention in a special way to baptism as the essential or characteristic feature of John's ministry. The fact, therefore, that baptism was established and that it abides as a permanent feature of Christianity, is of controlling importance.

Baptism is one of the three things which the Lord charged His apostles to do. They were (1) to make disciples out of all nations, (2) to baptize them, and (3) to teach them to observe His commandments (Matthew 28:19, 20). This is clear proof that, whatever the significance of baptism may be, the ministry of John was not a futile thing — a false start, an attempt at the introduction of something which God had subsequently to abandon and postpone. *Baptism is closely identified with the Kingdom of heaven.* God placed it at the threshold of that Kingdom as its distinguishing mark. And there it stands to this day. Therefore, it is perfectly safe to conclude that where we find baptism we find the Kingdom of heaven. For if, by a subsequent command of God, that ancient landmark of His Kingdom had been removed, and had been made the mark of something other than the Kingdom of God, the New Testament would surely have contained a record of the fact. For manifestly it is impossible that the New Testament could have been written as it is, with baptism occupying the place of prominence given to it therein, if the Kingdom of heaven had been removed from its place in this age. Inasmuch then as we find baptism prominently mentioned at the *end* of Matthew's Gospel, as well as at the beginning, we may safely conclude, from that fact alone, that there had been no change whatever in God's purpose between the first days of John the Baptist and the last days on earth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In following this discussion the reader should bear in mind that we are examining and testing by the Scriptures two assumptions, namely, *first*, that the preaching of the Kingdom of heaven was really an offer of the earthly kingdom to the Jews, and *second*, that, in consequence of the Jews having rejected that offer, God withdrew it, and took up the alternative work of building the Church. Inasmuch as there is no record in any of the Gospels of either an offer of a kingdom to the Jews or of its withdrawal, there should be no need of an extended effort to overthrow the foregoing assumptions. But inasmuch as they have spread far and wide, and have come to be accepted in many quarters as the indisputable truth of Scripture, we feel constrained to bring forward as fully as possible the evidence that bears upon the subject. And here we have certainly a decisive fact. Baptism was, beyond all questions, the identifying mark of the Kingdom that was announced by John and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the fact that *Baptism was continued by Christ's express command for "all the days" of this age*, and is continued to this day, is conclusive proof that the Kingdom of heaven itself continues; and it follows that the Kingdom of heaven is not the earthly kingdom promised to Israel.

Indeed, the Lord's final commission to His apostles (which has been appropriately called "the great commission") is virtually a command to recruit His Kingdom. They were first to make disciples out of all nations (which is done by preaching the Gospel); and those who are thus made disciples are to be baptized unto the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (the full Name of the Sovereign of the Kingdom); and finally these baptized disciples are to be taught to observe *all things that Christ had commanded them*. In other words, they were to be brought under the laws of the Kingdom, as found in the Sermon on the Mount, and in other commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Beyond all doubt the Lord's charge to teach to baptized converts "*all things whatsoever*" He had commanded, imposes upon believers the obligation to observe the Sermon on the Mount. For if *those* commands be set aside under the plea that they do not pertain to the Church, but to the *earthly* kingdom promised to the Jews, what then *are* the commands of Christ that are to be taught His disciples? If the words "all things whatsoever" do not include the Sermon on the Mount, what do they include? It is a daring thing indeed to deal in this fashion with words of the Lord which are so clear and plain as these. For it is quite impossible to misunderstand the meaning of "all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Those words were written by inspiration of God long after the supposed withdrawal of the supposed offer of the earthly kingdom to Israel, and long after the supposed setting aside of the Sermon on the Mount as having, according to our commentators, no application to God's people in this age of grace. How can they possibly reconcile that view with the words of Christ to His apostles, giving them their final instructions for the work of this age, and recorded by the Spirit of God long after the work of the age had begun? By no possibility can that view be reconciled with these words. Therefore, those who consistently hold the theory of the postponement of the Kingdom are constrained to set aside the Gospel of Matthew *in its entirety* and the other Gospels also, with the Acts and many of the Epistles likewise. Such is the result to which that view logically leads.

Baptism is the monument that God has erected to mark the era of the *New Covenant*. That covenant had been promised only to the Jews, but God intended it for believing Gentiles also, though He kept that fact hidden in His secret counsels. His purpose in grace for believing Gentiles was one of "the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven." The conspicuous feature of the New Covenant is *the forgiveness of sins*, according to the promise "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Accordingly, when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son to be "the Mediator of the New Covenant," and to shed His blood for the ratification thereof (Hebrews 8:6). We need only quote the Lord's words in instituting His Supper, when He took the cup and gave it to them, 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 25:27,28).

We see at a glance that John's ministry was the introduction to the New Covenant; for those whom John baptized came to him "confessing their sins" (Matthew 3:6); and it is recorded that "all the people that heard him, and the publicans, *justified God*, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers *rejected the counsel of God against themselves*, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7:29, 30). It is clear, therefore, that John, in preaching the Kingdom of heaven, was preaching the New Covenant. He was a true gospel preacher, for he preached *Christ* as the Mighty One who would baptize with the Holy Ghost; and he himself baptized *repentant sinners*, thus fulfilling the ministry foretold of him by the angel who said he should turn "the disobedient to the wisdom of *the just*; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).

Paul further describes John's ministry in these words: "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should BELIEVE ON HIM *that should come after him, that is, ON CHRIST JESUS*" (Acts 19:4).

This plainly declares, what we have already shown from many other Scriptures, namely, that John did not preach and baptize into an earthly kingdom, but that he preached repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, which is precisely what was subsequently preached by Paul (Acts 20:21) and by all the apostles, as the Lord Himself commanded (Luke 24:47). Paul also describes *his own* ministry as "preaching the Kingdom of God," which further identifies it with the preaching of John (Acts 20:25).

The correspondence between Paul's preaching and John's is very close, as appears by the testimony of the former given before King Agrippa: "Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should *repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance*" (Acts 26:19, 20).

Repentance, turning to God, and doing works meet for repentance, were prominent features of John's preaching. It is very clear therefore, that Paul preached the same "Kingdom of God" as John.

John indeed did not baptize to the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, for it was given to the Son of God to make known the Father's Name (Psalm 22:22; Matthew 11:27; John 1:18). Nor was the Holy Spirit given to those who received John's baptism; for that could not be until Christ had been glorified (John 7:39), and John ministered only in the day of the Lord's humiliation — "the days of His flesh." But those differences serve only to emphasize the supreme importance of the Cross and the Resurrection. For these the coming of the Holy Ghost, in fulfillment of the promise of the New Covenant, necessarily waited. But the point is that John's ministry was *in preparation for the New Covenant*, which the Lord came to establish and to ratify with His own blood, and was *not* in preparation for the earthly kingdom promised to Israel, and which is yet in the future. John's ministry belongs emphatically to *this* age, and not to the next, even as the Lord Himself declared (and who is there that can teach Him how to divide rightly the word of truth?) when He said: "The law and the prophets were *until John; since that time the Kingdom of God is preached*" (Luke 16:16). And we would observe in passing that the Lord made that statement when He was approaching Jerusalem to die there, showing that, according to Him, the Kingdom of God was being preached long after it had been, according to our commentators, rejected and withdrawn.

Finally, as to the significance of baptism itself, it is important to observe that it eloquently shows forth, in a striking symbol or figure, the great truth which characterizes the Kingdom of heaven. The Lord Himself challenged the Pharisees, and brought them to confusion by the question: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" (Matthew 21:25). And this again was long after the supposed withdrawal of the Kingdom that John had announced. If the baptism of John was from heaven, then, being a heavenly thing, it demands our reverent regard. But, alas! (and is not the unscriptural view we are examining largely responsible for it?) baptism is treated in our day with almost contemptuous indifference.

According to the teaching of the apostles (Romans 6:1–6; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21) baptism figures burial and resurrection, pointing primarily to the burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, but proclaiming also that those who believe on Him are identified with Him in His death and resurrection. But we do not at this time enter into the doctrine of baptism, being only desirous of showing that baptism, which is closely identified in John's ministry with the Kingdom of heaven, speaks of death and resurrection. That fact alone (and none can dispute it) disposes completely of the idea that the Kingdom that John announced was the *earthly* kingdom promised to Israel. It proves moreover that the Kingdom of heaven is the place and portion, *in the time now present*, of those who, *by grace*, have been made partakers of the unspeakable blessings of the New Covenant. For these are no longer counted of God as men in the flesh, but as those who have died and risen again in Christ, having been "begotten again into a living hope *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*"

This bearing of the significance of baptism upon our present inquiry touching the Kingdom of heaven finds strong confirmation in the ministry of Peter. So strong indeed is that confirmation that consistent adherents of the school whose views we are examining, discard Peter and his ministry altogether, as being "Jewish," and as having nothing to do with the dispensation of grace. The present writer, however, refuses to be deprived of Peter and his ministry, and therefore raises his voice in protest against any teaching that tends to such a result.

The Lord entrusted to Peter "the keys of the Kingdom of heaven," and this again was *after* the supposed withdrawal of that Kingdom (Matthew 16:19). It was in immediate connection with the ac-

knowledge of the Lord Jesus by His disciples as “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” and in immediate connection also with the Lord’s revelation to them that, *being the Christ of God*, “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*” (verse 21).

When the time came for Peter to discharge the office thus conferred upon him, and to open the doors of the Kingdom first to the Jews, and then to Gentiles, he commanded those who had heard and believed the Word *to be baptized*. To the Jews he said, “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” (Acts 2:38). John the Baptist too had preached repentance and had baptized for the remission of sins, with a view to the Coming One, promising at the same time the gift of the Holy Ghost. Likewise in the house of Cornelius, Peter preached Christ risen from the dead, proclaiming through His Name *the remission of sins* to all who believe in Him; “and he *commanded* them to be baptized in the Name of the Lord” (Acts 10:43–47).

These Scriptures hardly justify us in regarding baptism as one of “the keys of the Kingdom of heaven”; but they do show that baptism is the monumental mark of the New Covenant, whereby sins are forgiven through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus, that Redemption having been secured by His blood. And the position thus given to the rite of baptism in the ministry of the Lord Jesus, in His last charge to His apostles, and in their ministry and teaching, makes it a serious matter, to say the least, to treat baptism with neglect and indifference, “as the manner of some is.”

4

“LO, I COME TO DO THY WILL”

The Epistle to the Hebrews declares, among other “good things,” that the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to offer the appointed Sacrifice by which alone the New Covenant could be established. The tenth chapter deals at length with the purpose for which Christ came, and even gives us His words when coming into the world. What was in God’s plan was *the forgiveness of sins*; and since “it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins,” therefore, “when *He* cometh into the world He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but *a body hast Thou prepared Me*. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sins Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) *to do Thy will, O God*” (Hebrews 10:4–7).

What that “will” of God was, and what struggle and agony it cost Him to say “Not My will, but Thine be done,” and how He fully accomplished it, and could say “It is finished,” we know full well. But, when we are plainly told in the above, as in many other Scriptures, that the death of the Cross was before the Lord Jesus *when He came into the world*, can we possibly entertain for a moment the strange idea that He sent His forerunner to proclaim, and that He Himself proclaimed, national deliverance and an earthly kingdom to the Jews? Can we entertain for a moment the idea that the Lord Jesus came into the world with one definite purpose before Him, and yet devoted His time to proclaiming something *directly contrary thereto*? Such indeed is the idea that is industriously propagated by many eminent expositors of Scripture. Hence we are giving it a somewhat careful (though by no means exhaustive) consideration.

Turning now to the second chapter of Hebrews we find a clear reference to the Kingdom, and to “the children” of the Kingdom, whom the Father (a Name peculiarly associated with the Kingdom of heaven) gives to His Son. God, of course, knows “the children” before they know Him; for He chose them for adoption by Jesus Christ to Himself before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4, 5). But the children are “partakers of flesh and blood,” and the eternal truth is that “flesh and blood *cannot* inherit the Kingdom of God.” Moreover, as partakers of flesh and blood they are subjects of *another realm*, “the power of death,” which is vested in the devil; and through “fear of death” (that is to say, through being subject to death’s “fear” or authority) they were all their life time subject to bondage. What, therefore, is indispensably necessary in order to accomplish God’s purpose for “the children of the Kingdom” was to “destroy” or nullify the devil’s authority over them, and to “deliver” them from that bondage into another Kingdom — “a Kingdom which cannot be shaken,” and which is established upon the New Covenant (Hebrews 12:24, 27). Accordingly, we have in Hebrews 2:14, 15, the following clear and weighty statement of the purpose for which the Son of God Himself took part of flesh and blood (we quote also verses 12, 13, for the sake of the connection):

“Saying, I will declare *Thy Name* unto My brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee. And again, I will put My trust in Him. And again, Behold, *I* and the *children* which God hath given Me.” (These are all quotations from Old Testament prophecies which the Lord came to fulfill).

