

Bringing Back the King

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Philip Mauro

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CONTENTS

Introduction	1
The Gospel “Promised Afore”	5
His Accusation	15
Miracles, Signs and Wonders	27
“The Sure Mercies of David”	45

INTRODUCTION

The present volume contains papers written at various times during the summer and fall of 1919. They deal with matters relating to the present Kingdom of GOD, that being the Kingdom which John the Baptist had announced as “at hand” which the LORD had expounded to Nicodemus (John 3:3–18), about which He instructed His disciples during the forty days following His resurrection (Acts 1:3) which was preached by the apostles (Acts 8:12; Acts 19:8; 20:25, etc.), and into which GOD translates every believer (Colossians 1:13). This *present* Kingdom of CHRIST, Who is now “crowned” in Heaven as “the King of glory” the “King invisible” (Hebrews 2:9; 1 Timothy 1:17), has been hidden from many of those who belong to it. Their vision of CHRIST as *King*, and of that spiritual dominion — “the Kingdom of heaven” over which He holds sway, has been obscured by a modern theory according to which the Kingdom which the LORD and His servants positively declared to be “at hand” was not at hand by any means, but was (according to that theory) about to be “postponed” to another dispensation.

The basis of theory to which we refer is that when the LORD said: “The Kingdom of heaven is at hand” what He meant was that He was then ready to restore again the *earthly* kingdom of Israel, if they (the Jews) would accept it, He knowing all the while that they would reject it. The consequences of this error have been serious indeed. It has had the effect of *practically* banishing both the King and the Kingdom from the consciousness of many of GOD’S people, of setting aside the laws of that Kingdom, and of displacing other important things which pertain to it.

Therefore the situation demands first of all that the “postponement” theory be overthrown; and to that end it was necessary to bring to the attention of the LORD’S people sufficient evidence from the Word of GOD to refute it. That has now been accomplished for many; and the truth which set *them* free will doubtless deliver others also who are still misled as to the facts of the case.

But the refutation of the postponement theory serves only to clear the ground for the restoring to this present dispensation of certain things of priceless worth which properly belong to it. We may appropriately speak of this second stage of the work as “*Bringing back the King*”; for while the LORD JESUS CHRIST has been preached indeed as *Savior* (for which we cannot be too thankful), He is little preached or known as *Lord*, that is to say as the One Whose Words and commandments are to be obeyed implicitly by His redeemed people. There is more than one way of saying: “WE will not have This Man to *reign* over us” (Luke 19:14); for there are some who, while quite willing to receive pardon and life as gifts from His hand, are *not* willing to take *His yoke* upon them, and *learn* of Him.

Therefore in our writings on the Kingdom, we have sought not only to establish the truth that “*the Kingdom of heaven*” belongs to this present dispensation of the Gospel (which indeed is “the Gospel of the Kingdom,” as well as “the Gospel of the grace of GOD”), but also to bring back to the conscious perceptions of the people of GOD some of the things of incalculable value whereof they have been de spoiled by the teaching referred to. This is the main object of the present volume, which contains little of controversial character, but is devoted mainly to the presentation of *positive* teaching on the many-sided subject of the Kingdom.

There is room and also *need* for much more work of this sort. Hence our prayer is that some of those who are competent to undertake it, and whose interest in the subject has been awakened, may

become active explorers and laborers in the wide and fruitful field of investigation which it offers to them. In particular is there urgent need that the attention of the LORD'S people be directed to the *laws* of the Kingdom. The subject of "the law of CHRIST," "the doctrine of CHRIST," "the doctrine of GOD our Savior," "the law of the Spirit of life in CHRIST JESUS," "the apostles' doctrine" (which are some of the various names given in Scripture to the laws of GOD'S present Kingdom) is generally overlooked in the teaching put forth at the present day to the children of GOD; and this neglect is the cause of many of the evils which now afflict them.

An important part of the work which our LORD undertook under the New Covenant was to write His laws in the *hearts* of His people (Hebrews 10:16). How important this is, will be evident to us when we remember that the basis of *every* government is its *laws*, and that upon the observance of those laws the welfare of its citizens depends. Moreover, the honor and glory of the Throne are involved in the observance of the laws given by the Sovereign Ruler. The LORD has called attention to this truth in the most impressive way in the closing words of His great utterance familiarly known as "The Sermon on the Mount." From what He there says it is certain that no system of teaching, or other spiritual structure, can possibly survive the approaching time of the shaking of all things, *unless it be built upon that Rock Foundation*, which consists of CHRIST'S own sayings in The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:24, 25), which is the solid basis of the Kingdom we have received, and which *cannot be shaken* (Hebrews 12:22–27).

But the builders of the elaborate postponement theory began *their* work by setting aside the laws of CHRIST'S heavenly Kingdom on the ground that those laws are "Jewish," and not for us. Hence it is easy to predict the fate of what they have builded. In fact it is already toppling over. It is not enough, however, for us to recognize the fact that the LORD'S commandments apply to His saints of this dispensation. For obviously we must also store those commandments *in our hearts*, so that the Word of CHRIST may dwell in us richly, in all wisdom (Colossians 3:16), and thus from the very centre of our being it may find expression in all that we do and say. Let us then take note of what the LORD Himself says about His own commandments:

"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the Kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall *do* and *teach* them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:19).

This is what He has put at the beginning of His sayings. And at the end we find these solemn words:

"Therefore whosoever ¹ heareth *these sayings of Mine*, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock.

"And everyone that heareth *these sayings of Mine*, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and *great was the fall of it*" (Matt. 7:24–27).

We should take due notice of the significant fact that the SPIRIT OF GOD brought these sayings of the LORD JESUS to the remembrance of His disciples, and inspired them to record the same in the Scriptures, some years after the LORD had ascended into heaven. This was in fulfillment of what the LORD had promised them in His last conversation with them before His betrayal and death; and it was for a purpose of vital importance to them. He had pointed out that the only force constraining them to obey

1 Literally, "*everyone therefore whosoever*" — words which admit of no setting aside or postponing of these commandments of the LORD.

His commandments was to be *love for Himself* saying:

“If ye *love Me* keep My commandments.”

“He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that *loveth Me*.”

“If a man *love Me* he will keep My words.”

“He that *loveth Me not* keepeth not My sayings” (John 14:15, 21, 23, 24).

And then, to let them know how He would make it possible for them to have His “words” and “commandments” and “sayings” in order that they might show their love for Him by willing obedience, He added this promise:

“But the Comforter, which is the HOLY GHOST, Whom the FATHER will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, and *bring all things to your remembrance* WHATSOEVER I HAVE SAID UNTO YOU” (verse 26).

In the light of these Scriptures it is easy to detect the harmful and destructive character of the latter-day doctrine which boldly says that “the Sermon on the Mount is *law* and not *grace*,” and that its commandments are for another people and another dispensation.

Most assuredly if those sayings and commandments of the LORD were for another people, and for another Kingdom than that of GOD’S “dear SON” (Colossians 1:13), it is impossible that the inspired record should not have contained a clear statement to that effect. But there is no hint of such a thing. On the contrary, it is evident that the *last survivor of the apostles* had never heard that the Kingdom had been “postponed” or was “in abeyance.” We have quoted above from his Gospel; and in his Epistle also we have the words following, wherein the use of the pronoun “we” forbids utterly the idea of the postponement of the Kingdom:

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.

“But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily *is the love of God perfected*. Hereby *know we that we are in Him*” (1 John 2:3–5).

The same apostle says further:

“For this is the love of GOD, *that we keep His commandments*: and His commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3).

It is of the highest importance to note that the call to obey the commandments of the LORD JESUS CHRIST is included in His call to the weary and heavy-laden of this world:

“*Come* unto me ... and I will give you rest. *Take My yoke upon you* ... for My yoke is easy” (Matthew 11:28–30).

The sin-burdened one receives, on coming to CHRIST, the forgiveness of his sins, and he is also born again, being thus brought by the new birth into the Kingdom of God. But the Kingdom is a Kingdom of *grace*, a dominion where *grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life* (Romans 5:20, 21). For the yoke is not forced upon the pardoned sinner. He must *take it upon himself voluntarily*, and his obedience must be “from the *heart*” (Romans 6:17) “the obedience of faith” (Romans 16:26).

This is practical truth of the highest value, and truth whereof the people of GOD stand greatly in need at the present time. Hence our fervent desire and prayer that those who are gifted to minister the Word of GOD to His people may be awakened and duly exercised as to their responsibility in this matter.

THE GOSPEL “PROMISED AFORE”

(Romans 1:2)

Those who teach that the Lord Jesus Christ, when He manifested Himself to Israel in the days of His flesh, offered to them the earthly kingdom, and that when He spoke of the “Kingdom of heaven” or “Kingdom of God” He meant the earthly kingdom, endeavor to support that theory by saying that inasmuch as God had promised to restore earthly supremacy to Israel, He was bound at least to *offer* it to them when Christ came the first time.

That there are several fatally weak points in this argument is obvious almost at a glance. In the first place it is not pretended that God had promised to restore earthly dominion to Israel *at any particular time*. Hence it cannot be assumed that the fulfillment of *that* promise was in any sense due at the Lord’s first coming. This objection becomes absolutely fatal in the light of the Lord’s reply to His disciples when they asked the direct question: “*Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*” They had at least understanding enough not to ask if He would “offer” the kingdom to Israel; and indeed we are utterly at a loss to conceive how any intelligent person could entertain the idea that Israel’s consent to the restoring of the earthly kingdom — *when God’s time arrives* — would be asked. The Lord’s reply was: “*It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power*” (Acts 1:6, 7). This makes it absolutely certain that the time for restoring the earthly kingdom to Israel was not at Christ’s first coming; and makes it absolutely certain that when “the Word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness and he came preaching and saying: “Repent ye; for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Luke 3:2, with Matthew 3:2) he was *not* announcing the advent of the earthly kingdom. The Lord’s word in Acts 1:7 proves that fact beyond all questions.

Furthermore, if God was bound by His promise concerning the restoration of Israel’s earthly greatness as a nation to fulfill that promise *at the time of Christ’s first coming*, then clearly He was not fulfilling His promise by merely *offering* the kingdom to Israel. If the promise in question was due to be fulfilled at that time, then God should, and of course He *would*, have *restored the kingdom to Israel*, even if they had refused it — which, however, they never would have done, had it been offered. An *offer* of the kingdom was not called for, and under no conceivable view of the matter would it have been admissible, nor would it have met the requirements of prophecy.

Thus we have only to look closely at the assumption that the promise of restoring the earthly kingdom was then due to be fulfilled, to see it fade away into misty nothingness, as a mere product of the human imagination. Such indeed is the character of every assumption and argument by which it is sought to support the mistaken “postponement” theory.

What we propose to show in this paper, the Lord permitting, is that the *great* promise of all promises which God gave by the mouth of His holy prophets of old, was the promise of *this present dispensation of the Holy Spirit* — the era of God’s grace to sinners of all nations, the dispensation which is called “*the acceptable year of the Lord,*” “*the day of salvation;*” and is called also by other inspired names, descriptive of its character.

The Scriptures to which we will refer make it perfectly clear that the “promise” due to be fulfilled at the time of the first coming of Christ was that great promise, made to Abraham, of blessing to all the nations of the earth; or, as it is stated in the inspired words of the Apostle Peter: “the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying *unto Abraham*, And in thy Seed shall *all the kindreds of the earth be blessed*” (Acts 3:24, 25). The world of perishing sinners, lying in the darkness and corruption of heathendom, was drawing near to the time appointed for the fulfillment of *that* promise when the events occurred which are recorded in the first chapter of Luke, beginning with the visit of the angel Gabriel to Zacharias to announce the birth of a son, who was to be the Lord’s forerunner. In other writings on the subject of the Kingdom we have shown that the words of that heavenly messenger point in the clearest way to the coming of the day of grace which was soon to dawn upon the world; so we do not dwell at present upon the angel’s message. The point we would now make is that, when God was about to introduce that marvelous era of the gospel “which He had *promised afore by His prophets in the holy Scriptures concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Romans 1:1–3), He set about in a marvelous way to provide Himself a special messenger, one who was to be “more than a prophet,” and who was to announce to Israel the advent of a new order of things — “the Kingdom of heaven.”

That the new era, for the announcement of which this miraculously born messenger was brought into the world, was the era which God was then about to introduce, ought to be plain at a glance to the most ordinary mind. The idea that God, being about to introduce a particular era which He had promised “by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been *since the world began*” — that is to say, from a time long before Israel existed (Luke 1:69) — actually led up to it by bringing miraculously into existence a special messenger and sending him to proclaim *an era of a totally different character*, is so unreasonably and absurdly improbable that we are quite at a loss to account for its origin. Yet that idea has not only sprung into existence, but it has been propagated by well-known expositors of the Bible; and there are some who still cling tenaciously to it, notwithstanding that the error and its serious consequences have been clearly pointed out. It is much to be regretted that this harmful error is conspicuously spread over the pages of a popular “Reference Bible” [referring to the *Scofield Reference Bible* — Ed.] which is in the hands of a great many who love the Word of God. It is the more to be regretted because the editor thereof is one of the few among the denominational clergy who stand true to the fundamentals of Christianity. So we feel it a duty to spare no effort to deliver our fellow believers from a theory so dangerously erroneous, wherein we were ourselves at one time ensnared; and we are greatly encouraged to persevere in this effort by the many letters continually reaching us with grateful acknowledgments from those whom the truth concerning the Kingdom of God has set free.

Doubtless it will be a confirmation to these, and a help to others who are not yet delivered from the postponement theory, to point out from the Scriptures that the *promise of the Gospel* had, in God’s eyes, an importance *so great*, and that its fulfillment was *so dear to His heart*, that it is often spoken of as if it was the *only* promise given by the Old Testament prophets, and as if it had been the theme of each and all the prophets, and their *only* theme.

The Testimony of Peter

The Apostle Peter, for example, states very distinctly in his first Epistle that the subject whereof the prophets of old time prophesied was “*the grace that should come unto you;*” and this he said to those whom God had “begotten again ... by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3, 10). The Apostle’s words in this connection are very plain. Speaking of the “salvation,” which is the end of our faith, he says:

“Of which *salvation* the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who have prophesied of *the grace that should come unto you!*”

This shows that God’s prophets of old were charged to prophesy rather of the “salvation” and the

“grace” that were to come to believers of this dispensation, than of the earthly kingdom which, in its own proper time, is to come unto Israel.

But more than that, the next verse (which is part of the same sentence) declares that, according to those very prophecies, the promised salvation was to come through “the sufferings of Christ,” and would be a part of “the glories that should follow.” And what is even more impressive is the fact stated in the next succeeding verse (12), namely, that it had been revealed to those prophets that the things they prophesied were ministered “*not unto themselves, but unto us.*”

It appears, therefore, and this truly is a remarkable fact, that the things which God’s prophets of old spake about a coming “salvation” through “grace,” were intended *for us* — God’s people of this present dispensation. And not only so, but the concluding words of the same verse distinctly identify *the things spoken by the prophets of old with the things proclaimed by the preachers of the gospel now*. For the Apostle says “that not unto themselves but unto us they did minister *the things which* are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, which things the angels desire to look into.”

Thus it is said of the things now preached to all the world in the Gospel, including God’s “salvation” by “grace,” that the prophets of old foretold them, that the Holy Spirit has come down from heaven to witness to them, and that the angels desire to look into them. Thus it is made clear that the message of the gospel is the same message as — or, more accurately stated, is the *fulfillment of* — that spoken by the prophets. In this is seen the unbroken continuity of the Word of God, and the steady and uninterrupted working out of His eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There are indeed great and important differences between the era of the law and the prophets, and the era of the gospel; and those differences should not be lost sight of. But there is also a definite and direct *relation* between those two eras, which it is most needful that we should understand. For in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit is found the fulfillment of the promise spoken by *the prophets*, and the fulfillment also of the types and shadows and ordinances of *the law*. The Lord Jesus Christ came to fulfill to the very last jot and tittle both the *law* and the *prophets* (Matthew 5:17, 18); and He could not have fulfilled either had He set up, at His first coming, the earthly throne of David.

There could be, therefore, no greater mistake than to suppose that the setting up of the earthly kingdom was in the line of the fulfillment of God’s purposes and promises at the time of Christ’s first coming. The earthly kingdom would not have corresponded *at all* either to the promises of the prophets or to the *righteousness* of (*i.e.*, righteousness required by) *the law* (Romans 8:4), or to its types and shadows; whereas this dispensation of the Holy Spirit corresponds perfectly with the promises of the prophets and also with the requirements and types of the law.

Among the things that specially characterize this “day of salvation” or day of “grace” the greatest prominence is given in the Word of God to *the forgiveness of sins* and the *gift of the Holy Spirit*. But there was a work which *must needs be done* before those great gifts of God to sinful men (both of which are distinctly promised in the Old Testament), could be bestowed. There must be a *righteous foundation laid* upon which God could be just and yet justify the ungodly; and, moreover, the blood of the atonement must be shed on earth ere the Holy Spirit could come down to abide with men. Hence Christ must shed His blood — the blood of the New Covenant — must bear the sins of many on the cross, must die and rise from the dead, and ascend *into heaven*, before there could be any gospel of God’s grace preached with the Holy Ghost sent down *from heaven*.

These are the foundation facts of Redemption; and in their light we should consider carefully the first proclamation of the gospel in the ears of men, which was the utterance of the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost. When considered in that light it is easy to see that what specially distinguished that day from all other days since the world began, was that a large number of persons — “about three thousand souls” — were converted to God, were *baptized for the remission of their sins*, and re-

ceived *the gift of the Holy Spirit*; and that those wonderful results were accomplished *through the agency of a spoken message* (Acts 2: 38–41). Nothing like that had ever happened on earth before.

What then was the character of the message which produced such marvelous results? Upon examining it we find that it began with a statement to the effect that the miraculous speaking of many foreign languages, by those upon whom the Holy Ghost had come, was what had been foretold by the prophet Joel, who had spoken of a coming time when God would pour out of His Spirit upon *all flesh* (which we take to mean *upon men of every nation without distinction* as between Jews and Gentiles), and wherein (to quote the words of Joel): “*whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved*” (Acts 2:32). The Apostle Paul, in Romans 10:12, 13, quoted these same words of Joel — “*whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved*” — and he did so in order to prove that “*there is no difference between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord over all (men) is rich unto all that call upon Him.*”

Following his quotation from Joel’s prophecy, Peter preached the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His ascension into heaven, saying: “Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and *having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost*, HE (Christ) hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (verse 33).

Hence what God had in view, for this present dispensation, was *the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit*, Who was to be the Power of God in the world for the doing of the great work appointed for this age, wherein God is visiting the nations “to take out of them a people for His Name.” And the Apostle James, who declared this to be God’s purpose for this present age, added this significant statement: “*And to this agree the words of the prophets*” (Acts 15: 14, 15).

The disciples of Jesus Christ, who were to be the human instruments for the beginning of that work among men, had been commanded by the Lord Jesus, when He was about to ascend into heaven, to tarry in the city of Jerusalem until they should be “*endued with power from on high;*” and He further said to them at that time: “*And behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you*” (Luke 24:49). Here again *the promise of the Spirit* is spoken of as if it were the *only* promise of importance at the time.

It clearly appears, therefore, that the work of this promised day of salvation *must needs* await the coming of the Holy Spirit; and the coming of the Holy Spirit *must needs* await the resurrection and ascension into heaven of the crucified Son of God, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. For the chain of events, culminating in the coming of the Holy Spirit *must needs be completed*, link by link, according to the eternal purpose of God revealed in the prophetic Scriptures, ere the appointed work of this age could begin.

In Chapter 3 of the Acts of the Apostles we find another address by the Apostle Peter spoken also in the city of Jerusalem, in which address he again preached Christ as risen from the dead in fulfillment of prophecy, and declared that the things which had happened to Him were “*things which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets*” (Acts 3:17, 18). In that address also he called upon his hearers to repent and be converted *that their sins might be blotted out*. This utterance of the Apostle Peter makes the sufferings and resurrection of Christ to be the theme of “*all the prophets.*”

Furthermore, in the same address, the Apostle declared that “*all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken*, have likewise foretold of these days” (Acts 3:24).

It is important to notice the definiteness of these statements (and of others quoted later on), in view of the novel teaching referred to above, by which it would appear that what the prophets had *promised*, and what therefore was due to be fulfilled at Christ’s first coming, was the restoring of earthly dominion to Israel. The fact is, however, and these Scriptures clearly prove it, that the “*promise*” which was of overshadowing importance, (to such an extent as to put the earthly kingdom out of view altogether) was the promise of “*these days,*” that is to say, the wonderful days wherein the gos-

pel of God’s pardoning love to sinners of every nation is preached in all the world “*with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.*”

In further proof of this we call attention to Peter’s words spoken to Cornelius and the company assembled at his house. To them he preached that Jesus Christ is “Lord of *all*” (whether Jews or Gentiles); that the Jews had slain and hanged Him on a tree; but that God had raised Him up the third day; and then he said:

“To Him give *all the prophets* witness, that through His Name, whosoever” — Gentile as well as Jew — “believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:36–43).

What these clear words should impress upon us is the fact that the *remission of sins to every one that believes in the crucified and risen Christ* is what was witnessed by “*all the prophets.*”

Do we need to be reminded of the *greatness*, in God’s eyes, of the dispensation in which the riches of His grace and pardoning love were to be proclaimed to all the world? the age in which *God Himself* was to be revealed as Love and Light through the coming of His own beloved Son — “the brightness of His glory and the express Image of His Person” — to die for sinners and to rise triumphant from the dead? The age in which “the unsearchable riches of Christ” were to be preached to every nation under heaven? Surely, if we will but ponder for a little while the subject of “the forgiveness of sins” as foretold in the Old Testament prophecies, and as set forth a present reality in the New Testament Scriptures, we cannot fail to realize that other subjects of revelation, such as Israel’s earthly dominion — important as that is in its proper place — are *relatively of so little moment* as to be *lost sight of* when the work of God’s beloved Son, in laying a righteous foundation in His own death and resurrection for mercy and pardoning love to hell-deserving sinners, is the subject which the Spirit of God is presenting to our view.

It is true indeed that a part of God’s great plan is the recovery of Israel as a nation, and the placing of that nation in the position of supremacy in the earth. But that was a very remote thing indeed when God set in motion that train of marvelous events which was to introduce the era of His grace to “a world of sinners lost.” It is one of the blighting and withering effects of the “postponement” theory that, by intruding the remote matter of Israel’s earthly dominion at the beginning of this era of the gospel, at the *very place* in fact which is declared by inspiration to be “The beginning of THE GOSPEL of Jesus Christ the Son of God” (Mark 1:1), the *real* purpose of God in sending His Son into the world is obscured to many of His people. Indeed, the “*postponement*” theory is often presented in such a way as to make the restoring of Israel’s earthly greatness appear as the primary and immediate object which the Lord had in view, and to make the work of redemption and worldwide salvation appear as an alternative, to which He turned only after Israel had (as is mistakenly asserted) *refused* the earthly kingdom offered to them (as this theory teaches) by the Lord Jesus Christ at the beginning of His ministry.

For various reasons, which cannot be fully stated in this short paper, it is *exceedingly important* that the people of God should be wholly delivered from the strange error of supposing that the first coming of Christ had anything to do with the upsetting of the authority of the Caesars (to whom God Himself committed the government of the world for this age), and the restoring of earthly dominion to Israel; and that a firm hold should be laid upon the fact that *all* of God’s workings, beginning with the message sent to Zacharias foretelling the birth of John the Baptist, and his going before the face of the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord,” had to do with the introduction of this era of grace to sinners of every nation in the world.

The Testimony of Paul

The facts we are now bringing to the attention of our readers are also proclaimed strongly and clearly by the Apostle Paul. For example, in the address of that Apostle recorded in Acts 13:16–41, he

witnessed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, citing in proof thereof prophecies found in the Psalms and in Isaiah; and upon that foundation he preached, *in* the Name of the risen Son of God, the complete *forgiveness of sins to all who believe in Him*, saying:

“*Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses*” (verses 38, 39).

