

**The Church,
the Churches
and the Kingdom**

(1936)

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Philip Mauro almost exclusively used the Authorized Version (King James Version) unless he specifically referred to the Revised Version, the American Revised Version (later known as the American Standard Version) or even in places to the Rotherham Version to illustrate a particular point. The use of the Authorized Version was retained throughout this work.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is eminently practical. Broadly its aim is the furtherance of the work of the Lord and of the Gospel of God concerning His Son. Specifically it is a plea for the restoration to their original significations of those great Bible words "CHURCH" *and* "KINGDOM" and for a recognition of the distinctions between them, which are fundamental. Such an object should enlist the interest of the people of God purely as a matter of veneration for the Biblical names of things so closely related to Christ and to His redeeming work as His Church and His Kingdom. But much more is involved. For it is the writer's conviction that, owing to lack of care on the part of our fathers and forefathers in the faith in their usage of the words "Church" and "Kingdom," not only have the great things severally designated thereby become confused and beclouded in the minds of later generations, even down to the present time, but other consequences of a more serious character have resulted. As to what the net losses have been and as to what gains might be expected from a general return to the Biblical usage of those words, the reader of these introductory lines is referred to the pages that follow. Let it suffice here to say that, in the writer's opinion, the losses have been serious and that the possibilities of gain are proportionately great.

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1

THE CHURCH**THE BIBLE USAGE OF CHURCH:
ITS REMARKABLE STATUS AS A BIBLE WORD**

In the vocabulary of the Bible the word **CHURCH** has an exceptional status and a lofty origin which, we believe, it shares with none other. Moreover, its entrance into the Word of God was marked by attendant circumstances such as, when due attention is paid thereto, serve to invest it with peculiar sanctity in the hearts of all members of the household of faith. Its unique distinction is that it came into the vocabulary of the Bible directly from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and upon an occasion of high import (Matthew 16:18); which distinction is enhanced by the attendant facts: (1) that He set apart that word as the designation of a thing peculiarly His own, calling it *My Church*; (2) that the thing so designated was an edifice, not yet existent, of which He declared **HE HIMSELF** would be the Builder; (3) that it was to be built upon **THE ROCK**; and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it.

This is all that was said at that time concerning the Church of Christ; but those few words, spoken by the Lord Himself, amply suffice to fix the meaning of the word in its primary, its highest and its eternal signification. Later Scriptures use the word in the same sense and give further revelations concerning the wondrous edifice designated thereby; as that it is *a spiritual house* and is built up of *living stones* (1 Peter 2:5); and that it is being builded *for an habitation of God* (Ephesians 2:22). Reference to the details of these later Scriptures will be made hereafter.

At this point we desire only to call attention to the fact that the meaning of *Church*, in the first and the higher of its two Bible meanings, has been definitely fixed by the first occurrence thereof (the sense of the first occurrence of a Bible word or phrase being properly regarded as a prime factor in determining its meaning) to which must be added the exceedingly weighty consideration that, in this instance, the first occurrence of the word was from the lips of our Lord Himself.

As to the conclusion to be drawn from the stated facts, we would go no further at this point than to say (what none of the redeemed of the Lord would dispute) that they impose upon His people the duty to guard with jealous care the meaning that He Himself breathed into the word on the occasion of its birth into the family of Bible words, and specially to prevent, so far as in them lies, that any tradition, custom or venerable human usage should be suffered to detract from or to becloud that meaning.

But the New Testament Scriptures make frequent use of the word in a sense, which, though quite different from that already considered, is closely related thereto. In this secondary usage the word is employed to designate — not an object that is heavenly, eternal, and comprehensive and still in process of construction, but — an object that is earthly, transient, restricted and attains its full dimensions in this present evil world. Moreover, in this secondary meaning, the word often occurs in its plural form, which is never (and could not be) the case in respect to its primary sense. For we read not only of the church at Jerusalem (Acts 5:11; 8:1; 12:1, 5, etc.) and of the church at Antioch (Acts

13:1) the church at Ephesus, at Smyrna (Revelation 2:1, 8, etc.); but also of *all the churches* (Romans 16:4), *the churches of Galatia* (Galatians 1:2), *the seven churches in Asia* (Revelation 1:4), etc.

Now as regards this usage of the word in a strictly local, earthly and transient sense, what we wish chiefly to impress upon the reader is that this meaning also was, like the other, imparted to it and breathed into it by our Lord Himself. For, on the second (which was the last recorded) occasion when He uttered the word, it was used in this local, earthly, transient and restricted sense; and on that occasion He twice uttered it. The saying was, *And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto THE CHURCH: but if he neglect to hear THE CHURCH ...* (Matthew 18:17).

These words manifestly presupposed and in effect foretold the existence, in each locality where Christians should be of a recognizable society, assembly or congregation of people, distinguished from all others in that to them the word of Christ is law. Those assemblies were to be so constituted that they should be able to hear and to adjudicate matters of dispute that might arise between members thereof. Moreover this saying of our Lord clearly contemplated that His disciples in the days to come should be gathered together on occasions for certain definite purposes; and the meaning of *CHURCH* in this sense is made clearer and more definite by the words of verse 20: *For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.* The local church of Christ was to have as its distinctive mark that its members were gathered to His Name. It would be wholly aside from our present purpose and would not aid in its attainment to offer an exposition of this second utterance of our Lord in which He used the word *CHURCH*. For what we desire to impress upon the reader is that our Lord has given the word *Church* two distinct meanings; or rather, He has made that word the authorized designation of two distinct but related objects; the one, spiritual, heavenly and eternal, the other natural, earthly and temporal; which diverse objects have this important feature in common, that each is composed of redeemed people of God. Our Lord has, as it were, set apart or sanctified that word for the special purpose of designating thereby those several objects and none other.

Moreover, the New Testament Scriptures as a whole, in which the word (*ekklesia*) occurs more than an hundred times (counting both singular and plural forms) always use that word in one or the other of the two senses given it by the Head of the Church Himself. This latter statement will hardly be disputed; yet in case there should be a question about it in the minds of some, consideration will be given hereafter to such passages — not more than three or four — in which the word, *CHURCH* might possibly be thought to bear a different meaning.

And further we wish to direct attention to the impressive fact that, apart from the occurrences of the word *CHURCH* in the two passages cited above, that word is not found in any of the four Gospels. This word makes its occurrence in those passages very conspicuous and invests them with special significance.

Words are mysterious whether we regard the substance whereof, or the mechanism whereby they are formed. The substance whereof the spoken word is formed is the living breath of the speaker. Of the marvelous word-producing mechanism wherewith man is equipped we will not now speak. The written word is formed of symbols arbitrarily chosen to represent the spoken word; the latter, therefore, is primarily *THE WORD*. *God ... hath spoken* (Psalm 50:1). When He would have His communications reduced to writing, He has employed men as the instruments. The Scriptures are written speech. The words of Scripture are *given by inspiration of God*, are God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16). For like as God formed an inanimate human body out of the elements of the ground and breathed into it the breath of life, whereby *man became a living soul* (Genesis 2:7), even so He has been pleased to take of the lifeless elements of human language and to form thereof a body of writings (Scriptures) into which He has breathed (inspired — *inbreathed*) His own Breath (Holy Spirit) whereby that body of writings became a *Living Word*.

Man's breath is corrupt (Job 17:1). Wherefore his words likewise are corrupt (Psalm 73:8; Daniel 2:9). The only exception is *the Man Christ Jesus* (1 Timothy 2:5). The words HE spake *are spirit and*

are life (John 6:63). This is His own statement. Hence the meaning He has personally breathed into a word fixes and establishes its meaning forever; though we do not, of course, imply that the other *Scriptures* are any the less *inspired of God*. Our Lord has thus imparted meaning to the word *Church* and has done it in a very impressive way. Moreover, all the *Scriptures* use that word in either one or the other of the meanings to which He, by His own breath, has consecrated it.

Assuming then that the Bible usage of *Church* is as above stated, while it might perhaps be too much to assert that, because thereof, the word ought never to be used by the people of God in a different sense or be applied to a different object, it is nevertheless important that the people of God should be aware that, when anyone uses that word in a different sense or as the designation of a different object from those set forth above, he has no *Scripture* warrant or precedent for so doing. The question how far the people of God should consider themselves obligated by the above stated facts to adhere to the Biblical usage of the word *Church*, is doubtless important; but that question is only to be decided by the individual conscience and after a prayerful consideration of all pertinent facts. These pages are written with the object of assisting any who may be exercised in regard to this question, to give it such a consideration.

An exercised heart will, in pondering the above question, be mainly influenced by two considerations: *first*, a desire to honor and please our Lord by using a word He has specially identified with Himself in the senses sanctioned by His own usage thereof, and in no other; *second*, an appraisal of the losses that have been incurred and the injuries sustained by the people of God in consequence of the extra-Biblical usage of *Church* as the designation of objects other than those to which Christ and His apostles have applied it; such, for example, as “the Old Testament Church”, “the Historic Church”, “the Jewish Church”, “the Roman Catholic Church”, “the Anglican Church”, “the Protestant Church”, “the Church militant”, and the like.

The Extra-Biblical and Current Usage of “Church”

It is an undeniable fact that Christian writers have, from very early times, used the word *church* as the designation of the whole body of professing Christians on earth; and that the usage of the word in this collective sense has been, for many centuries, well-nigh universal. For example, notwithstanding that *church* does not occur at all in the English Versions of the Old Testament (being evidently regarded by the translators as unsuited to represent any Old Testament designation of God’s earthly people) and that it occurs only thrice in the Gospels (in each instance from our Lord’s own lips and with a future application), Christian writers quite commonly speak of “The Old Testament Church” and of “The New Testament Church”, and speak of the latter as if it were the historical continuation of the former. It is plain that not only is this a substantial departure from the usage of *Scripture*, but that the usage of *Scripture* cannot be accommodated to it.

We must needs, of course, reckon with the fact that this unbiblical usage of *church* has been established for centuries and has prevailed throughout the Christianized world. Therefore the meaning of those who use it in this sense today is not likely to be misunderstood by any of those who read their books and listen to their discourses. Nor can it be reasonably expected that a usage so widespread and deep-rooted could be abolished except by the interposition of God in a special way. Nevertheless, if indeed it be that there is no warrant or precedent in the Word of God for using *church* as the designation of the continuing and self-perpetuating body of Christians, real or professing, on earth, and if on the contrary other words are invariably used in the *Scriptures* to designate that body, it will be well worth all the expenditure of time and effort that may be needed to establish those facts.

For to begin with, the assumed case involves a twofold departure from the usage of *Scripture*: *first*, the discarding of the Biblical names for the body of God’s saints on earth; and *second*, the substitution therefore of a word which the sacred volume has, and with attendant circumstances of a very exceptional sort, appropriated to an entirely different use. For there must needs be a measure of confusion and loss in every instance where Biblical things come to be habitually designated by unbiblical names, or where, on the other hand, Biblical names come to be applied to things otherwise desig-

nated in the Bible. In the instance now under consideration, both these changes have, we believe, been wrought. Assuming this to be true, it behooves all who hold the Bible in veneration as the Word of the living God to take cognizance thereof and to determine as accurately and as completely as possible what the consequences have been and are likely to be.

More precisely stated, the writer's understanding of the matter and what he will attempt herein to show is that the word *church* is used in the Bible in two distinct but closely related senses and in none other; first, as the comprehensive and all-inclusive designation of the redeemed of the human race, embracing those now in heaven, those now on earth and those yet to be born, from the beginning of time to the end thereof; second, as the designation of a company of professed Christians voluntarily associated together as such in a particular locality on earth. Thus *church* has a Biblical meaning which pertains to heaven and eternity and has also a Biblical meaning which pertains to earth and time. Or, more accurately stated, that word is used in the Bible to designate an object now in process of completion in the heavenly or spiritual realm and whereof Christ is Himself the Builder; and it is also used in the Bible to designate objects now existing, in all the completeness they will ever have, here on earth.

When used in the first of these senses the word has no plural form and admits of none; but when used in the other sense it is frequently found in its plural form, e.g., *all the churches of the saints* (1 Corinthians 14:33). This Biblical usage of the plural, *churches*, to designate in a general sense the people of God on earth, collectively, and those in a particular geographical area, bears collateral testimony against the current usage of *church* in that sense.

It obviously follows that phrases of frequent occurrence; such as "The historic church", "The church universal", the "holy church throughout the world", "The history of the church", and the like, have no Biblical warrant. The Church of Christ that which He emphatically called *My Church*, has no "history" and can have none; for it is not among the things of earth and time. The totality of the people of God on earth at a given moment does not constitute the Church of Christ or a *church* of any sort. Such being the case, it cannot be otherwise than that the traditional usage of phrases such as noted above, which usage has prevailed throughout Christendom for many centuries, has had as one of its effects to becloud, for many of God's people, and indeed to obliterate from the consciousness of some, the truth of the heavenly and eternal character of the Church of Jesus Christ, which He is now building in the heavenly Zion (Hebrews 12:22-23) and which in the coming day, He will present unto Himself, *a Church of glory* without spot or blemish (Ephesians 5:27).

We hold it, therefore, to be undeniable that the *church* of Christian literature, the *church* whose history on earth (or epochs thereof) has been the theme of many volumes, essays, sermons and hymns, is not the *church* of Matthew 16:18, nor that of Matthew 18:17. That great body, composed of all on earth who believe on Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and who *were called CHRISTIANS first in Antioch* (Acts 11:26) dates its existence from the day of Pentecost, following our Lord's resurrection and ascension. It existed therefore in the days of the apostles, and yet, though it is mentioned more than an hundred times in the New Testament Scriptures, it never is called *the church*, its most common designation being *the Kingdom of God*. Some of its other Scriptural designations are: *Holy Nation, Kingdom of Priests, Household of Faith, Israel of God, People of God, and Household of God*. Therefore it cannot be regarded as an inconsequential thing, or be treated as a matter of indifference, that, subsequently to apostolic times, a complete transformation of the meaning of the word *church* has taken place, and that what Christ and His apostles designated by other names has now become *the church* to practically all the members of the Christian community. Surely it is well worth while to inquire as to the consequences of so great a change.

A Notable Antithesis

In our Lord's word to Simon Peter, recorded in Matthew 16, which we have already quoted in part, a very striking and instructive contrast is observed when verse eighteen is compared with verse nineteen. The latter reads:

And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

It is not necessary for our present purpose that an exposition of this great utterance of our Lord be given, since all that is required lies plainly in view upon its surface. We refer specially to the following impressive contrasts: (1) the contrast between the Lord Jesus Himself, Whom Peter had just confessed to be *The Christ, the Son of the living God* (verse 16) and Simon Peter, whom the Lord in His next words addressed as *Satan*, saying, *Thou art an offense unto Me* (verse 23); (2) the contrast between the CHURCH, which Christ Himself was to build, and the KINGDOM, whereof Peter was to be entrusted with the keys; (3) the contrast between the earth, where Peter's authority was to be exercised and heaven where his authorized acts were to be ratified.

As has been already pointed out, these words of our Lord present the CHURCH (in this the first occurrence of the word in Scripture) as an object specially related to Himself and dear to Him, the building of which was to be His own personal concern and occupation. It is highly important to note that, in connection therewith He allots to Peter no part, no office, no duty whatever. This is of great significance. On the other hand, He does assign to Peter a very responsible position in the Kingdom, promising to entrust him with the keys thereof. And here there comes into view still another contrast. For in the light of these words it is clearly to be seen that, whereas the church is a structure, an edifice of sublime proportions and dignity such as to demand Christ's own divine *workmanship* (Ephesians 2:10) and which, moreover, was at that time yet to be builded, the kingdom was a political realm or domain "on earth" of such sort that the means of ingress thereto might be, and should be, placed in the hands of a mortal man.