“Forasmuch then as *the children* are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; *that THROUGH DEATH*” — not through ascending an earthly

throne — “He might destroy him that had the power of death, *that is the devil*, and DELIVER THEM” (the children) “who through fear of death were all their lifetime SUBJECT TO BONDAGE.”

Did John Proclaim “The Earth Rule of David’s Son?”

It is hardly possible to misunderstand the meaning of the foregoing Scripture, which states with all possible clearness the purpose for which the Lord was born of a woman and which utterly excludes the idea that an earthly kingdom over men of “flesh and blood” was in contemplation at all. But that is the idea with which we have to deal. And in order that we may have this idea, *and some of the consequences necessarily involved in it*, definitely before us; and in order also that we may do justice to those who hold it, by stating it in their own words, we will now give a few extracts from a well-known publication, “The Scofield Reference Bible,” by means of which publication the idea of an earthly kingdom proffered to the Jews, refused by them, and consequently withdrawn and postponed by God, has been spread and popularized.

In that publication these statements are found:

“The phrase ‘Kingdom of heaven’ signifies the Messianic *earth* rule of Jesus Christ, the Son of David.” “It is the kingdom covenanted to David’s seed, described in the prophets.”

It will be observed that these statements are quite positive; but we find in the publication referred to no attempt whatever to support them by the testimony of Scripture.

Further it is said:

“The Kingdom of heaven has three aspects in Matthew:

“(a) ‘at hand,’ from the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist (3:2) to the virtual rejection of the King and the announcement of the new brotherhood (12:46–50);

“(b) in seven ‘mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven’ to be fulfilled during the present age (13:1–52), to which are to be added the parables of the Kingdom of heaven spoken after those of Matthew 13 and which have to do with the sphere of Christian profession during this age;

“(c) the prophetic aspect — the Kingdom to be set up after the return of the King in glory.”

We should be glad to weigh and discuss the evidences upon which these positive statements are based; but that we cannot do, for the reason that no evidence whatever is advanced in support of them. Moreover, as the result of our investigations, we are forced to the conclusion that no such evidence exists, the statements themselves being not only unsupported by Scripture, but contrary to the clear testimony thereof.

We offer a few comments on the above statements, asking our readers to bear in mind that, in all the Lord’s utterances concerning the object of His first coming into the world, there was *never a word* of any “Messianic *earth rule*,” nor any offer of national deliverance to Israel. The Kingdom of which He spoke as being at hand was “the Kingdom of *heaven*” not of “*earth!*”

- a. The period from Matthew 3:2 to 12:50 cannot possibly be regarded as an “aspect” of the Kingdom of heaven. It presents no distinct aspect or phase of that Kingdom; but was simply a period in the Lord’s earthly lifetime during which, as He went about from place to place, He proclaimed the fact that the Kingdom of heaven was about to be established. The proclamation of the Kingdom as “at hand” was a simple statement of *fact*, which we are bound to accept as *true*. It was in no sense a special “aspect” of the Kingdom, nor was it a conditional offer of anything whatever to the Jews.

- b. Here we find a glaring inconsistency, and also an admission which completely overthrows the idea that the Kingdom of heaven is “the Messianic earth rule of the Son of David.” For if so, how could its “mysteries” possibly have their fulfillment in this age? There is confessedly no “earth rule of the Son of David” *now*; and there is no nation of Israel at all. As to that there is and could be no dispute. It is perfectly agreed on all hands that “the earth rule of the Son of David, the Kingdom covenanted to David’s seed, described in the prophets” *has no place at all in this age*, during which Israel has no national existence. How then can “the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven” (which are simply certain features of that Kingdom which God had “kept secret” until the Lord Jesus revealed them) be “fulfilled during the present age”? How could the *Kingdom itself* be “postponed” to the next age, and yet leave *its characteristic features* behind it, becoming “like” the various things described in the Lord’s parables of the Kingdom? It is simply amazing that sober men can utter such absolute contradictions without being aware of it.

Expositors may differ as to the interpretations of the Lord’s parables of the Kingdom of heaven; but there is no room for disputing the fact that *those parables locate the Kingdom of heaven in this present age*. They do this in the most definite and positive fashion. Unquestionably the wheat and the tares are growing together in *this age*, and unquestionably the harvest is the end of *this age*; and equally certain is it that the invitation to the wedding supper in Matthew 22 represents the Gospel preached in all the world during *this age*. Those points being absolutely clear and undisputed, what becomes of the positive assertions that the Kingdom of heaven is the “Messianic *earth rule* of the Son of David, the Kingdom described in the prophets”? How can the Kingdom be postponed and some “aspect” of it, which is confessedly *not* the earth rule of David’s Son, and *not* the Kingdom covenanted to David’s seed, remain? In other words, how can a thing be both existent and nonexistent at the same time? These are some of the *mysteries* of the Kingdom which our commentators are bound to explain, for they are mysteries of their own making.

We dwell a little longer on this point for the reason that, if the reader apprehends it, there will be no further question, as to *when* the Kingdom of heaven exists in the world. One fact, then, is admitted on all hands, namely, that the Kingdom of heaven as described in the Lord’s parables belongs *in this present age*. And another fact which is indisputable is that “the Messianic earth rule of David’s Son” over the Jews *does not exist in any form or aspect in this age*. For certainly there is no trace of any “earth rule” for the Jews now; and not only so, but the fact is that, since the destruction of Jerusalem, A. D. 70, the Jews have not had so much as the shadow of a national existence. From these incontestable facts it follows that *the Kingdom of heaven is not “the Messianic earth rule of David’s Son, the Kingdom described in the prophets,”* which Kingdom was covenanted to the nation Israel. This is the foundation of the erroneous view we are discussing, and the facts stated above refute it completely.

The idea that John’s proclamation meant “the Messianic earth rule of David’s Son” comes into sharp collision with the statements of the Lord in His parables of the Kingdom. Therefore, in order to escape the difficulties thus created, resort is had to the invention of these imaginary “aspects” of the Kingdom. But that invention does not meet the difficulties at all. For if the Kingdom of heaven be indeed the “earth rule of David’s Son, the Kingdom described in the prophets,” and if “the earth rule of David’s Son” *be reserved, as all agree that it is, for the coming age*, then there is not and cannot be any “aspect” of the Kingdom of heaven *now*. A Kingdom which is *not* “the Messianic earth rule described in the prophets” cannot be an “aspect” of the Kingdom which *is* the “Messianic earth rule described in the prophets.” The contradiction is complete; and there we must leave it.

But with the Scriptures there are no difficulties at all. The difficulties result *wholly* from reading into the Scriptures an offer of the earthly kingdom to the Jews. The Lord came to establish — not the *earthly* kingdom described in the prophets, but — a *heavenly* Kingdom, which had *not been revealed to the prophets at all*, and whose characteristics were therefore “mysteries,” or

things which had been *“kept secret* from the foundation of the world.” He came into the world with no thought whatever of overthrowing the Gentile powers that be, or of interrupting “the times of the Gentiles” (which must needs be “fulfilled”). He sent His promised messenger before His face, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to announce the Kingdom of *heaven*, and to prepare the way of the Lord. The Lord Himself confirmed that announcement in unqualified terms by His own lips, and accompanied the proclamation by such works of power as were abundantly sufficient to make good the claim that He came forth from God. He did not at first describe the characteristics of the Kingdom of heaven, or tell what it was “like”; but He gave the laws thereof in that grand utterance known as “the Sermon on the Mount,” asserting thereby His “authority” and right to demand the *obedience* of men. In due time, after the mass of the people, under the hostile influence of the scribes and Pharisees, had spurned Him as “a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners,” and had attributed His mighty works to the power of Satan, He revealed *to His disciples* the previously hidden facts concerning the Kingdom of heaven, speaking of those things *in parables*, in order that the unbelieving Jews might not comprehend them, and in order that the prophecy of Isaiah 6 might be fulfilled. There is no indication whatever of any change in the theme of the Lord’s discourses, and not the slightest reason to imagine that the Kingdom of heaven in Matthew 13 was in anywise different from the Kingdom of heaven in Matthew 3. If the Kingdom of chapter 13 was not “the “Messianic earth rule of David’s Son, described in the prophets,” which none will say it was, then no more was the Kingdom that was announced in the earlier chapters.

“The Times of the Gentiles”

We have referred above to the “times of the Gentiles,” an expression used by the Lord in Luke 21:24, where it is recorded that He said: “And Jerusalem shall be trodden under foot of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Obviously those “times” had not been “fulfilled” at the Lord’s first coming, for they have not been fulfilled yet. And the “earth rule of the Son of David” *cannot* begin until the times of the Gentiles *are* fulfilled. So we have here another Scripture which testifies clearly and positively against the view we are examining.

The expression “times of the Gentiles” carries us back to the days of Nebuchadnezzar, when the period of Gentile dominion over Judea and Jerusalem began. In those days God gave to Nebuchadnezzar the vision of a great image, which represents *the entire course of Gentile dominion from beginning to end* — from the head of gold (the Babylonian empire) to the feet and toes of mingled iron and earthenware, (the last stage of the Roman dominion). In that vision (Daniel 2:31–45) was also seen a stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, which smote the image *upon its feet*; and then the stone “became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” According to Daniel’s inspired explanation of the vision, that stone represents the Kingdom which is called in the above quotation “the Messianic earth rule of the Son of David, the Kingdom covenanted to David’s Seed, described in the prophets.” The prophetic vision shows, therefore, that the Kingdom covenanted to David’s Seed is *not to come until the Roman Empire reached its last stage*, represented by the ten toes of the image. That last prophetic stage of the Roman Empire has not come yet, though we can now see it taking its predicted form of a federation of ten kingdoms. At the time of Christ’s first coming the Roman Empire was just beginning. Therefore, the announcement of the earthly kingdom in the days of John the Baptist, *would have falsified this prophecy*, and would have been equivalent to making the stone strike the image in the middle, instead of on its toes.

Furthermore, and as already stated, in reading the Gospel of Matthew we find nothing whatever to indicate that the “Kingdom of heaven” which the Lord spoke of in chapter 13, is a different Kingdom, or a different phase of the Kingdom, to that which He announced in chapter 4:17. Inasmuch as He used *exactly the same expression on both occasions*, and inasmuch as the inspired Scripture gives no hint of any change in the meaning of that expression, we are bound to take it as meaning exactly the same thing in both cases. Those who assert the contrary are re-

sponsible to prove their assertion by *evidence* sufficient in character and amount to carry thorough conviction.

- c. As regards “the prophetic aspect” of the Kingdom of heaven, we need only point out that the Lord Jesus Christ never applied that term to the coming Kingdom of glory. He always spoke of the future Kingdom as “the Kingdom of the Son of man” (see Matthew 13:41; 16:28; 25:31; etc.).

In the publication from which we have quoted we find the expression “the *mystery form* of the Kingdom,” which phrase has been invented to define the so-called present “aspect” of the Kingdom of heaven. There is no warrant whatever for that phrase. The Scripture says nothing of any “mystery form of the Kingdom.” On the contrary, the Lord’s own words tell us plainly that the facts concerning the Kingdom which in past ages *were* “mysteries” (in that God kept them hidden in His own counsels) are *now revealed*.

But what meaning are we to attach to the phrase “mystery form of the Kingdom”? We are told that we, the people of God, are now, at this present time, in the Kingdom of heaven in its “mystery form.” Where does that bring us, and what are the incidents, privileges, and responsibilities of the mystery form of the Kingdom? It is most important for us to know these things. But the publication we are consulting does not tell us. It leads us into a kingdom “in mystery form,” which is an unexplained “mystery” indeed, and there it leaves us in complete bewilderment. The present writer knows whereof he is speaking, for he too, like many others, had accepted these views upon human authority. Hence he is deeply thankful for the light of Scripture which has delivered him from the difficulties and perplexities into which they led him.

“The Kingdom in Mystery Form”

The expression “Kingdom in mystery form” calls for careful scrutiny. Whence came it? Certainly this phrase is not among “the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth”; for the Scripture speaks of no “Kingdom in mystery form,” nor of anything which could be properly described by that phrase. The idea conveyed by it is this, namely, that when “the earth rule of David’s Son” which had been supposedly “offered” to the Jews, was rejected by them, and was “withdrawn” (as they say), it took a *mysterious form*; and thus while they tell us in one breath that “the earth rule of David’s Son” is postponed to the coming age, in the next they say that it exists in *this* age, only in a “mystery form.”