These words plainly mark this present dispensation as preeminently the era of the *forgiveness of sins* through Jesus Christ to all who believe in Him. And the Apostle declared that the proclamation of complete pardon to every believing sinner was *the fulfillment of “the promise made unto the fathers”* (verses 32, 33). Thus the Apostle spoke as if the promise of this Gospel era were *the only* promise that God had made through the prophets. Most certainly it was “the promise” whose fulfillment was then due. Indeed, in all the preaching and teaching of the Apostles the promises they referred to were *never* those relating to Israel’s earthly dominion, but those of the era of God’s salvation for all men.

Finally, in concluding our examination of the preaching of the Apostle Paul, we call attention to the very clear words spoken by him to King Herod Agrippa, to whom he said:

“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying *none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come*; that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should *show light* unto the people (of Israel) and *to the Gentiles*” (Acts 26:22, 23).

Paul was here defending himself from the charge which the Jews had brought against him of teaching things contrary to the law of Moses, and of profaning the temple (Acts 21:28; 24:4, 5). To this charge he gave a complete answer in saying that, in all his ministry from first to last, he had been preaching to all men both small and great “*none other things*” than those foretold by Moses and the other prophets, namely, that Christ should suffer; that He should be the *first* to rise from the dead; and that He should *show light* not only to the Jews, but also *to the Gentiles*.

So we have again in this Scripture a strong statement to the effect that this present era of the showing of God’s “*marvelous light*” to all the world was the great theme of “the prophets and Moses.”

The Day of “Light”

This word of Paul also gives us one of the many descriptive terms applied in the Scriptures to this present age. It is the era of “light” for all men who will receive it. As the Lord Himself said to Nicodemus: “And this is the condemnation, that *light is come into the world*, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). The Apostle John also describes this present age, saying: “*The darkness is passed and the true light now shineth*” (1 John 2:8).

So also it is written In the Gospel by Matthew: “The people which sat in darkness saw *great light*, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death *light is sprung up*” (Matthew 4:16, quoting Isaiah 42:7).

Zacharias too, six months before the birth of Christ, spoke prophetically of His coming as “the *Day-spring* from on high” Who was “to give *light* to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.” Zacharias spoke also of Christ’s coming as “an horn of salvation in the house of His servant David, as He (God) spake by the mouth of *His holy prophets which have been since the world began*” (Luke 1:69, 70, 78, 79). And Simeon too, when he took the Lord, then an Infant forty days old, into his arms, spoke of Him as “a *Light* to lighten *the Gentiles*” (Luke 2:32).

All these inspired words point clearly to the then approaching era as being — not that of earthly

greatness for Israel, but — that of God’s salvation for all the nations of the world.

Likewise in the first words of John’s Gospel, reference is made to John the Baptist, of whom it is said: “The same came for a witness to bear witness of *the Light*, that *all men*” (without distinction as to nationality) “through Him might believe” (John 1:7).

Forasmuch then as this present age is described in many Scriptures as the day of “Light,” because Christ “the True Light” is come, and forasmuch as John was sent expressly “to bear witness of *the Light*, that *all men* through Him might believe,” it follows that John was the herald of *this present dispensation*, and not the announcer of a kingdom which was then thousands of years off.

It is instructive in this connection to refer back to Isaiah 42, which, according to Matthew 4:14–17, was being “fulfilled” at the *very beginning* of the Lord’s ministry, that is to say at the time when He “*began to preach and to say, Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.*”

That chapter (Isaiah 42) begins with the words: “Behold My Servant Whom I uphold; Mine Elect in Whom My Soul delighteth,” which words put Christ before us as the Lord’s “Servant” or Minister. And what was His service or ministry to be? The *first thing* said of Him is that “He shall bring forth judgment *to the Gentiles.*” Those words are *quite enough*, without looking any further, to show that the Lord’s ministry *at that time* had to do with bringing judgment *to the Gentiles*, and not with offering earthly empire *to the Jews*. But further, in the same passage it is foretold of Him that “He shall not fail nor be discouraged until He have set judgment *in the earth*” showing that His mission had a *world-wide* object. The next verse emphasizes the fact that the *whole earth*, and *all the people that walk therein* are included in the purpose of Christ’s ministry at His first coming; and then once more *the Gentiles* are specially mentioned, and the era of the Gospel is described in unmistakable language:

“I the LORD have called Thee in righteousness, and will hold Thine hand, and will keep Thee, and will give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a *Light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house*” (Isaiah 42:1–7).

To these clear statements of the object of the Lord’s first coming we should add the fact that the passage makes no allusion whatever to the earthly kingdom. When, therefore, we are distinctly informed by the Holy Spirit speaking through Matthew’s Gospel that the prophecy of Isaiah which we have just quoted was being “*fulfilled*” by our Lord at the very beginning of His ministry, and at the very time when He began to preach and to say: “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:12–17), we have the most conclusive and unanswerable proof that the Kingdom which He announced as then “at hand” was not the earthly kingdom promised to Israel, but was the era of the “Light” promised to all the world, Gentiles as well as Jews.

The fact that this present dispensation is plainly declared in the New Testament to be the era of “light” for all the world enables us to locate definitely the time of the fulfillment of certain of the prophecies which have an unmistakable gospel significance.

Thus, in Chapter 49 of Isaiah is a passage containing the promise of God to Christ, in the words: “I will also give Thee for a *light to the Gentiles*, that Thou mayest be My Salvation *unto the end of the earth*” (verse 6). Then follow the words quoted by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:2 as being fulfilled in this present age: “Thus saith the Lord, in an *acceptable time* have I heard thee, and in a *day of salvation* have I helped thee” (verse 8). Then comes a reference to what the Lord afterward spoke of — Gentiles coming from north, south, east and west to sit down with the true Israel (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) in the Kingdom of heaven (Matthew 8:11). These are the words of the prophecy: “Behold, these shall come from far; and lo, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Sinim” (verse 12).

Many other prophecies might be referred to in which the Gospel of God was “promised afore.” The number of such prophecies is doubtless very great; but the significance of many has been lost sight of through failure on our part to pay heed to such Scriptures as Romans 2:28, 29 and 9:6–8, which tell us that there is a *real* Israel hidden in the mass of the unbelieving nation, and a *real* seed of Abraham hidden in the multitude of his natural descendants, and also that the true “Israel of God” and the true “seed of Abraham” include also believing Gentiles. Because of this, many things which properly belong to this present dispensation have been detached from it, by our teachers, and put off to a future age.

The Promise Fulfilled

We see then that the Scriptures tell a perfectly plain, clear and consistent story to the effect that the all-important subject of the Old Testament prophecies was the era wherein Christ is “the Light of the world,” showing the way of life and peace to believing sinners of every nation under heaven. They show also (and of course there can be no denial of it) that God sent forth His Son for the express purpose of putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself as the Lamb of God, to the end that a righteous foundation might be laid for the *forgiveness* of every repentant and believing sinner, and so that *the Holy Ghost* might come down from heaven to witness to the risen and glorified Lord Jesus Christ enthroned in heaven, and to undertake all the great work to be accomplished on earth during this present dispensation.

Such being the era which “all the prophets” had promised, and the era which the Son of God came to introduce, and moreover the era which He actually *did* introduce by His death, resurrection and ascension, is it even conceivable that He could have gone about all Judea and Galilee proclaiming that an era of a totally different character, to wit, the era of Israel’s earthly greatness, and of the overthrow of the Gentile powers was actually “at hand?” In the face of statements of Scripture so clear as those we have quoted, can any one explain how it is possible that such an erroneous idea could have obtained currency among thoughtful people who read their Bible, and how any can yet be found to hold and teach it after the unreasonableness of the error has been pointed out?

Surely we are not claiming too much in saying that the proofs herein presented, and which any one of ordinary intelligence can readily understand, amount to a *complete demonstration* that the era which the Lord Jesus Christ admittedly came to introduce in the only way it could be done, namely, by His dying on the cross and rising again, is the era which He *said* He was about to introduce when He preached the Kingdom of God.

If, for example, we take what is recorded of the Lord in Luke 4:43, 44: “And He said unto them, I *must* preach *the Kingdom of God* to other cities also, for *therefore am I sent*,” and if we compare that simple record, in the light of all the foregoing facts, with what Paul the Apostle said some thirty years later: “And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone *preaching the Kingdom of God*, shall see my face no more” (Acts 20:25), can it be supposed for a moment that “the Kingdom of God” which the Lord was sent to announce and did announce, was a *totally different era* from “the Kingdom of God” which Paul preached? Such a thing is almost unthinkable. Yet it is precisely what the advocates of the postponement theory have been teaching far and wide.

Furthermore, John the Baptist himself also plainly identified the Kingdom announced by him as being this dispensation of the Holy Spirit, by saying of Christ: “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” This is stated in each of the four Gospels (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). There can therefore be no uncertainty as to the “Kingdom” which John announced except by shutting the ears completely against the clearest testimony of Scripture.

Again, John the Baptist further identified the Kingdom he was heralding by pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ as “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

And finally John showed that his ministry was preparatory to this present era of the forgiveness of sins, by the significant fact that he preached *repentance* and baptized those who came to him “*confessing their sins.*”

If indeed we had before us nothing more than the fact and the significance of baptism that would be quite enough to guide us to the conclusion that John’s ministry was the Divine introduction to this present age. There was no baptism connected with the earthly kingdom when it existed before, and there will be none connected with it, so far as appears, when it is restored.

On the other hand, baptism is very conspicuously identified with this present age; and it very strikingly expresses God’s characteristic work in the present time, which is *resurrection from the dead*. Moreover, John’s unique ministry of baptizing confessed sinners in the river Jordan, which ministry was expressly intended to *prepare* the way of the Lord, and to make ready a people *prepared for Him*, is wonderfully appropriate as an introduction to the work which the Lord came to do. For John’s baptism was the *burial* in a watery grave of those who acknowledge themselves *sinners*; and thus they are made ready for the Lord to raise them up in newness of life, and to bestow upon them the gift of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of Scripture concerning the Holy Spirit, concerning resurrection, and concerning the forgiveness of sins — which characterize this present age — are closely associated with baptism.

Against all this mass and weight of testimony, proving with the most extraordinary clearness and fullness that the Lord and His forerunner announced as “at hand” the Kingdom which actually *was* at hand, there does not exist, and never did, the faintest spark of testimony to the contrary. Yet the contrary has been held and taught by expositors of eminence, as if it were the most unquestionable truth.

The Kingdom Of God’s Dear Son

We cite one further passage (Colossians 1:12, 13), which bears the clearest testimony as to the Kingdom whose immediate coming was preached by Christ and His forerunner. In this connection we would first recall that the present era of “the gospel promised afore” is, in many Scriptures, spoken of as the era of “light” for all the world. The prophets of old witnessed to the coming of the Great Light that was to lighten the nations of earth. Zacharias, Simeon and John the Baptist took up this promise, declaring that the promise was about to be fulfilled. The Holy Spirit, through each of the four evangelists, witnesses that, in the coming of Immanuel — God manifest in flesh — the era of “light” had dawned. The Lord Himself repeatedly said, “I AM the Light of THE WORLD” (John 8:12; 9:5; 12:35, 36, 46). Finally Paul was converted by the risen Lord Himself and sent to *the nations of the world*, “to open their eyes, and to turn them from *darkness* to *light* and from the power (*i.e.*, the governmental authority) of Satan unto God” (Acts 26:18). In this last, as also in other Scriptures, the dominion of Satan is called a kingdom of “darkness.” Out of that kingdom all sinners, Jews or Gentiles, who by faith receive the gospel, are delivered. But *into what* are they brought? To this we have the clearest answer in Colossians 1:12, 13:

“Giving thanks unto the Father ... Who hath delivered us from (out of) the power (governmental authority) of *darkness* and hath translated us into THE KINGDOM OF HIS DEAR SON.”

This Scripture is a rock against which the “postponement theory” goes to pieces. It shows that the promised realm of “light” and the Kingdom of God’s dear Son are one and the same. It shows that “the Son of His love” (see margin) is the King of a Kingdom *now*. It shows (in agreement with all the Scriptures) that every one who is born again through the agency of the Word and Spirit of God is brought into *that* Kingdom. That is “the Kingdom of heaven” which God purposed from all eternity to introduce in this age. It is the Kingdom He actually *has* introduced. And beyond all doubt or question it is the Kingdom which the Lord and His forerunner said He was *about* to introduce.

Conclusion

We have fully proved, we believe, by the Scriptures herein referred to, that the Kingdom of God was “promised afore” by God’s prophets in the Old Testament Scriptures; that it was proclaimed as “at hand” during the days of the Lord’s earthly ministry; that it was introduced by the coming of the Holy Ghost; and that it is NOW RUNNING. It is the Kingdom *of God* because established by God; it Is the Kingdom *of heaven*, because the King is in heaven; it is the Kingdom of God’s *dear Son* because He is “the King invisible”; and it has many other names and titles besides to describe its various characteristics.

HIS ACCUSATION

“And sitting down they watched Him there; and set up over His head His accusation written, ‘This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.’” (Matthew 27:36, 37)

The several accounts which the four Gospels give us of the proceedings against the Lord Jesus Christ before Pontius Pilate are sufficiently full, when taken together, to impart a clear understanding of what occurred on that remarkable occasion when our Lord stood for trial and judgment before Caesar’s tribunal.

When the Lord was previously arraigned before the High Priest the charges preferred against Him were vague and indefinite; and many witnesses were sought in the attempt to substantiate an accusation of some sort. But no witnesses could be found to testify anything available for the purpose of His enemies; for though “the Chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witnesses against Jesus to put Him to death;” yet they “found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none” (Matthew 26:59, 60). At last an attempt was made to base an accusation on the Lord’s own declaration that He would raise up the temple of God in three days. What He had said was: “Destroy (*ye*) this temple and in three days I will raise it up,” meaning the temple of His body. (John 2:19.) This was perverted by the false witnesses, who made Him say that *He* would destroy the temple (which to them meant the temple at Jerusalem) and raise it up in three days. (Matt. 26:61; 27:40.) To that accusation the Lord made no reply.

Finally, the occasion which they sought against Him was found in His own statement that He was the Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 26:63–66). This was pronounced by the Sanhedrim to be blasphemy, and deserving of the penalty of death.

Since, however, the leaders of the Jews were without authority to put criminals to death, it was necessary to the accomplishment of their purpose that a decree imposing the death penalty be procured from the Roman governor, Pilate. But obviously the Roman governor would have paid no attention to the charge against Christ of blasphemy in making Himself the Son of God; so there must needs be brought against the Lord Jesus the charge of committing some definite *political* offence, such as sedition against the authority of Caesar, and, moreover, the offence laid to His charge must be of a nature to be punishable by death. He must be accused of a capital crime.

Accordingly, when brought before the governor, He was charged with seditious conduct in stirring up the people against Caesar’s rule and authority by presenting Himself to the Jews as their rightful king. We need hardly tell our readers that the gravest crime that can be committed against the constituted government (whatever it may be) is the attempt to overthrow that government. This was “His accusation,” which Pilate, in conformity to Roman law and custom, caused to be written upon His cross, though the Jews took strong exception to the terms in which Pilate expressed it. The records show that the Lord was indeed accused before Pilate of “making Himself a king,” and thus raising the standard of revolt and insurrection against Caesar. But the same records also show, and from *Pilate’s own lips*, that the accusation was *utterly unfounded and false*, that not a scintilla of evidence, even from the mouth of a false witness, was adduced in support of it. Pilate formally, and in a most impressive manner, pronounced the Lord guiltless of that, and of any other crime or fault. And surely those who know Him will all agree that nothing could have been further from His thought, or from His

blameless conduct, than to utter so much as a word or suggestion calculated to weaken the authority of the constituted government which He Himself had established and which by His own word was to last throughout “the times of the Gentiles,” authority which He Himself witnessed to Pilate was “from above” (John 19:11).

Never from that day to this, through all the intervening centuries of time, have even the enemies of Christ sought to fasten upon Him the baseless charge of offering to the Jews of His day the restoration of their national independence, and deliverance from Caesar’s authority, the charge of fomenting insurrection against the constituted civil rulers of His day — “the powers that be,” which *then* as *now* were “ordained of God” (Romans 13:1). But now, in this twentieth century, at the very end of the age, it is being widely taught — and not by the enemies of Christ, but alas! by leaders among His own professed people — that both Christ Himself, and His Spirit-filled forerunner, John the Baptist, who had been sent to prepare His way before Him and to make ready a people prepared for the Lord, and also His twelve accredited apostles with “the other seventy also,” went about all Judea and Galilee, proclaiming everywhere the earthly Kingdom promised to David — in other words, *doing the very thing whereof the Lord was accused before Pilate*, and whereof at Caesar’s judgment seat He was pronounced *guiltless!* For had the Lord Himself, or John the Baptist, or any other of His servants by His authority, on even a *single occasion*, proclaimed the setting up of the earthly Kingdom in Palestine, or proclaimed anything that could be construed as tending in any wise towards the setting up of another government contrary to that administered by Herod and Pilate, then the accusation brought against the Lord would have been well founded, and the judgment which the Jews demanded against Him would have been just according to the laws of the land.

In view then of this modern revival — in a most unexpected quarter — of the ancient and baseless accusation that was lodged against our Lord by the leaders of the Jews when they arraigned Him before Caesar’s tribunal, we would do well to scrutinize *with the utmost care* the inspired records which the Holy Spirit has given us of those proceedings. For this examination we shall need no legal training, since the records are intended to be read by plain people, not versed in legal technicalities. But it is one of the remarkable features of a most remarkable case that the man who probably is chiefly responsible for the currency given in our day to this ancient accusation against the holy and harmless One, was at one time a prosecuting attorney, and therefore is not only well acquainted with the crime of sedition and the sort of conduct which would amount to that serious offence, but is also a competent judge as to the evidential bearing and value of facts and inferences. (The chief agency in reviving and spreading abroad in our day the charge against Christ of offering the earthly Kingdom to the Jews of His day is the “Scofield Reference Bible,” whose editor was at one time a U. S. District Attorney.)

It is further noteworthy in this connection that expositors who now advance and contend for the charge we are discussing, maintain most positively that, not only did the Lord offer the earthly Kingdom to the leaders of Israel in His day, but also that *He would at that time have introduced it*, if they had but *consented to His proposal*.

It is one of the strangest things in all the history of doctrinal vagaries and departures from the truth of Scripture that there should arise in our day the need to investigate and refute such a charge as this, brought by men who acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. It is, we say, one of the strangest things in all the history of the Christian era, that any of those who know and love the Lord should have entertained for a moment the idea that He, coming into the world as “Son of man,” made “*under the law*” and subject in all things to the constituted authorities of the world, should have gone about seeking to undermine “the powers that be which are ordained of God,” and to get Himself proclaimed king by the corrupt leaders of Israel. Nothing — and we say it with all possible emphasis — nothing could have been further from His teaching and example. And nothing could be further from the truth of Scripture, which shows by many clear statements that when the Gentile dominion is brought to an end it will be *not* by insurrection raised up from beneath, but by overwhelming over-

throw from above (Daniel 2:44, 45; Matthew 21:44, etc.).

Christ before Pilate

What then are the facts as to the proceedings before Pilate? The “accusation” lodged against Christ was formal and precise; but to get a full understanding of the case we must read carefully all the Gospel records. The fullest accounts, and the more pertinent for present purposes, are found in Luke and John. But we will take the records in their order.

In Matthew’s account it is noted that Pilate questioned Christ, saying, “Art thou the King of the Jews?” To which the Lord’s reply is given in the words: “Thou sayest,” which amounts to a strong “Yes.” This was a declaration of His identity. Had He then, whose right it is to reign, ever asserted, publicly or privately, His *claim* to the throne, or ever presented Himself to the Jews as their King, or ever by word or act sought recognition from them as such? Had He ever proclaimed the hour of Israel’s national deliverance and of the overthrow of Caesar’s dominion as “at hand?” That is what was charged against Him at that time as a capital offence (and a capital offence it was if true), and that is what is widely averred and taught concerning Him in this our day by teachers who surely cannot be aware of what they are saying.

Matthew gives no further details of the charges preferred against the Lord, but he records with great particularity the fact that Pilate pronounced Him *absolutely innocent* of those things whereof the leaders of His nation accused Him, even declaring Him to be “a righteous Man” and going so far as to wash his hands publicly, and to avow himself “guiltless of the blood of this *Just Person*.”

Mark’s account shows that the whole Sanhedrim hurried the Lord into the presence of Pilate and were very vehement in their accusation against Him.

In Luke’s Gospel additional important details are given. It is noted that “they began to accuse Him saying, “We found this fellow *perverting the nation* and *forbidding to give a tribute to Caesar*, saying that He Himself is Christ a King” (Luke 23:1). To *pervert* is to *turn away from* (which is the literal meaning of the word), so that we have here the specific charge of sedition and rebellion against Caesar’s authority and Caesar’s revenue.

That the Lord acknowledged, in answer to Pilate’s question, that He was indeed the King of the Jews, might seem to give support to the charge of perverting the nation. But there is a vast difference between the fact that Christ *is* the promised King and the charge that He had sought or proposed to introduce the earthly Kingdom. Pilate himself recognized this difference. For, after examining Christ in regard to what He was accused of, he said: “I find no fault in this man” (verse 4).

The effect of this acquittal of Christ by Pilate was that “they were the more fierce, saying, ‘He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee’” (verse 5). And this would have been perfectly true if, when the Lord “went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom” (Matthew 4:23), or if, when He sent forth the twelve to “the cities of Israel” bidding them to preach saying, “The Kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 10:1, 23); or if when, near the close of His ministry, He sent forth other seventy also into every city and place whither He Himself should come, bidding them to say, “The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you” (Luke 10:1, 9), He had been (as many teachers of our day declare) offering the *earthly* kingdom to the Jews. But Pilate, who had the accusers and the Accused before him, dismissed the charge as wholly unsupported by the facts of the case. Not only so, but Pilate sent Christ also to be examined as to this charge by Herod (who chanced to be at that time at Jerusalem), since the offence, if committed at all, had been mainly in Galilee, over which province Herod had jurisdiction. Now Herod had desired for a long time to see Jesus (Whom he thought to be John the Baptist raised from the dead), because he had heard many things of Him. But it is clear that Herod had never heard, what our modern teachers so positively assert, namely that the Lord in His preaching all over the

country was announcing the earthly Kingdom. No one, until our modern expositors arose with this strange notion, ever pretended that there was a particle of proof to support that charge. Not a single witness came forward to testify to it before either Pilate or Herod. For Pilate gave the final judgment in the case as recorded by Luke thus:

“And Pilate when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers of the people, said unto them, “*Ye have brought this man unto me as one who perverted the people; and behold I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him.* No, nor yet Herod; for I sent you to him; and lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. I will therefore chastise him and release him” (Luke 23:13–15).

And yet again, when they insistently demanded that He be crucified, Pilate said to them the third time:

“Why, what evil hath He done? I have found *no cause of death in him.* I will therefore chastise him, and let him go” (verse 22). But “the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him (*i.e.* Barabbas) that for *sedition* and murder was cast into prison.” Thus the man who had been guilty of the very thing, “*sedition*,” that was falsely charged against the Lord, was released, and He, the innocent One, was condemned in His stead. What a striking illustration we have here of the mighty fact that He suffered once for sins, “*the Just for the unjust*,” that all *our* iniquities were laid upon Him! And how serious and how sad that there should be current among His own people a theory which in fact (however little those who press it may intend it) fastens that false charge of sedition upon Him! ¹

We come lastly to John’s account, where important facts are mentioned which will help us to comprehend the positive and uncompromising judgment of Pilate that the Lord was wholly innocent of any word or act contrary to the rule and authority of Caesar.

1 The writer was recently discussing the postponed kingdom theory with one who has been teaching for many years; and when the discussion reached the Lord’s trial before Pilate the writer put to that teacher the direct question, “Was the accusation of stirring up an insurrection against Caesar’s government true?” And our friend replied without a moment’s hesitation, “It was true”; and he had to say BO or abandon the postponement theory.