Although we shall not attempt an exposition of even a part of this passage, for that would take us far afield, it seems fitting to digress at this point so far as to say that, if asked whether the later Scriptures chronicle any events which might properly be regarded as the fulfillment of this promise of Christ to His servant Peter, we should point first to Acts 2, where it is written that Peter, having declared to the assembled multitude (addressing them as *men of Israel*) that God had raised up Jesus of Nazareth, Whom they had crucified, to sit upon David's throne (verses 22–34), went on to say: *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, Whom ye have crucified, both LORD and CHRIST* (verse 36), those being kingly designations. And when the bearers, being pricked in their heart, cried out, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Peter said to them,

Repent and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you (Israelites) and to your children, and to all that are afar off (Gentiles) (Ephesians 2:13) even as many as the Lord our God shall call (verses 37–39).

Those were *key* words whereby the Kingdom of heaven was opened to *all the house of Israel*, and so effectually that *about three thousand souls* entered that very day. And secondly, we should point to the record of a like happening, this time in the great Gentile city of Antioch, where Peter preached Jesus, Whom the Jews *slew and hanged on a tree* and testified that *Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly* (Acts 10:34–40) and that *through His Name, whosoever (Jew or Gentile) believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins* (verse 43). Whereupon *the Holy Ghost fell upon all them which heard the Word* (verse 44), they being Gentiles, whom Peter *commanded to be baptized in the Name of the Lord* (verse 48). Thus again the Name of the Lord Jesus by the mouth of Peter became the *key* whereby the Kingdom of heaven was opened to repentant and obedient sinners, this time to Gentiles.

We would call attention to the fact that it is by the preaching of Jesus Christ risen from the dead as Lord of all, that the door of the Kingdom of God was opened to all who obey the gospel; and confirmation hereof is found in that, when Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch shortly thereafter, having meanwhile preached the gospel in various cities in Asia Minor declaring *that we must through much*

tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God, and had ordained them elders in every church (Acts 14:22–23), *they gathered the church together*, and to them they *rehearsed all that God had done with them and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles* (verse 27). It will be observed that in this passage again the Kingdom and the Church are placed in such contrast that it is impossible to substitute either term for the other. For obviously it could not be said that we must through much tribulation enter into the church: nor could the apostles have gathered the Kingdom together. But of this more later on.

It is noteworthy that, after Peter had performed the duty which Christ assigned to him preeminently in opening “the door of faith” (which admits all believers of the gospel into His Kingdom), first to believing Jews at Jerusalem and then to believing Gentiles at Antioch, he retires forthwith from the position of prominence he had occupied up to that time in the inspired history of the Kingdom of God, and that thenceforth to the end of the Book of the Acts, the narrative is occupied with the ministry of the apostle to the Gentiles, who continued to the end of his devoted and fruitful service, *Preaching the Kingdom of God* (Acts 28:31).

In the series of striking contrasts presented in the words of Christ upon which we have been meditating, nothing is more conspicuous than the difference those words emphasize between the Church He purposed Himself to build and in connection with which He allotted to Peter no place or service, and the Kingdom of heaven, at the portal whereof He assigned to Peter a special and important duty. It is plain that if Christ’s disciples and servants of later generations had duly observed the meaning breathed by Him into the word *Church* and had they preserved that meaning in its integrity, it would have been very difficult and perhaps impossible for the authors and upholders of the papal ecclesiasticism to have founded their arrogant pretensions upon this Scripture. And further in the light of our Lord’s imperishable words it may clearly be seen how the departure which the traditions of men have effected in that meaning has played into the hands of that monstrous system of error which arrogantly proclaims itself the one and only true *church*, and supports that pretension by the assertion that it is founded upon Peter.

2

THE CHURCHES**THE CHURCH, HIS BODY:
THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST**

It is clear in the light of the entire New Testament that the Lord Jesus Christ during His brief ministry on earth established, for the continuance of the work He began, just two institutions: the Kingdom of God and the local church. That heavenly Kingdom was to be established, perpetuated and extended throughout the world by a means absolutely novel for such a purpose and seemingly inadequate — by preaching; and the local churches were to be the products of that preaching.

After the utterance of the Lord Himself, in which He announced His purpose to build His Church (Matthew 16:18) we find in the New Testament no information on that subject until we come to the Epistle to the Ephesians. The arrangement of the books of the New Testament exhibits a plan that was evidently designed with regard to an orderly progress of doctrine. Romans the first of the doctrinal books, contains the doctrine of the Gospel of God and the doctrine and the definition (14:17) of the Kingdom of God, wherein grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life (5:21). The Corinthian Epistles contain the doctrine of the local church. Galatians is a supplement to Romans, its purpose being to distinguish sharply between Judaism and Christianity, the law and the gospel, the old covenant and the new covenant, as typified respectively by Abraham's two wives and their respective offspring.

Ephesians, however, takes us into the heavenly places and manifestly for the purpose of making known for the comfort of the people of God in their trials and struggles on earth that the building by the Lord Jesus Christ of the Church which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:22–23) was even then in progress. The purpose and the wisdom of this order of presentation of the doctrine of Christ is clearly to be seen in the light of the fact that the people of God have to do while on earth with only the two divine institutions, the Kingdom of God and the local church of God, and that of these two the Kingdom has precedence both in importance and in the experience of the individual soul.

It is evident to the attentive reader that the apostle, in writing to the saints at Ephesus, was under the stress of a strong emotion, which may safely be attributed to the superlative glory of that great edifice of God's workmanship whereof a vision had been granted him. That emotion found an expressive outlet in the apostle's prayers, one in the first, and the other in the third chapter. In reading these, and especially the latter, one is impressed by the intense earnestness thereof and is naturally led to the conclusion that the apostle was moved thereto by the surpassing greatness of the object which was then before the eyes of his heart. Moreover, the fervor and intensity of the apostle's utterance make evident that he deemed it of supreme importance to the saints at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus everywhere that they should be fully enabled to comprehend what is the breadth and length and depth and height of the object he was contemplating.

Furthermore, the attentive reader will be arrested by the circumstance that the object itself, whose dimensions are so comprehensively referred to, is not specified in the verse from which the words of our headlines are taken. Was it the purpose of this omission to prompt a more careful scrutiny of the entire passage than we otherwise would have given it? Or is it so plainly apparent from the context what the thing in whose dimensions the apostle so earnestly desires the reader to comprehend that there was no necessity to name it? Whatever the Divine purpose in this omission, it clearly behooves us to make as certain as possible what that unnamed object is.

An Unsatisfactory Explanation

The only explanation of the text which the present writer ever received from those to whom he looked for instruction in the Word of God, or ever encountered in his reading of commentaries (which, he admits, has not been extensive) was that the specified dimensions pertained to The love of Christ, mentioned in the next verse. This explanation doubtless has something to commend it and, moreover, it offers an easy way out of the difficulty; but it never satisfied the writer of these lines, and the more he pondered the subject the more clearly it seemed that the manifest objections to the explanation were too serious to admit of its acceptance.

In the first place, dimensions pertain to what is finite; whereas the love of Christ is infinite and boundless. The succeeding verse itself, which is part of the same sentence, declares that it surpasses knowledge. True it is that the Scriptures sometimes speak of the infinite in terms of the finite, this being an accommodation to our finite minds. But in the text we are now studying the dimensions in every direction are expressly named, so that the idea of a mere accommodation to the finite mind of man is hardly admissible.

Again, the explanation referred to above takes no account of the important phrase, with all the saints (in the original text the definite article appears before saints). To this we will return.

Moreover, the love of Christ is the subject of a separate and independent clause of the apostle's prayer. Therefore, the construction of the sentence forbids its being taken as the object to which the dimensions specified in verse eighteen belong. As given in *Bagster's Interlinear Version* the two verses read thus:

Verse 18: "That ye may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth ..." etc.

Verse 19: "And to know the surpassing-knowledge love of the Christ."

It is apparent that verse nineteen contains an additional petition, complete in itself and distinct from that of verse eighteen; and that in no way, except by doing violence to the construction of the sentence, can the dimensions of verse eighteen be applied to the love of Christ. For clearly, if that were what the apostle wished to express, the words and to know, which dominate the sense of verse nineteen, would have been omitted and replaced by the single word of. It is hardly conceivable that the apostle would ask for the people of God that they might be fully enabled to comprehend the breadth and length and depth and height of an unnamed object, which they were to understand as pertaining to the object named in the next clause of the sentence and would then ask, as an additional petition connected with (and separated from) the first by the conjunction and, that they might know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ.

We think these considerations (which might be amplified) compel us to conclude that the dimensions of verse eighteen pertain to an object not named in the prayer, and that the name thereof is omitted because, being the prominent subject of the Epistle as a whole, it was deemed unnecessary to name it. We ask then: Is there such an object? And is it of such character that the dimensions of verse eighteen can be appropriately applied thereto?

An Habitation of God

In seeking the answers to these questions, we note in the first place that the prayer is introduced by the words, *For this cause*. There was then a definite cause that impelled the apostle to bow his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and to offer the several petitions which follow. Moreover, the relative pronoun *this* points to the immediately preceding portion of the Epistle as containing the unnamed object. Following this plain indication, we find, however, that the preceding verses of the chapter are occupied with a digression from the apostle's main subject, into which digression he was led by having referred to himself in the first verse of the chapter as *The prisoner of Jesus Christ for (in the behalf of) you Gentiles*. The first words of that first verse of chapter three are: *For this cause, I Paul ...* which show that he intended continuing in chapter three the subject of the last part of chapter two; and there we find that the apostle's theme reaches a climax in his reference to a building that was even then in course of erection, in which saved Jews and Gentiles were being builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

It is evident that, to get the connection in the apostle's mind between the prayer which begins at verse fourteen of chapter three, and what goes before, we must omit all the preceding verses of that chapter. It is also evident that in the last verses of chapter two the apostle speaks of a structure having dimensions which, while finite, are stupendously great; a structure, moreover, of such superlative importance both to God and also to His elect people as to constitute a most adequate cause for the apostle's fervent prayer on behalf of his Gentile converts.

Evidently he had been given to behold with his spiritual vision (perhaps when caught up to the third heaven, 2 Corinthians 12:2) a structure of surpassing grandeur and magnificence and of vast and imposing proportions, and had been given to know that, when completed, it would be the temple and habitation of God. An enthralling sight it must have been; and we can readily understand that, enraptured thereby, he would desire earnestly that all the people of God might be fully enabled to comprehend its import; for it vitally concerns every one of them.

And especially would the truth concerning that great edifice in all its vast dimensions — breadth wise, lengthwise, downward and upward — be of intense interest to Gentile believers; for in this connection it should be remembered that, as the apostle himself declares, he had been given the special dispensation of revealing the mystery of Christ, which in previous ages had not been made known as now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; namely that Gentiles were to be equal partakers with Jews of God's promise in Christ by the gospel and that both together were to compose one body; the Divine intent being that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God (Chapter 3:2–10).

We understand by what is here written that to Paul had been given a supernatural vision, whereby he was enabled to see a wondrous sight, observable by spiritual beings of high rank in the celestial realm. By him this special revelation was regarded as a dispensation of the grace of God (verses 2–3); and we believe that all expositors are agreed that the building of chapter 2:20–22, the one body of 2:16 and 3:6, and the church of 1:22, 3:10, 21, are different designations of one and the same object. Doubtless also the reference in 2:10 to His workmanship — that is, God's supreme creative work, His masterpiece is to the same great object.

Evidently it had been given Paul to see in its progress that stupendous work, which our Lord Himself announced when, in conversation with Peter, He made the statement: "Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). In view, therefore, of Peter's participation in the colloquy that led to this announcement, it is of interest to recall at this point what that apostle has written concerning this same spiritual house. For, addressing those amongst the Jews of the dispersion who had been born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the Word of God, he says that, coming to Christ as unto a living stone, they also as living stones, were being built up, a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, ac-

ceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:23; 2:4–5). Manifestly Peter is here alluding to the building announced by our Lord and described by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians.

A Striking Contrast

The Scripture upon which we are meditating suggests a contrast between the earthly temple at Jerusalem, as it stood in the days of the apostles, and that spiritual house, which Christ purposed Himself to build, whose firm foundation was to be laid in Zion (Isaiah 28:16; 1 Peter 2:6). The temple at Jerusalem, rebuilt by Herod the Great and rated as among the Seven Wonders of the World, was an object of pride and admiration to every Jew; and of course it was that to our Lord's disciples also. This appears by the record that, on the occasion of His last visit to Jerusalem, the disciples specially directed His attention in admiring terms to the buildings of the temple (Matthew 24:1), evidently expecting to elicit from Him an expression of admiration; for one said: *Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!* (Mark 13:1).

The buildings and the stones thereof were indeed of stupendous size; for the Lord Himself called them great. But His reply must have depressed their spirits; for He said: *Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down* (Mark 5:2). This was indeed a bold prediction for anyone to make concerning stones so huge and massive that the wonder was by what means they were put into their several places in the building. Yet, according to the description of the destruction of Jerusalem in *The Wars of the Jews* by the Jewish historian, Josephus — a thoroughly disinterested and competent witness — the prediction was fulfilled in a most exact and literal way.

Here then is an impressive contrast: Our Lord prophesied to His disciples, during the last days of His earthly ministry, concerning two buildings, both superlatively great. One of these, built by Herod, a usurping king of the Jews, was then standing in all its grandeur and solidity, seemingly indestructible, being composed of massive stones of prodigious size and weight and being lavishly adorned with gold and precious gems. Yet, concerning that building our Lord declared in the most positive terms that, ere the generation then living should have passed away, it would be so completely demolished that not one stone thereof would be left upon another.

The other building, His Church, was yet to be builded. He Himself, the true King of Israel, was to be the Builder. From His servant Peter we learn that it was to be a spiritual house, composed of living stones these being the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; and from His servant Paul we learn that in his day it was already being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner Stone, in Whom the entire building, fitly framed together was growing unto an holy temple ... for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Thus we know that the building of that great spiritual house, which the Lord Jesus Christ sanctified specially to Himself by calling it My Church, had been begun and was in progress of erection, to the wonderment of principalities and powers in heavenly places, during the lifetime of the apostles.

And today, after nearly two thousand years, the great work still goes on. He Whom the prophet called THE BRANCH, saying, *He shall build the temple of Jehovah ... and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne and shall be a priest upon His throne* (Zechariah 6:12–13), has laid the foundation thereof by His atoning death and His resurrection from the dead, and His hand shall finish it. We know not when this, incomparably the greatest of all buildings, will be completed; *but it is written of Him Whose hands have laid the foundation thereof, that His hands shall also finish it, and that He shall bring forth the headstone thereof amidst shoutings of Grace, grace unto it* (Zechariah 4:7–9).

Specially is it noteworthy that whereas the earthly temple with all its greatness and magnificence was to be utterly demolished and obliterated within a generation, the spiritual house, which Jesus Christ was to build of living stones, will endure throughout all ages, world without end (Ephesians 3:21).

On Christ salvation rests secure
 The Rock of Ages must endure;
 Nor can that faith be overthrown
 Which rests upon the Living Stone.

In Him it is ordained to raise
 A temple to Jehovah's praise,
 Composed of all the saints, who own
 No Savior but the Living Stone.

View the vast building, see it rise;
 The work, how great! the plan, how wise!
 O wondrous fabric! power unknown
 That rears it on the Living Stone!