On this point we quote the following from the “Reference Bible” already referred to:

“Such then is the *mystery form of the Kingdom*. It is the sphere of Christian profession.”

And further in a note on Matthew 16:19, where the Lord promised to Peter the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, we find this statement:

“Not of the Church, but of the Kingdom of heaven in the sense of Matthew 13, i.e., *the sphere of Christian profession*.”

Thus God’s wonderful and holy Kingdom, which none can enter except by being born of the Spirit, is degraded to signify apostate Christendom; and Peter’s apostolic ministry of throwing open God’s Kingdom to all believers, Jews and Gentiles, is degraded to that of doorkeeper to the precincts of great Babylon. What this teaching makes of the authority to bind and loose, which the Lord gave to His servant Peter at that same time, and afterward conferred on the disciples as a company (John 20:22, 23), we are not told.

There is nothing like the foregoing — no Kingdom in mystery form — in the Gospels. What they make known in this connection is the simple fact that, whereas the characteristics of the Kingdom of heaven *had been* kept as divine secrets or “mysteries,” during all the ages past, not having been revealed to the fathers by the Old Testament prophets, they have now been *made known* by the Lord Jesus Christ and His inspired apostles, and are published to all the world in the New Testament Scriptures. Therefore, the previously hidden facts concerning the Kingdom of heaven are not any

longer “mysteries” or secrets. The fact, then, is just the reverse of what is stated in the above quotations. For the Lord’s descriptive and prophetic parables, instead of enveloping the Kingdom of heaven in mystery, have the contrary effect of making all its mysteries known. And in revealing those mysteries, He disposes completely of the idea that the Kingdom of heaven, whether in one “aspect” or another, and whether in “mystery form” or in any other form, has any connection whatever with the earthly kingdom promised to the Jews.

Nothing could be farther from the plain truth of Scripture than the statement that the Kingdom of heaven is “the sphere of Christian profession.” The Lord has categorically refuted the idea by saying, “*Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord*” — mere professors, in other words — “shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven*” (Matthew 7:21). That is to say, the “Kingdom of heaven” is identical with the “new brotherhood” mentioned in the aforesaid “Reference Bible,” and to which we will presently refer. Only what is *real* can have place in that Kingdom. The “tares” are in the *same field*, but not in the *same Kingdom*, for they obey another ruler, being “the children of the wicked one.”

Again the Lord has said: “Except ye *be converted* and become as little children, ye shall *not enter into the Kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 18:2). The meaning of this is unmistakable. None can enter that Kingdom without conversion and the new birth. It is precisely the same truth which the Lord declared to Nicodemus in the well-known words of John 3:5: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he *cannot* enter into the Kingdom of God.” And the same truth appears in Paul’s words: “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood *cannot* inherit the Kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50); and again: “the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is *not subject to the law of God*, neither indeed *can be*” (Romans 8:7).

The words which the Lord spoke in explanation of the parable of the tares of the field — “the good seed are the children of the Kingdom” (Matthew 13:38) — declare the same truth, and they effectually shut out of this Kingdom all who have not been born of God. And these words of the Lord distinguish in a special way between “the children of the Kingdom” and “the children of the wicked one.”

In another pertinent Scripture (Matthew 23:13) the Lord declared the Pharisees — *who were the professing formalists of that day* — to be they who “*shut up* the Kingdom of heaven against men”; “for,” said He, “ye neither *go in* yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.” It would be hard to find a statement more contradictory to the plainest words of Scripture than that the Kingdom of heaven is “the sphere of Christian profession.”

5

ENTRANCE INTO THE KINGDOM. ITS STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

In another recent publication, which we need not specify by name, but which is accepted as an authoritative setting forth of the “postponed Kingdom” theory, we find this astonishing statement:

“Entrance into the Kingdom of heaven in its Messianic form, may be by *so low a standard* as that which *merely exceeds* the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20): while entrance into the Kingdom of God is by a new birth alone (John 3:3).”

This statement puts a wide difference indeed between the Kingdom of heaven, and the Kingdom of God, and that too in a matter as to which there is in reality no difference at all. Surely it is true in our day also that “the Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence”; and we have yet to see a statement that does greater violence to it than the foregoing declaration that “in its *Messianic*¹ form” it may be entered “by *so low* a standard as that which merely exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.”

The present writer does not know just how “low” a standard that would be; but while awaiting further information on that point let us turn to the words of the Lord which are cited in support of the grievous statement we have quoted. After telling His disciples that they are “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (does that suggest a “low” standard of righteousness?), and demanding of them obedience to the least of His commandments, He says: “For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven.”

This certainly sets for the Kingdom of heaven a higher standard of righteousness than that of the scribes and Pharisees. Literally the word rendered “exceed” signifies to *abound above*. But it is a very different thing to say that one can enter the Kingdom by a standard so low as that which “merely exceeds” the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. What is this higher standard of righteousness which the Lord requires of His disciples? And what was that of the scribes and Pharisees? Taking the last question first, we would turn to Matthew 23, where the Lord said of the scribes and Pharisees, that they paid tithes of herbs, but omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith; and He added: “these (latter) ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone.”

Again in the same passage He said that they made clean the *outside* of the cup and of the platter, but *within* are full of extortion and excess, adding: “Cleanse first that which is *within* ... that the outside may be clean also” (verses 23–27). From this and other Scriptures we gather that the chief defect in the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was that it was merely a matter of *outward show*, whereas the righteousness which Christ requires of His disciples is a thing of *the heart*. And this

1 See our comments on the word “Messianic,” page 31 herein.

higher righteousness is *by faith* of Jesus Christ; as said the apostle Peter concerning believers from among the Gentiles: "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts *by faith*" (Acts 15:8,9).

This higher righteousness is possible only to those who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, "who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." It was not possible for men to have this righteousness until after God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, had condemned sin in the flesh, and given the Holy Spirit to believers, to the end that "the *righteousness of the law* might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1-4). It is a righteousness that is possible only through "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," given to believers; wherefore Paul bids Titus "affirm constantly that they which have *believed God* should be careful *to maintain good works*" (Titus 3:5-8).

Accordingly, when we read the words of the Lord in Matthew 5, following verse 20, quoted above, we find that He traces all sins to *the heart*; and He requires that His disciples should cleanse *that which is within*.

All this seems to us to be the elementary teaching of the Scriptures on the subject of personal righteousness. Therefore we do not pursue the subject at greater length, and should not have thought it necessary to touch upon it at all, but for the amazing statement, which is commended to the Lord's people by expositors of the best repute, that entrance into the Kingdom of heaven, in its "Messianic form," may be by so low a standard as that which *merely exceeds* the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

"Kingdom of Heaven" and "Kingdom of God"

The last quoted writer, and others of the same school, make a wide distinction between the Kingdom of heaven and Kingdom of God; whereas the Scriptures make it plain that *when this present dispensation is in view*, the two expressions mean precisely the same thing. The only difference is that the phrase "Kingdom of God" is sometimes applied to the coming Kingdom of glory (as in 2 Thessalonians 1:5) whereas "Kingdom of heaven" is used only of the Kingdom as it exists in this age.

The absolute identity of meaning of the two expressions when used in regard to God's Kingdom in this present dispensation, is fully established by comparison of certain passages in Matthew with corresponding passages in other Gospels; for example, Matthew 4:17 with Mark 1:15; Matthew 11:11 with Luke 7:28; Matthew 13:31 with Mark 4:30; Matthew 13:33 with Luke 13:20; Matthew 19:14 with Luke 18:16, 17.

The Scriptures last cited: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me, for of such is the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN" (or "Kingdom of God," according to Luke), give words that were spoken by the Lord only a few weeks before His death. In Luke's account we have the additional words: "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God AS A LITTLE CHILD shall in no wise enter therein." And the parallel saying is found in Matthew 18:3: "Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted and become AS LITTLE CHILDREN ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven."

These words prove beyond question (1) that the Kingdom of heaven and Kingdom of God are, so far as relates to this age, one and the same thing; (2) that God's Kingdom is not entered by mere professors or according to a "low" standard of righteousness, but only by those who become "as little children," that is to say, they who are cleansed by the new birth from all unrighteousness; and (3) that, on the eve of the Lord's death, the Kingdom had neither been postponed nor changed into a "mystery form" (whatever that may be). The Scriptures lend no support whatever to those ideas, but on the contrary disproves them completely.

The main point to be apprehended is that the Kingdom which was announced by John and by the Lord Jesus Christ was *not* the earthly kingdom promised to Israel, but a different (*i.e.*, a *heavenly*) Kingdom, one that had not been revealed to the prophets of Israel, and one that was to occupy the

whole world as its “field.” When that point is apprehended, the whole subject of the Kingdom soon becomes clear.

As a help, therefore, to the apprehension of this cardinal point we here present a simple argument which will fully establish it.

1. The Scriptures cited above prove that the phrases Kingdom of heaven and Kingdom of God are identical in meaning for the purposes of our present inquiry.
2. The parables of Matthew 13 (some of which are given also in Mark and Luke) prove that the Kingdom of heaven (or Kingdom of God) exists in this present age, and that it is introduced and extended throughout the age by the preaching of a special divine message called “the Gospel.”
3. The many references to this Kingdom in the latter part of the Gospels and the book of Acts; and the fact that the Kingdom was preached by all the Apostles and especially by Paul, and is, moreover, mentioned repeatedly in the Epistles, prove that the Kingdom has not been withdrawn or postponed.
4. There being nothing whatever to show, or even to suggest, that the Kingdom mentioned in the later chapters of the Gospels, and in the Epistles and Acts, is a different Kingdom in *fact* or *form* from the Kingdom that is called by *precisely the same name* in the earlier chapters of the Gospels, there is not the slightest warrant for supposing that, at some point in the Lord’s earthly ministry, He set aside the Kingdom which He had proclaimed as “at hand,” or changed it into another kind of Kingdom (“mystery form”) which He called by *the same name*. On the contrary, the fact that John the Baptist made the imminent baptism with the Holy Spirit the prominent subject of his preaching, which baptism is the chief characteristic of the Kingdom of God in this age, establishes beyond controversy the complete identity of the Kingdom announced by John the Baptist with that which subsequently was preached and described by the Apostle Paul.

These four simple propositions cover the whole case; and they are easily grasped and easily verified by reference to the testimony of Scripture.

The entire theory of the announcement and subsequent postponement of the earthly kingdom rests upon the assumption that the unqualified proclamation of the Kingdom of heaven was a conditional offer to the Jews of the earthly kingdom, which assumption is not only unproved, but is refuted by the clearest testimony of Scripture.

That assumption made necessary another, equally contrary to Scripture, namely, that the Jews refused the earthly kingdom when God offered it to them (which is about the last thing in the world they would have done); and it also made necessary the further assumption that the (supposed) action of the Jews in refusing the offer of the earthly kingdom compelled God to change His plan, to set aside the Kingdom which He had positively announced as “at hand,” and to substitute therefore the building of the Church.

It is quite easy for the reader to test these assumptions by the Scriptures.

We do not offer herein any explanation of the parables of Matthew 13. For that we must refer our readers to our forthcoming volume “*After This*” referred to in the preface. We would only point out in this connection that it is needful to distinguish between what the Kingdom of heaven actually *is*, and what it *appears* to be, or “*is like*.” That Kingdom is purely spiritual in character — a heavenly company scattered throughout “the world.” They are the sons of God, of whom John says: “it doth *not yet appear* what we shall be.” What the Kingdom appears “like” in the eyes of men was foretold in the parables of Matthew 13, and has now been fulfilled in Christendom. Professing Christendom obscures both the Church of God and the Kingdom of God, but it *is* neither the one nor the other. Wheat and tares differ but little in appearance, but in nature there is a vast difference; and only the wheat are “the children of the Kingdom.” The Lord expressly says of the tares that they are “the children of the wicked one.” They are in the same field, but not in the same Kingdom. If the Kingdom of heaven in-

cludes all that is in the field of professing Christendom, it must needs include also the “Kingdom of Satan” (Matthew 12:26).

Therefore we are bound to reject, with all our energy, the view which allows no boundary between the Kingdom of heaven, on the one hand, and the Kingdom of Satan and the kingdoms of the world which he controls (Matthew 4:8), on the other. There is, indeed, no *geographical* boundary between them, for the Kingdom of heaven is dispersed throughout the world. But there is a *spiritual* boundary, and none can pass it to gain entrance into the spiritual Kingdom which it defines, except by the new birth, whereby “children of wrath” become “the children of God.” That is as plain as the Word of God can make it.