The True Witness

One peculiarity about this strange judicial proceeding which is clearly brought out in John's Gospel is this, namely, that the Jews, who brought accusation against the Lord Jesus, would not themselves go into the Praetorium (the Roman judgment hall) lest they be defiled, and hence be debarred from keeping the Passover (John 18:28). For that reason it was necessary for Pilate to go forth to them, and hear their accusation, and then go into the Praetorium and question Christ concerning the things alleged against Him. We learn from John's account that when Pilate first went out to the people he proposed that the Jews should try Him according to their own law; but they objected to that for the express reason that it was not permitted to them *to put anyone to death* (verse 31). Thereupon Pilate entered again the place of judgment and put to Christ the question which is recorded in each of the Gospels, "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" (verse 33). Here, however, we learn the significant fact that Christ did not immediately reply to this question, but demanded to know of Pilate whether he had made that inquiry of himself, or whether others had brought the accusation against Him. This question asked by the Lord of Pilate is significant. According to Roman law a prisoner, especially if charged with a capital crime such as sedition against the constituted government, was entitled to be tried on a formal and precise statement (or "indictment") setting forth the particulars of his alleged offence, and to be *confronted by the witnesses* on whose testimony he was charged.² Thus the simple question put by the Lord brought sharply to Pilate's notice the decisive fact that there were no witnesses to His alleged seditious conduct, even if in fact there had been any definite charges lodged against Him. All Pilate could say in reply to this pointed question was, "Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me. What hast thou done?" Since there were no witnesses to any acts or words of sedition, the only way of proceeding that was open to Pilate was to interrogate Christ Himself, and to decide the case upon *His* testimony. Various indications are given of what passed through Pilate's mind on that occasion. That the charge of sedition was wholly unsupported by proof must have been quickly apparent. Then the extraordinary message which Pilate's wife sent to him must have influenced his mind greatly; and finally there can be no doubt that the Lord's words and manner made a deep impression upon the Roman governor. The bearing of an honest witness always impresses those who have had judicial training and experience; and in this case it was *The True Witness* witnessing a good confession (1 Timothy 6:13). It is certain, at any rate, that, before Pilate came to the end of the case, "he knew that *for envy* they had delivered Him," and not for any crime against the State (Matthew 27:18).

So we reach the point where Pilate listened to the Lord's own testimony as to the nature of the Kingdom He had proclaimed. It is recorded in these words, which are few, but clear and decisive:

"Jesus answered, 'My Kingdom is *not of this world*. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered up to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not *from hence!*'" (John 18:36).

The words "of this world," twice repeated, signify the source or origin of the kingdom referred to. The preposition here rendered "of" (*ek*) means "from" or "out of." And we are bound to understand; otherwise we would impute guile and insincerity to the Lord, that when He said, "My Kingdom" He meant that kingdom which had been proclaimed publicly by Himself, by His apostles, and by John the Baptist. This testimony from the True Witness does away with the strange idea that He (and His servants) had announced two (some of our expositors say *three*) different kingdoms — as different in character as the earthly rule of an earthly monarch like David or Caesar, and a kingdom purely spiritual and heavenly. There never was, from "the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (Mark 1:1–3),

² As Festus said to Agrippa, "It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him" (Acts 25:16).

but *one Kingdom* in view; and that was and is the very same Kingdom concerning which our Lord testified before Pilate saying, “My Kingdom is not of this world.”

The last words of the answer we have quoted are worthy of special notice: “But *now* My Kingdom is *not from* hence.” The word “now” is the adverb of *time*, limiting the application of the Lord’s statement to the time or era *then present*. It leaves full room for the truth that, in a coming dispensation, His Kingdom *will* have an earthly character. But it clears away (or should do so for every one who receives His testimony) the idea that the earthly kingdom was at any time, or in any sense, embraced within the scope of the Lord’s mission at His first coming. Certainly it convinced Pilate, however unconvincing it may be to some modern Bible teachers. For Pilate, after his interrogation of the Lord, went forth again to the Jews and said to them, “I find *no fault* in this man” (verse 38). This decision he thus pronounced in the light also of the further words of Christ recorded in verse 37: “Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born” (*i.e.* to the end that He might be a king) “and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.”

He was born a King indeed, and “the King of the Jews,” too (Matt. 2:2); but not to set up at that time a kingdom which would conflict at all with the rule of Caesar.

Such was the decision reached by Caesar’s representative, and such became the *final judgment* never reversed and so far as the present writer is informed *never disputed*, until called in question by certain prominent Bible expositors of our time. From that day onward not even the enemies of Christ have ever claimed that He had sought or proposed, either directly or indirectly, to set up the throne of David until within recent years that baseless and thoroughly exploded charge has been revamped by certain eminent Bible commentators, and given to the Lord’s people as “new light,” derived by a process of a “rightly dividing the word of truth.” It is an amazing thing.

We believe the question we are discussing will be definitely and finally settled for many who have been greatly perplexed by it, when they see by the Scriptures that Pilate’s judgment, acquitting the Lord of any act or word tending to the overthrow of Caesar’s kingdom, was *based on the Lord’s own testimony*. Pilate’s judgment of acquittal would, of course, have been wrong and unjust, and contrary to truth, had it been the fact that the Lord at any time offered the earthly Kingdom to the Jewish people, or presented Himself to them as their earthly King, or authorized others to do so. But in that case, can anyone who loves Him harbor the thought that He would have denied the accusation, or even have permitted Pilate to pronounce Him innocent of that which He had in fact done?

The case, therefore, in the last analysis, comes to a point where one who forms an opinion about it must either conclude that the Kingdom of God (or Kingdom of heaven) which the Lord announced as “at hand,” was not the earthly kingdom which the Jews desired, or else he will have to conclude that Pilate, in the judgment rendered by him, was misled by the Lord’s own testimony, *that being the only evidence before him*. Let the reader therefore ask himself this question: “Did Pilate in fact reach an erroneous decision upon the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who was the *only* witness examined in the case?”

That Pilate clearly understood the issue presented to him admits of no doubt whatever. The accusation related to the setting up of a claim to an earthly kingdom, and Pilate was convinced that Christ had not spoken of a kingdom of *that sort*. This further appears by the fact that when Pilate, after having acquitted the Lord Jesus, sought to release Him, the Jews cried out, saying: “If thou let this man go thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a King speaketh against Caesar.” (John 19:12).

That would have been quite true if an earthly King and an earthly Kingdom had been in question. But the truth is, and Pilate was forced to decree and publish it, that Christ had never spoken of an *earthly* kingdom, but solely of a *heavenly* kingdom — a kingdom “not of this world.” And finally, when Pilate said unto them, “Shall I crucify your King?” the chief priests, answering for the nation, said:

“We have no king but Caesar.”

The issue, therefore, which Pilate decided was perfectly clear.

A Kingdom “Not Of This World”

When the Lord Jesus Christ and His forerunner, John the Baptist, were publicly announcing in the hearing of many thousands of people that the Kingdom of heaven was “at hand,” that is, about to be introduced, what actually *was* at hand was *this present dispensation of the Holy Spirit*. And that is precisely what John announced in clear words when he said, “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose. He shall baptize you *with the Holy Ghost* and with fire” (Luke 3:16), And the Lord Jesus, after His death and resurrection, referred to this announcement, *using the same words*, and telling His disciples that the event which John had proclaimed, the baptism with the Holy Ghost, would take place “not many days hence” (Acts 1:5). This proves conclusively that the “kingdom” which John heralded as “at hand” began at Pentecost.

This dispensation of the Kingdom of God heralded by John the Baptist, which is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, was to embrace the *whole world*, and was to be introduced by the Lord’s death and resurrection and His ascension to the right hand of God, in fulfillment of Psalms 2, 16, 110 and other prophetic Scriptures. This also was announced by John the Baptist in words of unmistakable clearness when he pointed to the Lord Jesus and said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;” and when he went on to say, “the same is He Which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost” (John 1:29–34).

It is clear that John was here announcing this era of the gospel of Christ crucified and risen from the dead, preached “with the Holy Ghost come down from heaven.” Every one with the smallest Bible knowledge knows that the words, “Lamb of God” speak of God’s appointed Sacrifice for sinners; and the remarkable statement — “the sin of the world” — shows that the coming Sacrifice was not for Israel only, but for the *whole world*.

The Heavens Do Rule

It may be not out of place to notice at this point one of the curious arguments by which it is sought to find a support or footing in Scripture for the theory that the Lord at His first coming offered the earthly kingdom to the Jews. The argument to which we are about to refer is so farfetched and so destitute of Scripture basis, that we would not deem it worthy of discussion but for the fact that one meets it again and again in writings whose *authors* are worthy of respect, even though their *arguments* may not be so in every case.

To the present writer’s mind the expression “Kingdom of heaven” (or literally “Kingdom of the heavens”) serves in itself to convey the thought of a kingdom of *unearthly* character — a kingdom that would be heavenly and spiritual in its features, rather than earthly. In a word, we regard that expression as descriptive (and designedly so) of that very kingdom which now is in existence in the world, and whereof the Apostle Paul says: “The *Kingdom of God* is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy *in the Holy Ghost*” (Romans 14:17). Righteousness, peace, and joy have their source in heaven, and the Holy Ghost, who administers the kingdom in the absence of Christ, is “come down from heaven.”

But the advocates of the postponement theory must needs find *some* reason for claiming that the term “Kingdom of the heavens” meant an *earthly* kingdom; so they advance the idea that the expression had its origin in the words of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar — “the *heavens* do rule”; and in the words spoken to that monarch by the voice from heaven which said, “And seven times shall pass over thee until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will” (Daniel 4:26, 32).

Now, we would remark to begin with, that there is not the slightest reason for supposing that there was any connection whatever between “the Kingdom of the heavens”, announced by John the Baptist and Christ, and the passage we have, cited from the prophecy of Daniel, there being nothing to support that idea beyond the fact (which in itself proves nothing to the purpose) that the word “heavens” occurs in Daniel’s interpretation of the vision of Nebuchadnezzar. But, upon considering the event recorded in Daniel 4, it is *perfectly clear* that there is no connection at all between that event and the proclamation made by John and by the Lord Jesus six hundred years later.

The purpose of God’s dealings with the first Gentile monarch to whom He had given dominion over the world (including authority over His own people, Israel), was to impress forcibly upon him, and those who were to succeed him in the exercise of that dominion, that all the rulers of earth hold their authority from heaven, and are responsible in the exercise thereof to the God of heaven. It is the same truth which Daniel subsequently recalled to Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson, and successor on the throne, to whom he addressed these words: “O thou king, *the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom and majesty, and glory and honour*” (Daniel 5:18). It is the same truth that the Lord Jesus testified to Pontius Pilate when He said: “Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were *given thee from above*” (John 19:11). It is the same truth declared by the Apostle Paul in writing to the saints who were under the civil power of that odious tyrant Nero at Rome, to whom he said; “There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Romans 13:1).

If “the Kingdom of heaven” meant the control which the God of heaven maintains over the earth then Nebuchadnezzar’s empire was the Kingdom of heaven, and so equally was the empire of the late Kaiser [of Germany], and that of the late Sultan of Turkey. That is what the extraordinary argument we are now examining would prove, if it proved anything to the purpose.

What God taught to Nebuchadnezzar by word of mouth and by a very severe experience was *true then*, as it is *now*, namely that “the heavens do rule”, and that “the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever He will”. It pleased Him then to give the dominion to Nebuchadnezzar and his successors. It pleased Him later to transfer it to Darius, and still later to Alexander the Great, and finally to Caesar. And in Caesar’s hands the earthly kingdom still remains and will until the fulfillment of Daniel 2:44, 45; 7:13, 14, etc.

Inasmuch as the supreme authority of Heaven and Heaven’s Ruler over the kingdom of men was *proclaimed and settled, and fully acknowledged*, six hundred years before Christ, it follows that the proclamation by John that the Kingdom of heaven was *at hand*, could not possibly have meant the authority of Heaven over earth’s rulers. Whatever meanings it might conceivably have had, at least this much is certain, namely that it *could not possibly have meant a kingdom of the sort which the God of Heaven had established on earth more than six hundred years previous to John’s ministry, which He had maintained to that very time* (after foretelling the succession of the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman Empires), *and which was already at the beginning of its fourth predicted stage when John began to preach*. Nothing could be more contradictory and absurd than to impute to John the Baptist the announcement that the identical sort of kingdom was then “at hand”, which in fact was actually in existence, and had been for six hundred years. But such is the character of all the arguments and reasons that have been advanced in support of the erroneous notion that the Lord Jesus, at His first coming, offered to the Jews the earthly kingdom, or presented Himself to the leaders of the nation as their earthly King. That notion has no basis whatever in the Word of God, but on the contrary is disproved and put completely out of court by proof of the clearest character. What we have shown herein is that it was put out of Caesar’s Court on the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Pilate’s judgment was based *entirely* on the Lord’s own testimony, for there was none other before him. Hence we ask those who say that the judgment of the court was contrary to fact, *What do they make of the Lord’s testimony!*

The reader, therefore, is called upon to say whether, with all the facts now before him, he will join himself with the chief priests and rulers of the Jews in accusing the Lord Jesus Christ of stirring up insurrection against Caesar, and seeking to set up another government.

For our part we maintain that the judgment of Pilate was correct, and in accordance with the testimony in the case; and moreover, that the testimony of the *only witness* that appeared before the court in that trial was *true*.

Addendum

In writing the foregoing booklet we overlooked a passage (Luke 20:19–26) which has a decisive bearing upon the question under discussion.

The Lord had just spoken the Parable of the Vineyard, which so enraged the chief priests and scribes that they *the same hour* sought to lay hands upon Him; “for they perceived that He had spoken this parable against them.” But “because they feared the people” they dared not take Him openly. Hence they plotted to secure something in the way of evidence upon which they could accuse Him before Pilate of stirring up sedition against Caesar’s authority. With this object in view, “They watched Him, and sent forth *spies*, which should feign themselves just men, *that they might take hold of His words*, that so they might deliver Him to the *power* and *authority* of the Governor” (verse 20).

Matthew and Mark record the fact that among these conspirators were “certain Herodians,” which shows the interest taken in this conspiracy by the partisans of Herod, the ruler of Galilee.

Only in Luke’s Gospel is the *purpose* of this plot distinctly stated; and it throws a light upon the question which the plotters so craftily and hypocritically put to our Lord. Quoting from Luke:

“And they asked Him saying, We know that Thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest Thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly: Is it lawful for us to *give tribute to Caesar, or no?* But He *perceived their craftiness*, and said unto them, *Why tempt ye Me?* Show Me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar’s. And He said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s. And they *could not take hold of His words before the people*.” So the plotters were foiled. Moreover the Lord’s reply not only defeated the attempt at that time to secure evidence on which they could successfully accuse Him before the Roman Governor, but it also furnished proof which completely demolishes the postponement theory put forth in our day. For it is clear that if Christ had proclaimed the earthly kingdom there would have been thousands at Jerusalem at that festival who could bear witness thereto, and hence it would not have been necessary to attempt, by craft, to secure evidence upon which an accusation could be based.

In the first place we have here from the Lord’s own lips a perfectly clear statement of what He taught as to the submission due to Caesar’s government. There never was, and could not have been, either in His teaching or example, anything in conflict with this reply to the question of the Pharisees and Herodians.

Furthermore, the incident furnishes conclusive proof that the Lord and His servants had never, in all their preaching, said so much as a single word which was capable of being construed as hinting at the overthrow of Caesar’s rule and the setting up of another government. Let it be remembered that the Lord Himself, and John, and the Twelve, and the Seventy also, had preached “the Kingdom of God” in all the towns, cities, villages and countryside of Judea and Galilee. Hence there were tens of thousands then assembled at Jerusalem for the Passover, who had heard the Lord’s message. The crowds there gathered included His bitterest enemies, the Pharisees, Scribes and Herodians, who had ever watched Him closely with a view to catching something out of His mouth which they could

use against Him. Yet among them all there was not one who could bring forward anything whatever in support of what His enemies were so desperately anxious to prove. Yet, in the face of this conclusive demonstration that the Lord and His servants had never spoken a word of setting up another government, the advocates of the modern postponement theory maintain that the earthly kingdom was preached by the Lord and His servants all over the land.

Hence the crafty attempt of the Lord's enemies to elicit some words from His lips which could be used in support of the charge of attempting the restoration of the earthly kingdom served to bring forth *conclusive evidence* that the "kingdom" preached by Christ and His servants, and which they said was "at hand," was a Kingdom that did not conflict in the least with that of Caesar, but one which in fact was to make Caesar's government all the more secure. The incident shows that there was no uncertainty whatever as to the kind of a kingdom the Lord had announced, but that, on the contrary, He had made Himself perfectly understood by the tens of thousands who had heard "the gospel of the kingdom."

In this connection we quote the following extracts from a letter by a lawyer of many years' experience addressed to the editor of a well-known periodical.

"I notice that you are still a firm believer in the postponement theory, as I was after getting the idea from the 'Scofield' Bible. Lately my eyes were opened to the untenableness of this theory. A calm reflection will convince you that the theory is wrong, in fact dangerous.

"There is much objection to it, but I just wish to emphasize one or two points which appeal to me as a lawyer. It needs no legal training to grasp these points, but naturally they appeal more strongly to one of the legal profession than to a layman; and now that I see these points in all their clearness I am somewhat surprised that such a good lawyer as Dr. Scofield failed to see them.

"To hold to the 'abeyance' or 'postponement' theory one must accuse Jesus Christ of cowardice, or evasion. The Jews cannot be accused of rejecting Christ as their earthly king unless He openly or in some public manner, either to the multitude or to the rulers, offered Himself as king. Do you not see that such an offer would have made Him guilty of treason and sedition, because the Roman government was the ruling power? We have heard these terms often used during the late war, and we know that there is no higher crime wherever there exists a code of laws; and they are always *capital* offenses.

"Now when Christ was arrested and brought before Pilate, what a splendid opportunity the rulers of the Jews had to prove Him guilty of sedition in offering to lead them as their earthly king! And how quickly they could have obtained a conviction and secured His execution by the Roman authorities, had any proof existed to support the charge! Yet try as they would they could find no witness who could convict Him of any treasonable utterances.

"When Christ was brought before Pilate in the Praetorium, Pilate asked Him 'What hast thou done?' Can any one believe that He contemplated evasion or deceit in His answer? Can it for a moment be imagined that He was not aware of the fact that by offering Himself to the Jews as their earthly king and leader He would have laid Himself open to the charges of sedition and treason? And can any one believe that had He made such an offer He would have concealed it from Pilate in His reply? For Pilate's question was a broad general question, such as is often asked a witness when it is desired to bring out all that he knows of the circumstances under consideration.

"Certainly no one knew better than our Lord Himself everything that happened in connection with his so-called 'offer' to the Jews; and as He Himself was The Truth,' certainly 'the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth,' would constitute His answer

to Pilate's question.

"Bouvier's Law Dictionary in defining perjury quotes from 2 Whart C. L. Sec. 1422 as follows: 'The willful assertion as to a matter of fact, opinion, belief or knowledge made by a witness in a judicial proceeding as part of his evidence, either upon oath or in any form allowed by law to be substituted for an oath, whether such evidence is given in open court, or in an affidavit or otherwise, such assertion being known to such witness to be false and being intended by him to mislead the court, jury or person holding the proceeding.'

"While our Lord was not under oath, He was testifying 'in a judicial proceeding' in a 'form allowed by law', for He was being questioned by the judge who was trying Him, and had He failed to give all the facts there would have been an intentional misleading of the 'person holding the proceeding,' — hence — *perjury*.

"Is not this an awful dilemma in which the adherents of the postponement theory find themselves?"

"Like many others I adopted the postponement theory because it was advocated by Dr. Scofield; but the theory never really 'set comfortably' with me. If the tremendous prophecies concerning the Atonement could have failed of fulfillment because of the whim of a few Jewish leaders, the question arose in my mind, how about the Second Coming? If we are to believe that one of these great events was altogether conditional, then we must believe that the other is also conditional; and it can no longer be looked upon as a blessed hope, but a blessed *conditional* hope.

"The postponement theory is no more nor less than a repetition of the baseless charge which was lodged against our Lord, of offering to the Jews of His day the restoration of their national independence. It is too late to make this charge, for the case is, as the courts say, 'res judicata.' For a court of competent jurisdiction, sitting under an authority no less than Caesar, acquitted by a verdict of two judges, Pilate and Herod, our Lord of this charge. The opinion of the court was final, conclusive and was never reversed, nor even questioned, until lately by the supporters of the postponement theory."

There are many and weighty objections to the "postponement" theory; but doubtless *the* most serious of all is that so clearly pointed out in the foregoing quotations, namely that it puts the Lord in the position of *first* having fomented sedition against the lawfully constituted government of His time, and of *secondly* having denied He had done so when interrogated about it by Pilate. We are, of course, perfectly satisfied that those who have taught and accepted the theory referred to have done so without realizing that it placed the Lord's conduct, and the testimony He gave before Pilate, in the light here exhibited. But now that the implications of this erroneous theory have been pointed out, we look to see its former advocates disavow it as publicly as they have heretofore maintained and taught it.³

We would direct special attention to the fact that the postponement theory furnishes an argument to those who wish to explain away, or otherwise get rid of, the promise of the Lord's Second Coming. For obviously, if the positive statement — "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" — can be taken to mean a *conditional offer*, depending upon the willingness of the Jews to accept Christ as King, and subject to withdrawal for that or any other reason, then the words "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself" can also be construed as only a conditional promise, depending upon the willingness of "Christians" to receive the doctrine of Christ's return and to "look for Him" (Hebrews 9:28). Thus the way has been opened for another "postponement" theory which would rob the few who "love His

3 Since this article was written many of those referred to, including some who are prominent as teachers, have publicly renounced the postponement theory.

appearing” of their blessed hope. For if the positive promise of the Kingdom of heaven admitted of the postponement of that Kingdom and the bringing in of an entirely different dispensation, then clearly the promise of the Lord’s return in glory to reign a thousand years equally admits of being set aside for the introduction of a dispensation of a wholly different character.

MIRACLES, SIGNS AND WONDERS.

Why Were They Given?

The beginning of this dispensation of grace was marked in a striking way by the working of great miracles and by mighty signs and wonders, that is to say, by manifestations of God's power working in a manner apart from and contrary to the ordinary or natural course of events, and causing wonder and amazement in those who beheld them. Moreover, those signs and wonders and mighty works in the realm of nature, were (with the rarest exceptions) of a *beneficent character*, such as healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, cleansing lepers and even raising the dead. They exhibited two characteristics, namely, Divine *power* and Divine *compassion*.

What was the purpose of God in these unusual manifestations of His power among men? And what is the Divine teaching connected with them?

It is very desirable indeed to have the right answer to these questions; and hence our present purpose is to seek that answer in the Word of God. The search for it will be both interesting and profitable, and the result will be sure and satisfying. For we may safely start with the assumption that, in regard to a matter so characteristic of this dispensation, whereof the Gospels and Acts fairly teem with instances, and to which, moreover, frequent allusion is made in the Epistles, the desired explanation must be given in the Word in a way that leaves no room for uncertainty.

A *special* need exists just at the present time for an inquiry into this subject, and it is important that the inquiry be both painstaking and exhaustive; and this for the reason that many have been led wholly astray in regard to it in consequence of the wide acceptance of a modern theory, which for convenience we have called the "postponement theory." According to that theory the ministry of John the Baptist and that of the Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles consisted in offering the earthly kingdom to the people of Israel, which offer (it is said) was rejected by them and "withdrawn," after which (so we are told) the Lord brought in the totally different dispensation of grace — this present dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

This theory, which has no foundation at all in the Scriptures, has done great damage to the truth of God, and has caused much confusion in the minds of those who have fallen a prey to it. Among other evil consequences it has practically reversed, in the minds of many of the Lord's people, the teaching of Scripture touching "Signs and wonders." For it is positively asserted by advocates of the postponement theory (whose numbers, we are thankful to say, are now rapidly diminishing) that the working of miracles was the *normal accompaniment* of the proclamation of the (earthly) kingdom, and that those miracles *ceased* when the offer of that kingdom was "withdrawn." Indeed, the alleged cessation of signs and wonders is given as a *proof* of the correctness of the postponement theory. And it must be conceded that, if it were true that the *preaching of the kingdom* ceased at a certain time, and that "another gospel" was thereupon substituted, and if, simultaneously therewith, the working of miracles also ceased, then we would indeed have some reason at least for thinking that the working of miracles was connected with the preaching of the earthly kingdom. So we will look carefully to see *just what the facts are in this regard*.

Our friends who uphold the postponement theory make much of this; for it is repeatedly asserted (but without any proof being ever offered) that miracles were “the normal incidents of the earthly kingdom,” For example, we are confidently told by a prominent advocate of that theory that

“Every announcement of the Kingdom of heaven, whether by the Lord Himself, or by His messengers, was accompanied by beneficent works of power, *of a character in harmony with that announcement.* ¹

“And furthermore, that these works were not mere credentials at the introduction, but continued the same to the end. They *characterized* the kingdom when He, the King was here, as they will again, for they are called ‘the powers of the coming kingdom.’”