With All the Saints

These words are of much significance for the purpose of our present study. They indicate the comprehensiveness, the all-inclusiveness, of this Temple of God, this incomparable Spiritual House, now in course of completion under the almighty hand of Him Who builded all things and without Whom there was not anything made that was made. Now a building is not complete until the very last stone has been hewn, shaped, polished and permanently set in the place assigned to it by the architect. Therefore the apostle fervently prays that we may be fully enabled to apprehend what, with all the saints, assembled together each in his proper place, will be the immensity of the dimensions every way of this incomparably wondrous building.

The truth which this Epistle specially emphasizes, and of which but little would be known had it not been written, is that throughout this era, specially characterized by the preaching of the gospel in all the world, Christ is bringing into existence something that is specially for the glory and satisfaction of God Himself, and which, to aid our comprehension of it, is designated by different terms; the one body, the church which is His body, the one new man, His workmanship, the habitation of God, an holy temple in the Lord, His inheritance in the saints.

This wondrous creation — this building, body, church — is composed of God's saints, His elect, His redeemed people, those whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world. Each and every one of them has a definite place assigned to him therein. These, in the aggregate, are God's inheritance (1:18, *cf. our inheritance*, verse 14). How great will that aggregate be when the very last saint shall have been called, saved and glorified; when the last member shall have been incorporated into the one body; when the last stone shall have been set in its appointed place in the vast building? Inasmuch as the apostle of Christ earnestly desires and prays, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the people of God may be fully enabled to comprehend this, we may and must infer, first, that it is possible for each of us to attain to some comprehension thereof, and second, that it is a blessed experience to attain thereto in any measure.

In the companion Epistle to the Colossians, the apostle exhorts us, if we be indeed risen with Christ, to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; and to set our affections upon (literally to mind) things above (Colossians 3:1–2). We are now meditating upon one of those things above, one that is superlatively great and glorious. We are in somewhat the same position as David who, looking forward with keenest interest to the earthly temple, in the building of which he was to have no part, nevertheless prepared abundantly for it, saying: The house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and glory throughout all countries (1 Chronicles 22:5). Moreover, we have David's own testimony, given before all the princes, captains and mighty men of Israel, specially assembled at Jerusalem, in which, after declaring that he had prepared with all his might for the house of his God, he said:

“Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have ... given to the house of my God over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house” (1 Chronicles 29:2–3).

We know by experience that we can exert control over our thoughts and affections and, by effort of will, we can set our minds upon one object or another. Responsive then to the apostle’s exhortation and encouraged by the example of David, shall we not, with resolute determination, set our affection upon that transcendently glorious house of our God, whereof the house which David had in contemplation was but a transient type and a fleeting shadow?

The Fullness

Our theme is illimitable; but not so our time or space. So we close with a brief reference to a closely related thought suggested by the word Fullness as used in this Epistle. This present dispensation of the Fullness of times is the era wherein God is gathering together in one all things in Christ (1:10) and specially is integrating, out of elements that by nature are most diverse and antagonistic — Jews and Gentiles — a new creation in Christ, namely, *The church which is His body, THE FULLNESS OF HIM THAT FILLETH ALL IN ALL* (1:22–23). Paul refers to those naturally incongruous elements in verses 12 and 13, speaking of the Jews as *We who afore trusted in Christ* (that is, before the Gentiles had believed on Him through the gospel); *In Whom ye also trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation*. Into this theme — the union in Christ of Jews and Gentiles to form one new man — the apostle pours all the ardor of his fervent spirit and glowing words until he reaches a culminating point in the prayer that his Gentile converts might Know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge and be filled with (unto) ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD (3:19).

And from this sublimity of thought he looks on, through all the intervening period that was to be occupied with the age-long work of edifying (building up) the body of Christ, to the time when we all shall have come unto the UNITY of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, *unto a perfect (full-grown) man, unto the measure of the stature OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST* (4:13).

In this reference to the glorious outcome of all gospel effort and all ministry of the Word in the energy of the Holy Spirit, eventuating in the measure of the stature of the Fullness of Christ, we have another allusion to the vast dimensions — the breadth and length and depth and height — of that spiritual house for which great David’s greater Son not only prepared abundantly but also is now building for an habitation of God through the Spirit and soon with all the saints, saved and glorified, conformed to His own image and changed into His own likeness, will bring to a supremely glorious completion.

Let Them Measure the Pattern (Ezekiel 43:10)

The use that God makes of measurements and the objects whereof He causes measurements to be made are matters of deep interest and they convey a lesson that is pertinent to this part of our subject. Therefore, they call for a brief notice. By examination of those Biblical objects whereof the measures are either given or taken it will be seen that they are structures designed of God for the people He elects to save and to bring into association with Himself; in other words, that those structures are for the salvation, the occupation and the worship of His elect. What we learn thereby is chiefly that, in respect to all such structures God has His own predetermined and exact plan, from which no deviation is permissible. Hence, the precise measures.

The first of those structures was the ark, whereby all living creatures that were to replenish the earth were saved from destruction by the waters of the flood. God gave to Noah precise directions for the making of the ark, and particularly for its dimensions. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits (Genesis 6:14–15). In these instructions as to the making of the ark may be

read clear and plain the great truth that salvation is of the Lord, that God's plan of salvation admits of no improvement or alteration by man, and that He has but one way of salvation for all mankind.

The next instance of measurements for structures to be used by a people chosen of God is that of the tabernacle in the wilderness and its appointments. The purpose of this structure is declared in God's commandment to Moses: And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it. And then follows a statement of the dimensions (Exodus 25:8; 27:21).

The prominent lesson here appears to be that, in respect to worship as in respect to salvation, God has His own plan which admits of no alterations of man's devising. The next instance is the building of the temple at by Solomon, according to the pattern which had been given to David by the Spirit (1 Chronicles 28:12). All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern (verse 5:19). For us the lesson here is the same as that taught by the pattern given from on high for the building of the tabernacle.

Then we come to the elaborate and detailed measurements connected with the city and the temple of Ezekiel's visions recorded in Chapters 40–43 of the book of his prophecy. Abstaining from surmising as to the interpretation of this vision and its details, it suffices for our immediate object to call attention to the declared purpose thereof, as stated in God's charge to Ezekiel (43:10–11) and the promise therein, which was conditioned upon the fulfillment by the people of Israel of what is commanded in verse 9:

“Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write them in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them.”

It is strongly implied in this passage that the condition of heart of God's people may be, and often is, such as to blur their spiritual vision and prevent their seeing precious and glorious things in the patterns that God has revealed in His Word. We find the same implication in Ephesians, especially in the apostle's prayer for the saints that the eyes of their hearts might be enlightened (1:18) and that they might be enabled to comprehend.

We come next to Zechariah and to the vision in Chapter 11 of the man with a measuring line in his hand, and who, in reply to the prophet's interrogation, “Whither goest thou?” replied, “To measure Jerusalem to see what is the breadth thereof and what is the length thereof” (verses 1–2). In this prophecy Jerusalem is associated with Mount Zion (verses 7, 10) as in Hebrews 12:22–23, where it is said to God's new covenant people, “But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem ... and to the church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven.” To this passage we will return, if the Lord permits.

Passing over Ephesians, the last instance of measurements in the Bible is in Revelation 21. Here John relates how he saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (verse 2). By this time the holy city, which is associated in Galatians 4:24–26 with the new covenant and is there declared to be the mother of us all, has been fully identified with the Church which is Christ's body. It is very significant therefore, that, in connection with the glowing description of that glorious city in Revelation 21, the angel who talked with John, saying, “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife” (verse 9) had a measuring rod in his hands, which in this instance was a golden reed, wherewith to measure the city, and the gates thereof and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the

breadth. And he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal (verses 15–16).

There is doubtless a wealth of meaning to be discovered in these several Scriptures that reveal God's particularity in giving, or causing to be ascertained, the measures of those buildings which specially pertain to His redeemed people. But we are not now seeking the interpretation of those Scriptures. The lesson they, one and all, impress upon this present writer's mind is the perfection of God's workmanship (Ephesians 2:10) even to the minutest detail thereof and the completeness with which every work of His is executed in precise accordance with His eternal plan and purpose. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world (Acts 15:18). The Scriptures we have been rapidly reviewing have to do with the greatest perhaps of all His works, the holy temple that He is building for His own eternal habitation. Surely then it is not difficult to believe that His original plan for that building, which was even then complete in His own mind, included each of the living stones whereof it was to be composed, and every characteristic of each individual, answering to size, shape, color, ornamentation, degree of polish, its exact place in the building, and the like. Such being the case, it follows that the operation of building the house must needs continue until the last stone shall have been quarried, squared, shaped according to plan, polished and put in position; in other words, until as many as were ordained unto eternal life — the entire number of God's elect — shall have believed (Acts 13:48).

And it should be the easier to comprehend this in our day after that God has permitted investigators in the domain of physics to discover that the Creator of the universe is just as particular about the internal structure of the invisible atom and the number and arrangement of its enclosed electrons, protons and neutrons, as about the number, arrangement and movements of the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon and stars.

Concerning Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:32)

While fully convinced that the dimensions referred to in Ephesians 3:18 pertain to the Church whereof Christ is the Builder, and not to the love of Christ, mentioned in the next verse, we believe also that there is a close connection in the apostle's thought between those two great topics. That connection is plainly indicated by the words, Even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25); from which it follows that, in order that one may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge he must ponder deeply the supreme manifestation of that love given in Christ's willing submission to the shame and agony of the cross, that He might sanctify and cleanse it and might present it to Himself a Church of glory not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it might be holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:26–27). If therefore one should be enabled by the Spirit to comprehend, though but feebly, the vast dimensions of that Church for which our Lord gave Himself a willing sacrifice and which He nourishes and cherishes as His own body, that one will know, so far as may be known, the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

3

THE KINGDOM:**ITS PURPOSE AND PLACE IN THE DISPENSATIONS OF GOD**

The subject to which we are now come is of supreme importance, being easily the most prominent theme of the New Testament from beginning to end. When that prolonged and oppressive silence of God, which, for more than four centuries, had hung like a pall of thick darkness over Israel and the world, was broken at last by the voice of a specially prepared messenger (whose mission had been predicted by the last of the Old Testament prophets) the burden of his message was expressed in the startling words, *Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand* (Matthew 3:1–2).

That epochal event is conspicuously chronicled in each of the four Gospels and special prominence has been given it in that not only is it dated with extraordinary particularity (Luke 3:1–2) but it is the only dated event in the New Testament. Hence it should cause no surprise that it ushered in a new and marvelous era in the history of the world. *It was the fullness of the time* (Galatians 4:4), the *beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ* (Mark 1:1–2), the long expected era in which God was to visit the Gentiles with His saving grace and all the ends of the earth were to see the salvation of the Lord. It was the era which the Holy Scriptures designate as *the acceptable time, the day of salvation* (Isaiah 49:8; 2 Corinthians 6:2); its distinctive feature being that God has now a Kingdom on earth, into which a way of admission has, through God's wondrous grace, been made available for men of all nations, kindred, tongues and tribes. It is appropriate to observe, before going on to speak of the nature of the Kingdom of God, that our Lord occupied the forty days of His post-resurrection ministry to His disciples in *speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God* (Acts 1:3); and also that the work He specially appointed for them during His approaching absence was the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom in all the world (Matthew 24:14; 28:19–20).

These recorded facts should suffice, without appeal to other Scriptures of like import, to impress upon the people of God the immense importance, in God's estimation, of the Kingdom of His Son and of the need for the furtherance of His purposes, that the existence of that Kingdom should be speedily testified by His witnesses to all the world. But the New Testament Scriptures contain much additional evidence of like purport; for the great subject of the Kingdom of God, now opened for all who, confessing their sins, believe on the Name of Jesus Christ for their salvation and their acceptance with the Father, is pursued throughout the successive books of the New Testament, until its climax is reached at the moment when a chorus of great voices in heaven exultantly announces that the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever (Revelation 11:15).

For the accomplishment of the purpose of our present inquiry it is needful also that those who pursue it should obtain, by giving heed to pertinent statements of the Word of God, a clear idea of the part and place assigned to this era of the Kingdom of God in His vast plan of redemption. It would be difficult indeed to exaggerate the importance thereof, whether we consider its relation to the salvation of men or its relation to the glory of God. But, because of the present limitation of time and space, we shall restrict ourselves to a few only of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God that have

been written for our enlightenment. Indeed enough has already been brought to the reader's attention to convince him, if he be at all jealous for the truth of God and zealous for His purposes, that anything — even so seemingly slight a matter as the misuse of a Biblical word — that might tend to obliterate from the consciousness of the people of God the existence of His Kingdom or to confuse them as to His purpose in its establishment and perpetuation, is nothing less than a calamity; as to which it behooves them, one and all, diligently to seek the remedy.

As matters now stand and whatever the cause, the undeniable fact is that God's people on earth have virtually lost all consciousness of the existence of His Kingdom; that they have but the haziest ideas as to its constitution, its aims and its activities; that few of them could give to any who might ask them concerning it, an intelligible account thereof; that many of them have not even so much as heard whether there be a Kingdom of God or not; while others have come to regard it as strictly a "Jewish" affair, which has been "postponed" to another dispensation; and that the preaching of the Kingdom of God has become all but obsolete in our days.

Such being the state of affairs amongst the people of God with respect to His Kingdom, the time is certainly ripe for the particular inquiry in which we are now engaged. And for the same reason it is not too much to expect that they who are zealous for the eternal purpose of God, which He has purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, will be steadfastly minded to give earnest consideration to the question that confronts us at the present stage of that inquiry; namely, whether or not the deplorable state of things indicated above is due in any measure to the fact that the oft-occurring Biblical phrase Kingdom of God has not for many centuries been used by the household of faith with the meaning given to it in the Holy Scriptures, and that another term, and one that has a very different Biblical meaning, has been substituted for it?

The Kingdom of God Exists for the Salvation of Men

The earliest teaching of our Lord is that recorded by the apostle John in the third chapter of his Gospel, which teaching was imparted to Nicodemus, a man of the Pharisees, a learned doctor of the Sanhedrin. The conversation with Nicodemus preceded our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, recorded by Matthew (Chapters 5–7) and preceded also His teaching in the synagogue at Nazareth recorded by Luke (Chapter 4). For those discourses were delivered after John had been cast into prison (Matthew 4:12; Luke 4:14–16) whereas it is noted in John's Gospel that after these things (that is, after Christ's interview with Nicodemus) Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea; and there He tarried with them and baptized. And John also was baptizing ... For John was not yet cast into prison (John 3:22–24).

From these facts, viewed in connection with statements found in the Gospels, we may clearly discern what it was that prompted the learned Rabbi's nocturnal visit to Christ. John the Baptist was at that very time, and had been for months, arousing the entire nation with the startling proclamation that the Kingdom of God was at hand. That proclamation was so forcefully made — the preacher having been brought into the world specially for this ministry and having been filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15) — that people of all classes came in crowds to his preaching and baptism, even into desert places. All regarded him as a prophet mighty in word and deed (though he wrought no miracles) and all the people were in a state of feverish expectancy, while musing in their hearts whether he were the Christ or not (Luke 3:15).

Now there was a special feature of John's ministry, upon which he placed the strongest emphasis, of such a nature that it could not fail to make a deep impression upon his hearers and to fill them with consternation and perplexity; so radical was it, so sensational, so subversive of the teaching they all had heard and firmly held concerning the Kingdom of God. And particularly would that item of John's preaching have caused painful surprise to the highly esteemed, the haughty, proud and supercilious sect of the Pharisees. For when John perceived some of that sect among the multitudes that congregated to his preaching, he singled them out as a special target for his piercing words, addressing them as a generation of vipers, who would do well to flee from the wrath to come, and vehemently declar-

ing that they were utterly deluded in taking for granted that their natural descent from Abraham assured them a place in the Kingdom of God; the truth being that descent from Abraham counted for so little in respect to the Kingdom of God that God was able to raise up, even of the stones under their feet, children unto Abraham (Matthew 3:5–9).