In the Scriptures subsequent to Matthew 13 there are many references to the Kingdom of heaven (and Kingdom of God) whereof no explanation is given in the publication referred to. Thus we have such facts as these: that, *after the supposed rejection of the Kingdom by the Jews*, Christ entrusted the keys of the Kingdom to Peter, which certainly was meaningless if that Kingdom had been already withdrawn; that Christ taught the necessity of conversion and a new birth in order to enter the Kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3); that He rebuked the Pharisees for shutting up the Kingdom of heaven against men (Matthew 23:13); that He spent the forty days of His stay on earth after His resurrection, “speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3); that the apostles, and especially Paul, continually preached “the Kingdom of God” (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23; 28:31); and that the subject of the Kingdom of God, as now existing in the world, is mentioned repeatedly in the Epistles. We are left without any explanation of these pertinent facts.

“The New Brotherhood”

We have seen that, according to the publication from which we have quoted, the “at hand” phase of the Kingdom extended from the beginning of John’s ministry “to the virtual rejection of the King and the announcement of the new brotherhood (Matthew 12:46–50).”

The obvious purpose of the quoted statement is to exhibit a contrast between the Kingdom of heaven announced by John, and the “*new* brotherhood” announced by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 12:46–50. It implies that, at the time of the incidents recorded in Matthew 12, the Lord had dropped the Kingdom of heaven, and had taken up another subject — “the new brotherhood.” But we assert with the utmost confidence that the Kingdom of heaven as seen in the early chapters of Matthew, and the “new brotherhood” seen in chapter 12, are *one and the same thing*; and further we assert that the words of the Lord Jesus identify the two beyond the shadow of a doubt. Let us proceed to the proof of this.

The Sermon on the Mount certainly puts before us a “new brotherhood”; for those who compose the Kingdom of heaven are all the children of God (Matthew 5:16, 45, etc.). They are taught in many passages that God is their Father, and that their fellow-disciples are brethren. So it is not to be assumed, without the clearest evidence that the Lord spoke a little later, to the same disciples, of a *different* brotherhood. But here is the conclusive proof of identity, leaving no room for any surmise or inference. For who are those who compose the brotherhood called the “Kingdom of heaven”? Let the Lord Himself tell us: “Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven, but he that *doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven*” (Matthew 7:21). And who are they who compose the “new brotherhood” of Matthew 12:48–50? Let the Lord tell us again: “But He answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is My mother, and who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand *toward His disciples*” — the same to whom the Sermon on the Mount was spoken, see Matthew 5:1, 2 — “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.”

Thus the words which describe the members of the “new brotherhood,” are the *identical words* which describe those who are in the Kingdom of heaven. It is almost unbelievable that men can thus imagine that they see a wide distinction where the words of the Lord establish *complete identity*. And

this method of putting asunder what God has joined together is made to pass as “*rightly* dividing the word of truth”!

“The Messianic Earth Rule” Is Matthew a “Jewish” Gospel?

We take strong exception to the way in which certain words and expressions are used by those who uphold the postponed Kingdom theory. In particular do we protest against the use of the words “Messiah,” and “Messianic” in such manner as to cast discredit upon important and divine things. So far has this usage of certain words gone that to speak of a thing as “Messianic,” or “Jewish,” or “legal,” is virtually to bring it into disrepute. Those words have become almost terms of opprobrium.

The fact is that the word “Messiah” is just another word for “Christ.” “Messiah” and “Christ” are perfectly synonymous and interchangeable, being of *precisely the same meaning*. Yet when it is desired by our modern teachers to distinguish something as pertaining exclusively to Israelites, and as being therefore of an inferior character, the word “Messiah” is invariably used, the word “Christ” being reserved for the exclusive use of Gentile believers, who, by nature are “without Christ.” The expression “Messianic *earth rule*” is calculated to have the effect of discrediting the thing to which it is applied, and of conveying the idea that it is beneath the regard of God’s saints in this era. Those who employ the word “Messiah” in that way ought, in all honesty and fairness, to say of the saints of this dispensation, that God “has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Messiah,” that He has “quickened us together with Messiah,” and that in time past we were “without Messiah, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise.” For the phraseology of which we are now complaining gives the impression that the Christ of God and the “Jewish Messiah” are two very different persons, and that the former is of higher dignity than the latter.

And it is constantly affirmed by commentators of this school, and widely accepted as unquestionable fact, that Matthew’s Gospel is “Jewish.” Certainly indeed it *is* “Jewish” in the sense that *all* the Scriptures, from beginning to end, and all the promises and the covenants, are “Jewish.” We who by nature are “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel” (Ephesians 2:12), being branches of the wild olive tree, do not well to speak disparagingly and contemptuously of “Jewish” things. For “the Gentiles have been made partakers of *their spiritual things*” (Romans 15:27). There is nothing beyond this that grace can do for us. All “spiritual things” and blessings of every description whereof we (Gentiles) have been made partakers by the mercies of God are “Jewish.” And above all, the Christ of God, the Messiah, is “Jewish.” For the apostle of the Gentiles says of the “Israelites” that “to *them* pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, *Christ came*, Who is over all, God blessed for evermore. Amen” (Romans 9:4, 5). Grace has brought believing Gentiles into the place of “fellow-citizens with the saints,” making them sharers together of all these “Jewish” blessings. And that is one of the leading “mysteries of the Kingdom.”

So let us be careful not to use the word “Jewish” as a term of disparagement.

And why is it said that Matthew’s Gospel is any more “Jewish” than other Scriptures, using the word in a sense which allows to Matthew’s Gospel only a remote application to the saints of this age? There is no warrant whatever for that idea. Luke’s Gospel, which opens with a scene in the Temple, and which contains the promise of the throne of David, and the very “Jewish” anthems of Zacharias, Mary and Simeon, together with the account of the circumcision of Christ, the purification of Mary, and the Lord’s interview in the Temple, at the age of twelve years, with the doctors of the law, is more “Jewish,” in the dispensational sense, than Matthew.

As regards Matthew’s Gospel, we have in the first place the fact that, in the very beginning thereof, the Lord Jesus is presented as the Son of Abraham, as well as the Son of David, the significance of which will appear later on; and the further fact that the work which the Lord was to accomplish is declared in the simple and clear words: “*He shall save His people from their sins*” (1:21).

Furthermore, Matthew presents Christ as fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy concerning the "Great Light" which was to be seen in *Galilee of the Gentiles* (4:14–16); for Matthew's account has very little to say of the Lord's ministry in Judea and Jerusalem.

Again, Matthew announces the fulfillment of another prophecy of Isaiah:

"Behold My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased: I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall show judgment *to the Gentiles*. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory. *And in His Name shall the Gentiles trust*" (literally, hope; Matthew 12:18–21, quoting Isaiah 42:1).

Not only do the foregoing passages refute completely the view that the earthly kingdom was in view at the Lord's first coming, but they also exhibit *the breadth of Matthew's Gospel*, which presents the work of the Lord, not as narrowed to the national interests of Israel, but as reaching out to embrace God's purpose, through that work, to bless *all the nations* of the world.

Again, we have in Matthew's Gospel, and *only there*, that marvelous invitation, addressed to all the world, and which has moved the hearts of men of every nation under heaven: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30).

In those matchless words of grace we have the very quintessence of God's Gospel for all the weary ones in the whole world. "Come, and I will *give*" is the fullest and the most condensed expression of God's *grace*. The words "take My yoke" signify willing submission to His *authority* or government, voluntary obedience to His law; and *that* is the Kingdom of heaven. They who heed those words enter that Kingdom where the law of Christ ("My yoke") is to be obeyed *voluntarily* (i.e., "from the heart," Romans 6:17), but where the recompense of the reward ("rest unto your souls") is exceeding great. The first part of this saying of the Lord is *grace*, which embraces all that God bestows as a free gift upon the undeserving. The second part is *truth*, which is taught to the children of God to be *obeyed* (as will be seen later on). For "*grace* and *truth* came by Jesus Christ"; and they who receive the *grace*, are called upon to obey the *truth*, and to walk therein.

Furthermore, we find in Matthew's Gospel, and in it alone, the parable of the Wheat and Tares, which exhibits the likeness of the Kingdom of heaven *in all the world*, and from *the beginning to the end of this age*; and also the characteristic parables of the Treasure, the Pearl, the Net, the Laborers in the Vineyard, the Virgins and the Talents. Those parables, which cover the whole field of God's work in this day of grace (for "the field is the *world*"), and cover also the duration of the *entire age*, exhibit the full breadth and scope of the first Gospel, and help to make it clear why it is placed at the beginning of the New Testament. The closing words of that Gospel are also characteristic and expressive of its scope; for those words send Christ's servants into "all nations" and pledge His presence with them to "the end of the age." So the last words of Matthew's Gospel recall its opening verse, which presents Christ as the Son of David (cf. Acts 2:29, 30; 13:22–24; where Paul expressly links *his* Gospel with Christ as the Son of *David*) and Son of Abraham.

Finally (though more might be said on this point) the Gospel of Matthew is the only one of the four that speaks of *the Church*. We cannot here discuss the bearings of the important passages in chapters 16 and 18 which refer to the Church of God.² The reader will, however, readily see for himself the bearings of this significant fact upon the point now under discussion. And surely we have now said enough to show that the term "Jewish" (even in the unobjectionable dispensational meaning of the

² See the writer's book, "*After This*," referred to in the preface.

word which limits that to which it is applied to the national interests and aspirations of Israel) is less applicable to Matthew's Gospel than to any of the others. In our judgment it cannot be properly applied to *any* of the New Testament Scriptures.

6

“MY WORDS,” “MY SAYINGS,” “MY COMMANDMENTS.”

We come now to a matter of vital importance, and one which will make clear the reason why we are seeking so earnestly to refute the doctrines under consideration.

On the eve of the Lord’s death on the cross He reviewed the work which the Father had given Him to do and which He perfectly fulfilled. He mentioned three things, *first*, revealing the Father’s Name; *second*, speaking the Father’s Words; *third*, doing the Father’s works. He said: “I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world. I have given unto them *the Words which Thou gavest Me*” (John 17:4, 6, 8).

We have now to consider the *words* spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, bearing in mind His statement, so often repeated, that the words He spake were *the words which the Father had given Him* (John 8:25–28; 12:49). The question is to whom are those words spoken? Are they spoken directly to, and to be heeded by, the people of God in this dispensation? Or are they spoken to Jews of some past or future era, with possibly an indirect “moral application” to us? That there should be any question about it is an astounding thing. For it is written that “God has, in these last days, spoken *unto us* by His Son”; and that “Therefore *we ought to give the more earnest heed* to the things which *we have heard*” (Hebrews 1:1; 2:1).

Moreover, we would bring to mind what the Lord Jesus Himself said about His own words, as for example:

“He that hath *My commandments*, and keepeth them, he it is that *loveth Me*, and he that loveth Me shall be *loved of My Father*, and *I will love him*, and will manifest Myself to him.

“If a man love Me, He will *keep My words*; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him. 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.

“If ye abide in Me, and *My words* abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

“If ye keep *My commandments*, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept *My Father’s commandments*, and abide in His love.” (John 14:21, 23, 24; 15:7, 10).

The Apostle Paul said:

“Let the *word of Christ* dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Colossians 3:16); and again,

“If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even *the words of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and to the doctrine which is according to Godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words” (1 Timothy 6:3).

We can but note with sorrow and deep concern the great contrast between the plain import of the foregoing Scriptures, and statements like the following which we quote from the publication already referred to:

“The Sermon on the Mount is *law, not grace*. The doctrines of grace are to be sought in the Epistles, *not in the Gospels*”

This, of course, sweeps away, not only the Sermon on the Mount, but *all* the Lord’s words recorded in the Gospels.

We reject the foregoing statements with all possible emphasis; and we earnestly warn the people of God against them as subversive of important truth, as dishonoring to the Lord, and as destructive in their consequences. Where, we would ask, shall we look for “words of grace” if not from our Lord’s own lips? Of whom did God say, but of Him, “I will put My words in His mouth” (Deuteronomy 18:18)? And of whom else does the Scripture say, “*grace* is poured into *Thy* lips”? Even the unbelieving Jews in the synagogue at Nazareth “bare Him witness and wondered at *the words of grace* which proceeded out of His mouth” (Luke 4:22); and the officers whom the chief priests sent to arrest Him reported as the reason why they did not do so, that “never man spake like this man” (John 7:46). Yet we are told by those who are trusted by many as safe expositors of Scripture, 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.” This is most serious; but happily the truth of the matter is too plain to be missed by any who are willing to *do the will of God*. They who thus seek to do the will of God are the members of that “new brotherhood,” being like the One who said: “My meat is to *do the will* of Him that sent Me” (John 4:34). And now as regards His “doctrine,” He has given this simple test: “If any man *will* (i.e., wills to) *do His will* he shall know *of the doctrine*, whether it be of God” (John 7:17). For *Christlikeness* consists in wholehearted devotion to the will of God. (John 4:34; Matthew 26:39).