Those who may take the trouble *to* accompany us even a little way on our present inquiry will find, we are sure, that the acceptance of the postponement theory has a mysteriously blinding effect upon the minds of those who accept it; for no *ordinary explanation* (as mere inadvertence or carelessness) will account for statements, like the foregoing, so directly contrary to the plain and plainly stated facts of Scripture.

For we are bold to say, and we propose to furnish clear and ample proof of our assertion, that the miracles wrought by the Lord, and by His servants in His Name, in the early days of this dispensation, have *no connection whatsoever with the earthly kingdom*, and that they are *not* “the powers of the world to come” referred to in Hebrews 6:5.

The proclamation of the kingdom was introduced with the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ in Galilee (Matthew 4:23), and it continued *unchanged in character* to the end of the account given of the doings of the Apostle Paul (Acts 28:4–9), he being the *last* of the Apostles of Christ whose ministry is recorded for us.

In other words, from the beginning of the Lord’s preaching, to the end of the preaching of the last of His Apostles, (and he the one who was at that time carrying the gospel of the Risen Son of God into the heart of the *Gentile world*) precisely the same “beneficent works of power” were wrought which, our friend says, characterized the earthly kingdom, and only when the King was here in Person and during the period when (according to this theory), the earthly kingdom was being offered to the Jews. Nor was there, during this time of apostolic activity in the gospel, *any lessening of the miraculous character* of the signs and wonders; for it is recorded that “God wrought special miracles by the hand God Giving “Testimony to the Word of His Grace” of Paul,” that is to say, miracles of an uncommon sort, “so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them” (Acts 19:11–12). Moreover, we have, during this period (after the Lord had ascended into heaven), the raising from the dead of Dorcas (Acts 9:36–42), and Eutychus (Acts 20:9–10), the latter being toward the end of Paul’s ministry.

God Giving “Testimony to the Word of His Grace”

Even the foregoing brief glance at the facts shows us clearly that the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ is fully and closely connected and identified with that of His apostles subsequent to His death and resurrection (and notably with that of Paul when preaching Christ *to the Gentiles*) by the working of *precisely the same miracles*. Hence, the fact in this regard is that the beneficent works in question were the identifying marks, not of a premature and abortive attempt to introduce the earthly kingdom, but of *the era of the grace of God toward all mankind*.

1 How remarkable that an expositor of Scripture could put such a statement into circulation, and base radical conclusions on it in the face of the words, “John (the Baptist) did no miracle.” (John 10:41)

Nor is this merely a matter of deduction from the historical records of the signs and wonders of apostolic days (though it could be surely deduced from those records alone); for the fact is stated for us in the clearest terms, as for example, in the account of the preaching of the gospel by Paul and Barnabas in Iconium, where we read that:

“Long time therefore abode they, speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave *testimony unto the word of His grace* and granted *signs and wonders* to be done by their hand” (Acts 14:3).

These words, “gave testimony to the *word of His grace*,” explain with perfect clearness the *purpose* of the “signs and wonders.” We ask, therefore, and with unfeigned wonderment, how is it possible, in the face of a Scripture which plainly declares that signs and wonders were God’s testimony to the Word of His *grace*, for Bible teachers of renown to assert that those mighty works were and are the characteristic marks of the *earthly kingdom*, and accompanied only the announcement of *that* kingdom.

We have here a vicious circle of unproved and unprovable assumptions, which we wish our readers to notice. First it is assumed that John and the Lord Jesus, in their preaching, were announcing the earthly kingdom. Then it is assumed that signs and miracles of healing are the normal incidents of that kingdom. Then it is further assumed that they ceased when the offer of the earthly Kingdom ceased, even before the Lord ascended into heaven. And finally, after having assumed the truth of all these things, every one of which is *exactly contrary to the clear statements of the Word of God*, they actually point to the signs and miracles as *proving* that the Kingdom announced by the Lord and His servants *was* the *earthly* kingdom promised to the nation Israel.

We are at this point merely casting our eye in a preliminary way over the field of Divine operations, in order to take note of the *times when* and *places where* these “signs and wonders” occurred, and in order to get a general idea of the purpose for which they were given. The first glance, however, reveals more than enough to overthrow the argument of those who uphold the postponement theory; for while they might maintain that “the gospel of the Kingdom” is “another gospel,” they cannot possibly mislead anyone as to the meaning of the expression “the Word of His grace.” Nor can they possibly, on their theory, account for the signs and wonders that accompanied the Apostle Paul throughout his preaching of the gospel *among the Gentiles*.

What we have already seen therefore, warrants the statement (which every item of pertinent evidence will confirm) that the miracles under consideration were given in order to mark the beginning of the great and wonderful era of *the forgiveness of sins*. This is what we undertake to show herein.

Signs and Wonders in Old Testament Times

But, in order still further to clear the ground of the postponement theory (which has served to obscure and distort important truth in the minds of all who have fallen under its harmful influence), we would call attention to the following facts of Old Testament history.

First. The period of the earthly kingdom of David was *not marked by miracles of the sort we are considering*, or by miracles of any sort. This is surely a fact to be accounted for by those who boldly assert that such miracles are “the normal incidents of the earthly kingdom.” Were that a fact, then the reign of David and Solomon would abound with the cleansing of lepers, healings of the sick, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead, and the like. Where are the records of such? David could give Mephibosheth a place at his table, but could not heal his lameness. In fact “the lame and the blind” received no relief at his hand, but were obnoxious to his soul (2 Samuel 5:5–7).

Second. The only two periods of beneficent miracles in Israel were (1) at the beginning of their history as a nation, when God came down for their *redemption* and *salvation*, and when He brought them through the wilderness; and (2) during the ministry of Elisha in the *northern* kingdom, which was distinctly a ministry of *grace*.

Bringing Back the King

We need not comment on these facts, for their bearing on the subject before us is manifest. Healing miracles were not the characteristics of the earthly kingdom secured and promised to David. Our Lord Himself called attention to the striking fact that though there were *many* lepers *in Israel* in the days of Elisha, not one of them was healed; only Naaman, a *Gentile*, was healed of that loathsome disease (Luke 4:21). Until Christ came there is no record of any Israelite being miraculously healed of leprosy.²

The Lord's Ministry of Healing

But the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ was distinguished from all other periods in the world's history by *innumerable* miracles of healing, which became, indeed, its *prominent characteristic*. As it is written:

“And Jesus went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people.

“And His fame went throughout *all Syria*; and they brought unto Him *all sick people* that were taken with *divers diseases and torments*, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were *lunatic*, and those that *had the palsy*; and **HE HEALED THEM**” (Matthew 4:23–24).

Again, a little later, we read that “He healed *all* that were sick” (Matthew 8:16); and again, that “*great multitudes* followed Him, and He healed them *all*” (Matthew 12:15). And in like manner, until the very *end* of His ministry, long after our friends say the earthly kingdom was set aside — He continued His miracles of healing the sick. For, as He approached Jerusalem for the last time, He performed the prodigious miracle of healing *ten lepers* (Luke 11:11–14). And while in Jerusalem, within a few days of His crucifixion, “*the lame and the blind* came to Him in the temple, and He healed them” (Matthew 21:14).³

It is apparent therefore that never was there an error more palpable, and for which less excuse exists, than that which maintains that miracles accompanied the preaching of the earthly kingdom and ceased when the Lord ceased to announce the kingdom as “at hand.” The Apostle Peter summed up the *whole ministry* of the Lord Jesus in these few words: “Who went about doing good and *healing all* that were oppressed of the devil” (Acts 10:38).

Here was a *new thing* in the earth and a thing marvelous beyond any previous works that were ever wrought among the children of men. For never since the world began had there been an era characterized by the healing of “all” sick folk, cleansing of lepers, raising the dead, restoring sight to the blind, making the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak. We do well to inquire and search diligently to ascertain what the meaning of this is. To *what great truth* was God calling attention by such extraordinary and unheard of manifestations of Himself in works of *grace* and *power*, works which the Lord called “the works of My Father,”

- 2 Miriam's case occurred in the wilderness; and, moreover, the circumstances made it a special case.
- 3 It is instructive to compare this with the treatment accorded “the lame and the blind” in the time of David. Then it was said “The lame and the blind shall not come into the house.” (2 Samuel 5:8). But “the lame and the blind” came to Christ even “in the temple, and He healed them” and concerning which He said, they were “works which none other man did”? (John 15:24).

In Peter's summary of his Lord's ministry quoted above, he tells plainly what was the preaching or "word" that was attested by all these marvelous works, saying, "The *word* which God sent unto the children of Israel *preaching peace* by Jesus Christ, *He is Lord of all*" (Jews and Gentiles alike — Acts 10:36). It was "the word of His *grace*" to which the Lord continued to "give testimony" when He sent forth that Word — the Gospel — among the Gentiles (Acts 14:3). And the Lord Himself spoke to the same effect when, in replying to the question which two of John's disciples brought Him from prison, He recounted His own healing miracles, and added the words, "*and the poor have the gospel preached to them*" (Matt. 11:5). The Holy Spirit has thus been at great pains to make it clear that the miracles were wrought *in attestation of the gospel*.

And there had been no change in this respect from the time when Christ began to preach; for the Lord had said precisely the same thing in His very first recorded message in Galilee, announcing that God had anointed Him "to *preach the gospel to the poor*" and also "the recovering of sight to the blind," and "to set at liberty them that are bruised." (Luke 4:18).

The "Great Light"

In the gospel as recorded by Matthew in the first mention of the Lord's healing miracles, which we have quoted above, and which is very comprehensive (Matthew 4:23–24), it is stated that the Lord had come into that region in order that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah, saying, The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles — the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned." (Matthew 4:14–16).

This puts the matter very clearly indeed, showing that even at the *very beginning* of the Lord's ministry the working of miracles of healing was not at all in connection with the announcement of the earthly kingdom to Israel, but in connection with the showing of God's *Great Light* to the *Gentiles*, And this is explained by the subsequent verse which tells of His fame spreading throughout *all Syria*, which lay just north of Palestine, bordering on the coasts of Zebulun and Naphtali.

"That Light" was not received by all, but only by those who believed on *His Name* (cf. John 1:8–12). The passage connects itself with Malachi 4:2: "But unto you that *fear My Name* shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with *healing in His wings*." And then follows the prophecy of the coming of Elijah the prophet.

"That It Might Be Fulfilled"

The next reference to the Lord's healing miracles is found in Matthew 8, the first miracle there recorded being the cleansing of a leper (an Israelite, as appears from verse 4); and the second being the healing of the Centurion's servant, a Gentile. Then it is recorded that:

"When even was come they brought to Him many that were possessed with devils; and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed *all that were sick*."

And to what end was this? Was it to manifest the normal accompaniments of the earthly kingdom? Nothing could be farther from the truth than that. Listen to these clear words:

"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, *HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND BARE OUR SICKNESSES*" (Matthew 8:16–17).

This Scripture gives exactly what we started out to seek, namely, a precise statement of *the reason why* God gave, at that time, an extraordinary and unprecedented display of miraculous works in the healing of *every sort and description of bodily disease, infirmity and deformity*. First let us notice how completely it overthrows the statement that these healings were "the normal incidents of the earthly kingdom" and the idea that they had any connection whatever with "the earth rule of the Son

of David.” The Lord was come, as verse 20 declares, as “Son of *man*,” and He did those prodigious works of bodily healing in order “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, *Himself* took *our* infirmities and *bare our* sicknesses” This tells us plainly what class of prophecies He had come to fulfill. And since this was at the *beginning* of His ministry, it plainly shows that the “Kingdom” which He was then proclaiming as “at hand” was a kingdom that was to be introduced by His suffering in our stead on the cross. For the prophecy here quoted is Isaiah 53; and all who take an interest in the subject we are discussing will heartily agree that that chapter, and particularly verse 4 which is here quoted, refers to the Lord’s sufferings on the cross, where “He was wounded for *our transgressions*, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are *healed*.”

This passage (Matthew 8:16–17) puts before us the close connection between *sins* and *sicknesses*; and it declares in the plainest way that the Person who did those mighty works is the same “Who *forgiveth ALL* thine iniquities, who *healeth ALL* thy diseases” (Psalm 103:3). Therefore, the healing of “*All* that were sick” and of “*all* manner of disease” proclaims, as nothing else could, the era of *grace*, the new covenant, the free pardon of all sins, and the presence of the One Who had come to do that mighty work. The signs and wonders which He wrought declare plainly the character of His mission.

Those works, so far from indicating the approach of the earthly kingdom, serve to put that subject out of sight altogether, and to reveal in the clearest possible way the dawn of the “True Light,” the Dayspring from on high, coming to give the “knowledge of salvation to His people by *the remission of their sins* through the tender mercy of our God” (Luke 1:77–79). In order to get a clear view of what is here presented for our adoring contemplation, let us go back for a moment to the Lord’s baptism, when He was first “made manifest to Israel,” remembering that it was to that end that John the Baptist came “baptizing with water” (John 1:31). There we find the Lord identifying Himself with those who came to John’s baptism “*confessing their sins*.” Those were “all the people that *heard* him, and the publicans” who “justified God, being baptized of him. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of John” (Luke 7:29–30): It is useful to notice just *what* the leaders of Israel “rejected,” and when. It was not the earthly kingdom, for that was never offered them, but “the counsel of God *against themselves*.” And this they did *at Johns baptism*, or in other words, at the very beginning. It was at the baptism of John that the people of Israel were sharply divided into two classes, a baptized company of *confessed sinners*, and an unbaptized company, including the leaders, who took the position of being “just persons, who need no repentance.”

Those two classes are seen *all through the Gospels*; and the ever increasing enmity of the leaders against the Lord had its main cause in this, that He *associated Himself with sinners*. That enmity is first noted in Matthew 9:10–11, when the Lord went to the house of Matthew the publican, and the Pharisees, seeing it, said to His disciples, “Why eateth *your* Master with publicans and sinners?” (By which words they themselves disowned Him as *their* Master).

It was, therefore, at Christ’s *first manifestation to Israel* that He, in a remarkable way, identified Himself with *confessed sinners*; and even previously to His manifestation to Israel, John’s ministry had, in the purpose of God, separated from the unbelieving mass of Israelites a remnant to be disciplined by the Lord Jesus, John having fulfilled his course in *making ready* “a people *prepared for the Lord*.”

And not only so, but the Lord, by submitting to baptism, the figure of burial and resurrection, showed beforehand the manner in which He was about to open the way in righteousness for the *forgiveness of sins*. It is essential, therefore, to a right understanding of the whole work of Redemption to grasp the significance of the Lord’s baptism in Jordan — the “river of Judgment.”

Let us also remember that the promise which John the Baptist made, concerning the Coming One, to those who confessed their sins and were baptized, was — not that He would set up or bring them

into an earthly kingdom, but — that He would *baptize them with the Holy Ghost* — a “promise” which, by His death and resurrection, was to be made good to all who should receive “the remission of sins” through faith in His Name. (Acts 2:38–39).

What we mainly desire at this point to impress upon the minds of our readers is that, in these wonderful events upon which we are meditating, we have *the beginnings of the era of grace*, whereof the prominent feature is *the forgiveness of sins*, that era being the dispensation of the Holy Spirit (as announced by John the Baptist), and being also the era of the Kingdom of heaven, into which *forgiven sinners* (and none others) are admitted by the new birth.

John, in his announcement to the repenting multitude, declared that, in comparison with the stupendous work which the Lord was soon to do — baptize with the Holy Ghost — his own baptism with water was relatively an unimportant thing, being but a preliminary to and preparation for the work of the Lord Himself. But the one is *directly connected with the other*. There was no also the significance of the important statement of Matthew 8:16–17, namely, that the Lord’s healing miracles were done in fulfillment of the great gospel promises of Isaiah 53. At first glance there is difficulty in understanding how the healing of diseases could be a fulfillment of predictions which manifestly refer to the sufferings of the cross. But the difficulty in large measure disappears when we note the close connection (so clearly declared in Psalm 103:3 and in other Scriptures) between *sins* and *sicknesses*. Diseases and sicknesses which outwardly affect the body are similar in origin and in nature to the iniquities and transgressions which inwardly affect the soul. As the cause is one, so the remedy is one. Christ’s atoning death provides a righteous ground for “remission,” both of the diseases of the body and the sins of the soul. Therefore, in introducing the era of free grace in *forgiving the sins* of all who believe in Jesus Christ, God chose to distinguish it from all other dispensations by countless *miracles of healing* of various kinds, and by other marvelous manifestations of His almighty power and tender compassion. And the more we consider the matter the more we will be impressed with the fact that such signs and wonders are *most appropriate to and in harmony with the character of this dispensation of the Holy Spirit*.

For the visible healing of the outward diseases gave, and was intended to give, the knowledge of, as well as confidence in regard to, the inward cleansing from sin and iniquity. Further and exceedingly clear proof of this is found in the next chapter (Matthew 9) as will be presently shown.

We know from such passages as Romans 3:25 that all sins which were pardoned before Christ died on the cross for sinners were forgiven in anticipation of that coming Sacrifice, ordained before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:29). The words of Isaiah 53:6, “And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all,” reach backward to the fall of man, as well as forward to the last sinner who is yet to taste the sweetness of pardoning love. The sins which the Lord forgave when on earth were borne by Him in His own body on the tree, as well as those that have been forgiven since His death. And in like manner He bore *the sicknesses* which He healed (and which were the consequences of sin) equally with the moral transgressions and iniquities which He forgave. Indeed, when we regard the intimate relation between sins and sicknesses it is not difficult to see that the putting away of the latter implies the putting away of the former at the same time, and by the same means.

Therefore we understand that the healing of diseases by the Lord Jesus Christ in view of His approaching sacrifice was the fulfilling of Isaiah 53:4 in that the Scripture would otherwise have been not *completely* “fulfilled,” that is, not carried out to the *full extent* of what was contemplated by it. In other words, since the Lord undertook to bear on the cross the full and entire consequences of the sins of His people, which consequences *included bodily diseases* as well as sins, therefore, the *fulfilling* of the Scripture demanded not only the remission of sins, but *the healing of diseases also*. And God saw fit to certify to all, by this striking and impressive evidence of the senses, that the One who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, and Who afterwards died on the cross and rose again, was and is indeed and in truth the Lord of all, Who alone “has power on earth to forgive sins.”

“That Ye May Know”

Faith is an attitude of the heart towards God which is produced by *divine witnesses* or *testimonies*. And God has provided that the things which He requires men to believe shall be established by ample *testimony*. Signs and wonders given at the beginning of the age, healing miracles especially, are expressly declared to “break,” no change of dispensation, and no possibility of any such thing; and that is the important matter just now for us to lay hold of.

Furthermore, John’s promise that the Lord Jesus Christ was about to baptize with the Holy Ghost indicates that (as the event proved) the Lord Himself had come, not to abide in the world, but for a *brief visit*, to do a “short work in the earth,” a work which *must be done* ere the Spirit could come down from heaven to *abide throughout the age*. What John was heralding therefore was *an age in which the Holy Spirit was to be in the world*, doing a work that was to occupy the entire age. The Lord’s own coming in the flesh was for a specific purpose which must precede the work which the Holy Spirit was to do. It was for the purpose of offering the appointed sacrifice for sins, thus making it possible for the Spirit to come and to *abide* for the age-long and worldwide work of the Gospel. Consequently, as it is quite easy for us now to see, John’s announcement to the believing remnant of Israel looked on to Christ’s ascension into heaven to the right hand of the Father. It looked on to what Peter subsequently spoke of when he said:

“This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 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 2:32–33).

It is quite plain to us now that, until the Lord “had by Himself *purged our sins*” and had “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens” (Hebrews 1:4), He could not receive of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, and fulfill what John the Baptist announced. And, in the light of this knowledge, it should be quite clear that the Kingdom which John announced was the kingdom of *grace*, the dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

With these facts in mind it should be easy to perceive be God’s *testimony to the Gospel*, and to the *Blessed One* Whom the Gospel proclaims to men as the Christ of God, risen from the dead, and ever living to save those who trust in Him. It was by “signs and wonders” that God “*gave testimony* to the word of His *grace*” (Acts 14:3). For God wishes men to “know the certainty” of the things preached to them in the name of Jesus Christ, and *particularly* that He is the One Who forgives sins. For the principal charge He gave to His disciples was that “repentance and *remission of sins* should be preached in His Name among all nations.”

Hence, in Matthew 9, we find the Lord explaining in clear and simple words *why* He wrought miracles of healing in the presence of the crowds that followed Him about. When the paralytic was brought to Him, carried by four men (as appears by the account in Mark 2:1–12) who even uncovered part of the roof of the house where the Lord Jesus was in order to let down the bed whereon the sick man lay, the Lord, *seeing their faith* (*i.e.* the faith of the man himself and of those who brought him) said, “Son, be of good cheer, *thy sins be forgiven thee*.” This saying caused certain of the scribes to say within themselves, “This man blasphemeth”, showing that they did not recognize in Him the One Who had said through Isaiah the prophet, “I, even I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins” (Isaiah 43:25). And thereupon the Lord showed Himself to be the One Who knoweth the very thoughts of our hearts. For He “knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk?”

This question is calculated to provoke thought. The Lord, however, did not wait for their answer, but, having thus fixed their attention upon the *vital matter of the forgiveness of sins*, spake these illuminating words: “But that *ye may know* that the Son of man hath power on earth *TO FORGIVE, SINS*

(then saith He to the sick of the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thy house. And he arose and departed to his house.”

The Lord’s words and acts on this occasion declare plainly that the great purpose of His then coming into the world was to save sinners from their sins. His first words to the paralytic, “thy sins be forgiven thee,” seem by their finality to say that, having forgiven the man’s sins, He had fully discharged His mission in his behalf. And, when *we* reflect upon the matter, we recognize the fact that the blessing of bodily healing, great as it is, is *as nothing* in comparison with the blessedness of having and *knowing* that we have, the forgiveness of our sins, and all that goes with it. By those words the Lord seemed to say that He had *fully met the man’s needs*. What followed, namely, the instantaneous and complete healing of the “incurable” disease, was a separate transaction, and was done for a distinct purpose, that is to say *for a testimony*, to the end that all, including those who in their hearts charged Him with blasphemy, might *know* that He, the Son of Man, hath power on earth to forgive sins.

So we have here the clearest proof, and from the Lord’s own lips, that His healing miracles were wrought in order to bear a Divine testimony to the all-important fact that He was come for *the salvation of sinners*. Precisely as, according to the inspired words of Peter, “All the prophets give witness” to Him, “that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive *remission of sins*” (Acts 10:43) even so the works that He did bear witness to Him, and to the purpose for which He came.

Christ’s Works Bearing Witness. The Impotent Man, etc.

It may be useful to call attention to a few more passages which state the purpose for which the Lord’s healing miracles were wrought in the eyes of those who followed Him about.

In the same chapter of Matthew which records the healing of the paralytic, we find this statement:

“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and *preaching the gospel of the kingdom*, and healing *every* sickness and *every* disease among the people” (Matthew 9:35).

In John 5 is recorded the striking miracle of raising up the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, to whom the Lord, finding him afterward in the temple, said, “Behold, thou art made whole; *sin no more*, lest a worse thing come unto thee” (verse 14). This is especially noteworthy as showing the intimate connection between sin and sickness, and as showing also that the supreme purpose of the Lord’s coming into the world was to save sinners from their sins.

Following this incident the Lord pronounced one of His most important utterances, putting in the clearest and strongest light the basic facts of the Gospel, namely, that He was the One Who should judge all men, and Whom all men should honor, even as they honor the Father; and that everyone who should hear His Word, and believe ⁴ Him that sent Him, has everlasting life already, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed already out of death into life. The miracle was wrought for the purpose of accrediting the *Son of God*, as He Who can save “all men” from death and judgment, and not at all to indicate that the era of the earthly kingdom of Israel had come.

In the course of this utterance, and indeed as the climax thereof, the Lord appeals to *three Divine witnesses* to Himself and His mission: and this is the point to which we ask special attention. He was demanding a *great thing* of His hearers, namely, that they should accept Him as the very Son of God, sent forth by the Father, and as acting in perfect oneness with the Father. By what proofs did He sup-

4 The text reads “believe Him that sent Him,” not “believe on.” It is hearing and believing: “the Gospel of God concerning His Son” (Romans 1:4) that is here required as the condition of salvation.

port that great claim? It is a proper question to ask, and it is important to understand precisely what proofs He Himself appealed to.