This astounding declaration must have raised in the minds of many of John's hearers and especially in the minds of the Pharisees the question: If descent from Abraham does not entitle those who possess that distinction to entrance in the Kingdom of God, what will serve to procure that right? Or in other words, *Who then can be saved?*

Therefore the Apostle John, in introducing Nicodemus into his gospel narrative, had a reason for stating that he was a man of the Pharisees. For thereby we are given to understand that, when Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, it was with the scorching words that the Baptist had leveled at the Pharisees ringing in his ears, and with the thoughts that had been aroused by John's revolutionary doctrine concerning the Kingdom of God surging in his heart.

Nicodemus began that famous colloquy, from which was to emerge truth of the most vital consequence to all mankind, with a very deferential and tactful remark. Addressing our Lord by the venerated title, Rabbi, he said: *We know that Thou art a Teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest* — those mentioned in verse 23 of Chapter 2 — *except God be with him.*

There is no reason, we think, for suspecting Nicodemus of insincerity in speaking thus, or for doubting his motive in coming to Jesus. The other references the Scripture makes to Nicodemus (John 7:50; 19:39) were seemingly intended to give the impression that he was a sincere seeker of the truth, and a believer in Jesus as the Christ.

Our Lord, however, disregarded wholly the introductory words of His eminent visitor and seems in His reply to direct the conversation very abruptly to the subject of the Kingdom of God. His words, which are amongst the weightiest ever uttered on earth, were: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again (or from above) he cannot see the Kingdom of God* (John 3:3).

When one reflects upon these words in the light of other Scriptures he can hardly fail to perceive that Christ, in so speaking, was not bringing an extraneous subject into the conversation. For the words just quoted, besides being one of the most sublime revelations of divine truth ever communicated to man, were a direct answer to the question which was at that very moment disturbing the hearts of many, especially those of the Pharisees. Moreover, in so speaking our Lord was giving a practical demonstration of what the closing words of the preceding chapter declare concerning Himself: He knew what was in man. **For He answered the unexpressed thought in His visitor's heart by explaining why natural descent from Abraham does not avail for entrance into the Kingdom of God; the imperative reason being that no man, whatever his relation to Abraham, can even see that Kingdom except he be born again.**

This word of the Lord Jesus puts every child of Adam, in respect to the vital matter of his personal salvation, upon the same level. It obliterates all distinctions of race and class as effectually as do the doctrinal explanations of the Holy Spirit subsequently given through the Apostle Paul in Romans and Galatians. That brief word of the Savior declares as plainly as it was afterwards given the Apostle John to make known, **that they to whom the right is granted to become the sons of God and the inheritors of His Kingdom are those who receive Him, who believe on His Name; for these are born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD (John 1:12–13); not of Abraham, but OF GOD —** that being the antithesis involved in this truly "fundamental" doctrine of Christ.

The thrice repeated negative imparts a tremendous emphasis to this Word of the Lord, testifying His intense desire to make known for all time, and particularly to that generation of Jews, that blood-relationship, fleshly descent and human volition have no part or preference, no influence whatever in gaining admission into the family of God. For there is no difference; for all have sinned ... Is

He the God of the Jews only? and not of the Gentiles also? Yes, of the Gentiles also (Romans 3:22–23, 29). *For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord (Jesus) over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved* (Romans 10:12–13).

The next words of Nicodemus show clearly that the subject thus introduced by our Lord was not an interruption to the current of his thoughts, but was the answer to the very perplexity that had impelled this teacher of Israel (verse 10) to come by night to One Whom he was constrained to recognize as a teacher sent from God. For Nicodemus now asks: How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? It was an intelligent question, being naturally prompted by the words he had just heard. So the Lord proceeds further to enlighten him. But inasmuch as His reply to that question introduces another topic, one that is of such importance as to demand consideration under another section of this paper, we will conclude this present section with a brief reference to the latter part of the Savior's revelation to Nicodemus (verses 11–21) in which He made known the following facts:

1. That the Kingdom of God belongs — not in the category of earthly things, but — in that of heavenly things (verse 12), which explains why one must be born again and be endowed with spiritual eyesight in order to see it (verse 3);
2. That the institution of that Kingdom awaited the ascension to heaven of Him Who had come down from heaven, even the Son of man Who has His existence in heaven (verse 13);
3. That this should be after that the Son of man should have been lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that being one of the things that must be (verse 14);
4. That the purpose of God to be thereby accomplished was that those who believed in Him should not perish but have eternal life (verse 15);
5. That God was moved to this amazing and unspeakable compassion — not, as the Pharisees would have supposed, by His love for Israel, but — by His love for the world (verse 16);
6. That God had sent His Son into the world, not for judgment, but for salvation (verse 17);
7. That the destiny of every man, whether for salvation or for judgment (for there are only those two destinies) depends solely upon his believing, or his not believing, on the Name of the only begotten Son of God (verse 18, *cf.* John 1:12).

It is appropriate here to recall that the chief responsibility of a king is to save his people (Matthew 1:21; 1 Samuel 10:27) and that, on the other hand, one of his highest prerogatives is judgment; and that, as Christ's first coming was for salvation (John 3:17; 1 Timothy 1:15) so His second coming will be for judgment (Acts 17:31; 24:25).

Thus we perceive the very first teaching and testimony of Jesus Christ had for their subject the Kingdom of God; and that they gave prominence to the facts that the establishment thereof and His own accession to the throne were to be through His death on the cross, His resurrection and ascension, and that God's purpose therein was the salvation of men of all nationalities of the world.

4

THE KINGDOM OF GOD: THE DOMAIN OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We have touched briefly upon the relation of the Father and the Son to the Kingdom of God as revealed in the earliest of the recorded teachings of Christ. But that discourse contains also an exceedingly important revelation concerning the agency of the Holy Spirit in connection with the heavenly Kingdom which soon was to be set up here upon earth. We know from later Scriptures (as Acts 2:22–36) that, when Jesus of Nazareth, having been delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God to be crucified and slain, was raised up, in fulfillment of Psalm 2 and 45, being thus by the right hand of God exalted and having received of the Father the promised Holy Spirit, He poured forth that promised One in the manner recorded in Acts 2. Christ did not make known to Nicodemus the coming of the Holy Spirit; but He did reveal to that earnest inquirer the antecedent events — the crucifixion, resurrection and exaltation of the Son of man; and moreover, truth of fundamental importance touching the Spirit's relation to the Kingdom of God was made known to him in our Lord's reply to his question, How can a man be born when he is old? The answer was:

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and (or even) of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind (or Spirit or breath) bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John 3:5–8).

The all-important matter here, from the human standpoint, is that of entrance into the Kingdom of God. The answer is clear, and moreover it is satisfying even to the normal human mind. For, assuming the Kingdom of God to be a spiritual kingdom, it requires little effort for one of ordinary intelligence to grasp the fact that only those who are born of the Spirit could have part and place therein. The analogy to the kingdoms of this world is plain. For, precisely as one becomes a citizen of an earthly kingdom by his natural birth, so likewise it would be readily inferred that, to become the citizen of a heavenly and spiritual kingdom, one must needs be born from above and of the Spirit of God. To accept and believe this much makes no great demand upon the human intellect; notwithstanding there are mysteries, unfathomable by the human mind, involved in this subject of the new birth. But even that should not cause surprise, seeing that the natural birth likewise involves mysteries which human science is unable to explain and human reason to apprehend.

Again it is easy for the natural mind to accept the statement, That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. For human observation, extending as far back as the records go, has found it to be the invariable rule of all life, animal and vegetable, that “like produces like”; or, in the more impressive language of Holy Writ, every living creature reproduces after his kind.

But our present concern is with the very close connection which is shown by the above quoted words of Christ to subsist between the Holy Spirit and the Kingdom of God. That in order to enter

into that Kingdom a man must be born of the Spirit is plainly declared. But what can we make of the words of Verse 8, The wind bloweth where it listeth etc.? Those words caused bewilderment to Nicodemus, as evidenced by his exclamation, How can these things be? But the Lord evidently considered that Nicodemus should have understood Him; for He says, “Art thou a master (*literally*, the teacher) of Israel, and knowest not these things?” which plainly implies that the things which caused bewilderment to Nicodemus were taught in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, in which Nicodemus was supposed to be thoroughly versed.

Let us then follow this clue, bearing in mind that in both the languages which God has been pleased to use in communicating His mind to man — Hebrew and Greek — the same word stands for the several substantives designated by the several English words, *spirit*, *breath* and *wind*. Hence, verse 8 of our passage might be correctly rendered in either of three ways: “The wind bloweth where it listeth”, or “The breath breathes where it wills”, or “The Spirit moves where He pleases.” We are also to bear in mind that the passage is speaking particularly of the impartation of life.

With these facts in mind it is easy to see that the words of John 3:8 connect directly with several important passages of the Old Testament. The first of these is Genesis 2:7, *And the LORD formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (lit. of lives) and man became a living soul.*

Here, at the second occurrence in the Bible of the word “Spirit” (or *Breath*, or *Wind*), it is used in describing that act of God whereby the father of mankind was brought into being, after God had fashioned his physical body out of the mineral components of the earth, by breathing into the inanimate form the breath of life, thereby imparting to him by the same act the lives of all his generations.

It is of interest to note that whereas the *first* mention of the Spirit (or Breath) of God is in connection with the creation of the world (Genesis 1:2); the *second* is in connection with the creation of man.

Incidentally it is also worthy of note that not until thousands of years after the Book of Genesis was written did human knowledge attain to the discovery that the components of the human body are identical with the minerals of the earth. Whence then and how did the writer of Genesis obtain the exact scientific information contained in the above quoted verse? Certainly it was not from “The wisdom of the Egyptians”, though Moses was fully versed therein (Acts 7:22).

It surely would seem that the learned rabbi Nicodemus, who had attained to the exalted position of the teacher of Israel, should at once have understood from the Savior’s words, that **the creation of a new order of men for citizenship in the Kingdom of God was to be accomplished after the same method and by the same divine agency — the Breath or Spirit of God — as were employed in the creation of Adam.** Confirmation of this is given in the twentieth chapter of John’s gospel, where it is written that the Lord, after His resurrection, came into the room where the disciples were assembled, the doors being shut, and after bestowing upon them His benediction of peace, He breathed *on* — or more literally *in* — them, and said, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). Thus new life was imparted to men, where life of that sort had not previously been.

The Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones

Another Old Testament passage that should have occurred to Nicodemus and that claims our attention at this point is a prophetic vision upon which the Jewish rabbis founded great expectations for the revival of the nation of Israel in a future day. This is Ezekiel’s vision of the valley which was full of bones, which were very many and very dry, and concerning which the LORD said to him, *These bones are the whole house of Israel* (Ezekiel 37:11).

The hand of the Lord having carried the prophet out, in the Spirit of the Lord and having set him down in the midst of the valley, the LORD asks him (verse 3), Can these bones live? When the

prophet had confessed his inability to answer the question by saying, O Lord God, Thou knowest, the LORD commanded him,

“Prophesy upon these bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the Word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones: Behold I will cause breath to enter into you and ye shall live (verses 4–5).

So the prophet did as he was commanded, and as he prophesied there was a noise and a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to bone; but there was no breath in them” (verses 7–8). Then the LORD said to him,

“Prophesy unto the wind ... 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 9–10).

It is not appropriate to attempt at this place an exposition of this prophetic vision. Enough to say we believe that its general purport and its fulfillment may be discerned by taking careful note of certain peculiarities, presently to be noted, in the text of the prophecy and then referring to several complementary passages in the New Testament. The textual peculiarities we have in mind are, in the first place, the extraordinary frequency of the recurrence of the word *ruach*, and in particular that spirit in verses 1, 14 of our English Version, breath in verses 5, 8–10, and wind, winds (three times) in verse 9, each and all represent the same Hebrew word, *ruach*.

From these peculiarities in the text of the prophecy, taken together with the explanatory statement in plain language that These bones are the whole house of Israel, we may assuredly gather that there was to come to the natural Israel, and at a period in its history when the nation should be reduced to a spiritual and material state comparable to a valley filled with disintegrated human skeletons, a revival or resuscitation of a radically different sort from anything that had taken place in their previous history; and further that the preaching of the Word of God and the direct and powerful operation of the Spirit of God were to be the Divine agencies in its accomplishment. We naturally ask then: Has anything of this nature occurred in the history of the Israelitish people? And does the New Testament throw light upon the vision or afford help in establishing the interpretation thereof?

In seeking answers to these questions we may minimize one of the major difficulties in our way by observing that the phrase the whole house of Israel, as used in the Holy Scriptures, is not to be taken as meaning every Israelite. For the New Testament makes quite clear that the expression all Israel does not have that all-inclusive meaning, very far from it.

What Israel Was Seeking After

The fulfillment of this prophecy, which naturally figured largely in the Messianic expectations of the carnally minded Jewish people, was one of the things that Israel was ever and most earnestly seeking for. Hence we obtain help in our effort to understand this prophecy from the apostle Paul, when, speaking of the nationalistic expectations of his fellow Israelites, his kinsmen according to the flesh, he remarked that Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (Romans 11:7).

This statement bears the impress of the finality of a Divine dictum which admits of no change. The statement that Israel had not obtained that which he was seeking for would manifestly have been devoid of point or purpose in Paul’s day if the time for the fulfillment of God’s promises to the natural Israel were yet in the future. And the matter is put beyond all doubt by the added statement, but the election hath obtained it; which plainly declares that, whatever it was that Israel had been seeking for, the quest was now at an end; and that, notwithstanding Israel as a whole had not obtained the ob-

ject it had been seeking after, nevertheless, the promise of God had not failed, for the election had obtained it.

Furthermore, so urgent is the apostle to make this matter transparently clear that he elaborates his explanation at considerable length in the immediate context. For in Chapter 9 he strongly repels the idea that the failure of the nation as a whole to attain by faith to the fulfillment of God's promises, was an indication that the word of God had taken none effect (verse 6); and he gives, on the contrary, as a convincing and most satisfactory reason that **They are not all ISRAEL, who are of Israel**. This, we say, is a clear and exceedingly satisfying explanation of the seeming failure of some of the promises which the Jews, because of the carnal rabbinistic interpretation of the Scriptures then current, were confidently expecting to inherit in virtue solely of their natural descent from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is the Holy Spirit's explanation by the apostle's pen.

True it is that the promises of God were in terms for the Israelites; to whom pertaineth ... the promises (Romans 9:4). But the question here arises: who are included in the name Israel? To whom does it properly belong? Does it include all the natural offspring of the patriarch Jacob, to whom the name was first given? So said the teachers of Israel in the days of Paul, and so say some who in our day assume to teach The Israel of God. But what saith the Scripture? **They are not all ISRAEL, who are of Israel; that is, not all the natural descendants of Jacob are included in the name Israel**. And not only so; but the apostle, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, proceeds to pile proof upon proof from the histories and prophecies of the Old Testament to show that he, Paul, was not here announcing a new doctrine or putting a new limitation upon the Israelitish promises, but that **God had repeatedly declared by the mouth of His holy prophets that only believing Israelites were counted as of the true Israel, and specially that He had plainly stated through His servant Isaiah concerning Israel, that, *Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant (only) shall be saved* (Romans 9:27).**

The Promises to Abraham and His Seed

This truth, namely that — not all the natural offspring of Jacob, but only — they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham (Galatians 3:7), of one of the most prominent and most strongly emphasized doctrines of the New Testament. Yet the error against which the apostle directed his strongest denunciations still persists. **For even in our day and amongst the most orthodox of Christians are those who hold that God has promised earthly dominion to Israel after the flesh by an unconditional covenant**. Therefore we invite attention to the last verse of Galatians 3. The apostle there, addressing Christian converts who were Gentiles by birth, uses these words, which seem to us too plain to admit of misunderstanding: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." This statement should suffice to put beyond controversy that all who are Christ's, whether or not they were the natural descendants of Abraham, are his seed and therefore are heirs according to the promise; that is to say, that particular promise, which those who say they are Jews but are not (Revelation 2:9; 3:9; Philippians 3:3) claim as exclusively their own; namely, the promises to Abraham that he should be the heir of the world. Concerning this exceedingly important promise, the same apostle elsewhere says:

"For the promise that he should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of none effect" (Romans. 4:13–14).