For whom then are Christ’s “words,” “sayings,” and “commandments,” if not for the members of the Church, which is His body? Let the reader’s *heart* answer the question before God.

In the first place then we maintain that it is *an unspeakable blessing and privilege* to have *His* commandments; for they tell us what His will is, and thus give us the opportunity to please Him by doing it. We protest with all our energy against the false and destructive idea that the keeping of Christ’s commandments is “legality.” Obedience to Christ is not legality; for obedience is of the very essence of the Gospel of the grace of God. Those who are saved by the *grace* of God are those who confess Him as LORD, and that involves *obedience*, for He Himself has said, “Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say?” It is utterly vain to make a mere lip confession. But, in spite of these clear facts, we are referred to the Epistles for “the doctrines of grace.” Very well, we will quote then from one of the very last of the Epistles, even from the same one which declares that “God is Love.” In it we read this:

“And hereby do we know that we know Him, *if we keep His commandments*. He that saith, I know Him, *and keepeth not His commandments*, is a *liar* and *the truth* is not in him” (1 John 2:3, 4).

Here is one of many passages which tell us that “truth” is not merely an orthodox creed (as some appear to think), but is the *doing* of the things which are according to the words of Christ. And we will state at this point that the Word of God is, in its essence, not so much a word of information, as a *Word of command*. It is in this latter character that it shapes human conduct, producing what, in its Godward aspect is “fruit” and in its manward aspect is “light.” And it is to little purpose that we have read the Scriptures (Gospels and Epistles alike) if we have not learned that the object of the Word is *the production of Christlike conduct in those who, by grace, are made members of His body*.

But one of the great and growing evils of our day is the prevalence of a barren and unfruitful orthodoxy. For men are being industriously schooled in the idea that it suffices to accept the Word of God as a word of information (which results in mere orthodoxy), and that to submit to it as a Word of *command* is “legality.” Thus we find a numerous class of persons who are quite willing to accept *informa-*

tion from God, and who flock to conferences and addresses where they hear only expositions of prophecy, dispensational views and the like, but who are not willing to receive *commandments* from God. That, they have been taught, would be “legal.”

In another Epistle we are informed that God has “translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son” (Colossians 1:13). What does this mean, if not that we are brought under the laws of that Kingdom? For the essence of a kingdom is *submission to the expressed will of the ruler*. The Kingdom of heaven is a *real* Kingdom. It is a realm whose citizens have become, by their *heavenly birth*, the *subjects of a heavenly King*. The law of that Kingdom is “the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). It is grievous and harmful error to teach that the people of God “belong to Christ” only in the sense that it is His part to save them from their sins; for they belong to Him in the further sense that it is *their* part to serve and *obey* Him. He is “the Author of eternal salvation unto *all them that obey Him*” (Hebrews 5:9). And therefore the Gospel is preached for “obedience” among all nations. It is preached not only to save Gentiles from death and judgment, but also “to make the Gentiles *obedient*.” (Romans 15:18; 16:26, etc.; also 1 Corinthians 7:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:2; 2 Peter 3:2).

The Sermon on the Mount certainly contains the commandments of Christ, to be kept by those who love Him, and *because* they love Him. It contains those commandments concerning which He charged the Apostles to teach the converts out of all nations “to observe *all things whatsoever I have commanded you*” (Matthew 28:20). Nevertheless, to say that “the Sermon on the Mount is law, not grace” is destructive error, for it disconnects Christ’s commandments, which are “not grievous” (1 John 5:3), from the age of grace and the Kingdom of grace, where they belong, and connects them with the law of Moses, concerning which Peter says it was “a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (Acts 15:10). Christ’s yoke, on the contrary, is “easy”; yet it is not *forced* on anyone. Those who take it upon them must do so *voluntarily*. It is wholly a matter of *grace*.

To separate the commandments of Christ from the age of grace and from those who are saved by grace, is “dividing the word of truth” indeed; but it is not “*rightly*” dividing it. Rather is it a grievous mutilation of the Word, the consequences of which are harmful in the extreme.

“Not Under Law”

This is an appropriate place to call attention to a strange misconception that has become very prevalent, and which is due to a wrong interpretation of Romans 6:14: “For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under law, but under grace.” This is by not a few interpreted as meaning that we who are “under grace” have received from God no commandments for our obedience. Such a view is most acceptable to the flesh, but is very far from being the truth of Scripture. The difference between the dispensation of law and that of grace is that under the former *sin had dominion*, for, as stated in Chapter 5:20, 21: “the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as *sin hath reigned* unto death, even so might *grace reign*, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.” Sin, therefore, had dominion in the dispensation of law because of man’s unrighteousness, since men in the flesh can never be justified by “the works of the law,” and since “the mind of the flesh is *not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*” (Romans 8:7).

But “under grace” it is otherwise; for, through the obedience of Christ in dying unto sin once for all, and through the righteousness of God which the Lord Jesus Christ thereby accomplished, *believers in Christ are not subject to sin’s dominion*. God has justified them on the ground of the blood of Christ, and has made them His children. Does that relieve them from the obligation to obey God’s commandments? Quite the contrary; for now, having through grace received a new nature, they *can* obey the law of God instead of the law of sin. As Paul says: “But God be thanked, that ye *were* the servants of sin, but ye have *obeyed from the heart* that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then *made free from sin*, ye became the *servants of righteousness*” (Romans 6:17).

Those who are “under grace,” are the children of God. They are in *God’s* Kingdom, and therefore it is said: “*sin* shall not have dominion over you.” That is true for the excellent reason that *sins* author-

ity has been replaced by *God's* authority, *sin's* law by *God's* law. Being the children of God they are placed under the authority of His Son, Who has given them *the Father's commandments*. Those commandments, which the Son's own lips have spoken, they are to observe and do — *not in order to be justified by their own works* (which is what is meant by being “under law”) but — for producing fruit unto God and bearing testimony before men; not in order to gain eternal life by their own efforts, but *because they have received it as the gift of God's grace*, and are therefore bound to obey their heavenly Father's commandments, in order “that the Word of God be not blasphemed,” and “that they may adorn *the doctrine* of God our Saviour in all things” (Titus 2:5, 10).

Nothing could be further from the truth than the idea that those who are saved by grace are not to obey the commandments of Christ. They are the only ones who *can* obey them. For, having been begotten again of the incorruptible Seed of the Word of God, they are no longer “the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2), in whom the spirit of evil works; but “children of obedience” (1 Peter 1:14, Greek), in whom the Holy Spirit works.

Let us then observe that, according to the teaching of 1 Peter 1:2–25, the children of God are elect, “through sanctification of the Spirit *unto obedience*, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ”; for God hath begotten them again “unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Hence they are required to be “*obedient children*,” not fashioning themselves (i.e., shaping their conduct) according to the desires which governed them in their former state of ignorance; but as He Who called them is holy, so are they also to be holy in all manner of behavior. And let the following verses be carefully noted:

“And if ye call on THE FATHER, Who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's *work*, pass the time of your sojourning *in fear*, forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your *vain conversation*” (manner of life) “handed down by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.”

Could anything be clearer than that redemption by the blood of Christ brings us into the holy relation of children to God, “Who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory,” and that, being God's children, we have the Father's commandments, which He has given us to the end that our “conversation” may be as is befitting what His grace has made us?

Wherefore, “Seeing ye have purified your souls” (or natural lives) “*in obeying the truth through the Spirit*, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently, *being born again*” — i.e., because ye have been born again — “not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”

Further in the publication from which we have quoted it is said: “Under the law of the Kingdom for example, no one may hope for forgiveness who has not first forgiven (Matthew 6:12, 14, 15). Under grace the Christian is exhorted to forgive because he already is forgiven” (Ephesians 4:30–32).

Again we have a distinction in disparagement of the Sermon on the Mount, which distinction is not only unscriptural but shallow. It is not true that “under the law of the Kingdom none can hope for forgiveness who has not first forgiven.” On the contrary, every child of the Kingdom has already received, by the grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, the complete forgiveness of all his sins. It is simply astounding that commentators on the Scriptures should close their eyes to the fact that the Sermon on the Mount is spoken to the *children of God*, that is to say, to those whose *sins have been forgiven* for Christ's sake. These are they to whom John says: “I write unto you, little children, because *your sins are forgiven you for His Name's sake*” (1 John 2:12). What the Lord teaches in Matthew 6:12, 14, 15 (which our commentator characterizes and disparages as “legal ground”) has no reference to our past sins, but to “debts” or trespasses occurring after conversion. As to these, the law of grace requires us to forgive our brethren “until seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:22). And there is nothing contrary to this in the Epistles, and could not be. Ephesians 4:30–32 commands forgiveness; but it *does not say what will be the effect, as regards our own debts, if we refuse obedience to*

this command. Both commandments, that in Matthew 6 and that in Ephesians 4:30–5:1, are given to *children of God*, and there is precisely as much “law” in Ephesians as in Matthew.

“The Sermon on the Mount”

That great and blessed utterance of the Lord Jesus which is found in Matthew 5, 6, 7, contains internal evidence of the clearest sort that the Kingdom to which it pertains is not the future earthly kingdom promised to Israel, but is the present Kingdom wherein *grace* reigns. It is all the purest grace from beginning to end. Forgiveness is the supreme law, resistance is forbidden, judgment is excluded, enemies are to be loved, those who curse us we are to bless, those who persecute us we are to pray for. The man who walks by that rule would be a perfect exemplification of the grace of God.

It is quite impossible to apply this utterance to the earthly kingdom promised to Israel, for the persons of and to whom Christ here speaks are to expect that they will be persecuted for righteousness’ sake. They are the poor in spirit, the meek, and those who mourn now, but whose reward is “in heaven.” They were to be exposed to false prophets who, though they would come in sheep’s clothing, would be nevertheless ravening wolves (compare Acts 20:29). They are to be reviled and persecuted, and men are to say all manner of evil against them falsely for Christ’s sake.

Very different indeed will be the conditions in that day when the enemies of Christ shall be made a footstool for His feet, when He will rule the nations with a sceptre of iron, and when ten men will take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew and will say: “We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”

In the entire Sermon on the Mount there is, from beginning to end, no trace of the presence of the King, or of any of the incidents of the earthly kingdom of the Son of David. There could be no greater contrast than that between the Kingdom foretold in the Old Testament prophecies, and that depicted in the Sermon on the Mount. Anyone who will take the slightest trouble to compare the two can satisfy himself of that fact without the shadow of a doubt. Beyond all question the *only period* in which the conditions set forth in Matthew 5–7 could prevail on earth is the present age of Christ’s rejection and absence from the world.

Again we call attention to the striking fact that they who enter this Kingdom of heaven are *the children of God*. The most notable thing about the Sermon on the Mount is that in it the Lord Jesus Christ makes manifest *the Father’s Name*, thus fulfilling Psalm 22:22. In fact the keyword to this entire passage is the word “FATHER,” which occurs in it seventeen times. This marks a new departure in the Word of God, and opens a new era in God’s dealings with men. It is unmistakably the era wherein God is begetting children to Himself, according to His eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ Jesus the Lord. This calling of those whom God had predestined unto adoption by Jesus Christ unto Himself (Ephesians 1:5) is *pure grace*. In fact it is done “to the praise of the glory of His *grace*” (Ephesians 1:6). There could, therefore, be no greater error than to identify the Sermon on the Mount with the earthly kingdom promised to Israel. This should put an end to all controversy as to the persons to whom the Sermon on the Mount is addressed. To whom but to the saints in this dispensation could Christ say, “Your FATHER which is in heaven”? Surely the application of these words is not open to any doubt or question.

Laodicea

We make no attempt to disguise the fact that we see *great peril* to the children of God, in these modern theories which seek to turn their hearts away from *the words* of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the danger lies in this, that in putting away His *Words* they put away *Himself*. His WORDS are what He, in going from the world, has left unto us of HIMSELF; and “they are spirit, and they are life.” If those words abide in us, and we in Him, we shall be fruit-bearing branches of the True Vine, and shall ask what we will, and it shall be done. Moreover, if we love Him and keep His Words, the Father will love us, and both the Father and the Son will come to us and make Their abode with us.”