Let it be observed then that He first, as it were, *waived His own testimony* (verse 31) *and that of John* (verses 33–35.) Although John “bare witness unto the Truth,” the Lord would not rest the case on the testimony of any *man*. He said, “I receive not testimony from man” for “I have *greater witness* than that of John,” though “he was a burning and a shining lamp” of testimony.

And what was that “greater witness” to the Person and mission of the Lord Jesus? It was threefold (for there are always, in a matter so vital, “three that bear witness” *whether in heaven or on earth* — 1 John 5:7–8).

The first is described thus:

“For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me” (verse 36).

Here is a statement of the purpose of the Lord’s healing miracles, and one that is too clear to admit of any misunderstanding. The works which the Lord was doing everywhere He went were works which *the Father* had given Him to do; and the purpose of those works was to *bear witness* to the fact that *the Father* had sent Him.

One would naturally ask, what do the advocates of the postponement theory make of these and similar statements of Scripture whereof the meaning is as plain as simple words can make it? To that question our reply must be that they simply ignore such passages completely. It has been to the writer a source of continual astonishment, in examining the arguments of those expositors, to find the most radical statements made in the most positive way, with *never a word of evidence from the Scripture* in their support. They quote freely *from one another*, but ignore the witness of the Bible. It is an exceedingly perilous state of things when men, be they never so gifted and learned, come to regard themselves, and to be regarded by others as “authorities” who need not to refer to proof from Scripture in support of their statements. Few of the Lord’s people are aware of the extent to which they are exposed to this peculiar danger at the present time. The whole fabric of the postponement theory was based upon the bare and unsupported assertions of human “authorities” — some of them indeed very gifted, very godly, and very able — but fallible human beings just the same, prone to err, and compassed with infirmities.

We lately examined certain volumes of current commentaries on Matthew and Acts, wherein the postponement theory is presented at great length and in a peculiarly aggravated form; and we were amazed to find page after page of assertions made in the most dogmatic style with never a reference to any supporting proof whatever — and these were statements of the most radical sort.

We would therefore lay it down as a rule of vital importance that a writer who assumes to instruct the people of God in regard to the things of God, should *always* give the Word of the Lord upon which his statements are based; and that the reader should accept *no* statement of any human “authority”, however eminent, without clear and ample supporting proof from the Word of God, and without *seeing for himself* that the proof adduced *fully establishes the thing asserted*.

The task upon which we are now engaged may well be taken as a test case. Let the reader examine some writing of the most eminent and pronounced advocate of the postponement theory, and note what he says as to the significance of signs and miracles of healing. And if he says (as he will if he refers to the topic at all) that those miracles were the normal accompaniments of the earthly kingdom, let the reader then note the *complete lack of supporting proof*; and finally let him weigh the truly astounding fact that those eminent expositors have made assertions which not only are without the support of evidence from the Word of God, but are actually in direct opposition to the plainest of plain statements therein. Surely, after verifying (which is very easy to do) what we are bringing to the

reader's attention, the latter will be justly cautious in regard to writings whose assertions are not supported by ample proof from the word of God.

In the passage last referred to (John 5:36–47) the other two Witnesses to which the Lord appealed were the *Father Himself*, as the Lord said, “And the *Father Himself*, which hath sent Me, hath *borne witness* of Me” (verse 37) ; and lastly *the Scriptures*, whereof He said, “They are they *which testify* of Me” (verse 39).⁵

As to the probative effect of the Lord's miracles we would further call attention to the case of Nicodemus. That learned and eminent Pharisee and teacher of Israel did not infer from those mighty works that the era of the earthly kingdom had arrived. To him (and indeed to anyone who knew the records of David's reign and Solomon's) such an idea as that would never have occurred. But Nicodemus drew a conclusion which was *right as far as it went*, for he said to Christ, “We know that thou art *a teacher sent from God*; for no man can *do these miracles that thou doest*, except God be with him” (3:2). And upon that confession, the Lord opened up to Nicodemus the foundation facts concerning the “Kingdom” which John the Baptist was at that moment proclaiming, namely, that it was the domain of the Holy Spirit, that it was for all “the world”, that a man must be born again in order to see it, and that He Himself must be “lifted up” on the cross, in order that perishing sinners who should believe on His Name, might receive everlasting life and enter that Kingdom.

“Tell Us Plainly”

On another very important occasion, after the Lord had restored sight to the man that had been born blind, the Jews were greatly stirred up, and crowding around Him in Solomon's porch in the temple, put to Him the direct question, “If thou be the Christ *tell us plainly*.” Here again the Lord appealed to the works He was doing as a sufficient witness to Himself, saying, “I told you and ye believe not. *The works that I do* in My Father's Name, *they bear witness of me*” (John 10:25).

What the Lord here declares is easy to understand, namely, that He having come in the Name of God, and as Son of God, and *doing works of that sort* (exhibiting Divine *power* and Divine *compassion*) in His Father's Name, the works were a *proof* that He was indeed the Christ, the Son of God.

The particular miracle which caused such great commotion in Jerusalem at that time was the giving of sight to one who had been born blind, and concerning which the man himself said that “Since the world began it was not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind” (John 9:32). It is noteworthy that, before working this extraordinary miracle, the Lord had declared to His disciples that the man who had been born blind was in fact a prepared vessel for the very purpose that “the works of God should be made manifest in him” (verse 3). And He spoke of this miracle as one of “the works of Him that sent me” (verse 4). This puts the Lord's healing miracles in a place of great importance. They were things He “*must work*,” And wherein lay the necessity? In that those very works, were the *divinely ordained proof* of who He was, and of what He had come to do.

“Believe Also In Me”

In Chapter 14 the Lord is exhorting and encouraging His own true disciples to believe in Him (see verses 1, 9–11). And in this connection He again appeals to His works as a reason why they should believe in Him, saying, “Believe Me that *I am in the Father* and *the Father in Me*; or else believe me *for the very works' sake*” (verse 11).

5 Even the Lord Himself, when He took the lowly place of a Man among men, would not demand that His statements be received except upon full and convincing testimony by Divine Witnesses. Let us therefore be careful to bring forward the proofs of what we say.

Here we have again the clearest proof that the miracles were not merely incidental (much less merely the “normal incidents of the earthly kingdom”, as our friends assert) but were the essential proofs both of His Person and of His mission (the putting away of sins).

Once again in the same discourse to His disciples the Lord spoke of this important matter, saying of the unbelieving world, “If I had not done among them *the works which none other man did*, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father” (15:19–24). It is not the Jews that the Lord is here speaking of but *the world*.

The works, therefore, wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ, were evidence of the Father’s love for the world in sending His only-begotten Son, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. They prove the Person of the Son, they prove His oneness with God the Father, and they prove the saving character of His mission to *the world*. Therefore, the *disciples* were exhorted to believe Him for the very works’ sake; whereas the rejection by *the world* of the One Who wrought those works which none other man did, is its condemning sin (see John 16:8; also 3:17–18).

Signs and Wonders after the Resurrection

We now continue our study of the subject in order to ascertain whether any change in regard to signs and miracles was caused by the Lord’s death and resurrection.

With the Coming of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, the preaching of the gospel of Christ in its fullness (that is to say, Christ crucified by men but raised from the dead by the mighty power of God) became the great work and the chief characteristic of the age. What connection had healing miracles, signs and wonders with the preaching of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit? This is an important question, to which the Scriptures give a clear answer.

The Apostle Peter, in the first apostolic proclamation of the gospel, referred to this very subject, and cited the prophecy of Joel as showing that the pouring out of the Spirit of God was to be accompanied by “wonders” and “signs” (Acts 2:19). Here is very significant proof from the Old Testament that “signs and wonders” were to be the accompaniment — not of the earthly kingdom, but — *of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit*,

It is highly interesting to note that the expression “signs and wonders” was first used in connection with the miracles wrought by Moses (Exodus 7:3; Deuteronomy 4:34 and 34:11) and that it does not occur again until the time of the later prophets. Isaiah uses it in a remarkable way, saying, “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel” (Isaiah 8:18; cf. Hebrews 2:13). So the expression was used first for the works wrought by Moses, and then for those wrought by Christ.

Peter’s message to the men of Israel assembled in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost reached its culmination and climax in the exhortation to repent, and be baptized for *the remission of sins*, which was coupled with the promise that they should *receive the Holy Ghost*. We see therefore that the working of signs and wonders was the witness given of God to approve the preaching of *forgiveness of sins* in the Name of Jesus Christ, and that it is specially identified with the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Referring again to Peter’s address we note the statement in verse 22 that “Jesus of Nazareth” had been “*approved of God by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you,*” making it still further evident that the Lord’s healing miracles were not the incidents of the earthly kingdom but the signs by which the Lord Jesus was “approved of God” to the people of Israel.

Towards the close of the same chapter (Acts 2) is found a comprehensive statement of the things which *characterized the Church at its very beginning*; and among these things, to which prominence is thus given, we read, “And fear came upon every soul; and *many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles*” (Acts 2:43). Thus, the very beginnings of the Church were marked by *many* wonders and signs wrought by the Apostles.

In the next chapter of Acts is given a selected instance of the “many signs and wonders” which were done in those days by the Apostles, and (as would be expected) the incident is full of instruction. For present purposes, however, we would only point out that the raising up of the impotent man was done “in the Name of Jesus Christ” (verse 6); and that the declared purpose of the miracle was to glorify the Lord Jesus, and to add God’s own confirmation to the Apostle’s testimony that He was risen from the dead (verses 13–16). And again the ultimate purpose of the miracle, the salvation of sinners, is clearly revealed (verse 19).

The purpose of the miracle is further shown by Peter’s words to the temple authorities recorded in the next chapter. To them he said:

“Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that *by the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*, Whom ye crucified, Whom God raised from the dead, even *by Him* doth this man stand before you whole. Neither is there *salvation* in any other; for there is *none other* Name under heaven given among men whereby we must *be saved*” (Acts 4:10–12).

Here again the purpose of the “notable miracle” that had stirred the whole city is clearly set forth. It was wrought in order to put God’s seal in an unmistakable way on the preaching of “salvation” through the Name of Jesus Christ. And we should pay heed to the fact that the concrete instance of “salvation” then before them was a case of *physical healing*.

Following this, we have a remarkable piece of confirmatory evidence in the prayer offered by the church when the threats of the chief priests and elders were reported by the Apostles. The prayer is recorded in these words:

“And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may *speak Thy Word*, by stretching forth Thine hand *TO HEAL*; and that *SIGNS* and *WONDERS* may be done *BY THE NAME, OF THY HOLY CHILD JESUS*” (verses 29–30).

To the church in that day the preaching of the gospel was evidently the vital thing; and they saw how very important it was that miracles of healing, signs and wonders, should accompany the preaching of forgiveness of sins in the Name of Jesus Christ

Moreover it was promptly and impressively made evident that they had the mind of God in praying thus, for we read:

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. And with *great power* gave the apostles witness of *the resurrection*, and great grace was upon them all.

“And by the hands of the apostles were *many signs and wonders* wrought among the people; insomuch that they *brought forth the sick into the streets* and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

“There came also *a multitude out of the cities round about* unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks and them that were vexed with unclean spirits; *and they were healed every one*” (Acts 4:31–33 and 5:12, 16, 17).

Surely there was never a time like this in all the history of the world, when the sick were brought out of doors and laid in the streets for the shadow of a man to fall upon them, and when *multitudes* came from other cities with their sick; and they were healed *every one*. We here see the healing miracles of the Lord Jesus continued on an equal or *even greater scale* by His Apostles; and we are not left to infer the reason (though we could readily do so), but are plainly told that God’s purpose in working

those marvelous miracles of healing was to give an *unmistakable witness from heaven* to the Word of the gospel — forgiveness of sins in the Name of Jesus Christ.

Miracles Accompanying the Gospel

The Lord Jesus had given command to His apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (*i.e.* all creation); and He added these words:

“And *these signs* shall follow them that believe; in My Name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall *lay hands on the sick and they shall recover*” (Mk. 16:15–18).

Thus the Lord Himself foretold that “signs” would accompany the preaching of the Gospel; whereas we have yet to find the slightest evidence, or even the faintest indication, that miracles characterize the earthly kingdom, either past or future. (The expression “the powers of the world to come” will be considered later on).

And now, as we follow the spread of the gospel into Samaria, and then into the great Gentile world, we find the fulfillment of the Lord’s prediction. The inspired account of the progress of the gospel is simply an amplification of Mark 16:20: “And they went forth, and *preached everywhere*, the Lord working with them, and *confirming the word with signs* following.”

Immediately after Stephen’s martyrdom, Philip went down to Samaria and “*preached Christ* unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and *seeing the miracles which he did*. For unclean spirits crying with loud voice came out of *many* that were possessed; and *many* taken with palsies and that were lame were healed” (Acts 8:5–7).

And further it is recorded that, after Simon Magus was converted, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding “*the signs and great miracles* which were done” (verse 13, Greek).

Soon thereafter Barnabas and Paul were sent forth by the Holy Spirit to preach in the Gentile regions of Asia Minor; and coming into Iconium they abode there a long time, “speaking boldly in the Lord, Who gave testimony to the *Word of His grace*, and granted *signs and wonders* to be done by their hands” (Acts 14:3). And in the same chapter is the healing by Paul of a man impotent from his mother’s womb, who never had walked, his condition being precisely the same (and described in the same words) as that of the man healed by Peter at the Beautiful gate of the temple (Acts 14:8–10).

In the next chapter, Barnabas and Paul recounted to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem “what *miracles and wonders* God had wrought *among the Gentiles* by them” (verse 12). In chapter 16 is related the casting out of the spirit of divination from the young woman at Philippi, and the miracle of the earthquake in the same city. And in chapter 19:11–12 is the record of the special miracles which God wrought by Paul. In chapter 20 is the raising of Eutychus, and in chapter 28, as already noted, there is the healing of Publius, and of others who had diseases, on the Island of Melita.

So the record of miraculous healings continues to the very end of the narrative. It stops only when and where the account of *the preaching of the gospel itself breaks off*.

“The Signs of an Apostle”

There are several passages in the Epistles of Paul which give clear explanations of the purpose for which miracles were wrought, and which strongly confirm what we have already brought to the reader’s attention.

In Romans 15 Paul speaks of the grace of God that was given him to preach Christ *among the Gentiles* (which we presume, none of the advocates of the postponement theory would claim to be the of-

fer of the earthly kingdom *to the Jews*) and in that connection says as follows:

“For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me to make the Gentiles obedient, by *word* and *deed*, through *mighty signs and wonders*, by the power of the Spirit of God” (Romans 15:18–19).

Here again we read of “*mighty signs and wonders*” wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit, the purpose in this case being to make evident to the Gentiles that the Gospel was a Divine message.

Again, in writing to the Church at Corinth, Paul used an expression which throws additional light upon our subject, further making it evident that the working of miracles was intended to accredit the Apostles as God’s messengers, as well as to give the Divine seal to their message. Hence, Paul, as the “Apostle of the Gentiles” was empowered to work miracles no less wonderful than those wrought by other Apostles; and to this fact he here referred, saying, “For in nothing am I behind the very chiefest Apostles, though I be nothing. Truly *the signs of an Apostle* were wrought among you in all patience, in *signs and wonders and mighty deeds*” (2 Corinthians 12:11–12).

An “Apostle” is one “*sent forth*”; and the working of the signs and healing miracles, which manifested Divine *power* and compassion, was given as a convincing proof that those men were Apostles of *God*, and that their message was the *truth of God*.

In Galatians 3:5 we find this pertinent and illuminating question: “He therefore that ministereth to you *the Spirit*, and *worketh miracles among you*, doeth he it by the *works of the law*, or by *the hearing of faith*?”

Manifestly, this Scripture definitely connects the working of miracles with the dispensation of *the Spirit*; and it also contrasts the dispensation of *law*, with that of faith, connecting miracles with the latter, instead of with the former.

Not only do the working of miracles and the healing of diseases belong to this dispensation of the Spirit, being the appropriate accompaniments of the preaching of the Risen Christ by His Apostles, but they are also among *the gifts of the Spirit*, distributed among *members of the Church*. In the list of those gifts, found in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, are “*gifts of healing*”, and “the working of miracles”. Moreover, it is distinctly stated that God has set “in *the Church*” both “*miracles*” and “*gifts of healings*”, these following immediately after “Apostles, prophets and teachers” (1 Corinthians 12:28, 29).

How can we account for the remarkable fact that certain eminent expositors hold and teach that the very gifts and powers which God “set in *the Church*” are the peculiar characteristics of the *earthly kingdom*?

Finally, the reference found in Hebrews 2:3, 4 is one of the most forceful and instructive of all. The subject there presented, is 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”. It is *the Lord’s own message* that is here referred to, the message which embraced the wonderful things which God has “in these last days spoken unto us by His Son”, the message wherein is revealed the love of God in giving His own Son to die for sinners, the new birth making them the children of God and bringing them into the Kingdom of Heaven, and also making them king-priests unto God, and the glory which they are to share with Christ in the world to come. Concerning this “*so great salvation* which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them (the Apostles) that heard Him”, our passage goes on to say:

“God also *bearing them witness*, both with *signs and wonders*, and with *divers miracles and gifts* (*i.e.* distributions) of the *Holy Ghost*, according to His own will.” This statement is wonderfully clear and comprehensive. Signs and wonders and miracles were the *witness or testimony of God* to the message of *salvation* at first spoken by the Lord Jesus Himself, but confirmed to us by those who heard Him, the *same testimony of God being continued* as to their preaching. Moreover, those manifestations of

God's power are coupled with the distributions of the *Holy Spirit*, which are peculiar to this present era of grace.

This Scripture is sufficient, without any other, to divorce completely the signs and wonders and miracles of the New Testament from the dispensation of the law, or that of the earthly kingdom, and to attach them solidly to this present dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

“The Powers of the World to Come”

But are not “the powers of the world to come,” which are spoken of in Hebrews 6:5, the miracles of healing and other beneficent works, such as were wrought by the Lord and His Apostles? And will not such miracles abound, on a scale far greater than ever before, in the age to come?

Many prominent teachers tell us so, and quite positively. But does the Bible say so? Here again the writer has to confess that he once accepted the foregoing statement on human authority, and even repeated it to others as Bible truth, only to find out to his mortification that the Bible lends no support to it at all, but just the reverse.

To begin with, there is no warrant whatever for supposing that, in the coming age, there will be the masses of diseased people, the blind and leprous, the lunatic and palsied, and possessed of demons, that were in the world in the days of Christ. On the contrary, the prophetic descriptions given of the conditions that will prevail during the millennium forbid the idea that there will be any opportunity for such manifestations of Divine power and compassion.

But apart from that, the very words “have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come” refute completely the meaning our friends assign to them. The word “powers” is not synonymous with “signs, wonders or miracles.” *If those were meant the word “powers” would not have been employed.* The usage of that word in the Bible makes what we here assert clear beyond all disputes, as we will show.

But, before coming to that, it should be noted that one does not “taste” a sign or wonder or a miracle. If a man is healed he gets, not a “taste” but the *full effect* of the miracle, whereas, if it is wrought in his presence on another, he merely observes it. The word “taste” could not possibly be used in speaking of signs, wonders, miracles of healing, and the like. A “taste,” in this figurative sense, is a *partial* experience, or anticipation, or foretaste, of things to be enjoyed hereafter to the full.

The word here rendered “powers” occurs many times in the New Testament, of which we will just give a few instances, sufficient to make clear the meaning.

When used in the plural it generally refers to *governmental powers*, as “the powers of the heavens shall be shaken” (Matthew 24: 29), “the powers that be” (Romans 13:1); “angels, principalities, powers,” (Romans 8:38 and 1 Peter 3:22). Those who are brought under the rule and Lordship of Christ by the gospel now get a *foretaste* of what those who live in the coming age will *fully enjoy*.

The word is also used of “the power of God” (Matthew 22:29; Romans 1:16); “the power of the Highest” (Luke 1:35); “the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14; Romans 15:13), “the power of the Lord” (Luke 5:17) ; “power from on high” (Luke 24:29; Acts 1:8). Those who have had experience of the power of God in their lives in this age have “tasted the powers of the world to come,” which then will be known fully, and by all.

It is further written that “the kingdom of God is not in word, but in *power*” (1 Corinthians 4:20); and this saying is immediately applied in dealing with an offending person “with the *power* of our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:4). We get only a “taste” now of this power of the Lord to put down all evil doing; but in the coming age it will be known everywhere and to the full. The word is also used of “power” that raises the dead (1 Corinthians 6:14, 15, 43; Ephesians 1:19) and “the power that worketh in us”

(Ephesians 3:20). Every believer knows *something* of this resurrection power in him; but it is only a “taste.” However, in the coming age, we shall enjoy it in fullness. Thus it is that they who receive now, by faith, the risen Christ, the Son of God, have a *taste* of the joy, the bliss, the grace, the glory, the liberty, the power, the knowledge of God, and the communion of the Spirit, and whatever else will be their satisfying portion in the age to come. But signs and wonders and miracles of healing are things of a totally different order; things which were known as fully in the beginnings of this age as they ever could be known; things which in any case, cannot be “tasted”; and things which, so far as is revealed, have no special place, (if any place at all) in the age to come.

The children of God, even the “newborn babes” have “tasted” the *goodness* of the Lord (1 Peter 2:1; Psalm 34:8) and have also “tasted of the heavenly gift,” the Bread of God from heaven, which He has given for the life of the world (Hebrew 6:4; John 6:32, 33); but, in the coming day, they will eat bread *to the full*. They have already received the Spirit as “the earnest” of their inheritance, into which inheritance they will be brought in the age to come (Ephesians 1:14). They have received already of the rich grace of God; but it is only a foretaste of “the grace that is to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13; Ephesians 2:6).

We have therefore only to examine the words “taste” and “powers,” as those words are used by the Spirit of God, to get with clearness and certainty the meaning of Heb. 6:5, and to see that it has nothing whatever to do with signs and wonders and miracles of healing.

Summary

Reviewing what we have gathered in the course of our present inquiry, we may concisely state our main conclusions as follows:

First. There is, according to the Scriptures, no connection between signs and wonders (such as miracles of healing) and the earthly kingdom, either past or future.

Second. Those mighty works are the special and peculiar mark of the present era, namely, that of *God’s grace* in the *forgiveness of sins*, being His appointed and appropriate manifestations of Divine power to distinguish this dispensation of the Holy Spirit from all other dispensations.

Third. Those miracles, when wrought by the hands of the Lord Jesus, were His Father’s works, given to *bear witness* that He was indeed the Son of God Whom His Father had sent into the world; and *especially* to prove that He had power on earth *to forgive sins*.

Fourth. The continuation of the *same mighty works*, wrought through the Apostles *in the Name of Jesus Christ*, without diminution of their number or of their marvelous character, proves that the ministry and preaching of the disciples was the continuation of the ministry and preaching of their Lord and Master. There was no “break” between the two, as some assert.

Fifth. The mighty miracles, signs and wonders, which God wrought by the hands of the Apostles were for the specific purpose of giving testimony to the Word of His Grace, (*i.e.* the gospel of Christ crucified and risen from the dead), and to accredit the Apostles as His true servants and messengers.

Sixth. Miracles and gifts of healings were among the gifts or distributions of the Holy Spirit.

Seventh. The same miracles were “set in the Church” at the beginning, and there is no record that God has ever removed them.

“THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID”

(Isaiah 55:3)

What are “the sure mercies of David?” And to whom does God say: “I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David?” (Isaiah 55:3).

The Scriptures have linked precious truths and promises with the name of David, who was the man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). This fact has, however, become obscured in recent times through erroneous teaching, which makes the promises associated with David to be earthly and Jewish, instead of heavenly and spiritual. Nevertheless, the fact is that David is identified in a very special way with the gospel of God’s grace to all men. In that connection the names of Abraham and David are closely associated; for it was through them, that blessing was to come to all the world.

There was, however, no power in Abraham and David to impart blessing, or to be the channels of blessing, either to Israel or to the world. Hence, whatever “the sure mercies of David” might be, they could be made good to those for whom they were intended only through the death and resurrection of the promised Seed of Abraham and David. Whether we have in view earthly blessings or heavenly, blessings temporal or eternal, they could not be made available to men, whether Jews or Gentiles, except by blood redemption. Whether the purpose of Christ’s first coming was to introduce an earthly kingdom or a heavenly, in either case the truth is that “Christ must needs have suffered and risen again the third day.” Every promise of God, whether of earthly or heavenly blessing, was conditioned *of necessity* upon the death and resurrection of Christ; for what was “due” at His first coming was “a curse” (Malachi 4:6).