Furthermore, this apostle, after having declared to the Galatian Christians affirmatively that believers in Christ are the true children of Abraham and are his heirs according to the promise, adds additional emphasis to his statement by declaring negatively that the son of the bondwoman, who in this allegory, represents the natural Jew, shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman; because, as he goes on to explain, believers in Christ are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free (Galatians 4:30–31).



Thus, according to the Scriptures, not only is there no unfulfilled promise of God for those who are Jews by nature, but as regards the particular promise of earthly dominion and an earthly inheritance to Abraham and his seed, the natural Jews are the only people whom the Scriptures expressly and by name exclude from participation in that promise.

The Era Proclaimed By Christ and His Forerunner Was That of the Holy Spirit

Further proof of the importance of the matter now under consideration is afforded by the prominence given to it at the very beginning of the New Testament. For thereby it is plainly to be seen that the new era proclaimed by our Lord and His forerunner, which as we have shown, is preeminently the era of the Holy Spirit, and of the Kingdom of God, was one in which the natural descendant of Abraham, though he were *a man of the Pharisees* and *The teacher of Israel*, could have no part except he were born of the Spirit. This will clearly be seen by reference to the following passages.

Brief as are the Gospel accounts of John's message to the Jews, they all give prominence to his testimony that the One Who was about to be made manifest to Israel was He of Whom it had been prophesied that upon the seed of Jacob He should pour out of God's Spirit (Isaiah 44:1-5). As recorded by Matthew, John preached, saying:

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matthew 3:11).

It is highly significant that what preceded this great utterance was, first of all, the announcement that the Kingdom of heaven was at hand (verses 2-3), and then a warning — without parallel even in the Scriptures themselves for intensity, solemnity and scathing language — a warning addressed directly to the most cultured and highly esteemed of the Jewish sects against the fatal error of saying within themselves, *We have Abraham for our father*, as if that relationship guaranteed their admission into the Kingdom of God, whereas in God's sight and with respect to His promises to Abraham, they were no better than a brood of vipers, and no nearer to His Kingdom than the stones under their feet.

Thus we learn from Matthew's Gospel that John's proclamation to the people of Israel gave prominence to three distinctive features of the new era whereof he was the Spirit-filled herald: *first*, that the new era was that of the Kingdom of God; *second*, that that Kingdom was to be specially under the administrative power of the Holy Spirit; *third*, that natural descent from Abraham would not suffice to entitle its possessor to enter that Kingdom.

Matthew also records the significant fact that, when Jesus was baptized, *the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him* (3:16).

Mark's account is shorter, but its tenor is the same. He notes that John's mission marked *The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Mark 1:1); and he gives the substance of John's preaching in these few words: *There cometh One mightier than I after me, the ratchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water; but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost* (1:8). Mark likewise records the incident at Christ's baptism of the opened (or cloven) heavens and the descent of the Spirit upon Him in the similitude of a dove (1:10).

Before referring to the corresponding passages of Luke's Gospel, we recall the record by Matthew of what is by far the most notable of the activities of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the Christian era, the immaculate conception of Jesus Christ which is thus given in the words of the angel of the Lord to Joseph: *Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost* (Matthew 1:20).

Luke gives us the angel's words to Mary touching this transcendently high and holy matter, which words were spoken to the mother of our Lord some months before the message to Joseph. Answering the question, prompted by Mary's perplexity, the heavenly messenger said,

“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

Moreover, Luke records other instances of the special activity of the Holy Spirit in the miraculous events that distinguish the beginning of the era of the Kingdom of God. He relates that an angel of the Lord, before the visit of Gabriel to Mary, appeared to Zacharias the priest while he was ministering in the temple, telling him that his prayer had been heard and that his wife Elizabeth should bear him a son, who should be great in the sight of the Lord and should be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15).

And again Luke records that, when Mary, after the angel's visit, went to the hill country of Judah to the house of Zacharias and saluted her cousin Elisabeth, *the babe leaped in her womb and she* — that is, Elisabeth — *was filled with the Holy Ghost* (1:39–41).

Luke also tells of a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, *just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him*; and that *it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ*; and that *he came by the Spirit into the temple at the very time when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for Him after the custom of the law* (Luke 2:25–27).

Luke also records John's warning against reliance upon natural descent from Abraham for admission into the Kingdom of God (3:7–8); and likewise John's proclamation that Christ would *baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire* (verse 16) — and the descent through the cloven heavens of the Holy Spirit in the semblance of a dove upon the Lord Jesus, when He was *being baptized, and praying* (verses 21–22).

Luke also relates in Chapter 4 the following incidents which further exhibit the special activities of the Holy Spirit in those great historic events which prepared the way for the Kingdom of God:

“And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness” (verse 1).

“And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about” (verse 14).

And then follows the recital of the Lord's teaching in the synagogue at Nazareth, where He had been brought up (verse 16). There we read that it was His custom to go to the synagogue (wherever He might be) on the Sabbath day and stand up to read the Scriptures. Whatever the portions He read on other occasions, of which we have no record, the reading on that particular occasion, which God has singled out for a conspicuous place in His holy Word, was from the prophet Isaiah, Chapter 61, which begins:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor ... to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind ... to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”

Then, having closed the book and handed it again to the attendant, and while the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened with rapt attention upon Him, He made this impressive and immensely important declaration: *This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.*

But those synagogue goers cared little for the gospel He had come to preach, though they must needs have wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. What they demanded of Him was that He should repeat there at Nazareth the miracles they had heard of His doing at Capernaum (verse 23). To that audacious demand He answered by referring to incidents in the ministry of Elijah and Elisha. Whereupon *all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city* (verse 28). And is not the same spirit manifested today in many a synagogue in our own land, when one ventures to declare that Christ came to preach the gospel to the poor from the very beginning of His ministry, and not, as the modern Judaizers would have it, to restore the earthly dominion to Israel after the flesh?

The Promise of the Spirit in John's Gospel

Coming now to the fourth Gospel, we find in its account of the ministry of John the Baptist that he, after denying that he was the Messiah, declared that there was One standing among them at that very moment, *Whom they knew not, Whose shoe's ratchet he (John) was not worthy to unloose* (John 1:20–27). And the next day John, seeing Jesus coming to him, said, *Behold the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sin of the world* (verse 29). A startling announcement this; and it is well nigh impossible for us to conceive how it sounded in the ears of the Jews of that day; or how it affected their hearts, eagerly expectant as they were of the advent of a militant Messiah Who should triumphantly deliver Israel from the oppressive yoke of Rome and restore their former greatness enhanced many times. The Christ Whom John announced was coming — not to overthrow the earthly enemies of the Jews but — *to become God's sacrifice for the sin of the world*.

In making that wondrous announcement John explained that, although he had known that his mission was to make the Messiah manifest to Israel, yet he was not to know and did not know Him personally, until he saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him (verse 32); that being the sign whereby he was to identify the Christ. For John says:

He that sent me to baptize with water, the Same said unto me, Upon Whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He Who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw (the promised sign) and bare record that this is THE SON OF GOD (verses 33–34).

It is of prime importance for our immediate purpose that by each of the four evangelists great prominence is given to the fact that the Kingdom of God, whereof John was the divinely appointed herald, was to be inaugurated by the baptism with the Holy Ghost (which had been prophesied by Joel and other prophets); and that He Who was to baptize with the Holy Spirit was the One on Whom that same Spirit should be seen descending from heaven in the similitude of a dove and abiding on Him. Moreover, the three synoptic Gospels record that the Anointed One was identified also by a Voice from heaven saying, *This is My beloved Son*.

Further we find in the record of John's ministry contained in the fourth Gospel, a clear intimation of that basic truth of the Gospel of God concerning His Son, which is the central testimony of the whole New Testament, namely that before the Son of God, Who is the Christ of God, could bestow the promised baptism with the Holy Spirit, He must first be offered up as a sacrifice for the sin of the world. This brings us again to our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus, concerning which we will at this point add only the further remark that His teaching there given is not only in perfect agreement with the testimony of the Baptist, but it also enlarges that testimony and throws light upon the obscure parts thereof.

The relation of the Holy Spirit to the Kingdom of God is still further elucidated by our Lord's teaching on the eve of His sufferings recorded in Chapters 14–16 of John's Gospel. The prominent subject of that teaching is the coming of the Spirit of Truth, that Other Comforter, Who was to abide with the Lord's disciples forever (John 14:16–17). There are four other distinct promises (five in all) of the coming of the Comforter, the Holy Ghost in this one discourse (14:26; 15:26; 16:7, 13); and

seven things are specified — three for the world (16:8–11) and four for the people of God which the Holy Spirit was to accomplish. Those seven things embrace within their scope all the major activities of the Kingdom of God during the entire interval between the departure of Christ to His Father's house to sit upon His Father's throne and His coming again in glory to judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31).

That the affairs of God's Kingdom on earth were to be administered by the Holy Spirit and that His presence in the world was essential to that end is further indicated by our Lord's emphatic statement, prompted by the sorrow that filled His disciples' hearts by reason of the thing He had just spoken to them (John 16:7),

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient (advantageous, profitable) for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto YOU.”

The implication clearly is, *first* that the Spirit's presence was needed to sustain them in the tribulations they were to undergo in propagating the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God, and *second* that the Lord's going personally to heaven was necessary to the end that He might send the Spirit to them. And to this agree the words of the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost when, after Christ's promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit had been gloriously fulfilled, the apostle spake of the patriarch David and 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, he would raise up the Messiah to sit on his throne; he (David) seeing this before spake of the resurrection of the Messiah ... 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 (Christ) hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:29–33).

Here is a clear, emphatic and most authoritative declaration that the one thing for which the fulfillment of God's promise to David of One to sit upon his throne was waiting, was the resurrection of the King Messiah from the dead, having obtained eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12). Therefore the modern doctrine, which postpones the reign of Christ to a future dispensation, is a serious error.

Power from on High

In concluding our citations showing that the new era, proclaimed by our Lord and His forerunner and which they designated as the Kingdom of God, was to be characterized preeminently by the presence on earth of the Holy Spirit in Person, we refer to the Lord's promise, spoken after His resurrection and recorded in Luke 24:49; *And behold I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.* With this should be read the promise recorded by Mark (9:1): *Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the Kingdom of God come with (in) power.* That this prediction refers to the day of Pentecost is evident from other parallel predictions which manifestly refer to that event. It could not refer to the Transfiguration of Christ, for there was no coming of the Kingdom of God on that occasion and no display of power.

And lastly we have the clear and significant words of our Lord to His disciples when He showed Himself to them after His passion, being seen of them forty days *and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God* (Acts 1:3). At which time He *commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which (saith He) ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.* But their minds were occupied with a very different subject; for the sacred record continues:

“When they therefore were come together, they asked Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel? And He said, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you” (literally, *the Holy Ghost having come upon you*); “and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:4–8).

From these Scriptures it very clearly appears that the various promises — namely, the baptizing by the Lord Jesus Christ with the Holy Ghost, foretold by John, the coming of the Holy Ghost (*the promise of the Father*) foretold by Christ, the coming of the Kingdom of God *in power* and the receiving of power by the disciples of Christ, also foretold by Him — were each and all fulfilled, and in a most evident manner, on the day of Pentecost.

5

PENTECOST:

THE SOUND AS OF A MIGHTY WIND

In our discussion in an earlier part of this book of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones, and in referring to the peculiar use in that prophetic passage of the Hebrew word *ruach*, which is variously translated, spirit, breath and wind, it was suggested that the general purport of that vision and its historical fulfillment might be discovered by giving heed to certain peculiarities in the text in the light of certain complementary passages in the New Testament. The textual peculiarities referred to are discussed in that earlier passage; and as for the New Testament Scriptures there in contemplation, foremost among them was our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus, with particular reference to His seemingly cryptic statement that *the wind bloweth where it listeth*. Another was the record of the occasion when the Lord breathed on His disciples, saying: *Receive ye the Holy Spirit* (John 20:21–23). Sufficient comment for the immediate purpose has already been made on those passages.

But there remains yet another Scripture, one that calls for special consideration in this connection; the description in the second Chapter of the Acts of those marvelous happenings at Jerusalem which marked the consummation of the work of our glorified Redeemer in His fulfillment of *the promise of the Father*. Let us remind ourselves that the feast of Pentecost which occurred fifty days after the Passover, whereby the people of Israel commemorated their redemption and deliverance out of Egypt, was the anniversary of the giving of the law from heaven by the hand of Moses, the mediator of the Old Covenant. That great event, which was indeed a mountain in the history of God's dealings with His old covenant people (Exodus 19:2–8; 12–20; Hebrews 12:18–21), marked the birthday of that nation. How appropriate then that just fifty days after the sacrifice of the holy Lamb of God on Golgotha's cross, should have occurred *the birth of the holy nation* (1 Peter 2:9) and that it should have been distinguished — not by the giving of the law from heaven engraved upon tables of stone, but — by the gift of the Holy Ghost from heaven to write the law of God upon the hearts of His elect people, who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

In exact correspondence with the type, that great day of Pentecost stands forth in history as another mountain, though of very different character from that of the type, being spiritual, heavenly, invisible, which cannot be touched (Hebrews 12:18, 22), but none the less real. For that was the beginning of that *Kingdom which cannot be moved* (verse 28). And then was fulfilled that word of Christ, recorded in the Gospel by Mark (9:1) that some of those who were then standing near Him should not taste of death until they should have seen the Kingdom of God come in power.

Moreover, on both of those historical occasions, which are likened in Hebrews 12 to two mountains, one marking the place of the Old Covenant and the other (its spiritual counterpart) the place of the New Covenant, there was a redeemed people gathered in a locality which God Himself had designated, who were waiting at the appointed place to be consecrated to Him as His peculiar people. On that first day of Pentecost, which was observed at Mount Sinai, the proceedings culminated in that awe-inspiring "Voice of Words" from heaven, the utterance of the "ten words" by the Voice of Almighty God, which struck terror to the hearts of the assembled people (Exodus 20:1–19). But on the

first Pentecost of the New Covenant, instead of the law spoken from heaven by the audible Voice of God, and afterwards brought down from heaven engraved by the finger of God in tablets of stone, the Holy Spirit filled all the place where the disciples were sitting and they all were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Thus to the new covenant people, a nation born at once (Isaiah 66:8) was given a law that is peculiar to itself, *The law of the SPIRIT OF LIFE, IN CHRIST JESUS, which makes free from the law of sin and death* (Romans 8:2). That law is written, *not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart* (2 Corinthians 3:3). Of that *new covenant*, which is *not of the letter, but of the Spirit*, Paul and Timothy had been made of God the *able ministers* (verse 6).

And this is in complete agreement with God's promise of a new covenant which He would make in a then future day with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jeremiah 31:31–34); concerning which He declared, first of all, that it should *be not according to the covenant He made with their fathers in the day He took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake*; and concerning which He goes on to declare that the great outstanding difference was to consist in the manner in which His law was to be given to the new covenant people.

“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the LORD, I will put My law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.”