The Lord has identified Himself with *His own Words* in such a way that *we cannot possibly have Him* if we part with *them*. It is recorded that when the Jews said to Him “Who art Thou?” He replied, “Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning” (John 8:25). This verse, as it stands in our Authorized Version is obscure. In the margin of the American Revised Version it reads: “Altogether that which I also speak unto you”; and the sense of it is that He and His sayings are One. What He *says* is what He *is*.

In view of this, and of other Scriptures referred to herein which testify the supreme value of the words spoken on earth by the Lord Jesus Christ, it is plainly a serious matter to entertain theories which set aside His words as not applicable to the members of His body, the Church. For the effect of such views is to bring about the conditions of Laodicea. The teaching we are opposing is true to the character of Laodicea; for to shut out the Lord’s words, is to shut *Him* out; and the characteristic feature of the Church of the Laodiceans is their perfect satisfaction with the riches and increase of spiritual “goods” which they have acquired, while the Lord stands outside the door, and knocks, if perchance any *man* will *hear His voice*, and will open unto Him.

With the deepest solicitude, and most earnest entreaties, we urge the beloved people of God to consider how they are treating “the words of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Timothy 6:3), what heed they are paying to them, what place they are giving to them in their hearts and lives. Great and eternal issues depend upon this weighty question. But surely, every one whose heart knows anything of the constraining love of Christ will respond to the appeal that we now make to His “peculiar people,” that they cling to His words as to their dearest possession, and that they listen to no views or theories which tend to lessen the value of those words, or to weaken their hold upon our heart and conscience. And most earnestly do we raise a warning against teachings (from whatsoever source they may come, and howsoever great may be the expectations of those who put them forth) which *deny to the Words of the Lord Jesus Christ the quality of GRACE*. Such teaching does dishonor to Him and grievous wrong to His people.

7

THE SON OF ABRAHAM

The first words of the New Testament shed strong and clear light upon the subject we are studying. The following are the opening words of this new revelation of God:

“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.”

This verse presents the Lord Jesus Christ in the two characters of Son of David and Son of Abraham.

The promised Son or “Seed” of Abraham is the same as the promised Son of David. The Old Testament foretells in many passages His coming. But it remained for the New Testament to reveal the fact that His “coming” includes *two* comings of one and the same Person.

At His first coming He brings about the fulfillment of God’s promise made to Abraham concerning *his* “seed.” At His second coming He will bring about the fulfillment of God’s promises concerning the Son of David. The present age, therefore, is the era of fulfillment of the “blessing” promised to Abraham, and which was to come to “all the nations of the earth” through Abraham’s “seed.” The New Testament Scriptures make it absolutely certain that the present age is the time of the fulfillment of that promise.

The particular promise to Abraham, to which we are now referring, was the last and greatest of the seven covenants that God made with Abraham. It is found in Genesis 22:15–18, and was given immediately after Abraham’s act of obedience in offering his son Isaac, and his receiving Isaac again as it were from the dead. (See Hebrews 11:17–19). Thus the experience of Isaac was a “figure” of death and resurrection whereunto baptism is a “like figure” (1 Peter 3:21). When we remember that God has placed baptism at the threshold of this age, and as a symbol or “figure” of the way (and the only way) whereby a man can “be born when he is *old*,” and thus can enter the Kingdom of God, we will readily see the significance of those events recorded in Genesis 22, which called forth this special promise to Abraham.

Moreover, this particular promise is distinguished from all other promises but one, in that God *confirmed it with an oath*, saying: “By Myself I have *sworn*, saith the Lord.” God’s special purpose in thus confirming His word to Abraham with an oath was to give to *us*, who are “the heirs of the promise,” “a strong consolation,” and to show to us “the IMMUTABILITY of His counsel” (Hebrews 6:17, 18).

That part of the promise which bears directly upon our subject, and which has its fulfillment in this age, is given in these words: “And in *thy Seed* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”

The chief points of this promise are (1) that the “blessing” (which is not described in Genesis) was to come *by Abraham’s Seed*; and (2) that it was to reach *all the nations of the earth*. This present age then is not the era of Israel’s prominence *among* the nations of the earth, but of God’s dealings in grace *with* the nations (the “Gentiles”) on *precisely the same terms as with the Israelites*. For what especially characterizes this age is that, throughout the whole extent thereof, the Gospel is preached among “*all nations*” (Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:47), “with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.” Or, to state the same fact in different words, this present age is (and in God’s immutable counsel *always*

was) the age of the Kingdom of heaven. For that is a Kingdom which is introduced by *preaching the Gospel* in all the world (“the field is *the world*”), with the result that all who believe receive “that Holy Spirit of *promise*” (Ephesians 1:13; Acts 2:38,39), being born again and becoming “the children of the Kingdom” (Matthew 13:38).

For of them it is written: “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6).

This having been the determinate counsel of God concerning this present age (though His counsel was hidden from the prophets of Israel), it is easy to see that the APOSTLE PAUL is the principal instrument of the Lord in extending the Kingdom throughout the world. And in the light of that fact we can clearly see what Paul meant when he described his ministry as “preaching the Kingdom of God” (Acts 20:25; cf. Acts 19:8; 28:23, 31). Moreover, much of Paul’s ministry in his Epistles becomes very clear and intelligible in the light of the fact that *he* was specially chosen for carrying forward the work of the *Kingdom of God* among the Gentiles.

We have observed that God’s words to Abraham did not reveal the character of the blessing that was to come to the Gentiles through Abraham’s “Seed.” But that information (which was a “mystery,” being hid from past ages and generations, Colossians 1:26) is now supplied by the New Testament. For example, from Galatians 3:6–18, we learn that God’s promise to Abraham was “the gospel,” or good news, “*that God would justify the heathen (Gentiles) through faith.*” We learn also that “the blessing of Abraham” which was to “come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ” referred to God’s purpose to give the HOLY SPIRIT to all Gentile as well as to Jewish believers. The whole passage, which is all about Abraham, his “Seed,” “the blessing,” and “the children of Abraham,” should be read with careful attention. It will yield much light to those who do so. But, for our immediate purpose, it will suffice to quote the following verses:

“8. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify *the heathen* through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham,” (i.e., told that good news beforehand to Abraham), “saying, In thee shall ALL NATIONS BE BLESSED. 9. So then, they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.”

And how are they blessed? In this way:

“13. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree. 14. *That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles* through Jesus Christ; that we might receive *the promise of the Spirit* by faith.”

Here we have the familiar truth of the Gospel, as preached and taught by the Apostles, namely that, in order that “the blessing” of eternal life — “the Gift of the Holy Spirit,” who is *life* — might come to the Gentiles through the Gospel, Christ MUST NEEDS die upon the cross, and rise again, and must ascend into heaven, from thence to pour out “the Gift of the Holy Spirit.” The “blessing” could not come upon us, except “the curse” should first come upon Him.

What we now seek to impress upon our readers is that the announcement of the opening verse of the New Testament, in presenting Jesus Christ as “the Son of Abraham,” carried with it the assurance that He had come to fulfill all that was involved in God’s word and oath to Abraham; — in other words, He had come to do all that “must be” accomplished in order that sinners among both Jews and Gentiles might receive the promised gift of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit is “the promise of the Father,” which promise was made good by the Son. And the first verse of Matthew points to that great result. Hence that verse contains by implication the fact that Christ had come to suffer the curse of the law.

This is confirmed by John’s announcement, which declared, concerning the Coming One, that He should baptize with the Holy Ghost. We may therefore regard the baptism with the Holy Ghost as the *grand object* for which the Son of God came into the world. This will be more clearly seen in the light of the facts that Christ came to mediate and to establish the New Covenant, and that the New Cove-

nant is the Covenant of the SPIRIT who “giveth life,” and of RIGHTEOUSNESS, which involves the forgiveness of sins on the basis of Christ’s redeeming blood. (2 Corinthians 3:6–9).

It follows that the Kingdom of heaven, which God announced through John the Baptist, and through Christ and His disciples, is nothing less or other than that *new order of things* which came fully into existence in the world when the disciples were baptized with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. That Kingdom was subsequently extended from its starting point at Jerusalem, by means of the preaching of the Gospel (sowing the incorruptible seed of the Word), “with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,” the invariable result being that those who, through the Gospel, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, are quickened by the Holy Spirit.

We call attention to the fact that, in the Epistle to the Galatians, the object of the Apostle’s urgent admonitions was that those Galatian believers should continue in the “truth of the Gospel.” They were truly converted men, for it is testified of them that they were “*all the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ*” (3:26); but they were nevertheless being moved away from him (i.e., Paul) who had called them “into the *grace* of Christ, unto another gospel, which is not another” (1:6, 7). The example of the Apostle Peter is given as a solemn warning to show that one who has been born again may be turned aside to fleshly observances. Speaking of the lapse of Peter and others, by reason of which Barnabas also was carried away, Paul said: “But when I saw that they *walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel*” etc. (2:11–21). Attentive reading of this great passage will make it clear that the subject of the justification of *sinners* is not in view at all, but the very different subject of how *believers* ought to *live*. Even an apostle of Christ might make himself a transgressor by building again the things which (in accepting Christ as his righteousness and his life) he had destroyed. And Paul declared, as the stand which he had taken for his own life here below, that he had been “crucified with Christ,” and that *the life which he lived “in the flesh”* he lived by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him, and gave Himself for him. By so living he could say, “I do not frustrate” (or make futile) “the grace of God, for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain.”

Every believer has received the *grace* of the Gospel; but **not** every believer walks according to “the *truth* of the Gospel.” And this makes it clear that the Gospel brings to us not only the facts of the Redeemer’s love, to produce in our hearts justifying faith in Him, but it brings also *truth* (i.e., commandments of Christ) by which we are to *walk*.

It was in regard to *this latter part* of the Gospel that the Galatians were in danger of falling away; and it is important for a right understanding of the matter that we give careful heed to this. Those Galatians were all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, and because they were God’s sons He had sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts (3:26; 4:6). So there can be no question at all as to their conversion. But they were “foolish.” And wherein did their foolishness lie? In that they did not “*obey the truth*” (3:1). They were not walking according to the truth of the Cross of Christ. They were “foolish” in that, although they had *received the Spirit* by “the hearing of faith,” they thought to be “made perfect by (or in) the *flesh*,” that is to say (in their case) by fleshly observances, such as circumcision and the keeping of days and months and times and years, after the customs of the Jews, which had been abolished by the Cross of Christ. And in Chapter 5:7 Paul returns to this point, saying, “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that you should not *obey the truth*.” And this question is asked in direct connection with the statement that: “In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but *faith which worketh by love!*” That is to say, those who are, *by grace* and through the effect of the Word and Spirit of God, *in Christ Jesus*, are to be characterized by a faith which is active, ever *working*, and working *by love*. They are under the law of *love*, according to the command of verses 13, 14: “by love serve one another. For all the law is *fulfilled* in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” And to the same effect is Chapter 6:2: “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so *fulfil* THE LAW OF CHRIST.” The passage last quoted is plainly interpreted for us by the corresponding passage in 1 Corinthians 7:19: “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but *keeping the commandments of God*.” This cannot be misunderstood, nor explained away.

Surely it is plain from the foregoing, (and from other passages in the New Testament) that those who receive the *grace* of God are brought into a new order of things — a *Kingdom* in one word — wherein they are called upon to obey “the law of Christ.” The law of Christ is, in fact, a part of the Gospel preached by Paul; and it was in regard to *that part of the Gospel* that his indignation was aroused to such a pitch that he said: “But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (1:8, 9). Yet this important “*truth* of the Gospel” is, in large measure, lost sight of in our day. And not only so, but the Epistle to the Galatians is commonly referred to as if it were written to show that *unregenerate men* cannot be justified by religious doings and other works of the flesh. That is true indeed; but it is not what is taught in Galatians. For that Epistle has to do with the very different subject of how *the children of God* ought to “live” in obedience to “the truth of the Gospel,” and to “walk” in the Spirit, to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, and to sow to the Spirit. Galatians declares what should be *the effect of the Cross of Christ* on the *life* and *walk* of those before whose eyes Christ has been set forth, in an evident way, crucified; and who have received the Spirit as a free gift by the hearing of faith. And to what end is the Spirit given if not that the children of God should live by the Spirit, be led by the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, sow to the Spirit, and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit? (Galatians 5:25; 5:18; 5:16; 6:8; 5:22, 23).

The purpose of God’s work in *grace* is to impart *new life* — the gift of the Spirit; and the purpose of life is the bringing forth of such actions, works and doings as give glory to God and bear testimony to men. If we, who have received the *grace* of God, fail to produce “fruit” toward God and “light” toward men, then we have received “the grace of God in vain” (2 Corinthians 6:1). Those “good works” which God requires of us who enjoy the unspeakable gift of His grace, must be such as *please Him*; and we can know what is pleasing to Him only by His *Word* which reveals His *will*, and His will is *law*. To be in the Kingdom is a matter of *grace*; and being in the Kingdom we are required — not by the constraint of force or under pains and penalties, but — for the love of Christ, to obey the law thereof.