“The King of Glory”

A careful study of the place given to David in both the Old and the New Testaments reveals that his relation with the future earthly dominion of Israel is a very subordinate feature thereof, and that the promise of God concerning the Son to be born of the lineage of David included purposes of *vastly greater importance* than even the setting up and occupying of the earthly throne.

It is most true that the prominent thing covenanted to David’s Seed was a *kingdom*. But *what* kingdom was meant? Surely we miss completely the meaning of the prophetic visions concerning God’s wonderful Kingdom if we limit it to the *earthly throne of Israel*, or if we place that feature of prophecy in the foreground. The Kingdom which God had in view, of which the prophets spoke, and which John the Baptist announced as “at hand,” was far greater and more glorious than the kingdom of Israel; and the “throne” which David’s promised Son was to occupy, was and is a throne of far greater majesty and authority than the earthly throne of David, whether past or future. David himself foretold that the promised Seed should “have dominion from sea to sea and from the river *to the ends of the earth*” (Psalm 72:8). These words speak clearly of a worldwide dominion; and from other prophetic Scriptures, equally plain, such as Isaiah 9:6, 7, it is evident that “the Government,” which was to be upon the shoulder of the Coming One, was vaster far than the government of the tribes of Israel. There is great need that the eyes of our understanding should be opened concerning this matter, so that we might, by our spiritual perceptions, behold the wonders and glories of the Kingdom era which began when Christ Jesus, “the King of glory,” entered into heaven through the everlasting doors —

was *crowned* there with glory and honor — and was placed upon the Father’s *throne*, “at the right hand of the Majesty *in the heavens*”

That stupendous event is celebrated in Psalm 24 in words of grandeur and strength:

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

“Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

“Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah.”

We have lost sight of this great event, and have overlooked its significance. We have made little or nothing of the fact that our Lord, when after His resurrection He entered heaven, was “*crowned*” there (Hebrews 2:9), and that He was there *enthroned*. We have forgotten that He became from *that time* “*the King*, eternal, immortal, invisible,” and “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 1:17; 6:15). The Apostle Peter announces this truth when he says of Christ that He is “gone *into heaven*, and is *on the right hand* of God; *angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto Him*” (1 Peter 3:22). These Scriptures clearly refer to the very same “*Kingdom of the heavens*” which John the Baptist announced as “at hand,” and in view of whose nearness he called upon the people of Israel to repent.

Consider the following simple facts as related in plain language in the Scriptures. First, John the Baptist, a man sent from God, came preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying: “Repent ye, for the Kingdom of heaven (literally, *of the heavens*) is at hand.” A few years after that strange and wonderful announcement, Jesus Christ, God’s Son, “the LORD mighty in battle,” returning to heaven victorious from the strife, was *crowned* and *enthroned* in the *heavens*, having first said to His followers on earth: “All power” (authority) “is given unto me *in heaven* and in earth.” At that very time, He received the office, dignity, place and authority of a KING, and became the Occupier of *a throne in the heavens*. Is that not “the Kingdom of *the heavens*” which had been divinely announced just previously? How could there ever have been any question or uncertainty about it? When “the Kingdom of *the heaven*” was proclaimed as “at hand,” and was followed immediately by the King’s coronation and enthronement *in the heavens*, all authority in heaven and earth being vested in Him, where is there room for the smallest doubt that the Kingdom of the heavens which God established when the King of glory entered into the heavens, was the same “Kingdom of the heavens” which He had announced just previously as being then “at hand”?

That the seat of government of this new and wonderful Kingdom, (over which is enthroned the Man Whom God raised from the dead) is “in the heavens,” is a sufficient explanation of the fact that it is divinely called “the Kingdom of the *heavens*.” But the sphere of this new Kingdom *extends to the earth*; and it includes among its happy subjects some of the people on earth. For there are some people, scattered among the nations of the earth, who can say in the language of Paul: “Our citizenship is *in the heavens*” (Philippians 3:20, R.V.). These of whom we speak are the *born* subjects of that heavenly Kingdom. They are already raised up and seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, for *in His death they also died*, and their life is hid with Christ in God (Ephesians 2:4–6; Colossians 3:3). They acknowledge the Lordship of Him Who is enthroned in heaven, and render *willing* obedience to His commandments — not because compelled by the strong arm of the law, nor through fear of pains and penalties imposed for disobedience, but — because He said: “If ye *love Me*, keep My commandments.” The love of Christ constraineth them.

The King Raised From the Dead

The Scriptures already quoted leave no room for doubt, in our opinion, that the Kingdom of the heavens, announced by John the Baptist and by the Lord Himself, began when Jesus Christ, the glori-

fied Man, having been saluted a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec — (who was *King* of righteousness and *King* of Salem, that is, peace) — sat down “on the right hand of the *throne* of the Majesty *in the heavens*” (Hebrews 7:1; 8:1).

The first manifestation *on earth* of that new Royal Government occurred on the day of Pentecost, when Peter (to whom were committed the keys thereof) threw open the doors of that Kingdom, proclaiming Jesus Christ, *the Son of David*, raised up and exalted to the throne of God in heaven; and when three thousand men repented on hearing the word of the Kingdom, and submitted, *in obedience to the Lord’s command*, to the symbol of death and burial in the ordinance of baptism.

But furthermore, what we have stated above is in perfect agreement with the words of the prophets, especially in the light of the interpretations thereof that are given in the New Testament; and this we propose to establish by abundant proof.

There is just one additional point however, which we would state here, namely, that *the kingdom secured by God’s covenant and oath to David’s Son* was to be inherited by that promised Son *in resurrection*. We ask particular attention to this because, in order that we may have a correct understanding of the subject now before us, it is needful to apprehend clearly the fact that, *before* the Son promised to David could *ascend the throne covenanted to Him*, He “*must*” *die on the cross and rise again from the dead*. This appears, for example, by the Lord’s first explanation of the Kingdom of God — that given to Nicodemus — in which He declared the nature of the Kingdom to be such that, in order to see and enter it, a man “*must be born of the Spirit*”; and that, in order to establish it, the Son of man “*must be lifted up to die on the cross*.”

This fact explains certain things which, without its light, would be enveloped in obscurity; and among other things it explains *David’s connection with the Gospel preached in all the world during this era of grace*.

Let us notice at this point the words of Peter, found in Acts 2:30–32, where, speaking of David, he said:

“*Therefore* being a prophet and knowing that God had *sworn with an oath to him*, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh ¹ He would *raise up* Christ to sit upon his throne; he” (David) “*seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ*; that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.”

It clearly appears therefore that God’s oath to David concerning the Seed Who was to occupy the everlasting throne, required for its fulfillment that the promised One should die and rise again *before occupying that throne*. God’s promise and purpose were (though it required the light of the New Testament to reveal it) to “*raise up* Christ to sit upon his throne.” Thus we learn that, wherever the throne was spoken of in prophecy, *the cross* and *the resurrection* were in view as the appointed and the *only* pathway to it. The “*sufferings* of Christ” were to come first, and the “*glories*” (including prominently the glory of the throne) were to “*follow*” (1 Peter 1:11).

This was not understood by the prophets of old; but there is small excuse for us who enjoy the full light of the New Testament to be ignorant of it. For it has now been made clear by the Scriptures of the New Testament that there would have been no everlasting throne of David for the Lord, and no sure mercies of David for us, without the fulfillment, first, of all that was foretold concerning His death and resurrection.

1 Compare in Paul’s description of the Gospel of God the statement that Christ was “made of the seed of David *according to’ the flesh*” (Romans 1:3) — the same words used by Peter.

David and the Gospel

The light of this fact is an invaluable aid in the study of David's relation to the purposes of God in general, and to the dispensation of the Gospel in particular. David is the *first* man named in the New Testament (Matthew 1:1) and the *last* (Revelation 22:16). On the basis of the "postponement" theory, how could that remarkable fact be explained? Nothing more than this is really needed to tell us that the descent of our Lord from David "according to the flesh," has a very broad significance, and a very important bearing upon the era of the Gospel. What serious damage, therefore, is done to the truth in which the church is vitally interested, by a theory which disconnects God's oath and covenant with David from this present dispensation of grace, and stamps them with a fictitiously "Jewish" character! Truly "*from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence*" (Matthew 11:12).

The first verse of the New Testament is a marvelous Scripture. It connects the new and glorious order of things then about to begin, with Abraham and David, the two men with whom God made a covenant *confirmed by an oath*; and from those two it traces the descent "according to the flesh" of that One mentioned in Psalm no. 110, Who was the *Third* with Whom God entered into covenant *with an oath*, saying: "The Lord hath *sworn* and will not repent, Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec."

When we grasp, even if it be but partially, the significance of the *three oaths of God*, and when we observe that the three to whom those oaths were severally made are named in the first verse of the Scriptures of the New Covenant, we shall have information in hand sufficient to show us the main characteristics of the new order of things which God was then about to introduce in heaven and on earth. The mention of Abraham tells of the promised era wherein the "blessing" of God was to come to every nation of the world; and the mention of David tells of a Kingdom vaster, grander far, and more excellent in glory, than that of David and Solomon.

Moreover, that first verse of the New Testament points clearly to *the death and resurrection* of the Coming One, seeing that Christ *must* be "made a curse" ere the promised "blessing of Abraham" could "come on the Gentiles" (Galatians 3:13, 14); and seeing that *He must* also die and rise again ere He could ascend the promised throne.

God's oath, recorded in the Psalm 110, is in perfect accord with this; for it points to the era wherein Christ was to *sit at God's right hand in heaven*. It is impossible to misunderstand the meaning of this prophecy or to be mistaken as to the era in which it is fulfilled; nor is there, in fact, any disagreement about it. That the Lord when He entered heaven was "*called (or saluted) of God a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec*" (Hebrews 5:10) is undisputed. But we need to apprehend concerning the priesthood of Melchisedec that he, besides having the priest's office, *was also a king*. That fact is mentioned in the Old Testament narrative (Genesis 14:18), and is pointed out with much emphasis in the New Testament (Hebrews 7:1, 2).

In order to make things fit into a preconceived and erroneous system of dispensational ideas, the Lord's *present* Kingship has been divorced from His Priesthood, and pushed off to the next age. Indeed, by some of those who deal in "dispensational truth," (so called, but which is not always *truth*) the Lord's Melchisedec Priesthood itself is put off to the millennium. But what warrant is there for this? Does it not clearly appear by many Scriptures that our Lord is *now* a King, enthroned and crowned in heaven, and is also *now* a Priest? And is not His Priesthood altogether "after the order of Melchisedec," in that it is both unchangeable and intransmissible, in that He abideth a Priest *forever*, and in that He discharges the duties of that office "in the power of an endless life"? Surely there is no room for doubt on those points.

Furthermore the Epistle to the Hebrews, which has to do in a special way with the Lord's *present* offices and ministry, calls particular attention to the fact that Melchisedec was "by interpretation

King of *righteousness*, and after that also King of Salem, which Is, King of *peace*” (Hebrews 7:2). Here we have “righteousness” and “peace,” which are the two leading characteristics of the now present “Kingdom of God,” as described by the Apostle Paul (Romans 14:17). So that we have thus another Scripture which presents the Lord as a *King* whose seat of Government is *in heaven*, ruling a Kingdom whose subjects (or some of them) are on earth, and which is characterized specially by *righteousness* and *peace*.

Moreover, the Epistle to the Hebrews not only reveals the Lord Jesus as a King in heaven, “*crowned* with glory and honour” there; but it also reveals the character of His throne as “a throne of *grace*” (Hebrews 4:16). This further identifies it, and in the clearest way, with this present dispensation of the grace of God. (See Romans 5:21.) And that throne, though in heaven, is a throne to which the people of God on earth have free access; for they are bidden to “come boldly” to it, that they may “*obtain* mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Here again is a Scripture that tells quite plainly of God’s present Kingdom as being “the Kingdom of the heavens” indeed, whose citizens, though they are bodily on earth, have access in spirit to the throne of grace above.

“Remember Jesus Christ of the Seed of David”

David’s direct and close connection with the Gospel of God and with the present gospel dispensation is clearly seen in the preaching of the two leading apostles, Peter and Paul. Brief reference has been already made to this; but we purpose looking at it more closely, if God will. It also appears conspicuously in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, which contains the unfolding of the Gospel. We find therein that Paul, like Matthew, links *his* gospel with the two Old Testament characters Abraham and David, to whom God gave special promises, connected in each case with a *son*, and confirmed in each case with an *oath*. (See Romans 4:1–8.) The place given to David in Paul’s gospel is proof of the clearest sort that the promise of an everlasting throne to David’s Seed has to do (prominently though not exclusively) with *this present dispensation*.

But what is even more striking and significant is Paul’s *last* message concerning the Gospel, which is found in his second Epistle to Timothy. In that message he exhorts his son Timothy to be “a partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel; whereunto,” says he, “I am appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher of *the Gentiles*” (2 Timothy 1:8–11). And he further says: “The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” It is in this connection that Paul gives to Timothy that remarkable exhortation to “Remember Jesus Christ of the *Seed of David*, raised from the dead according to *my* Gospel” (2 Timothy 2:8, R.V.).

We call special attention to the fact that, in this last definition of the Gospel as proclaimed by Paul — a definition given in the most impressive way and in the most concise terms — David is mentioned and *Abraham* is omitted. This is very striking indeed in view of a situation which confronts us today, when many of those who proclaim the gospel of Christ are mindful, indeed, of His relation to *Abraham* (through whose Seed blessing was promised to the Gentiles), but have *completely forgotten* the important fact that the risen Christ Who is to be preached *to the Gentiles*, was “of the Seed of *David*.”

That fact is, as we have already said, as plain as anything can be on the face of the New Testament Scriptures. And not only so, but its value to the people of God is incalculably great. Yet, not only has the fact itself been set aside and its significance hidden from those who should be in the enjoyment of it, but teachers of eminence have exerted their abilities to the utmost limits in the effort to make it appear that David stands, in the purposes and promises of God, merely in connection with the restoration of earthly dominion to Israel. So firmly, indeed, is that erroneous idea rooted in the minds of many teachers of greater or lesser note at the present time, that the mention of David’s name in the first verse of Matthew is frequently cited as evidence of the “Jewish” character of that Gospel; whereas, In the light of the Scriptures to which reference has been made herein, it is easy to see that

the place given to David's name in the first Gospel is proof of the broad scope of that Gospel, and of its *worldwide* application.

Peter's First Gospel Message

Having thus cleared the ground of the preconceived and mistaken idea that David's place in the purposes of God is limited to (or is specially connected with) the earthly greatness of the nation of Israel, we will now look more closely at the two great Gospel addresses, that by Peter recorded in Acts 2, and that of Paul in Acts 13.

Peter was, by the Lord's choice, the first to preach the Gospel "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." The place and the time for this preaching were also chosen by the Lord, Who had commanded His disciples to *tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until* they should be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). And in this connection It may be well to point out that the *same message* of "repentance and forgiveness of sins" in the Name of the risen Christ, which was to be preached first at Jerusalem, was to be carried thence "among all nations" (Luke 24:47), by the Lord's disciples, who were appointed to be witnesses unto Him "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). It was *especially for the accomplishment of this work* that the Holy Ghost was to come, as the Scriptures just cited so plainly declare. The "one Spirit" came down to be the Power of the *one Gospel message to all* the nations of the world. There was and could be no "break" in the direction or in the character of God's dealings with mankind, until that "same Jesus who was taken up into heaven" shall come again in like manner, as He was seen to go into heaven.

There is every reason, therefore, why those who have been brought by God's grace into the enjoyment of the blessings of His Gospel, should study with the greatest care the first utterance on earth of the Spirit of God, proclaiming through human lips the message of God's love to "a world of sinners lost and ruined by the fall."

For the purposes of our present study, we will notice particularly the prominence, given in Peter's first Gospel message, to David. His name is mentioned three times, and he is the only human being referred to at all, except for the incidental mention of Joel, whose prophecy concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit is quoted. The real message begins at verse 24, being founded upon David's prophecy in Psalm 16. It shows, as do many other Scriptures also, that the great thing which God is testifying to the world during this present age, is *the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*, apart from which there is no gospel, no faith, no forgiveness of sins, no hope for perishing sinners (1 Corinthians 15:12-19).

It is an instructive and an impressive fact indeed that God's *entire* message for this *entire* age, and for the *whole* world, is founded upon *David's prophecy* in the sixteenth Psalm; and we see that no sooner is the Holy Ghost come down from heaven to witness unto Jesus Christ as crowned and enthroned *there*, than He turns to that portion of Scriptures and unfolds it as only God Himself could do; showing that it was the Spirit of Christ speaking in the prophet David who said:

"I foresaw the Lord always before My face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved. Therefore did My heart rejoice and My tongue was glad; moreover also My flesh shall rest in hope: Because Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to Me the ways of life; Thou shalt make Me full of joy with Thy countenance."

Thus, we see that it is *the Son of David* who is preached as raised from the dead; and this fact is full of significance if we are but able to discern it. The importance of it should never have been lost sight of, seeing that the Apostle Paul, who had been "put in trust with the Gospel," said when the time came for him to turn his trusteeship over to others: "*Remember Jesus Christ of the Seed of David* raised from the dead according to my

Gospel” (2 Timothy 2:8, R.V.).

Peter then explained in simple words that the “patriarch David, “being both dead and buried and his sepulcher being with them in Jerusalem to that very day, was not speaking of himself, but, “being a prophet, and knowing that God had *sworn with an oath* to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up² the Christ to sit on his throne, he seeing this before He spake of the *resurrection of Christ*, that *His* soul was not left in hell, neither *His* flesh did see corruption.”

What is here stated in plain words is that God’s oath to David called for, and was to be fulfilled by, the *raising up of Christ from the dead*. We should also notice particularly the declared purpose for which Christ was to be raised up, namely *to sit upon a throne*.

It was, then, *a kingdom* that was to be brought into existence through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. But *what* kingdom? We have been accustomed to think only of the earthly kingdom of Israel, which was then a long way off, and have lost sight of the glory of God’s *heavenly* Kingdom which was *just then began*, and which had awaited the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and His ascension into heaven. Everything that had gone before points to the conclusion that Peter was here speaking of “the Kingdom of God,” concerning which the Lord had been instructing His disciples during the forty days following His resurrection; and not the kingdom that is to be restored to Israel when “times and seasons “are resumed, concerning which times and seasons He had told them they were not to know anything at that time (Acts 1:3, 7).

The words of Peter’s address fully confirm this. The question is as to the meaning of the words “to sit upon his throne” (literally, “on the throne of him”). Does the pronoun “his” refer to David or to God? Was it David’s throne, or God’s? God’s words to David were: “I will establish His (Christ’s) Kingdom. He shall build an house for My Name, and I will establish *the throne of His Kingdom forever*” (2 Samuel 7:12, 13). In Psalm 45:6, we find the words: “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever,” which words are quoted in Hebrews 1:8 and there applied to Christ. In 1 Chronicles 17:14, we have the additional words: “I will be His Father, and He shall be My Son; and I will not take My mercy away from Him as I took it from him that was before thee. But *I will settle Him in Mine House and in My Kingdom forever; and His throne shall be established forevermore.*”

These words evidently refer to the *coming* Kingdom of Christ which will be a universal dominion (Revelation 11:15); but they are broad enough to include the Kingdom of God which the Lord announced when on earth, and which awaited His death and resurrection. We quote them mainly to show that the “throne” referred to is *God’s* throne; and we have only to notice what follows in Peter’s address to see the confirmation of this. He thus applies the prophecy:

“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. For David is not ascended *into the heavens*: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand until I make Thy foes Thy footstool.”

Having” proved the resurrection of Christ by one Psalm of David (Psalm 16), Peter now proves His ascension into heaven and His enthronement there by another Psalm of David (Psalm 110), thus resting his *entire message* upon the words of David. The Gospel preached by Peter was therefore in substance merely a declaration of the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning Christ that had been spoken by David. This agrees with what Peter says in his first Epistle, namely that the things spoken of old time by the prophets are “the things which are *now* reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven” (1 Peter 1:12). And Paul also declares that *he* preached “*none other things* than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come” (Acts 26:22).

2 The word translated “raise up” is that which is always used for *raising up from the dead*.

In the passage last above quoted from Peter's message, we have the explanation of the words "Sit Thou on My right hand" — (verse 34), showing that the throne which which has become so popular in our day. Such is not the teaching of Scripture; but, as in the passage last quoted, and in passages such as Hebrews 5:9, 10, the Lord Jesus Christ in resurrection is seen to have become "the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey Him*; called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec."

The Preaching Of Paul

In Acts 13, we have the record of a gospel message by Paul. It has been given to us, of course, as an example of what was preached by that apostle. As in Peter's address, so also in Paul's, David is the prominent personage referred to (only casual mention being made of Abraham, Saul and Samuel); and the message itself is founded upon two Psalms of David and a quotation from Isaiah which concerns David. Speaking of King Saul, the apostle said:

"And when He (God) had removed him, He *raised up* unto them David to be their king; to whom also He gave testimony and said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart, which shall fulfill all My Will.

"Of this man's seed hath God *according to His promise, raised* unto Israel a *Saviour*, Jesus, ³ when John had first preached before His coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not He. But, behold, there cometh One after me, Whose shoes I am not worthy to loose."

Compare the words of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist: "For He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath *raised up* an horn of *Salvation* for us *in the house of His servant David*" (Luke 1:68, 69). The significant word "raised up" is frequently used in this connection.

"*Men* and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent" (Acts 13:22–26).

Paul here named David and Abraham (as did Zacharias in Luke 2:69, 73) and he declared that "the promise" previously made by God to Israel, which had been fulfilled by the coming of Christ, was the promise of a *Saviour*, showing that what was then promised was not the earthly kingdom, but something far greater, and which was not for Israel only but for all men. The terms "*Saviour*" and "this salvation" are, however, appropriate to describe God's *heavenly* Kingdom, because the bringing of a sinner into *that* Kingdom is indeed "salvation."

It is important to note that "the Kingdom of God" preached by the apostles (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:31, etc.), and which had been previously announced by the Lord and by John the Baptist, does not take the place of any earthly kingdom; *for it leaves every man who enters it still subject for the time being to the 'present earthly powers just as he was before his conversion* (Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1, etc.). The Kingdom of God is a *spiritual* Kingdom, and it takes the place, for everyone who is born again, of that spiritual kingdom of darkness, which had dominion over all mankind. That evil kingdom is variously referred to in the Scriptures as the kingdom of Satan, the dominion of sin and death, the power of Satan, the power of darkness, the kingdom governed by the Devil, and by the principalities, powers and world rulers of darkness (Matthew 12:26, 28; Romans 5:14, 21; 6:14; Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13; Ephesians 6:12, etc.). That dominion of sin and death still exists, and the whole world lies in it (1 John 5:19). But there is now a way out of it through Jesus Christ. For when a man trusts Christ he

3 Compare the words of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist: "For He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath *raised up* an horn of *Salvation* for us *in the house of His servant David*" (Luke 1:68, 69). The significant word "raised up" is frequently used in this connection.

is immediately, by the mighty power of God, “translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son” (Colossians 1:13).

We call attention to the fact that, in the passage last quoted above from Paul’s address in Acts 13, the Holy Spirit, by the apostle, connects “the promise” made to David of “a Saviour,” with the preaching of John the Baptist, and this is done in such a way as to make it clear that John preached the very same thing that was promised to David. From those words, it also appears plainly that both the promise to David and the preaching of John are fulfilled in “this salvation,” now sent into all the world and proclaimed in the Gospel.

In the next words of Paul following those last quoted, he announced *the resurrection of Jesus Christ*. That being the foundation fact of the Gospel and the ground of God’s offer of mercy to men, and being moreover the only basis of hope for sinners, it was always prominent in the preaching of the apostles. And he continued saying:

“We declare unto you glad tidings, how that *the promise* which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children; in that He hath *raised up Jesus again*; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.

“And as concerning that He *raised Him from the dead*, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, *I will give you the sure mercies of David*.