Since the prophecy itself states in plain language that the basis of God's relationship with the people of that new covenant was to be a Divine work in virtue whereof He would forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more, there should be no doubt whatever as to the identity of the new covenant people, nor should it be necessary, in writing for the comfort and edification of Christ's redeemed people, whose distinction it is that their sins are forgiven them for His Name's sake (1 John 2:12), to cite testimony from the Word of God in proof that they are the people, *the Israel of God* (Galatians 6:16) to whom God's new covenant was promised and with whom it is now established in the blood of Christ as an *everlasting covenant* (Hebrews 13:20). The need, however, exists as one of the unhappy results of a modern system of doctrine, which, though in its distinctive features it is directly contrary to the Scriptures, has nevertheless found acceptance with many of those who are of the household of faith. Therefore we call attention to the following passages of Scripture (out of many that might be cited) as amply sufficient to establish that the redeemed of the Lord are His new covenant people.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews the new covenant promised through Jeremiah is quoted at length (Chapter 8:8–13) and Jesus Christ is declared to be both the *Mediator* and also the *Surety* thereof (Hebrews 7:22; 8:6; 9:15, etc.). As most of our readers are doubtless aware, the word for covenant in the Greek text (*diatheke*) is sometimes translated *covenant* and sometimes *testament* in our Authorized Version. This causes confusion. The word always means *covenant*, that is, a solemn compact or contract between two parties.

In our Lord's appointed memorial whereby His redeemed people were to show His death till He come, the cup was declared by Him *to be His blood of the new covenant* (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25), which, said He, is shed for (the) many for the remission of sins. It is readily seen that these last words identify Christians as the people, foretold by the Lord through Jeremiah, who should all know Him from the least to the greatest, *because their sins and their iniquities He would remember no more*.

The apostle Paul declares that God had made Timothy and himself to be *able ministers of the new covenant; not of the letter, but of THE SPIRIT: for the letter killeth, but THE SPIRIT GIVETH LIFE* (2

Corinthians 3:6); which clearly proves that the new covenant is now in full force and that Christians are its beneficiaries.

A Nation Born At Once

Continuing for a little to survey the events of the day of Pentecost broadly, before commenting upon some of its specific features, we refer again to Isaiah's prophecy concerning the nation that was to be born at once (Isaiah 66:5–8) and we note that what the prophecy chiefly emphasizes is that *Before she (Zion) travailed she brought forth; before her pain came she was delivered of a man child.*

The Travail of Zion (in other words, the Destruction of Jerusalem) came to pass in the year AD 70. It was one of the most momentous events in the history of mankind and one of the most far-reaching in its consequences. All subsequent history to the present hour has been profoundly affected thereby. For at that time two diverse streams of Jewish humanity were poured forth into the sea of nations. One stream, the followers of Jesus Christ, had by that time come to be known as Christians, a name first given them at Antioch in Syria (Acts 11:26); and these were quickly assimilated by the nations amongst which they found refuge. The other stream, unconverted Jews, defying assimilation and surviving persecutions of the fiercest description, have been and still are the cause of vexatious problems to all the nations that have afforded them an asylum. That travail of Zion was so grievous that our Lord, in contemplation of it, wept over it (Luke 19:41–44).

If therefore, we take the birth of God's Israel to be that which took place on the day of Pentecost, which we feel fully warranted in doing, we find in that event a most evident fulfillment of the leading item of Isaiah's prophecy. But there is yet more to support the view that we have the designed fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in the events of Pentecost. The declaration, *Before she travailed she brought forth* (verse 7) is preceded by the words: *A voice of noise from the City, a voice of noise from the Temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to His enemies* (verse 6). The three occurrences of the word *Voice*, which is twice associated with the word *noise*, are identifying marks for our guidance in seeking the historical fulfillment of the prophecy. As will be shown, each of the three kinds of *voice* has its counterpart in the recorded events of Pentecost.

But first as to the word here translated *noise*. It is from a primitive root meaning to rush (Strong's Hebrew Concordance). Hence a rushing noise from the city is given as a mark for the identification of the fulfillment of the prophecy. In close correspondence with this is the fact that the first of the divine manifestations on the day of Pentecost was *a sound from heaven as a rushing mighty wind*.

The next item of the prophecy is *a voice* (or proclamation) *from the temple*. The Scriptures make quite clear (as this writer has shown before in *The Hope Of Israel*) that the one place in which the disciples habitually met and in which they were assembled on the day of Pentecost, was the Temple, and more definitely one of its vast corridors known as Solomon's Porch, where the Savior Himself was wont to teach His disciples (John 10:23; Luke 24:53; Acts 2:46; 3:11; 5:12). Here then is another correspondence and a notable one. For the culminating event of the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2, was the voice or proclamation of Peter, who being filled with the Holy Spirit lifted up his voice to proclaim with convincing power, the resurrection, exaltation and enthronement of Jesus of Nazareth, in fulfillment of the words of David.

“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thine enemies
Thy footstool” (Psalm 110:1).

Peter's inspired utterance was indeed a *Voice of the Lord* rendering *recompense to His enemies*. Moreover, Peter brings his stirring proclamation to a climax with a weighty asseveration, addressed to *All the house of Israel*, giving them to *know assuredly that God had made that same Jesus*, Whom they had crucified, *both LORD AND CHRIST* (verse 36).

Returning to Isaiah's prophecy the next words are: *Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once?* (Isaiah 66:7–8). These words agree marvelously well with the events of Pentecost.

The Whole House of Israel

But what has chiefly impressed the writer in connection with this part of his subject is the agreement of the recorded events of Pentecost with Ezekiel's vision of the Dry Bones; and when due allowance is made for the highly symbolical character of that vision, the correspondence is truly remarkable. We start with the Lord's plainly stated explanation to the prophet, *Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel* (Ezekiel 37:11); and we must admit that the spiritual condition represented by those dry and scattered bones was truly that of all the house of Israel in the days of Christ. Paul, speaking for himself and other converted Jews, says that *God, Who is rich in mercy, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ* (Ephesians 2:4–5). Moreover, our Lord Himself, addressing the most cultured and most religious of the Jews of His day, likened them to *whited sepulchers full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness* (Matthew 23:27).

Now the essential significance of the vision is that the house of Israel, being in that utterly hopeless state of deadness and decay, was to be made to live; for in that vision the prophet was to read God's answer to His own question, *Can these bones live?* God Himself says (addressing the bones): *Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you and ye shall live* (verse 5). Furthermore, the prophecy declares and strongly emphasizes the fact that the agencies God would employ in working that stupendous miracle would be the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The Lord bids His servant, *Prophesy upon these bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones, Hear the Word of the Lord* (verse 4). For the house of Israel was to hear a special Word of the Lord, a quickening Word that would impart newness of life to all who should hear the Word. In *the Jew first* was to be fulfilled that great utterance of Christ, *The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall LIVE* (John 5:25).

But another Divine Agency was to cooperate, *the Wind, the Spirit*. For we read: *Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, 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* (Ezekiel 37:9). Here are correspondences with the recorded events of the day of Pentecost which are too close (extending as they do even to matters of detail) to be regarded as mere coincidences; and whether or not we take those events to be what God had especially in view when He gave this vision to His prophet, we must concede that they agree marvelously well with the Biblical significance of the symbols employed.

But there is more. We recall again that the first supernatural manifestation on the day of Pentecost was of a startling character: *Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting*. Only in this passage and in Hebrews 12:19 (*the sound of a trumpet*) is the Greek word here used represented in our Version by the word *Sound*. In both instances the sound came from heaven. In the passage in Hebrews the reference is to that terrifying blast of the trump of God which brought terror to the hearts of the Israelites gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai, and which will be heard again by all the spiritually dead at the last day. It was no ordinary *sound*. According to *Strong's Greek Concordance* the word signifies a loud or confused noise, a roar.

In correspondence with this, the prophecy says: *So I prophesied as I was commanded, and as I prophesied there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone* (verse 7). Here again are identifying marks that assist in determining the fulfillment of the vision. According to Strong the word *noise*, used in this sentence signifies a loud sound, and *shaking* signifies an uproar or commotion, such as might be caused by an earthquake. The latter occurs again in Ezekiel 38:19, where the Lord GOD says: *Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel* (cf. Hebrews 12:26–27). It is plainly apparent that these identifying marks have their counterparts in that sound as of a rushing mighty wind and in those ensuing commotions (e.g., *When this was noised*

abroad the multitude came together) that are recorded in Acts 2. Incidentally it is appropriate to observe that there was no place in Jerusalem, other than the temple, where such a crowd could have congregated.

As one thoughtfully ponders the inspired account of this vision, the impression made upon the mind is that what it represents is — not an action instantaneously accomplished, but — a process that extends itself over a long stretch of years; although its representation in the form of a vision necessitates that all the events and epochs it was intended to foreshadow should be presented to the eye in close succession. Thus the stirring and shaking of the dry bones and the subsequent coming together and the joining of bone to its companion bone, forming eventually a corporeal entity, would naturally (seeing that what the vision represents is a national epoch) require a long period of time for its accomplishment. And this is confirmed by the words, *And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you and cover you with skin, and put breath in you* (verse 6); which words, when taken as representing events in the history of a nation, give the impression — not of a nearly instantaneous action, but — of a work that occupies a stretch of years.

Hence it is of interest to note that we find what clearly answers to these symbolical events and to their proper sequence, in the record of the happenings of Pentecost and thereafter. Thus in the miraculous speaking of *Peter and the rest as the Spirit gave them utterance*, we have what answers to the prophesying to the dry bones, calling upon them to *hear the Word of the Lord*, and causing breath to enter into them, i.e., causing their revival or resuscitation (Ezekiel 37:4–5). And then we read (Acts 2:41) that *they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added three thousand souls ... and all that believed were together*. Thus a body was being formed, as it were by the joining of bone to bone, a body animated by a common life, its members functioning in harmony and for the good of the whole body. And this process of joining member to member continued on indefinitely; for we read that *The Lord added to them daily* (2:47); and again, *Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women* (5:14); *And in those days when the multitude of the disciples was multiplied* (6:1); *And the Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly* (6:7); *And much people was added unto the Lord* (11:24). And this process, which began on the day of Pentecost, has continued unto now.

An Exceeding Great Army; an Innumerable Multitude

And what was to be the outcome of that wondrous process of regeneration by the agency of the mighty Spirit of God and of the incorporation into one body of those redeemed ones in such manner that they become members one of another (1 Corinthians 12:12–13; Ephesians 4:4, 13)? Let us give attention to the last verse of the prophecy and see if it does not suggest the answer to this question: *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* (verse 10). Two distinct prophesyings are mentioned in the inspired account of this vision. The Lord's first command to His servant was, *Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the Word of the LORD, and ye shall live*. These words clearly indicate the nature of gospel preaching and its effect. They are in close correspondence with the words subsequently spoken by Christ when He announced the arrival of the hour ... when the dead should hear the voice of the Son of God and those that heard should live (John 5:25).

The response to this first prophesying by Ezekiel was a noise and a stir, followed by a coming together of the bones, not in haphazard fashion, but each bone in proper relation to the others. And as the prophet continued observing, the sinews and the flesh came up upon the reconstituted skeletons and the skin covered them.

The second prophesying (verse 9) which also was by the Lord's express command differs in several particulars from the first; and those points of difference demand our thoughtful attention. **First**, this prophesying was addressed — not to the bones, but — to the wind. In this instance the bones were not called into action, nor did the result depend in anywise upon a response on their part. The Wind, that is, the Spirit, and the Spirit alone, was to accomplish this part of the divine purpose. Sec-

ond, the words to be spoken in this instance were: *Thus saith the Lord GOD, Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.* The phrase *four winds*, according to its usage in Scripture, points to universality, to something that involves the whole habitable earth (Jeremiah 49:36; Daniel 7:2; 8:8; Matthew 24:31; Revelation 7:1). Of special interest in this connection are our Lord's words in Matthew 24:31; for there, speaking of His own coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, He says: *And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.* Here our Lord speaks of a future event of worldwide extent, involving all His elect. **Third**, the second prophesying was to be followed — not by a long-continued process, but — by an instantaneous action on the part of *the whole house of Israel*; the effect being that *they lived and stood up on their feet, an exceeding great army* (verse 10).

Considering the prophecy as a whole and each item thereof individually, we think the conclusion is well nigh inescapable that the last quoted verse has its fulfillment in the resurrection of the people of God, the dead in Christ, at His coming again, including the whole company of His elect from the four winds *an exceeding great army* indeed, an innumerable multitude of all nations and kindred and people and tongues. And to this agree the words: *they stood up*; for the resurrection is viewed in Scripture as an upstanding or uprising. The foregoing pages present, we believe, ample warrant for taking Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones to be a foreshowing of this era of the Holy Spirit (which is that of the Kingdom of God); picturing the startling beginning thereof on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit's age-long work of regeneration and of gathering out of every nation a people for the Name of the Lord, and the glorious consummation thereof in the resurrection of all the redeemed. This view of the prophecy is very satisfying to the enlightened consciousness. At least, this present writer finds it so.

6

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS IN REVELATION 19:10

“**W**hen the seer of Patmos, after hearing a mighty chorus of voices out of heaven as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, *Alleluia: FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH*, was bidden *Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb*, his emotions were so overpowering that he fell at the feet of the bearer of the message to worship him. But the heavenly messenger said: *See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: Worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*” (Revelation 19:9–10).

We take the word prophecy in this saying — not in the narrow sense of the foretelling of future events, but — as embracing all the revelations that God has been pleased to give from time to time by the mouth of all His holy prophets. And we take *The testimony of Jesus* to be — not what the Lord Jesus Himself testified, but — the things which the Father has testified about Him by the mouth of His prophets. John in his first Epistle has a passage of some length, in which he speaks of *the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son* (1 John 5:9) and of *the record that God gave of His Son* (verse 10); the word *witness* in verse 9 and the word *record* in verse 10 being the same that is translated testimony in Revelation 19:10. So we have in John’s Epistle a clear explanation of the phrase *the testimony of Jesus*.

Now among the many things that God hath testified of His Son, the most prominent is that He should reign over the earth (Psalm 2:6–9; 45:6–7, etc.). Moreover, **JESUS** is the name by which He was to reign. It has been well said concerning the prophets:

That in regard to their writings, the spirit of the prophecy cannot be recognized to be the testimony of Jesus, if the KINGSHIP of Christ be not regarded as one main part of that testimony ... It cannot be denied that the prophecies deal very copiously with the subject of the Lord’s Kingly power and righteous moral government of the world; with His sovereignty, not only over the chosen people, but over all the earth, calling the nations to account in virtue of His right as King of kings and Lord of lords, and so ordering the course of His providence toward them as to work out the purposes of His holy and righteous judgments. (*Isaiah’s Testimony for Jesus*, Galloway: Thynne, London)

Immediately following the above quoted words of the angel is the record of a vision in which John saw a white horse and One Who sat thereon, having on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS**. This is identically *The testimony of Jesus* as witnessed by the apostle Paul, who declared Him to be *The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords* (1 Timothy 6:15).

We conclude therefore, that the substance and essence, the central theme of The Testimony of Jesus is His Kingship, which embraces His absolute authority as Sovereign Lord of creation and His almighty power to save. This is the ever recurring theme of The Sure Word of Prophecy. The Messiah was to come for two specific purposes: salvation and judgment. These are diametrically opposite in character, but both are kingly responsibilities and prerogatives. Salvation has precedence in order of

time. Its day is NOW; and, because God is not willing that any should perish, the day of salvation has been prolonged until at last the predicted scoffers are asking derisively, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as from the beginning of the creation (2 Peter 3:3–4). Inasmuch as the second coming of Christ introduces the day of the Lord — the Day of Judgment, that great and terrible day — it is plainly the case, as the apostle declares (verse 15) that the long-suffering of our Lord in deferring that inevitable day, is **SALVATION**.