There is a “gospel” that is much in favor in these days, which has no place in it for the word obedience, and according to which the mere mention of obedience is “legality.” But it is certain that Paul preached no such gospel as that. Obedience to “the commandments of God” was a very prominent part of *his* gospel (1 Corinthians 7:19; 9:21; 14:37; 1 Thessalonians 4:1, etc.); and he had moreover “a readiness to revenge all disobedience” (2 Corinthians 10:16). Accordingly we find in Galatians that believers are required to “fulfil *the law of Christ*.” The fact being, as stated in Colossians 1:13, that God has, by means of the Gospel, delivered them from the power (that is the governmental authority or kingdom) of darkness, and has translated them “into the Kingdom of His dear Son,” they are *of course* subject to the law of that Kingdom. The same gospel which delivers believing sinners from one kingdom — that of sin and death and darkness — also *translates* them into another Kingdom, that of God’s dear Son, where the law is “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:2).

Great mischief has resulted, and it could not be otherwise, from the suppression of the facts concerning the Kingdom of God, which Paul “preached among all nations for the *obedience* of faith, according to the commandment of the everlasting God.” And as a natural consequence of such teaching even the *word* “obedience” has become irksome and obnoxious.

Doing the Truth

As regards the obedience which God requires of those who are born into His Kingdom, there are other Scriptures to which attention should be directed, though it be but briefly. Prominent among them are certain passages which contain the word “Truth.” The meaning usually attached to that great word is one-sided and incomplete. In fact its more important side is frequently lost sight of. “Truth” is generally taken to mean *correct information concerning divine things*; and certainly the word *has* that meaning. But it means more than that, as will be very clear upon consideration of a few important Scriptures.

“Truth” is one of the characteristic words of John’s Gospel, which announces at the beginning thereof that “Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ” (1:17). It is significant that “Truth” is thus asso-

ciated with “Grace” as comprehending that which came (literally, came into being) by Jesus Christ; and that these are put in contrast with the law, which “was given by Moses.” The law embraced (1) God’s just demands *of men*, and (2) “a shadow of good things to come” (Hebrews 10:1). But by the Lord Jesus Christ came two corresponding things, namely, (1) God’s work *for men*, (*i.e.*, *grace*); and (2) the *realities* whereof the law had only the *types and shadows*, (*i.e.*, *truth*).

Broadly, therefore, truth signifies *reality*, and Christ is “the Truth” in that He not only expressed what is real in His sayings; but He also embodied reality. He is the *real* Light, the *real* Bread, the *real* Vine (John 1:9; 6:32; 15:9).

The Lord’s first recorded use of the word “Truth” in John’s Gospel, gives the broad meaning of the word:

“For every one that *doeth evil* hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his *deeds* should be reprov’d. But he that *DOETH TRUTH* (or *practises the truth*) cometh to the light that his *DEEDS* may be made manifest that they are *wrought* in God” (John 3:21).

It is clear that, according to these words of the Lord, the *truth*, which God requires in the inward parts (Psalm 51:6), is to be wrought out in the daily lives of His people; and unless we see this meaning in the word “truth” we miss the most important lesson that it is intended to convey.

This corresponds with the words of Psalm 33:4: “For the word of the Lord is right; all His *works* are done in TRUTH.”

Again, the expression “worship in *truth*” (John 4:24), manifestly signifies worship which consists in acts that are *real*; and to be *real* they must be such as God Himself commands. All rites, ceremonies, and other forms of “worship” (so-called), which are devised by men, are rejected — they are not *real*.

The Lord’s saying to His disciples, “If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed (literally, TRULY), and ye shall know *the truth*, and *the truth* shall make you free” (John 8:31, 32), obviously signifies walking in obedience to His commands. This knowledge of the truth, which makes free, is *experimental* knowledge, not *theoretical* knowledge merely. It is knowledge that comes in *doing* the truth.

What the Lord said about Satan, namely, that he was a murderer from the beginning, and “abode not in *the truth*, because there is *no truth* in him” (John 8:44), manifestly refers to the evil one’s *actions* rather than to his *opinions*; for no doubt the devil’s opinions are strictly orthodox. “The devils believe and tremble.”

Again the words “The Spirit of TRUTH will guide you into *all truth*” (John 16:13) would seem to refer to the Spirit’s ministry in leading the children of God in right ways (Romans 8:14); for the word “guide” would be inappropriate if it were merely a matter of imparting correct information.

The words “Sanctify them through *Thy truth*, *Thy Word is truth*” (John 17:17), is plainly a prayer that the lives of God’s people might be characterized by practical holiness through the influence of the Word. The corresponding phrase in the Old Testament “Thy *law* is truth” (Psalm 119:142), confirms this, indicating clearly that “the Word” in this case (as in many other cases) is a Word of *command*, to be obeyed.

The same usage of the word “truth” appears in the Epistles of Paul. Thus, in 1 Corinthians 5:8, “truth” is put in contrast with “malice and wickedness,” which are evil *things* and not merely wrong *ideas*. Moreover, the whole passage has to do with bad *conduct* on the part of one of the saints of God.

Paul’s statement, “For we can *do* nothing against *the truth*, but for the truth” (2 Corinthians 13:8), can be understood only by taking the word “truth” as standing for actions that are according to God’s revealed will (cf. Galatians 5:17). In the preceding verse Paul says, “Now I pray God that ye *do* no evil ... that ye should *do* that which is honest”; and this helps to make the meaning clear.

In Ephesians 4:17–24 the former bad conduct and manner of life which characterized the Gentiles (in one word, their “walk”), is referred to as being directly contrary to what they had been taught since their conversion, “as *truth* in Jesus, that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man,” etc. “Truth” here is plainly that right conduct or manner of life (“conversation”) which is according to the doctrine and example of Christ. And so also in verse 24, “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of *truth*” (Greek). The next verse, “Speak every man *truth* with his neighbor,” gives the word in its usual, but related meaning, signifying the utterance of things that are right, and that promote right actions.

The words “as *truth* is in Jesus,” correspond with His own words, “I am *the Truth*,” and have the force of a declaration that in Him is seen the perfection of conduct that is according to God.

The statement that “The fruit of the Spirit (or of the light) is in all truth” (Ephesians 5:9), plainly declares that “truth” is something actually wrought out in the life. To make the word “truth” to be synonymous with mere orthodoxy is to rob it of the better part of its meaning.

“The love of the *truth*” in 2 Thessalonians 2:10, appears by the context to be love of *righteousness*.

Peter also uses the word “Truth” in this sense. He speaks of the saints having purified their souls “in *obeying the truth* through the *Spirit*” (1 Peter 1:22). The meaning of this is plain, and it throws light upon the Lord’s word: “He (the Spirit) shall guide you *into all truth*”

Peter also speaks of certain things that should characterize the lives of believers, saying, “if ye *do* these things ye shall never fall”; and he adds that he deems it needful to put them in remembrance of these things, although they, knowing them, have been “established in the present *truth*” (2 Peter 1:5–12). And again he contrasts the “pernicious *ways*” of false teachers with “the *way of truth*” (2:2).

God’s Word is the “word of *truth*” (Psalm 119:43; 2 Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:5; James 1:18). It is the Word of Truth in the fullest sense; for it gives us *facts*, i.e., statements that are in every particular *true*; but also it gives those facts concerning God, not merely that our minds may be filled with correct information, but that we, through “the word of the *truth* of the Gospel,” might be “filled with the knowledge of *His will* in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,” to the end that we “might *walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing*, being *fruitful* in EVERY GOOD WORK, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:9, 10).

We would also refer our readers to the usage of the word “truth” in 2 John 1, 2, 3, 4, and 3 John 1, 4, 8.

It is in vain (and worse than vain) that we *know* the truth, if we do not *live* it.

8

PROPHECIES RELATING TO THIS PRESENT AGE

“The Son of Man”

The Lord Jesus, in His public utterances, habitually referred to Himself as “the Son of man.” That fact is, of course, deeply significant, and it has much to teach us. It takes us to the Eighth Psalm, which is a prophecy of vast scope and importance. Read in the light of the Holy Spirit’s interpretation given in Hebrews 2, it is quite easy to determine its bearing upon the questions we are investigating.

By declaring Himself to be “the Son of man” the Lord applied the Eighth Psalm to Himself; and therefore we have only to observe its details in order to learn the purpose for which He stooped to become “the Son of man.” First of all we would notice that Psalm 8 does not speak at all of the Kingdom promised to the Jews, or of the throne of David. Since then the Lord identified His first coming, *not with the Second Psalm*, which speaks of God’s “King” and God’s “Christ,” but with the *Eighth Psalm* which speaks of the “Son of man,” we have *in this fact alone*, conclusive proof that, in announcing the Kingdom of heaven, He was *not* announcing the “earth-rule of the Son of David.”

Briefly, then, Psalm 8 tells of three distinct periods in the history of the Son of man. In the *first* period He was to be made “lower than the angels,” this being the period of His life on earth. There is no throne, or suggestion thereof in this period, but the contrary. The Lord Jesus “*was* made a little lower than the angels” (not to reign over the Jews, but) “*for the suffering of death.*” In the *second* era He was to be “crowned with glory and honour,” and Hebrews 2:9 tells (what we all know full well) that this second period is *the present age*, during which the Lord Jesus is crowned with glory and honor at God’s right hand *in the heavens*. In the *third* era He is to assume dominion over the works of God’s hands, and all things will be put under His feet; this third era being the coming millennial reign of Christ.

Therefore, it is beyond all dispute that, when the Lord declared Himself to be “the Son of man” (as was His invariable custom in public), He thereby declared that He had been made lower than the angels “for the suffering of death”; that He would thereafter, for an unmeasured period (this present age), be crowned with glory and honor *in heaven*; and that at the expiration thereof He would come again and take that “dominion” for which “man” was created, and which as “Son of man” is His “by inheritance,” seeing that He is “the Heir of all things” (Hebrews 1:2). All this is clearly involved in the title “Son of man.”

Thus we have in Psalm 8 another clear Scripture which effectually refutes the idea that the Kingdom of heaven, which “the Son of man” proclaimed and came to establish, was the “earth rule of the Son of David.”

The Lord Jesus Christ, in humbling Himself to become “the Son of man,” became, indeed, the rightful inheritor of all God’s purposes for, and of His promises to, *Man*. But, in taking that position, He of necessity also assumed the responsibility for *all Man’s liabilities*. On account of these He “must needs” endure the righteous judgment of God; and obviously the liabilities of Man must be discharged by the Kinsman-Redeemer, *before* the property and possessions could be taken and en-

joyed. In other words He must first redeem His enslaved “brethren” from the bondage of sin, and must also raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. (Leviticus 25:25; Ruth 4:5).

It is not necessary, for our purpose, to pursue this fruitful subject further; for every intelligent reader will see almost at a glance that, according to the Eighth Psalm, which the Lord (by calling Himself “the Son of man”) declared He had come to fulfill, His first coming was “for the suffering of death,” and furthermore that in between His first coming and His second, was to be *this present era*, when He should be crowned with honor and glory *in heaven*.

“Sit Thou at My Right Hand until —”

In Psalm 110 also we have a clear prophecy which has its fulfillment in this age. This prophecy declares in the plainest terms that *before* Christ’s enemies should be placed as a footstool for His feet, and *before* the rod of His strength should be sent forth out of Zion, and *before* He should rule in the midst of His enemies, there was to be a period during which He should sit *at God’s right hand in heaven*. And it needs no argument to prove that that prophetic period is the present era — the age of the Kingdom of heaven, which is so called because, among other reasons, the King is *in* heaven. So again we have a clear Scripture which absolutely forbids the idea that the Kingdom of heaven is “the earth rule of the Son of David.”

The “Seventy Weeks”

One of the most comprehensive of all prophecies as regards the then future history of Israel is that recorded in Daniel 9:20-27, known as the prophecy of the “Seventy Weeks.” Those seventy weeks, or 490 years, refer exclusively to Israel; for the angel Gabriel, who communicated the prophecy to Daniel, said: “Seventy weeks are determined upon *thy* people (the Jews) and *thy* holy city” (Jerusalem). And inasmuch as this prophecy relates specifically to the first coming of “Messiah, the Prince,” and even gives the time of His coming, it bears directly and decisively upon the subject of our inquiry.

The details of this prophecy have been carefully traced out, and are available to all who wish to study them. So we confine ourselves to what is strictly pertinent to our subject.