“Wherefore He saith also in another Psalm, Thou shalt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption. But He Whom God raised again saw no corruption.”

There is no need to point out the close correspondence between this preaching and the preaching of Peter. The apostles, of course, all preached the same thing; for they had received the same directions from their Lord, and the same Holy Spirit was given to them all. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “Therefore whether it were I or they” (the other apostles) “*so we preached, and so ye believed*” (1 Corinthians 15:11).

Paul quoted Psalm 16, as Peter had done, in proof of the resurrection of Christ; and he quoted also Psalm 2, to which, however, no further reference is needed. But we should pay particular attention to the quotation from Isaiah 55:3: “I will give you the sure mercies of David”, and to the remarkable and illuminating application, which the apostle made of those words.

The first important fact for us to notice is that these words are found in a Gospel message, and are declared to be applicable to this present dispensation. That is a fact generally ignored. Moreover, Paul distinctly that it was as concerning *the raising of Christ from the dead* that God had given that wonderful promise. So we have here the clearest proof of the identity of God’s promises to David (“the sure mercies of David”) and the blessings now proclaimed by the Gospel, which blessings are secured by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In other words, we have here the proof, in the form of a plain statement of fact, that God’s promises to David and the blessings freely offered by the Gospel are *one and the same thing*.

This explains why Jesus Christ is described in the first verse of the New Testament as “the Son of David.” One who had spiritual understanding of the prophecies (the meaning of which has now been opened to us by the teaching and preaching of the apostles) could have gathered from *that single verse* that the Son about to be born *in the house of David* would be slain for the transgression of His people, that He would rise from the dead and be enthroned in heaven, and that salvation would be preached in His Name to *all the world*. But, through not knowing the Scriptures, we have fallen into the error of supposing that, because Matthew’s Gospel begins with the mention of David’s name, it has therefore

specially to do with the *earthly* kingdom. In fact, however, the mention of David's name at that point, proves just the reverse.

Referring back to the promise of "the sure mercies of David" given through the prophet Isaiah, we call attention to the significant fact that it occurs in a passage (Chapter 55) which speaks in an unmistakable way of the blessings offered by the Gospel preached to all the world in this dispensation. The setting of this remarkable promise is instructive and illuminating. Chapter 53 contains the clearest of all the prophetic descriptions of the birth, life, sufferings, condemnation, death, burial, resurrection and ascension of the Lord. Happily, therefore, we have as a starting point a passage of Scripture as to the meaning of which all who are likely to take an interest in our subject will be in complete agreement.

In that Scripture (Isaiah 53), which all recognize as the great prophetic foundation for this gospel dispensation, the *results* of the Lord's death and resurrection are declared in these words:

"He shall see His seed ... He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied; by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities" (Isaiah 53:10, 11).

The "many" who are justified through Him (cf. Acts 13:39, "*all that believe are justified from all things*") — are referred to in the next chapter as "the children" of one there spoken of as a *desolate woman*, forsaken and grieved in spirit, and again as *a city* that is to have foundations of sapphires and to be adorned with precious stones. The Apostle Paul tells us in Galatians 4:26–31 that the one here referred to is "Jerusalem which is above ... which is *the mother of us all*"; and that we who are of faith, and are hence the children of Abraham, are also "the children" of this heavenly city.⁴ In the prophecy God says concerning those "children" that they shall all "be taught of the Lord," that their peace shall be great, and that "their righteousness is of Me" (Isaiah 54:1, 13, 17). These statements clearly identify the persons referred to as the children of God of this dispensation.

Then follows in the next chapter (Isaiah 55), a wonderful foretelling of the Gospel, beginning with the familiar words: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat." It is hardly necessary to say that this prophecy has its fulfillment in the preaching of the Gospel in this age. Such being the case, there can be no uncertainty whatever as to the fact that the promise of verse 3 belongs to this present dispensation. These are the words:

"Incline your ear, and COME UNTO ME; *hear* and your soul shall *live*; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID."

Those three simple words, "Come unto Me," tell us plainly that it is the Spirit of Christ speaking in the prophet Who gives this promise; and when we connect this Scripture with Matthew 11:28: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden," we must see that, beyond all question, these words are spoken to those to whom the Gospel of God is now sent. Nothing more is needed to identify Matthew's Gospel as one of worldwide application, and not narrowly "Jewish," as is often taught. In the preceding verse (Isaiah 55:2) is the question: "Wherefore do ye *spend* your money for that which is not bread, and your *labour* for that which satisfieth not? "The Lord sees all mankind thus *labouring* and *spending* for naught: and therefore He says: "Come unto Me, all ye that *labour*, and I will *give* you rest."

We recall also His words recorded in John 6:27, "*Labour not* for the meat which perisheth," followed by the saying, "I am the Bread of Life: he that *cometh* to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst" (verse 35).

4 For a fuller meditation on Isaiah 54, see "Ruth, the Satisfied Stranger," chapter entitled "The Mother of Us All", which forms part of *The Philip Mauro Library*.

The meaning of the words “the sure mercies of David,” is further established by the fact that they are declared to be things secured by “an everlasting covenant.” To those who “hear” the Gospel, God promises that their “soul shall *live*”; and then He says: “And I will make an *everlasting covenant* with you, even the sure mercies of David.” The everlasting covenant is the *New Covenant* sealed and secured eternally by the blood of Christ. The same expression is found in Hebrews 13:19, 20: “Now the God of peace, Who *brought again from the dead* our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, *through the blood of the everlasting covenant*, make you perfect in every good work to do His will.”

The first words of the chapter (Isaiah 55) indicate clearly what those “sure mercies of David” are. These are the words:

“*Ho*, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

The verse is characterized by that great gospel word “Come,” thrice repeated; and it is addressed to “every one that thirsteth,” “everyone” being equivalent to “whosoever.” Moreover, the words “without money and without price” call pointed attention to the fact that the benefits of the Gospel are all bestowed *freely*. Furthermore, the invitation is given to the poor — to him “that hath *no money*.” And finally, what the thirsty and the poor of all the world are thus invited to partake of freely, are *water*, *wine*, and *milk*, these being the familiar symbols of eternal life, of joy in the Holy Ghost, and of spiritual food for babes — “the sincere milk of the Word.”

In verse 4 is a prophetic reference to Christ as the “Witness,” and as the “*Leader and Commander* to the people,” which reminds us of His office as Captain of our salvation. In verse 5 it is said of Him, “Behold, Thou shalt call a nation that Thou knewest not, and nations that knew Thee not shall run unto Thee.” This refers to the “holy nation” composed of the “called” from among the Jews and Gentiles in this dispensation (1 Peter 2:9; Romans 9:24, 25); and it also looks on to the time when the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of the holy city (Revelation 21:24).

Verses 6–11 speak of God’s “mercy” in abundantly pardoning those who turn to Him from their own way, and who call upon Him while He is near, and of His Word going forth to accomplish His purpose, even as the rain and snow come down from heaven. Verse 12 speaks of the “joy” and “peace” of those who are saved; and verse 13 takes us on to the time of Millennial blessing on earth. Thus, the great and prominent features of this present day of grace are plainly seen in this chapter, by which a clear indication is given of the meaning of the words “*the sure mercies of David*.”

The passage in Hebrews 13:19, 20, referred to above, like those we have been studying, puts Christ before us *in resurrection* as the One Who *secures* to His people, by an “everlasting covenant,” the sure mercies of David. It also brings to mind David’s hope in the Lord as his Shepherd, supplying every want, spreading a table for him, filling his cup to overflowing, and causing goodness and mercy to follow him all the days of his life. Psalm 23 speaks plainly of the sure mercies of David, and of Him Who makes them sure.

Among the blessings obtained under the New Covenant, through the blood of Christ, the most prominent is *the forgiveness of sins*. It was for that chiefly that the blood of Christ was shed, as clearly appears by His own words, when in giving the disciples the cup He said: “Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the *new covenant*, which is shed for many for *the remission of sins*” (Matthew 26:27, 28).

Where can words be found to declare the greatness of the mercy, which has been secured at the cost of the precious blood of Christ? Some idea can be gained of the importance and value in God’s eyes of the forgiveness of sins by reading Hebrews 10:1–25. That passage (which tells of the New Covenant and of those who enjoy its benefits, who are all “sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all,” and have boldness to enter into the holiest through His blood) — begins with the words: “For the law having a shadow of *good things to come*.” ... Those “good things to come,” among which God gives prominence to the forgiveness of sins, are but another name for “the sure

mercies of David.” There is a further reference to this in the prophecy of Isaiah, in the words of verse 7:

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He *will have mercy on him*; and to our God, for He *will abundantly pardon*.”

These Scriptures make it plain that “the sure mercies of David” are the blessings secured by the everlasting covenant ratified in the blood of Christ, the Son of David; and that the greatest of those mercies is *the forgiveness of sins*. Doubtless, there are other things, exceedingly great and precious, embraced in “the sure mercies of David”; and among them no doubt are rich blessings that will not be enjoyed until the coming age of Christ’s visible glory. But our main point is that the words which form the subject of our present inquiry refer *primarily* to “the unspeakable riches of Christ” freely bestowed *now*, in this present day of grace, upon all who trust in Jesus Christ risen from the dead, “Who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.”

This fact being established — (and the Scriptures we have cited *do* establish it beyond a doubt, though we have not yet exhausted the proof — it follows that David (whose name means “*Beloved*”) stands more closely connected with this present dispensation than any other Old Testament character, unless we except Abraham, whose name is, for obvious reasons, coupled with David’s, in the first verse of the New Testament, and in other passages thereof.

It follows also that, so far from it being true that Matthew’s Gospel is “Jewish,” in the sense of being specially devoted to the earthly interests of the Jewish people, and that the mention of David’s name is an indication of this — the fact is that the first Gospel is of very broad scope, being related in a special way to this present dispensation, and that the reference to Abraham and to David at the beginning of that Gospel is a strong proof of its close connection with the now current era of grace. And we have only to read to verse 21 of the first chapter to find that the Son Who was about to be born in the house of David was to “*save His people from their sins*.” This plainly declares that, of all He was to accomplish by coming into the world, the greatest thing in God’s eyes — so great, indeed, that it was woven into His New Covenant Name — was the fulfilling of the promise concerning “the sure mercies of David.”

It is true, indeed, that Matthew’s Gospel begins with the genealogy of “the great King” (Matthew 5:35); but it is the genealogy of “the King of *glory*,” the “King eternal,” the “King of kings,” not merely that of the King of the Jews. It is true also that Matthew’s Gospel contains the laws of a kingdom, but it is the Kingdom *of the heavens*, which a man can enter only by being born again and becoming as a little child; not the kingdom of the earthly nation of Israel. This, we say again, is a truth of incalculable value; and the writer of these lines can find no words to express his thankfulness for the Scriptures that have cleared away from his mind the mistaken notions which until lately hid it from him. It is a joy indeed to share the knowledge of this truth with others who have received by faith the rich blessings of God’s everlasting covenant, “even the sure mercies of David.”

“This Blessedness”

In the fourth chapter of Romans, we have the revelation of the Gospel of God’s grace, as it was given to the Apostle Paul to unfold it. The Gospel is there connected, as in Matthew 1:1; Luke 1:69, 73; and Acts 13:26, 34, with Abraham and David, Abraham being presented as the man who believed in “God Who quickeneth the dead,” and David as the one who knew and described “the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works.” In the case of Abraham, we see God putting forth His mighty power to get Himself a family and a people through one who was as good as *dead*. In the case of David we see God’s power acting in the putting away of *sin* so great that it hardly lies in the mind and power of man to devise and accomplish a greater. Abraham believed God concerning the very matter, which *death* had made impossible; and it was counted unto him for righ-

teousness. David confessed his *sin*, both to the Lord and also to men; and God forgave his transgression and covered his sin. *New life for the dead; forgiveness for the sinner*: these are the two *great* needs of all men; and these are the two unspeakable blessings preached to all men by the Gospel, through Jesus Christ, and bestowed freely upon all men who believe the Gospel. Through Abraham, who was “as good as dead,” and through David, who had abused the kingly power with which God had clothed him, in committing the greatest sins possible against God and men — breaking the sixth and seventh commandments under the most aggravated circumstances — God brought into the world One Who gives to all who trust Him *eternal life* and the forgiveness of *all their sins*.

Briefly then we may say that Abraham stands for the truth that God quickens the dead, and David for the truth that God freely pardons the repentant sinner. This explains why Abraham and David are connected together in the New Testament.

By David’s own hand, his confession has been written in the Scriptures in words that have brought hope and comfort to countless millions. Speaking to the Lord, against whom he had sinned, he said:

“I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah” (Psalm 32:5).

And again:

“*For* I will declare my iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin” (Psalm 38:18).

And again:

“*Have* mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

“*For* I acknowledge my transgression; and my sin is ever before me.

“Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and clear when Thou judgest.

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.

“Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

“Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness” (Psalm 51:1–9, 14).

Enough has been quoted to show that what distinguishes David in a very special way from all other persons prominent in the Scriptures, is the *full, outspoken confession of his sins and iniquities*, his acknowledgment of the depths of his wickedness, and his unsparing condemnation of himself, thereby justifying God and taking the part of God against himself. Hence, David’s *special* and *peculiar* place in the revelation of God’s dealings with men is that of standing forth as *the monument of God’s mercy to the sinning believer, who judges himself and confesses his guilt and sin*.

What is the depth of the mercy of God? For the answer to that question the Word of God points to David. How far does God’s pardoning love extend? Again for answer we are pointed to David.

The “blessedness” of which David speaks, then, is not the “blessedness” of being God’s chosen king; nor is it to his greatness as a monarch that the New Testament Scriptures call attention. David speaks to his fellow men, as none other speaks, of the “blessedness” — that is to say, the *happiness* — of those *whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered!* What happiness is there like unto this? Surely, the happiest of all God’s creatures, those whose joy is the fullest now, and whose place will be nearest to Himself in the glory, are FORGIVEN SINNERS; and it is among THESE that David stands conspicuous and preeminent.

How deeply important, therefore, is the question: “Cometh *this blessedness* then” — a blessedness far beyond that of angels who have never sinned — “upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?” (Romans 4:9). It might readily be supposed that the happiness referred to was reserved for God’s chosen people to whom the rite of circumcision had been given. But not so. God’s promise to Abraham was given to him “*not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision*”; and from this fact Paul draws the comforting conclusion that Abraham is the father (in God’s sight) “*of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised*”; and as to the circumcision, he is reckoned not the father of all the Israelites, but *only of those who believe* — those who not only are of the circumcision, “but who *also walk in the steps of that faith which our father Abraham had, being yet uncircumcised.*”

But we refrain from going further into this subject, our purpose being to show that David, and the vital truth of God which David especially illustrates in the Scriptures, *belong to this dispensation of grace*. That purpose, we think, has been accomplished. In fact, it must be clearly seen by all who have followed us thus far that not only does David illustrate truth belonging to this present dispensation of the Gospel, but he illustrates the very *essence* of the Gospel — *the forgiveness of sins*.

An Everlasting Covenant, Ordered and Sure

“The last words of David ... the man who was *raised up* on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel,” are recorded in 2 Samuel 23. The words are few, but impressive and deeply significant; for we have here what the Spirit of the Lord spoke by David, and what the God of Israel said to *him*. The subject of those words is, first of all, what God requires of him who is appointed to rule over mankind: “The Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men *must be just, ruling in the fear of God.*” Where shall one be found who possesses these essential qualifications for rulership over men? Only in Christ are such qualities seen. Hence, mankind will not be governed according to the mind of God until “the kingdoms of this world” shall have “become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ” (Revelation 11:15).

The next verse speaks very clearly of Christ. “And He shall be as the light of the morning, like the rising of the sun; a morning without clouds, when, from the sunshine after rain, the green grass springeth up from the earth” (2 Samuel 23:3, 4 — *Darby’s New Translation*).

This passage connects itself with the many Scriptures, which speak of Christ’s coming as the “True Light” (John 1:9; 8:12).⁵

Then come the words, which are directly in point:

“Although my house be not so before God, yet He hath made with me an *everlasting covenant, ordered* in every way and *sure*, For this is all my salvation and every desire, although He make it not to grow.”⁶

5 Cf. “The Dayspring from on high” (Luke 1:79); “The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings” (Malachi 4:2).

6 Rotherham makes this line a question: “Will He not make it shoot forth (or bud)?” This suggests Isaiah 11:1: “A rod out of the stem of Jesse,” etc.

On a previous occasion God had spoken to David concerning his house “for a great while to come” (2 Samuel 7:19); and it is evident that David had been given to see that his house would not measure up to God’s standard. Yet, notwithstanding the failure of David’s house, which indeed ended its career of authority over men so ingloriously in Zedekiah, God made with him “an *everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure,*” a covenant which embraced all God’s salvation and “every desire.”

The sun of the house of David, as a reigning house, set disgracefully in Zedekiah, whom God addressed through the prophet Ezekiel in these words:

“And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God; *Remove the diadem and take off the crown:* this shall not be the same; exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it” — the rule of the house of David — “until HE come, whose right it is; and I will give it Him” (Ezekiel 21:25–27).

In tracing in Matthew 1 the line *Abraham — David — Christ*, there is a stretch of fourteen generations of *reigning* kings of David’s house, and then a stretch of fourteen generations during which the royal house is submerged in obscurity. But David seems to have foreseen it *springing or budding forth* in One through Whom all God’s salvation and every desire was to be accomplished.

There is a response to the words “exalt him that is low and abase him that is high,” in the song of Mary, “He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath *exalted* them of low degree” (Luke 1:52), referring to the exaltation of Christ, the lowly One, and those who are associated with Him in His rejection on earth and His exaltation in heaven.

It is a fulfillment, worthy of Him Who was the subject of the prophecy, that the crown given to Him should be that of the *Kingdom of heaven*, and the throne occupied by Him that of the *God of heaven*. The words of the prophecy — “until He come whose right it is, and I will *give it Him*” — evidently have their fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Heir to David’s throne, the words “*until He come*” being very definite. But, as we have seen, the promise was to be fulfilled *in resurrection*. Hence, in the days of His flesh, He forbade them to tell anyone that He, Jesus, was the Christ (Matthew 16:20, 21; 17:9, etc.). But, after the resurrection, He announced the great fact, saying: “All power (that is, *authority*) is *given* unto Me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18), thus fulfilling the words, “I will *give it Him*”; and *then* He gave His servants their worldwide and age-long instructions as to their service, saying, “Go ye *therefore* ...”

We have thus the revelation of the mighty fact that the Man Christ Jesus, the lawful and only Heir to the throne of David, the *last of his line* and the *only possible claimant to the covenant God made with David concerning the throne*, was put to death, but was *raised up from the dead* without having seen corruption, never to die again, and that He, the true King, has been invested with royal honors and glories, having been crowned and enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. Jesus Christ, of Whom God said in the Second Psalm: “Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee,” and “Yet have I set *My King* upon Zion the hill of My holiness,” is now, in resurrection, the Custodian of “the sure mercies of David”; and He ministers those mercies through the agency of the Gospel, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is appropriate, in this connection, to quote some verses of Psalm 89:

“I will sing of the *mercies of the Lord forever*; with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations.

“For I have said, *Mercy shall be built up forever*; Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish *in the very heavens*.

“I have made *a covenant with My chosen*, I have *sworn unto David* My servant.

“Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah” (verses 1–4).

“Blessed is the people that *know the joyful sound*: they shall walk, O Lord, in the *light* of Thy countenance.

“In Thy Name shall they rejoice all the day! and in *Thy righteousness shall they be exalted*” (verses 15, 16).

The Gospel is clearly foretold in the two last quoted verses.

“Also I will make Him, My Firstborn, *higher than the kings of the earth*.

“My *mercy* will I keep for Him forevermore, and *My covenant* shall *stand fast* with Him.

“His seed also will I make to endure forever; and *His throne* as the days of heaven.

“*My covenant* will I not break; nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips.

“Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David.

“His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me.

“It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness *in heaven*. Selah” (verses 27, 28, 29, 34–37).

We deem it quite clear that this covenant became operative when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and that the *throne* referred to has been established in Him from that day.

Mount Zion: “Here Will I Dwell”

Psalm 132 contains David’s prayer and his heart’s desire concerning the Ark of God. He had “heard of it at Ephratah” (verse 6). We do not know how early this took place in David’s life; but certainly, it was in his young manhood, if not earlier, that the thought of the Ark of God’s Presence stirred his heart, and the desire for His Presence began to take possession of him. That thought never left him until at last he “*found it* in the fields of the wood.” This was soon after he came to the throne. (See 1 Chronicles 13:5.)

Here also we find the record of David’s vow:

“Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the Mighty (One) of Jacob.”

First Chronicles 17 should be read for an understanding of how great a thing it is in God’s eyes that one of His people should have a thought for His House. This is recalled in Stephen’s address, who, speaking of David, said:

“Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built Him an house. Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples *made with hands*, as saith the prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool; what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of *My rest*?” (Acts 7:46–49).

Stephen, in thus quoting Isaiah 66:1, 2 throws light upon our subject, showing that “Zion” which God chose as His dwelling place (“My Rest”) is the *spiritual* site of His “*spiritual* house.” We have seen that names bestowed by God in old times remain as designations of the spiritual and abiding *realities* whereof the things originally designated were but *types* and *shadows* (Hebrews 10:1).

Then comes David’s prayer:

“Arise, O LORD, into *Thy rest*, Thou and the Ark of Thy strength. Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let Thy saints shout for joy. For Thy servant David’s sake turn not away the face of Thine anointed” (Psalm 132:8–10).

At this point, the Lord’s oath is recalled:

“The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; He will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children keep My covenant and My testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore” (verses 11, 12).

Here is a distinct promise concerning Christ Himself, to Whom the throne is covenanted by an oath; and a promise to other “children” that they too shall share the honors of the throne *upon the condition of keeping the covenant and testimony* (something then *future*) that God was to teach them (cf. Isaiah 54:13; Jeremiah 31:34; John 6:45; 1 Corinthians 2:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 2:20). The Lord’s words recorded in John 6:45 are especially important as showing that the promise repeated so often in these prophecies is fulfilled in this present dispensation. He said:

“It is written in the prophets, *And they shall be all taught of God*, Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath *learned of the Father*, cometh unto Me.”

With this, we would compare the words of Psalm 45, which in Hebrews 1:8, 9 are shown to have been spoken to Christ:

“Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness; therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness *above Thy fellows*” (Psalm 45:6, 7).

We have here the mention of Christ’s everlasting throne, and of those who are to be associated with Him in government — His “fellows.” The Greek word for “fellows” is also translated “partakers.” Thus we read, “For we are made *partakers of Christ*, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast *unto the end*” (Hebrews 3:14).

We would also cite the promise “to him that overcometh” in the letter to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans:

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me *in My throne*, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father *in His throne*. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

In these words the Lord distinguishes clearly between the throne He now occupies, “My Father’s throne,” and that which He will occupy in the coming age — “My throne.” The promise of sharing that *future* throne is given to those of His people who overcome. It is a wonderful promise to us who find ourselves surrounded by Laodicean conditions — many claiming to be “Christian,” but “lukewarm,” claiming also that they are “enriched” with spiritual goods and conscious of no need, but in reality impoverished, blind and naked, and above all, with Christ and *His words* outside! But more than that, the passage brings clearly before us the fact that our Lord occupies *now* a throne *in heaven*; which is but another way of saying that He is a *King*.

We quote now the remaining verses of Psalm 132:

“For the LORD hath chosen *Zion*; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is *My rest* forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also *clothe her priests with salvation*; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. *There will I make the horn of David to bud*: I have ordained a lamp for

Mine Anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon Himself shall His crown flourish” (verses 13–18).

“Zion” is here declared to be God’s “rest” and His dwelling place forever. Thus the name, which was originally the designation of the hill in the city of Jerusalem on which David’s house stood (1 Kings 8:1), becomes the designation of God’s spiritual dwelling place. (See also Psalm 76:2; 78:68, etc.) Zion, “the perfection of beauty,” is where God’s King is now seated, according to Psalm 2:6: “Yet” — that is, notwithstanding what the rulers and peoples of the earth should do to Christ (see Acts 4:25–27) — “have I set *My King* upon My holy hill of Zion.” That is the mountain to which *we*, the saints of this dispensation, are come, as it is written: “But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” ⁷ (Hebrews 12:22). And on this is based the exhortation: “Wherefore we receiving *a kingdom which cannot be moved*, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Hebrews 12:28).