That which specially characterizes the day of salvation is the presence on earth of the Kingdom of God; which exists for the very purpose of the salvation of sinners from the wrath to come. It is designated more particularly the Kingdom of God's dear Son; which designation shows incidentally that His Kingdom is the fulfillment of Psalm 2:6–7 (as is explicitly declared in Acts 4:25–28); for it is ruled by the Son of God from His Father's throne in heaven, its affairs on earth being administered by the Holy Spirit. This is the time of the fulfillment of the words of David: *The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool ... Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies* (Psalm 110:1–2).

The Kingdom of God is the outstanding and distinctive feature of the day of Salvation. Not only so, but it is the Kingdom of those who are saved, and indeed it exists primarily for their salvation. Those who are saved are in it because they are saved; and conversely they are saved because they are in it. The Kingdom of God is fitly typified by the ark of Noah, whereby all who entered in response to God's *Come thou ...* (Genesis 7:1) were saved (1 Peter 3:20) in order that they might possess the purged earth; while all who remained outside the ark perished. Even so those who enter into the Kingdom of God in response to His gospel invitation, *Come unto Me*, are saved to possess and occupy the new heavens and the new earth, for which the people of God even from Abraham's time were looking (Hebrews 11:16; 2 Peter 3:13). And the gracious invitation of the gospel is more than an invitation. It is a command; for God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent and for the very reason that He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:30–31). God is still saying to perishing souls *Why will ye die?* (Ezekiel 33:11) and *Save yourselves from this untoward generation* (Acts 2:40).

Furthermore, the Kingdom of God is a thing to be preached, that is, its existence here on earth is to be proclaimed and testified to all mankind as God's gracious provision for their immediate salvation and wherein they will be kept by His power, through faith, unto that complete and perfect salvation which is to be revealed at the second coming of Christ (1 Peter 1:5). John the Baptist preached it, our Lord Himself preached it, and His apostles preached it. For it is a fact of vital import to all mankind that the gospel of salvation is The gospel of THE KINGDOM. The gospel of the Kingdom saves perishing men because it makes known the good news that God has brought into existence in this world a Kingdom of His own, whereof His own Son, in resurrection power and glory (Romans 1:4), is the Sovereign Ruler; a Kingdom which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy IN THE HOLY GHOST (Romans 14:17); a Kingdom that God has established and has maintained until now for the shelter and security of repentant and believing sinners. And God has made it an essential part of His plan and has made known by the lips of His Son, that THIS gospel Of THE KINGDOM shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come (Matthew 24:14); that being our Lord's answer to the question of His disciples (verse 3), *What shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the world?*

We do not digress to inquire just what it means to preach the gospel of the Kingdom, or to preach the Kingdom of God. Those phrases are of frequent occurrence in the New Testament Scriptures, and at the cost of a little effort the interested inquirer can gain a sufficient understanding of what is meant thereby. We trust that some light on the subject will come to those who read these pages. But for our immediate purpose it will suffice to say that the quoted phrases signify at least the proclamation, as impressively and insistently as possible, of the real existence of that Kingdom; of its accessibility to all men; of God's gracious purpose in its establishment; of the conditions upon which He gives entrance into it; of the eternal security and blessedness of those who enter; and of the peril of

delay in entering, because of the certainty and imminence of the righteous judgment of God and the condemnation and eternal woe of all who obey not the gospel.

In the light of what has been said above, which is but a fraction of what the Word of God says on the subject, it should be a matter of deep concern to all the people of God that, as the first and foremost of all religious activities wherein they take part or to which they give aid, this gospel of the Kingdom should be unceasingly preached; and that, however other enterprises may fare, there should be no abatement of the preaching of this gospel of the Kingdom. Probably the most definite promise of the Kingdom preached by Christ and His apostles is that in Daniel 2:44. The interpretation is made easier and surer by the setting in which the prophecy occurs. For it is found in Daniel's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image, which, as interpreted by the prophet, symbolized the four empires that were successively to rule the world; the Babylonian empire being the first. Thus the vision was of worldwide scope. Concerning Nebuchadnezzar's own empire Daniel said: "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: For the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them" (verses 37-38). Then after giving an outline of each of the four empires, the prophet says:

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a Kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the Kingdom shall not be left to other people, and it shall stand forever" (verse 44).

These words have their clear fulfillment in the Kingdom announced by John the Baptist and preached by Christ and His apostles, and they indicate also the source of the name used in Matthew's Gospel, The Kingdom of heaven. For the Jews, for whom Matthew specially wrote, would naturally connect that name with the Kingdom foretold by Daniel, which was to be established by The God of heaven; for Daniel's prophecies were closely studied and often cited by their teachers. The precise wording should be noted. The prophet does not say that the Kingdom, which the God of heaven was to set up should be established by or upon the overthrow of the fourth empire and be its successor; but that it should be set up in the days of those kings (kingdoms). The words are in complete agreement with the historical fact that God did, in the days of those kingdoms, set up a Kingdom, of heavenly character by the agency of the Holy Spirit and through the instrumentality of the gospel of the Kingdom.

Further the prophecy declares that the Kingdom which the God of heaven should set up would break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever, which words clearly foretell an extended era during which the breaking in pieces and the consumption of the kingdoms of this world should be in progress. This is in agreement with the historical fact that, from the downfall of the Roman Empire (in the days of which the Kingdom of God was set up), the history of the world has been marked by the disintegration and the consumption of kingdoms, great and small; and there is seemingly no power inherent in civilization to arrest the process. Two of the statements of the prophecy invite specific comment:

First, that the Kingdom which the God of heaven would set up should never be destroyed. This statement has special point for the reason that God had once before established a kingdom, that of Israel, giving them laws and ordinances and giving them also, at their own desire, a king. But that kingdom was to be destroyed by His own decree when the limit of His longsuffering goodness should be reached. So shall it not be with the Kingdom of God. That Kingdom shall never be destroyed.

Second, that the Kingdom to be set up by the God of heaven should always be possessed by the same people. Some might surmise, in view of what happened to Israel, that God might sometime bring the predicted Kingdom likewise to an end. That the Kingdom should never be destroyed was plainly declared by the words just quoted; but might it not be taken from the people to whom it was first given; even as it had been taken from the apostate people of Israel and bestowed on another people? We recall the Lord's words spoken to the leaders of the Jewish people on the occasion of His last

visit to Jerusalem, when, after referring in a parable to their rejection of Himself, He said: "Therefore say I unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43). But that this will not happen again we are assured by the words of the prophecy: And the Kingdom shall not be left to another people. Other features of this prophecy will be discussed in a later chapter.

There is little room for uncertainty as to the identity of that nation to which, according to the above quoted words of Christ, the Kingdom of God was given; for the fact that those who obey the gospel of Christ and are subject to the law of Christ constitute the Kingdom of God is made very prominent in the New Testament. It is appropriate to quote at this point the words of Peter, written to those who were born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible (1 Peter 1:23) to whom he said: Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood (or kingdom of priests), AN HOLY NATION, a peculiar people (1 Peter 2:9). Here is the Nation to which the Kingdom has been given for an everlasting possession.

That this passage is of fundamental importance may be clearly seen in the light of the fact that the threefold promise of the above quoted words was first made, upon express conditions however, to that people which God had redeemed out of the darkness and the bondage of Egypt. It is specially to be noted that the promise to them, that they should be to God a people peculiarly His own, and a kingdom of priests and an holy nation, was made upon the express conditions of obedience and fidelity, to which conditions they all assented. This will be set forth fully in the following pages.

The Place God Has Assigned To His Kingdom

It is recorded in Luke 16 a saying of our Lord which clearly fixes the place of the Kingdom of God in His plans and dispensations for the world. Let us note carefully the words:

The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail (Luke 16:16-17).

Two dispensations are here named: The law and the prophets and the Kingdom of God. And these are definitely located historically and relatively to each other. For it is distinctly stated that the Kingdom of God began just where the era of the law and the prophets ended, at the unique ministry of John the Baptist. The coming of that prophet, which was foretold by the last of the Old Testament prophets (Malachi 4:5-6) is thus a great historical landmark; and here it should be noted that the appearance of John in his appointed role of The voice of one crying in the wilderness, is the only dated event in the New Testament (Luke 3:1); and moreover, that this date is given with a precision and a particularity that do not characterize any other date in the Bible itself, or in any of the chronicles of antiquity. Surely these facts bear clear and strong evidence to the very great importance in the eyes of God of the beginning of His Kingdom in the world.

The phrase the law and the prophets was in current use among the Jews, being the expression whereby they commonly designated the Mosaic dispensation. The above quoted words of Christ declare that the era of the law and the prophets existed until John, and that it was then displaced by the Kingdom of God, the advent of which was the essence of John's proclamation. In complete agreement with this is the first verse of Mark's Gospel: The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; this beginning of the gospel era being here also connected with, and its place in history fixed by, the ministry of John. For the next verses read: *As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.* And at verse 14 we read: *Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*

These words of our Lord make known that the advent of the Kingdom of God was an event whereof the time had been prefixed in God's program. Those words also make known that the event was one whereof the time had been indicated in the prophetic Scriptures and therefore was one the people would be expecting. And such indeed was the case; for the Book of Daniel, which foretold in Chapter 2 that the God of heaven would, in the days of the fourth world empire, set up a Kingdom which should never be destroyed, gave in Chapter 9 the precise measure of time from the first year of the (then future) Persian empire unto Messiah the Prince (verse 25). We are warranted therefore in understanding that the period of 483 years there mentioned was the time whereof the fulfillment was publicly announced by no less a person than Messiah the Prince Himself.

But there is more to be learned concerning this Kingdom of God from the last quoted passage in Luke than the fact that its era dates from the ministry of John. Its announced relation to the law and the prophets is highly important. That was, as already stated, the common designation of that divinely given system of government under which the people had subsisted from the birth of their nation. No other nation, before or since, had had such an origin or such a governmental system. The ten words, engraved by the finger of God upon tablets of stone, constituted the basic or organic law of that nation. And God gave them additionally His statutes and judgments (Deuteronomy 4:1, 6, 8; etc.) whereby they were to regulate their relations and their dealings, first with Himself, then with each other, and lastly with the heathen. He also sent them messages on special subjects at various times by His servants the prophets. Truly as saith the Psalmist, He hath not dealt so with any nation (Psalm 147:20). But now the awful end, of which God had faithfully warned them countless times by His prophets, had come. But not as though the Word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all ISRAEL, which are of Israel (Romans 9:6). Israel was indeed an apostate and rebellious people. Their history had been one long career of stubbornness and rebellion from the days of Moses to the days of Christ. Stephen in his dying message to that people, after rapidly sketching their history of treachery and apostasy, summed it up in a few blistering sentences.

“Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before the coming of the Just One; of Whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers; who received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it” (Acts 7:51–53).

But there is nevertheless a bright lining to the dark cloud of Israel's apostasy. True, Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it (Romans 11:7). What Israel was seeking for and was vainly confident of inheriting in virtue of their natural descent from Abraham, was the Kingdom of the Messiah, the Kingdom of God. They did not obtain it. But God's purpose was not frustrated nor was His Kingdom “postponed” to a future day when the Jews might be (perhaps) more amenable to His plans. No, The election hath obtained it and the rest were blinded.

It was given to the apostle to the Gentiles to make known, and he has done so in his Epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians, that, according to the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, not all the natural descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were to be embraced in the Israel of God's purpose, which he expressly calls The Israel of God (Galatians 6:16); but that only a remnant were to have part in the real Israel. This the apostle tersely announces in the words, For they are not all ISRAEL which are of Israel. Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham (his natural descendants) are they all CHILDREN (Romans 9:6–7). In other words, natural descent from Abraham availed nothing for those who walked not in the steps of the faith of Abraham (4:12); and as establishing the general principle of election, the apostle cites the fact that, of all Abraham's descendants, only Isaac's seed were chosen and of his two sons, Esau and all his offspring were rejected. And what emerges from the whole teaching of Scripture on this subject is that: **They which are the children of the flesh, these are NOT THE CHILDREN OF GOD, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed (Romans 9:8)**. And the conclusion is plainly drawn in Galatians 4:28: Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise, those brethren being Gentile Christians, but

being, as Isaac was, supernaturally born. For we must not lose sight of the vitally important fact that entrance into the Kingdom of God is solely by the new birth (John 3:3, 5).

And here it should be observed that, as regards entrance into the Kingdom of God, the teaching received by the Jews from their rabbis embodied two errors that were of capital importance: **first**, they were taught that all Israelites were assured of entrance and citizenship in virtue of their natural descent from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; **second**, that all Gentiles were excluded. These things which pertain to the Kingdom of God are manifestly inapplicable to the Church of Christ. For the Church is not preached; men do not press into it; one does not enter it by the new birth; it was not promised to the children of Abraham. Therefore we ask, **Is it not very desirable, to say the least, that these distinctions, so clearly marked in the Scriptures, should be observed and not obliterated or confused by applying the name Church to that which the Bible consistently calls The Kingdom of God?**

7

PREACHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Having noted the place given to the Kingdom of God in the ministry of Christ, we turn now to the Acts of the Apostles for the purpose mainly of observing the place and prominence given to that subject in the preaching and teaching of His apostles. That book contains the inspired history of the activities of the Holy Spirit in His personal administration and supervision of the work of the Lord for a space of about thirty years, beginning with Peter's proclamation of the Kingship of Christ at Jerusalem and ending with an account of Paul's preaching and teaching in the imperial city of Rome. It will be instructive, therefore, to note the attention given in that book to the subject of the Kingdom of God in comparison with the place given therein to the Church of Christ. Briefly the facts in this regard are that whereas, on the one hand, the subject of the Kingdom of God and its extension throughout the world is the prominent theme of the entire book of Acts, there is, on the other hand, not so much as a remote allusion to that Church which our Lord declared His intention to build in the then indefinite future.

But more than that; the significance of this striking contrast between the prominence of the Kingdom of God throughout the book of the Acts and the complete silence of that book in respect to the Church whereof our Lord was to be the Builder, is enhanced by the further fact that frequent reference is made to local churches, the existence of which in the world was clearly implied in the words of Christ recorded in Matthew 18:17. For it is made evident that wherever the gospel was preached in various localities, beginning at Jerusalem, local assemblies of believers in Jesus Christ came into existence, which assemblies were from the very first designated churches. It is a notable fact that the Greek *ἐκκλησία* — *ekklesia*, and not the Jewish synagogue, was taken as the model for the Christian assemblies, and that even the name of the former was adopted for them and by Christ Himself.

If therefore we had only the book of the Acts to enlighten us, we should most assuredly gather from its testimony that God has established in the world, for the accomplishment of His declared purpose in this dispensation, two distinct institutions: first, the Kingdom of God, which embraces in its wide domain all the saved men and women that are in the world at any one time; second, the local church, which is the assembly of God's people in a particular place (1 Corinthians 11:18; 14:23), where the Spirit presides and where He distributes gifts of ministry for the edification and comfort of the people (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). And further we should be forced to the conclusion that the word *church*, in its earthly and temporal meaning, is confined strictly to a company of believers who meet together at stated times in a certain place. For when reference is made in the book of the Acts to aggregates of Christians dwelling in several localities, they are referred to always as churches, never as a church. Thus we read: Then had the churches rest (Acts 9:31); Confirming the churches (Acts 15:41); so were the churches established (Acts 16:5).