The full period of 490 years is divided into three parts of unequal length, namely 49 years (7 weeks), 434 years (62 weeks), and 7 years (1 week). The first two periods, making 483 years (69 weeks) run consecutively from the decree to restore and build Jerusalem (see Nehemiah 2) to “Messiah, the Prince.” This period has been proved, by careful computations, to have expired on the *very day* that Christ entered Jerusalem immediately preceding His betrayal and death, the *only* occasion when He was acclaimed publicly as the “Son of David” (see “*The Coming Prince*,” by Robert Anderson).

The prophecy tells us that, *after* the period of 483 years “shall Messiah be cut off, and have nothing” (Daniel 9:26, R. V.). And this was fulfilled in the most literal way. There remains then the one “week” (seven years) which is yet future, in which the details of the prophecy specified in verse 27 are to be fulfilled, those details having to do with the career of Antichrist. But, between the expiration of the 69th week (the date of the Lord’s entry into Jerusalem) and the beginning of the 70th week, lies an unmeasured interval, this present age, during which, according to the prophecy, (verse 26), Jerusalem and the Temple (“the city and the sanctuary”) should be destroyed. Where is Christ during that period? Manifestly not on earth; hence He is not seen in this prophecy after being “cut off.” But Psalm 110 shows that, during the interval between the 69th and 70th week, He is at God’s right hand in heaven. Hence the interval between the 69th and the 70th week is the era of the Kingdom of heaven, Christ being, in the words of Paul, “the King *invisible*” (1 Timothy 1:17), during that period.

It is quite clear that the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks makes it impossible that the Kingdom foretold to Israel in the Old Testament prophecies could have come into existence until after the cutting off of Christ, and until the fulfillment of His predicted absence in heaven, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, the rise and career of Antichrist, and the return of the Lord Jesus from heaven.

9

THE KINGDOM IN ROMANS

As we follow the record of the extension of the Kingdom after the Lord's ascension (He having spent forty days with His disciples "speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God," Acts 1:3), we find Peter opening the door of the Kingdom on Pentecost, and to such good purpose that "there were added (unto them) about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). Subsequently, after the persecution that arose consequent upon the death of Stephen, "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere *preaching the Word*. Then Philip went down to Samaria, and *preached Christ* unto them." And "when they *believed* Philip, preaching the things *concerning the Kingdom of God, and the Name of Jesus Christ*, they were *baptized*, both men and women" (Acts 8:4, 5, 12). From these passages it is clear that the message which the Apostles preached, though it is one and the same Gospel (for there is "not another"), was variously described as "the Word," "Christ," "the Kingdom of God."

Then Paul was miraculously converted by the personal act of the Lord Jesus Christ in Glory, without human intervention, having been laid hold of for service in the Kingdom, specially with reference to the Gentiles, to whom the Lord sent him "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from *the power of Satan* unto God" (Acts 26:17, 18). These words of the Lord, spoken unto Saul of Tarsus, recognize the Kingdom of Satan as existing in the world along with the Kingdom of God. Paul's words in Colossians 1:12, 13 are an echo thereof: "Giving thanks unto the Father ... Who hath delivered us from *the power of* darkness, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son."

Inasmuch as the Apostle Paul was thus qualified, in a manner without parallel in God's dealings with men (for no other "vessel" was ever prepared in the same way), to be the Lord's chief instrument in the extension of the Kingdom of God, we should expect to find, in Paul's writings, much truth concerning the Kingdom; and the more so, because he himself describes his ministry (and it is described by the Spirit of God) as "preaching the Kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8; 20:25, etc.). And indeed it would require many pages to trace out the Kingdom truth which is found in the Epistles of Paul. We shall not attempt this in the present volume, which contains little more than an outline of the great subject of the Kingdom of heaven; but will only indicate briefly how that subject is presented in the Epistle to the Romans. Inasmuch as this Epistle is the unfolding of "the Gospel of God" which was entrusted to Paul, to whom Christ gave "grace and apostleship *for obedience to the faith among all nations*" (Romans 1:1-5), we may confidently expect to find in it a full explanation of the reason why Paul's ministry is described as "preaching the Kingdom of God."

The parables of the Lord Jesus Christ foretell what the Kingdom should be "*like*" The Epistle to the Romans tells what it is. "For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the HOLY GHOST*" (Romans 14:17).

What immediately precedes this comprehensive and illuminating definition of the Kingdom, explains the negative clause "not meat and drink" (lit., "eating and drinking"), showing that the laws of the Kingdom do not prescribe rules governing such matters as eating or not eating certain kinds of food, or as regarding or not regarding (or esteeming) specific days, "one day above another." But the

preceding chapters (12 and 13) contain many positive commands which the children of the Kingdom are to observe.

We note then, first of all, that the Holy Spirit, the Unseen One, “Whom the world *cannot* receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him” (John 14:17) is the personally present Administrator of the affairs of the Kingdom, which accords with all the Scriptures from the first words of John the Baptist onward. This appears by the words “*in the Holy Ghost.*”

In developing, in the Epistle to the Romans, the theme of the Kingdom, Paul first deals with the subject of *righteousness*, which is of overshadowing importance, and is always put forward as a prominent characteristic of the Kingdom of God (see Psalm 45:6,7; Psalm 72:1, 2, 3, 7; Psalm 89:14; Matthew 5:20; 6:33, etc.). The subject of *God’s righteousness*, apart from the law, but which was witnessed by the law and the prophets (3:21), occupies the first four chapters. It is instructive to note, in this connection, that the Lord Jesus Christ is presented in Romans, also in Matthew, as “made of *the seed of David*, according to the flesh,” showing that the tracing of Christ’s descent from David affords no ground for the assumption that the *earthly* kingdom is in view. Paul’s Gospel is further like Matthew’s in that it presents “Jesus Christ of the seed of David *raised from the dead.*” (2 Timothy 2:8; Acts 13:22, 23; Romans 1:4).

It is also interesting and significant to compare the place given to Abraham in the Gospel of Matthew, and in the writings of Paul, respectively; and to compare the “Blessed are they” of Romans 4:7, 8, with the “beatitudes” of Matthew 5.

Coming to Romans 5:1–5 we find all the above described elements of the Kingdom of God in the words “being justified” (i.e., MADE RIGHTEOUS) “by faith, we have PEACE with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and REJOICE in hope of the glory of God ... and hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by THE HOLY GHOST Who is GIVEN unto us.” And the words of verse 11: “We also JOY in God through our Lord Jesus Christ” fill out the description. Thus we have the great elements of the Kingdom of God — Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy, comprehended in and with the Gift of the Holy Ghost, all this being grounded upon “the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God set forth a propitiation (mercy seat) through faith in His blood to declare His Righteousness” (3:24–26).

Following this, in the latter part of chapter 5, Paul traces the historical course of the “dominion,” or Kingdom all the way from Adam to Christ. Man was created for “dominion” (Genesis 1:26); but Adam lost it through sin; and moreover death entered by sin, and so, from Adam to Moses “DEATH reigned.” This is the first epoch of worldwide dominion (Romans 5:14). Then “the law entered” by Moses. This changed conditions somewhat, but did not improve matters as regards righteousness, nor help man in anywise to recover the lost dominion, or even to escape himself from bondage. As a consequence of the law “*sin abounded*”; and hence it is recorded that, from Moses to Christ, “SIN reigned unto death.” This is the second epoch of worldwide dominion.

But now Christ comes, the new Man (of whom Adam was a “figure”), and by Him grace enters as a consequence of *righteousness accomplished by His “obedience”* (that is His obedience “unto death, the death of the Cross,” Philippians 2:8), to the end that, “*as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might GRACE reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

This is the third, and *now present*, epoch of worldwide dominion, during which epoch *Grace* reigns through *righteousness*. And this agrees strikingly with Hebrews 4:14–16, where we have the record of Christ Jesus, Who is “passed into *the heavens*,” in consequence of which there is made accessible to us a “throne of GRACE.” This third epoch is that of the Kingdom of God.

Chapter Six (of Romans) introduces us fully into this new Kingdom. Baptism stands in its divinely appointed place, being here fully explained. It speaks of identification with Christ risen from the dead, of Whom it is significantly stated that “*death hath no more dominion over HIM*” (verse 9).

Here we are shown that we are now to *serve God*, and to yield full and willing obedience to His “doctrine” (verse 17). In fact we are told that we have become “servants of righteousness,” which is the

outstanding characteristic of the Kingdom of God. Furthermore, having been delivered from the dominion of sin, we are admonished not to permit sin to *reign* in our mortal bodies, to *obey it*, in the desires thereof (verse 12), and not to yield our members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but to yield *ourselves* unto God, and our members as instruments of *righteousness* unto God. “For sin shall not have DOMINION over you, because *ye* are not under law but UNDER GRACE.”

Manifestly the words “*under grace*” signify *subjection to grace*, the latter word being simply used, by a common figure of speech, to express that Kingdom whereof Grace is so prominent a characteristic. The fact that the domain wherein *Grace reigns* has *its laws*, which they who are “under grace” are to obey, is plainly set forth in this chapter. But it also appears, as is evident throughout the New Testament Scriptures that the obedience of those who are “under grace” is *voluntary* in character, proceeding “from the heart,” and is not enforced by magistrates, or by prescribed pains and penalties. Thus, in verses 16–18 we read:

“Know ye not, to whom ye *yield yourselves servants to obey*, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of *obedience unto righteousness*; but God be thanked, that ye *were* the servants of sin, but ye have *obeyed from the heart* that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”

These words clearly express the believer’s translation from the dominion of sin, with its *compulsory* service, to the dominion of “righteousness,” which is another name for the Kingdom of God, with its *voluntary* obedience.

Chapter 7 of Romans deals at length with the subject of “law,” showing by the experience of Paul, when he was a man in the flesh under law, that the law of Moses, “which was ordained to life” brought condemnation and death even to one who made every possible effort to keep it. His experience proved that the Law of Moses could not effect deliverance from sin and death, but was powerless to do so because of the presence of “another law,” the “law of sin,” which operated in his members, bringing him, “wretched man” that he was, into hopeless “captivity.”

But, passing on to Chapter 8, we find Paul as a new man “in Christ Jesus,” where there is “no condemnation.” But this new domain is far from being a state of lawlessness; for we find that they who are in it are subject to another law, which is called “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” and which is placed in direct contrast with “the law of sin and death,” from which it had set Paul free. This new law is “the law of the *Spirit*,” because it is the law of that heavenly Kingdom whose subjects are all born of the Spirit, and are privileged to be “led by the Spirit,” having “received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry ABBA, FATHER.”

It is the law of “*life*”; for “the Spirit is *life* because of righteousness”; and moreover, to those who are under this law it is declared that: “if ye, *through the Spirit* do put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall *live*.”

They who are in this realm of grace are “the children of God,” who have been quickened by the Spirit, but who are still awaiting “the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (verse 23), being in a groaning creation, which also is awaiting with eagerness “the *manifestation* of the sons of God.”

It is very easy to see how perfectly this corresponds with the Lord’s wonderful word picture, which He set before us in the parable of the Wheat and the Tares; where the blades of wheat, all *living* and possessing the *same life*, are nevertheless in “the world,” waiting for the day of their *manifestation*, when “the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.”

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh to *live after the flesh*; for if ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall *live*” (Romans 8:12, 13).

We conclude then that the foundation of the Kingdom of heaven was laid in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For, after the blood of redemption had been shed, and He had entered into

heaven by His own blood, “having obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12), *then* the Holy Ghost could come down from heaven to bestow “the washing of regeneration” upon sinners who hear and believe the Word. Thus they are “made righteous” (Romans 5:19) and are qualified to enter that Kingdom whose first characteristic is righteousness, and where grace reigns through righteousness. That Kingdom is ruled by “the Son of man who is *in heaven*”; and they who enter it, being “born of the Spirit” are subject to “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” which is “the law of God” (Romans 8:2, 7) for His children (verse 14). For the mind of the flesh is not subject thereto, and cannot be; because of which “they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (verse 8). The children of the Kingdom are “under grace,” and therefore sin does not have dominion over them, to compel them to “obey it in the lusts thereof.” For they are become “servants of righteousness” and “servants to God” (Romans 6:12, 14, 17, 22), wherefore they have their fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life. “For the Spirit is *life* because of *righteousness*,” and “the Kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost.”

“Now unto THE KING, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

“I give thee charge, in the sight of God, Who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, Who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou *keep this commandment* without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; which in His times He shall show, Who is the BLESSED and ONLY POTENTATE, the KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS, Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; Whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to Whom be honour and power everlasting, Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17; 6:13–16).