Thus, we see the fulfillment of Isaiah 8:18:

“Behold *I and the children* whom the LORD hath given Me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which *dwelleth in Mount Zion*.”

Her “poor” are now indeed satisfied with bread, even “the Bread which came down from heaven” (John 6:35, 41, 51). Her priests also are “clothed with salvation”; for we are a holy and a royal priesthood, having access to the presence of God within the veil (1 Peter 2:5,9; Hebrews 10:19, 20) ; and her saints “shout for joy”; for we “rejoice in the Lord always,” our sorrow having been “turned into joy,” and “we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 4:4; John 16:20; Romans 5:11). Moreover, it is “there,” that is, in Zion, that God has caused “the horn of David to bud.”

Thus, we can clearly see the great promises to David being fulfilled during this present dispensation; though the *complete* fulfilment thereof will be in the coming age. We do not know how these things will appeal to our readers; but we believe that many, and we pray that all, will share what we feel to be a very great gain indeed, in that many precious things which we had mentally postponed to the age to come are now seen to be *present* realities, for our present enjoyment” by faith.” Until lately our idea was that God’s attempt to introduce the Kingdom foretold by the prophets and announced by John the Baptist was broken off because of the refusal of the Jews to accept it when offered to them; and that hence the Kingdom, and everything connected with it, and all the promises relating to it, were bodily postponed to another age, while meantime a dispensation of a totally different character (which in fact was a complete “mystery” not hinted at in the prophecies) was introduced and had been going on for nineteen centuries.

Often and often, this conception — accepted by us upon high human authority but utterly without foundation in the Word of God — was disturbed by New Testament Scriptures (especially the writings of Paul) declaring one and another prophecy to have been fulfilled in *this* age. Yet, through reluctance to admit having been mistaken in a matter so important, we clung to the wrong idea until it became impossible to do so any longer.

Great indeed has been the gain since we first grasped the fact that the Kingdom foretold by the prophets and announced by John the Baptist was one greater far and more glorious than the earthly kingdom of Israel; that it was the Kingdom of *heaven*, because the seat of Government is there; and that, so far from there having been any “break” or “postponement,” the fact is that the Lord entered heaven, immediately after His resurrection, as “King of glory,” and at once occupied the throne, received the crown and sceptre, and assumed all authority “in heaven and on earth.”

It is quite clear to us now that all things from the very beginning of this age took place, in every de-

⁷ Called in Galatians 4:26, “the mother of us all.”

tail and particular, according to the eternal plan and purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”

The Shepherd King: “My Servant David”

The prophets of old foretold things which have their fulfillment in this present age, and also things which are to be fulfilled in the age to come; but they were unable to distinguish the *time* which the Spirit of Christ, Who was in them, did signify (1 Peter 1:10–12). We, however, in the light of the New Testament, can distinguish between the present and the future things, though in some cases it is necessary to give much prayerful consideration to these matters to avoid confusion.

We have been learning of late that certain important prophecies, which we had previously assigned to the next dispensation, belong in reality to the one now present. What largely accounts for the failure on the part of many to see this, is that the Kingdom of God as it exists during this age is altogether of a heavenly character — in fact it is “the Kingdom of the *heavens*” Hence the hidden character of its most important features. “The King “Himself is “invisible” (1 Timothy 1:17), so that it is only by faith that “we see Jesus — crowned” (Hebrews 2:9). The laws of the Kingdom are written in the hearts of its subjects (Hebrews 8:10), and are “obeyed *from* the heart” (Romans 6:17; 16:26, etc.). In other words, there are no visible displays of government or of its administration. The subjects of that Kingdom are those whose citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20); and their possessions are in heaven (Matthew 6:20). On earth they are “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20), representatives of “the King of glory.” They have been blessed with all “spiritual blessings in *heavenly* places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3), where, in God’s contemplation, they are already seated (Ephesians 2:5). Their place of worship is in heaven (Hebrews 10:19, 20), and in fact their very *life* is hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3).

All these statements, and others of like nature, are plain statements of *fact*, and are to be apprehended *by faith*; “for we walk by faith, *not* by sight.” But it must be confessed that we have apprehended very little of the realities of God’s present Kingdom; for it is much easier to assign those things in our minds to a future day, than to make the effort of faith that is necessary in order to take hold of them as present realities. Nevertheless, “the Kingdom of the heavens” *does exist*. Its King *is* crowned and enthroned in the heavens. Its laws and administrations *are* directed from thence, and its subjects *are* blessed with spiritual possessions *there*.

So we must needs distinguish the heavenly realm with its things that are unseen and eternal, from the earthly realm, whose things are seen and temporal. In the coming day this separation will no longer exist. For God has “purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together *in one* (system) all things in Christ, both which are *in heaven*, and which are *on earth*” (Ephesians 1:9,10). In that day many prophecies concerning the nation Israel, the earthly people, will have a fulfillment *on earth*, which same prophecies are spiritually fulfilled in this present age in God’s heavenly people — “the Israel of God.”

In the Scriptures referred to above we have the simple and clear explanation of the fact that many words and names commonly used by the prophets have *two distinct meanings*, one spiritual and heavenly, the other material and earthly. Among these words are “Jerusalem,” “Zion,” “Kingdom,” “Israel,” “David,” etc. The names “Israel” and “David” are applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, the former in Isaiah 49:1–6, the latter in certain passages in Ezekiel, to which we are now about to refer, the people of Israel have had and will have again David the son of Jesse for their King. But “the Israel of *God* have Jesus Christ, their “David,” as their King of *glory now*. According to the principle “that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural” (1 Corinthians 15:46) the earthly kingdom came first, and ended in utter failure and overthrow — we might say, in death and burial. But it will be restored in “the times of restitution” (Acts 3:21) by Him Who is now raised from the dead; and meanwhile the Kingdom of *heaven* exists, and is entered by all who are born again.

We wish at this point to refer to certain portions of the prophecy of Ezekiel, and to consider them briefly in the light of the New Testament

In Ezekiel 33:11 God promised *life* to those of “the house of Israel who would turn from their evil way,” which promise was fulfilled in those who turned under the preaching of John the Baptist and received the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Ezekiel 34:4 God prophesies against “the shepherds of Israel who healed not that which was sick, nor brought again that which was driven away, nor sought that which was lost”; and then He says:

“Thus saith the Lord God; Behold *I, even I*, will both search My sheep and seek them out” (verse 11). I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken and will strengthen that which was sick” (verse 16).

The Lord’s earthly ministry among the people of Israel was a fulfilment of this; for He Himself declared that He had been sent “to the *lost sheep* of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). So that the Lord was, like David His father, a *Shepherd* before He became a *King*. We quote also the following striking passages:

“I will feed them in a *good pasture*, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their *fold* be. There shall they lie in a *good fold*, and in a *fat pasture* shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel” (verse 14). “Therefore will I *save* My flock, and they shall be no more a prey” (verse 22).

There is an obvious correspondence between this prophecy and the Lord’s words in John 10, where, after having denounced the false shepherds as thieves and robbers, He announced Himself as “the good Shepherd,” Who came to the door of “the fold,” and said further: “I am the door, by Me if any man enter in he shall be *saved*, and shall go in and out, and *find pasture*” and also, “I am come that they (the sheep) might have *life*, and that they might have it more abundantly.” It is quite evident that the Lord is here declaring the fulfilment of the prophecy we have been quoting.

The words “I will *save* My flock, and they shall be no more a prey” are repeated by the Lord in substance in Luke 12:32, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.”

Returning to Ezekiel 34, after the words: “Therefore will I *save* My flock,” comes the promise: “And I will set up *one shepherd* over them, even *My servant David*; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and My servant David a *prince* among them; I the Lord have spoken it” (verses 23, 24).

In these words, we find the “one flock” and “one Shepherd” of John 10:16; and it is just at this point that David is mentioned by name. It is evident from the context that the words “My servant David” point to the same blessed One referred to in Isaiah 49:3 as “My servant Israel.” In short, the Lord Jesus Christ is here called “David.” Christ’s words to Peter also come to mind in this connection: “Feed My lambs. Feed My sheep” (John 21:15–17).

In the next verse of Ezekiel 34 (verse 25) is the promise: “And I will make with them a covenant of *peace*”; and in verse 29: “And I will *raise up* for them a plant of renown” (cf. Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5). It is easy to see the fulfilment of these promises in the Lord Jesus Christ raised up from among the dead. Paul’s words in the synagogue in Antioch seem to refer directly to this prophecy (Acts 13:23, 32, 33).

In the same connection we call attention to Jeremiah 23, where we find a “woe” pronounced upon the shepherds, to whom the Lord says: “Ye have scattered *My flock* and driven them away”; and then

comes the promise: “I will gather the remnant of *My flock* ... And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them; and they shall fear *no more*”; and then the same promise as in Ezekiel, in the following words:

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will *raise unto David* a righteous *Branch*, and a *King* shall reign, and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth” (verses 1–5).

Beyond a doubt this is “the promise” which Paul says “was made to the fathers,” and which God has fulfilled “unto us their children, in that He hath *raised up Jesus again*” (Acts 13:32,33). It is the promise to which Paul referred again when he said: “Of this man’s (David’s) seed hath God, according to His promise, *raised unto Israel* a Saviour, Jesus” (id. 23). These promises have their fulfilment in Christ as the King of heaven now, and will be even more completely fulfilled when His Kingdom is extended to embrace also “the kingdoms of this world” (Revelation 11:15).

Going on to the Ezekiel 36 we read the promises to Israel, that God will gather them from among the heathen, will sprinkle *clean water upon them*, and they shall be clean; will put a *new heart* in them, and will put *His Spirit* in them, and cause them to *walk* in His statutes (verses 24–27).

Here again is a promise, which is fulfilled through the Lord Jesus Christ to His people in this dispensation. The new birth of water and of the Spirit is here distinctly foretold, resulting in a people who are cleansed from all their sins, and who walk in God’s ways with a new heart. It was especially in view of this passage, and of Chapter 37 (to which we will presently refer) that the Lord said to Nicodemus: “Except a man be born of *water* and of *the Spirit*, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God”; and when Nicodemus expressed his astonishment, the Lord said further: “Art thou the teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things?” (John 3:5, 10, Greek). As the teacher of Israel, Nicodemus should have known this prophecy and understood its significance.

The water, or rain, is *the Word of God* (Deuteronomy 32:2; Isaiah 55:10). It was on the day of Pentecost that the refreshing rain of the Gospel came for the first time upon Israelites gathered out of every country under heaven, when their sins were all put away, and the Holy Spirit was given to them. This is the Kingdom of heaven; the effect on earth of Christ being exalted to the throne of heaven and crowned with glory and honour there.

The same mighty work of Pentecost is vividly foreshadowed in the next chapter of Ezekiel (Chap. 37), where we find the vision of the dry bones, which God says “are *the whole house of Israel*” — the very expression used by Peter on the day of Pentecost, when he said: “Therefore let *all the house of Israel* know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, Whom ye have crucified, both *Lord* and *Christ*” (Acts 2:36). The words “And they shall *know* that I am the Lord,” occur repeatedly in this part of Ezekiel, being clearly the declared object of God’s promised dealings with that people.

We will now point out briefly the important matters in the chapter referred to (Ezekiel 37).

First, there is the command: “Prophesy *upon these bones*, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, *hear the Word of the Lord*” (verse 4). This was the first work of the day of Pentecost, calling to the dry bones of Israel and causing them to *hear the Word of the Lord*. And what was the message to be?” Thus saith the Lord unto these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall *live*.” This is exactly what Peter promised to his hearers on the day of Pentecost, when they were pricked in their heart (showing that a heart of *flesh* had replaced the heart of *stone*), saying: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and *ye shall receive the Holy Ghost*.”

So after Ezekiel had prophesied as commanded, he goes on to say:

“And as I prophesied, there was a noise and a shaking” — reminding us of the noise of the rushing wind, and of the record in Acts 4:31 that the place was *shaken* where they were assembled together — “and the bones *came together*, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was *no breath* in them. Then said He unto me, Prophecy unto *the wind* (or breath), prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may *live*. So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet an exceeding great army” (verses 7–10).

As the result of the work of God at Pentecost, the “bones” came *together*, forming a “body” composed of them who heard the Word and believed (as it is written: “All that believed were *together*”); and “Breath” entered into it, even the Breath or Spirit of God (referred to by the Lord in speaking to Nicodemus in the words, “the Wind bloweth, or breatheth, where it wills”), and it became a living body — “the body of Christ.”

To this “body” others saved through the Gospel have been added, from among Jews and Gentiles, until it has become indeed “an exceeding great army.”

In Ezekiel 37:14 we read: “And I shall put My Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land.” The first part of this promise is plainly fulfilled in this dispensation; and we believe the words “place you in your own land” refer to our position in heavenly places in Christ; though of course there remains the literal fulfillment to the nation Israel in the coming day.

Then follows the joining together of the two sticks of Israel and Judah (Ezekiel 37:16, etc.), which God interpreted as signifying that He would unite *all the tribes of Israel into one people*. This too has had a fulfillment from Pentecost on; for since then there are no divisions between the ten tribes and the two. Peter speaks of, and to, “the whole house of Israel,” and Paul and James speak of “the *twelve tribes*” (Acts 26:7; James 1:1). This also has a further fulfillment in “the unity of the Spirit”; for “There is one body and one Spirit ... one hope ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all” (Ephesians 4:3–6).

Then follows in Ezekiel the promise:

“And I will make them *one nation* in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one King shall be king over them” (verse 22). “So shall they be *My people*, and I will be their God” (verse 23).

In various prophecies is found the promise, “I will be their God and they shall be My people”; and we are expressly informed that this promise is fulfilled in the new covenant people of *this dispensation*, a people composed of believing Gentiles as well as believing Jews (Romans 9:24–26; 1 Peter 2:9,10). The words of Peter, “An holy nation,” suggest also a fulfillment of the words: “I will make them *one nation*.”

Since our Lord is now, in resurrection, both King of Glory and also “the great Shepherd of the sheep” (Hebrews 13: 19), we have in that fact a fulfillment of verse 24: “And David My servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have *one Shepherd*.”

Continuing our quotation from Ezekiel:

“And My servant David shall be their Prince forever” (cf. Acts 3:15, “Prince of life” and 5:31, “Prince and Saviour”).

“Moreover I will make a *covenant of peace* with them; it shall be *an everlasting covenant* with them, and I shall place them, and multiply them, and set My sanctuary in the midst of them *for evermore*. My *tabernacle* also shall be with them. Yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (verses 25–27).

The covenant of *peace*, which is “an everlasting covenant,” here mentioned in connection with the name of David, brings clearly before us “the everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David” of Isaiah 55:3. “*Peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1) has the *first place* among the “sure mercies” secured to us by His death and resurrection.

God’s promise to set His Sanctuary and His tabernacle, or dwelling place, in the midst of His people is fulfilled, in a primary manner, in this dispensation, by the presence of His Holy Spirit in the church, and in individual saints. It will have a complete and final fulfillment in the day foretold in Revelation 21:1–4, and, as we have seen, the promise “I will be their God, and they shall be My people” has also a present fulfillment. In addition to the Scriptures already cited in proof of this, we would quote also the clear words of Hebrews 8:10: “I will put *my* laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and *I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people.*”

We find in the New Testament Scriptures numerous passages declaring the fulfilment, in this present dispensation, of specific prophecies. Some of the prophecies thus explained are so worded that, without the light afforded by the explanations given in the New Testament, we should not have been able to understand and to apply them. But the light thus given as to certain specific prophecies is available also for the application of other like prophecies; so that, by using diligence and care, we can determine probably in all important cases, whether and to what extent the prophecy belongs to this present age.

For the help of the reader who may wish to study more thoroughly into this matter of the application of Old Testament prophecies, we give below a list of some of the instances referred to, citing in one column the prophecy, and in the other the place where it is quoted or cited and applied in the New Testament.

The Prophecy	Where Cited
The Law and the Prophets in general	Matthew 5:17, 18; 7:12; Luke 1:70; 18:31; 24:27, 44; John 6:45; Acts 3:18, 24; 7:42; 10:43; 13:27; 24:14; 26:22; 28:23; Romans 1:2; 3:21; 8:4; 16:26; 1 Peter 1:10–12
Types and shadows of the Law	Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1
Isaiah 40:1–3	Matthew 3:3, etc.
Joel 2:28, 29	Acts 2:16; Romans 10:12,13
Psalms 2:1	Acts 4:25
Psalms 118:22	Acts 4:11
Isaiah 66:1, 2	Acts 7:48–50
The Prophecy	Where Cited
Amos 9:11, 12	Acts 15:15–17
Isaiah 6:9	Acts 28:25–28
Psalms 98:2, 3	Romans 1:2
Habakkuk 2:4	Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11

Genesis 15:6	Romans 4:23, 24
Hosea 2:23	Romans 9:25; 1 Peter 2:10
Hosea 1:10	Romans 9:26
Isaiah 10:21–23	Romans 9:27
Isaiah 1:9	Romans 9:29
Deuteronomy 32:21	Romans 10:16
Isaiah 65:1, 2	Romans 10:20, 21
Deuteronomy 32:21	Romans 10:16
Isaiah 65:1, 2	Romans 10:20, 21
Isaiah 28:11, 12	1 Corinthians 14:21
Psalms 8:4	Hebrews 2:6–9
Psalms 22:22	Hebrews 2:12
1 Samuel 2:25	Hebrews 2:17
Jeremiah 31:31–34	Hebrews 8:7–13
Isaiah 40:8	1 Peter 1:24

“The Key of David”

In the last book of the Bible, the Lord’s relationship with David is mentioned in several passages of deep significance; in fact, David is the *only* individual named in Revelation as having kinship with the Lord Jesus. There are three references to David in that book, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him to show to His servants” — and we will briefly consider them.

In the Lord’s message to the angel of the church in Philadelphia we read:

“These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath *the key of David*, He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth ; I know thy works: behold I have set before thee *an open door*, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My Word, and hast not denied My Name ... Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Revelation 3:7,8,10).

It is highly significant that the Lord here comes — not to a Jewish company, but — to a *church*, describing Himself as “He that hath the Key of David,” showing that the promises made in connection with David are specially applicable to the *church*. However many may be “the sure mercies of David,” and of whatsoever sort, Christ Jesus is He Who has the key that unlocks them all; and we may be quite certain that they are first of all for His co-heirs, the members of His Body.

There may be very much more in the promise of Revelation 3:7–10 than we are able as yet to discern; but clearly the prominent thing there is the opening of a *door of escape* — for the church which has but little strength, but has kept His Word and not denied His Name — out of the approaching hour of trial, which is coming to try them that dwell upon the earth. That much is quite plain. And the

words, which follow, are significant: “Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy *crown*.” Here is a *crown* in view for those who receive this promise, reminding us of other Scriptures such as: “If we suffer, we shall also *reign* with Him” (2 Timothy 2:12, following immediately the reference to “Jesus Christ of the *seed of David* raised from the dead”).

And in the next verse of Revelation 3, we find some of the wonderful things awaiting those who overcome and who enter the door opened by Him Who has “the key of David.”

The words, “key of David,” take us back to Isaiah 22:21, 22, where we read a promise concerning Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah, in which occur the words: “And *the key of the house of David* will I lay upon his shoulder, so he shall open and none shall shut; and he shall shut and none shall open.”

The circumstances under which those prophetic words were spoken are, briefly, as follows: In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib, King of Assyria, invaded Judea and advanced as far as Lachish, taking certain fortified cities of Judah. Thereupon Hezekiah, instead of counting upon God for protection and deliverance, sent a humble message to the Assyrian enemy, saying: “I have offended; return from me; that which thou puttest upon me” (in the way of tribute) “I will bear.” He also gave him all the silver that was found in the House of the Lord and in the treasures of the king’s house, and stripped off the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord, and from the pillars which he himself had overlaid, and gave it all to the king of Assyria (2 Kings 18:13–16),

The Lord’s indignation was aroused by this, and He caused Isaiah to prophesy concerning it, as recorded in Isaiah 22. It appears by that prophecy that Shebna, who was the treasurer at that time, and was set over the house, was directly implicated in the matter. So the Lord sent a message of stern reproof to him, in which He said:

“And behold, I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall He pull thee down. And it shall come to pass in that day that I will call My servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah, and will clothe him with thy robe, and will commit *thy government* into his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And *the key of the house of David* will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”

Later in the same year, when Sennacherib came against Jerusalem, Shebna and Eliakim were two of the men who listened to the insulting speech of Rabshakeh, and reported it to Hezekiah. (See Isa. 36:3; 37:2.) The particulars of the part that Eliakim took in the deliverance that the Lord granted to Judah and Jerusalem at that time are not recorded. But the indication is that he was in some special way used of God to open a door of escape for the land and the city, and especially for the house of David, from the mighty Assyrian invader. In Isaiah 37, containing the Lord’s response to Hezekiah’s prayer, this passage is found, which throws some light upon our subject:

“And the remnant *that is escaped* of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. For *out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant*, and they that *escape out of Mount Zion*: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this ... For I will defend this city to save it, *for Mine own Name’s sake* and for *My servant David’s sake*” (verses 31, 32, 35).

The words used in the prophecy concerning Hilkiyah are not quite the same as those in Revelation 3:7. In the former we read “The key of *the house* of David,” and in the latter “the key of David.” The words of Isaiah suggest a key entrusted to Hilkiyah whereby a door of deliverance would be opened to the house of David, which was threatened with destruction at that time; whereas the words of Christ speak of a key, which He holds *in His own hands* as the Keeper of “the sure mercies of David.” But the thought of deliverance *through God’s mercy from a grave danger* is the same in both passages.

The next chapter of Revelation begins with the words: “After this I looked and, behold, a *door was opened in heaven*,” which indicates the way of escape promised by the Lord in His words to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia.

What first presents itself to the seer upon entering that door is *a throne* set in heaven. And John saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book, or scroll, sealed with seven seals, which book becomes immediately the subject of intense interest. From various considerations, into which we do not enter here,⁸ we take this book to be the sealed evidences of the title of Christ, as Redeemer, to the possession of the earth — “the purchased possession” (Ephesians 1:14). John now hears the words:

“Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, *the Root of David*, hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof” (Revelation 5:5).

And thereupon John sees “a Lamb as it had been slain”; and when He took the book the “new song” burst forth from the four living ones and the four and twenty elders, in which occur the words, “Thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

Thus, we find David’s name again associated with *the redeemed of all the world*.

Finally, in the last recorded words from the lips of our glorified Lord, we read this:

“I, Jesus, have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things *in the churches*. I am *the Root and the Offspring of David*, and the bright and morning Star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:16, 17).

Here, once more, in sending a message to *the churches*, the Lord describes Himself as the Root and the Offspring of David, thus again connecting that patriarch with the saints of this dispensation. Furthermore, we have in this same passage a reecho of the gospel invitation of Isaiah 55:1–3: “Ho, every one *that thirsteth*, come ye to the waters, and he that hath *no money*,” found in the passage where the words “sure mercies of David” first occur.

Thus, from first to last, and from various passages of Scripture, which present the truth from different points of view, we find David associated with God’s dealings in grace, in *this present dispensation*, with sinners of every nation in the world.

Conclusion

It seems to us, in contemplating the conditions now existing among the people of God, as those conditions have become known to us by personal observation in this country and abroad, that certain teaching given in our day to “the household of faith” has had the deplorable effect of displacing from the “great house” (2 Timothy 2:20), many valuable things that had been provided by the Master of that house for the welfare of its inmates, and for their comfort, enjoyment and service. Among the important things which have been thus removed from their proper place, we would mention the Kingdom of heaven itself, the words and commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ (Who is the now crowned “King of glory” in the heavens), the ministry of John the Baptist, the Gospel of Matthew, and other Scriptures of vital importance to the saints of this era, the provision of God’s grace for ministry to the sick in the churches (James 5:14–16), and last, but not least, “the sure mercies of David.”

As we contemplate this spoliation and impoverishing of the people of God, we cannot wonder at their present sad state of coldness, torpor and spiritual leanness. The condition of “the household of

8 See “Ruth, the Satisfied Stranger,” Chapter 12.

God” is exceedingly grave. A work of *restoration* is called for. We believe it has begun. Who will volunteer for this needed service? The opportunity is great; but there is no time to be lost, for the end of all things is at hand, and the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. “Wherefore then are ye the last to BRING BACK THE KING?”