Thus the book of the Acts, which records the activities of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the gospel era, testifies plainly that, during the entire period covered by that book, Christians and Christian communities adhered without deviation to the usage of the word church which was established by the Lord Himself, as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. Moreover, as will be shown later on, the other books of the New Testament bear witness to the continuance of that usage up to the time when

the last of them was written. Our Lord's own estimate of the importance of the Kingdom of God for the accomplishment of His work in this dispensation of grace is clearly certified by the brief account in the first chapter of Acts of the instructions He gave to His disciples during the forty days following His resurrection. It appears thereby that those instructions related chiefly, if not entirely to the Kingdom of God. The writer (Luke) after referring to the former treatise (his Gospel) which he had written concerning what the Lord had begun to do and teach until He ascended up into heaven, after that He through the Holy Ghost had given commandment unto the apostles whom He had chosen, goes on to say that the Lord also showed Himself alive to the apostles after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days and speaking of **THE THINGS PERTAINING TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

Our Lord's instructions to His disciples at that particular time would, of course, be concerned with that which was thenceforth to be their chief occupation and the occupation of all His servants till the consummation of the age. Hence the passage makes very plain that, from the moment the disciples should be endued with power from on high, by the coming of the Holy Ghost upon them (Acts 1:8), they were to be occupied with *the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.* And it seems hardly necessary to add that those instructions of our Lord and Master hold good to the present time and therefore the subject of the Kingdom of God, which was of prime importance in our Lord's mind at that momentous epoch, should likewise be the chief concern throughout this era of all those for whose salvation He died and rose again. The lesson taught by this passage is the more impressive because of the fact, which the passage itself records, that the apostles were occupied at the time with thoughts concerning a very different kingdom from that into which they were soon to be inducted. For we read that *they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel? And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power* (verses 6–7).

These words of our Lord are not to be taken as implying that at some time in the far distant future it would be permissible and appropriate for His followers to occupy themselves with times and seasons respecting such matters as the hopes of earthly dominion that have ever been cherished by the Jewish people. Much less are they to be taken as implying that, in some future day a renewed national existence is to be given to Israel after the flesh. The proper effect of those words is to prohibit the disciples of Christ all inquiry and speculation concerning *times and seasons.* For times and seasons pertain to earthly changes, and it is the express will of our Lord that His people are not to be "looking after those things that are coming to pass on the earth," but *looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God even our Saviour Jesus Christ* (Titus 2:13); for they all are *turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven* (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10).

Yet, notwithstanding the Lord's plain prohibition for His people of occupation with times and seasons, there has always been on the part of many of them a craving for inquiries and speculations of that nature. And never has that tendency been so much in evidence as in recent times. The subject of *times and seasons* seems to be invested with a peculiarly alluring fascination; and especially so when the times and seasons in question have to do with Israel after the flesh. It is safe to say that at many Bible Conferences of our day far more attention is given to that conjectural "kingdom," which engrossed the thoughts of Christ's disciples during those forty days, than to that other and very different Kingdom to which He was directing their minds. Brethren, these things ought not so to be. At all events, the disciples gave heed to His words; for there is not on record thereafter so much as one syllable from any of them touching the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel.

Having now observed the conspicuous place given at the very beginning of the book of the Acts and by our Lord Himself to the Kingdom of God, let us note also the place given to it at the very end of the book. It closes with a brief account of the ministry of the apostle Paul at the capital city of the world, the very last words being: *Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came unto him, PREACHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD and teaching those things which concern*

the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him (Acts 28:30–31). Here we have the apostle's *preaching* and *teaching*. The emphasized words supply the heading we have chosen for this chapter of our book. It is a striking expression, and we shall be well repaid for all the time and effort we may expend in seeking to understand just what it is to preach the Kingdom of God. When one hears and thoughtfully considers that expression he would naturally ask first: "How can a Kingdom be preached?" and second: "What sort of a Kingdom was it that Paul preached during those years at Rome?"

Our purpose in raising these questions and in seeking a Scriptural answer to them is not the mere gratifying of curiosity, though in this case the curiosity would be laudable; but it has a practical aim. It is prompted by the reasonable assumption that, if the servants of Christ in our day were to preach what Paul preached, and in the power of the Spirit, Whose presence with the people of God our Lord has pledged to the end of the age (John 14:16), the results of their preaching would be comparable to those that everywhere attended the preaching of that apostle. And our assumption is fortified by another which is equally reasonable, namely, that if the preaching of the Kingdom of God has indeed become virtually obsolete in our day, as to which let the reader judge, then we need look no further for an explanation of the paucity of the results of all the elocutionary efforts that nowadays go under the phrase *preaching the gospel*.

It will be recalled that the apostle had written the Christian community at Rome sometime previously, stating he longed to see them and was ready, to the utmost of his ability, to preach the gospel to those at Rome also (Romans 1:11, 15); and in that letter he declared himself to be a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, *Separated unto the gospel of God ... concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power — that is, with powerful emphasis — by the resurrection from the dead* (Romans 1:4).

Within the compass of the Epistle to the Romans are to be found clear and satisfactory answers to the questions proposed above. But it will be of assistance to the interested reader to have in mind, while seeking those answers, a general idea at least of what is meant by such phrases as *preaching the Kingdom of God* (Mark 1:14; Luke 4:43; Acts 28:31, etc.), *the word of the Kingdom* (Matthew 13:19); *testified the Kingdom of God* (Acts 28:23), and the like; which terms are used to describe the activities of our Lord Himself and those of His servants. What is chiefly to be learned from those expressions and what will be of assistance at this stage of our inquiry, is that our Lord and His servants occupied themselves in making known to all men everywhere the existence of the Kingdom of God in the world at this present time; that being, amongst all the things that are of interest to the children of men, by far the most important. That the Almighty God has a Kingdom now on earth, which, though unseen (for it *cometh not with observation*) is none the less real, is of paramount interest to all men, and to one as much as to another. Because of the nature of that Kingdom, it being not visible to the natural eye but realized only by faith, it must needs be made known by preaching; that is, by the oral testimony of competent and fully qualified witnesses, who have personal knowledge of its existence, its constitution, its laws, and especially of the benefits enjoyed by its citizens and how one may gain admission thereto.

When one has obtained but a faint comprehension of what the Kingdom of God is as portrayed in the New Testament, he will realize that the proclamation of its existence and its nature is beyond all comparison the most vitally important communication ever given to the people of the world; far more so even than the commandments, statutes and judgments promulgated at Mount Sinai; and he will realize also that it is a proclamation's gospel indeed — which could not possibly have been conceived by the imagination of man. Therefore our Lord declared that John the Baptist, the herald of that Kingdom, was *more than a prophet*; and therefore also He immediately added, *Notwithstanding, he that is least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he* (Matthew 11:9, 11). It was the intrinsic value of what John preached that made him the greatest of the prophets; and that also is what made Paul's preaching the greatest of human instrumentalities in the transformation of individuals and communities from the beginning of the world.

It only remains to say that that subject — the Kingdom of God, now existing on earth — has lost none of the favor it had with God at the first and none of the interest it had for men. Where then are those in our day who will address themselves to the carrying on of Paul's unfinished business — preaching the Kingdom of God? For the message that gave to this day of salvation its glorious beginning must be the means also whereby it will be brought to a yet more glorious ending.

The matters brought under consideration in this chapter have special claim upon the attention of those who serve the Lord in preaching the gospel and in instructing His people concerning the things that pertain to their most holy faith. Each servant of Christ who is thus occupied must needs be equipped with a scheme of what might be called "working truths," that is to say, truths which he uses constantly, both in public ministry and also in dealing privately with individuals who are seeking the knowledge of God. These "working truths" are easily distinguished from the minister's fund of doctrines that are largely of an intellectual, theological or speculative sort, which Abraham Kuyper terms "a collection of formal and doctrinal expositions."

The writer believes that, with many of these servants of Christ, there is need of a radical rearrangement of his scheme of "working truths," such as will bring the Kingdom of God into that prominent and central position which it occupied in the ministry of our Lord and His apostles; and that, when this is done, other related truths will find their proper positions, and a long step will have been taken towards a realization of fruitage from their labors comparable to what resulted from the ministry of Paul.

8

THE KINGDOM OF GOD:**WHAT IT IS AND IS NOT**

The apostle Paul has given in a few words a comprehensive definition of the Kingdom of God: For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink: but righteousness and peace and joy **IN THE HOLY GHOST** (Romans 14:17), is essentially different; not eating and drinking and joy in Israel, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Before looking further into this definition of the Kingdom of God, from which there is much to be learned, we would remind ourselves that the apostle's definition of the Kingdom is not a part of the proclamation thereof. That definition was written for the instruction of (even as these pages are intended for perusal by) those who were already the children of the Kingdom, having been regenerated by the Spirit of God, and translated by God the Father into the Kingdom of His dear Son. What is to be preached and testified concerning the Kingdom of God to them that are without is a different matter. To them the Kingdom of God is presented as an ark of salvation wherein they may be sheltered from the approaching floods of judgment: as a city of refuge, to which the guilty may flee for safety from the pursuing avenger of blood; and its King is presented, as on the first page of the New Testament, as the One to Whom the Name JESUS — *Jehovah saves* — was to be given, for the express reason that He should save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). And here we have a feature of the Kingdom of God which distinguishes it in the most radical way from all other kingdoms: Its citizens are one and all, **SAVED FROM THEIR SINS**.

Continuing now for a little our quest for information as to just what that Kingdom is, into which we have been admitted through the door of the new birth, we note that our Lord, in His Sermon on the Mount, in which He taught His disciples the laws of God's Kingdom (Matthew 5:1-2), emphasized, as His servant Paul afterwards did, that the Kingdom of God was not established for the purpose of meeting temporal needs or for solving the ever-pressing problem of the many, "What shall we eat and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Such anxieties are banished from the thoughts of the citizens of that Kingdom through the revelation, given by the Son of God Himself, that they have a Father in heaven; and therefore they are to take no thought, that is, to be not anxious, for the future, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? Or wherewithal shall we be clothed? And here is the reason in our Lord's own words: For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:25-33). It is worthy of note, and to this we expect to return, that in these words of the Savior, as in Paul's definition, the most prominent characteristic of the Kingdom of God is righteousness.

In considering these words of our Lord and in applying them to ourselves, proper allowance must be made for the great difference between the antecedents and the circumstances of those first disciples of Christ and our own antecedents and circumstances. They were truly His disciples, for they voluntarily came to Him and listened to His words. But even those among them who had attained to a saving knowledge of Christ were still imbued with the false doctrines and expectations inculcated by the teachers of the Jews, the essence of which was that, in the days of Messiah's Kingdom, the Jewish nation was to be exalted to the place of supremacy over the nations of the world. Hence it was

most needful for them that the truth be impressed upon them first of all that — not eating and drinking, but — God’s righteousness was the prominent characteristic of His Kingdom, the first thing to be sought by, and the first thing bestowed upon, those who enter that Kingdom.

In the Scriptures just cited, the contrasted kingdoms are, according to a familiar figure of speech, identified each with its leading characteristics. One is meat and drink; that is, it gives prominence to an abundance of good things to eat and drink in the future land of promise. The other is righteousness, peace and joy; that is, it gives prominence to the righteousness that eventuates in peace with God and joy in the Holy Spirit. But the Epistle to the Romans presents another impressive contrast between kingdoms that exercise dominion over human beings, and this contrast we will briefly consider before pursuing the subject of what God’s Kingdom is.

Two Spiritual Kingdoms Of Opposite Character

In the fifth and sixth chapters of Romans we read of two kingdoms or dominions now existing in the world. Both are spiritual in their nature; but they differ, the one from the other, as light from dark”, and biologists assign Man to that kingdom. This classification would be correct if man were but a physical being; and moreover, it is a convenience for the purpose of distinguishing human beings from the members of the vegetable kingdom, to classify him as an animal. But the fact that human science has come to regard Man as merely one of many species of animals and even, according to the degrading theory of organic evolution, as but a higher development of the genus of “anthropoids”, making him a near kin of the gorilla and the chimpanzee, bears striking testimony to the great distance the human race has fallen from the knowledge of its high origin and of the original likeness of Man to his Creator. To have succeeded in bringing about the acceptance of the Darwinian theory by multitudes of the most cultured and highly educated among the Christianized nations of the world, must be counted among the greatest triumphs of that great being whom the Scripture stigmatizes as a liar from the beginning.

This much will suffice, however, of that subject to, serve as an introduction to what we wish to assert under this section; namely, that the right classification of Man, according to what he was in the day of his creation in Adam, places him — not in the kingdom of the brutes, but — in the Kingdom of God; and further that the immediate effect of his recreation in the Man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5) Whom God raised from the dead, is to restore him to his original place in that heavenly Kingdom. This means primarily that those who, by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, have been made new creatures in Him, now enjoy the protection and favor of the Almighty God and also the high privilege of doing His blessed will through obedience to the law of Christ. The truth in this regard, as revealed in the Word of God, may be concisely summed up by saying that even as the fall of Adam brought his entire family, the whole human race, into the dominion of sin and death, so likewise the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead brought His entire family, the whole company of the redeemed, into the Kingdom of God. Every kingdom has its distinct system of law. This is as true in nature as amongst the nations of human beings. The “animal kingdom” has its laws, which all animals obey; and so with the “vegetable kingdom” and with the “mineral kingdom” also.

Man, being a spiritual being, requires, for the proper regulation of his behavior, laws of a spiritual nature. Even in his unfallen state in Eden he was subject to the commandments of God. But there is a radical difference between the kind of obedience which God requires of Man and that He demands and receives of others of His creatures. The latter render compulsory obedience, which in animals and vegetables is instinctive. Those creatures obey each the law of its being very much as a machine runs, and must run, according to the predetermined will of its maker; for the law that controls its operation is embodied in its structure. But the obedience required of man by his Creator is willing obedience (Psalm 110:3; Isaiah 1:19). Man differs from the rest of the animate creation most radically in this, that God has endowed him with intelligence whereby to understand His will and has also given him the power of choice, to obey or to disobey. None of the brutes has the least trace of either of those endowments. It is perhaps the deepest mystery of our being that God, in creating Man in His own im-

age, made room for the free exercise of the human will within the compass of His own irresistible will, while at the same time so overruling the will of the creature that even the most wicked exercises thereof do but eventuate in the accomplishment of His own purpose.

The most conspicuous illustration of this great truth is that outstanding exercise of the lawless and rebellious will of man which brought about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In that unparalleled act, all sorts and conditions of men in effect participated. For truly the kings of the earth (Herod and Pontius Pilate) did set themselves, and the rulers (the chief priests and members of the Sanhedrin) with the peoples of the earth (Jews, Greeks and Romans) did confederate together against the LORD and against His Christ; even as David had prophesied (Psalm 2:1–3). Those confederates, mad with satanic rage, were left free from all restraint and divine intervention, though that Anointed One might have summoned twelve legions of God's mighty angels to deliver Him out of their hands (Matthew 26:53). Yet what that great aggregation against God's Holy Child Jesus Whom God had anointed, succeeded in accomplishing, was precisely what God's counsel had determined before to be done (Acts 4:25–28).

The laws of God which the brutes instinctively obey are all for their well being and for the perpetuation of their kind. Likewise the laws which God has given to His intelligent human creatures are for their benefit. An intelligent and fair-minded unbeliever would not dispute this. Therefore the perversion of the character of man that sin has wrought is plainly to be seen in the anomaly that men habitually do things contrary to the commandments of God though they know from experience the ruinous consequences thereof. The law of the Kingdom of God is *the law of Christ*, the King (Galatians 6:2). It is also called *the law of the Spirit* (Romans 8:2), the Holy Spirit being the Administrator on earth of the affairs of that Kingdom, the One by Whom all who enter it are regenerated, by Whom they are guided and taught, and in Whom they live and walk and overcome the desires of the flesh (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:16–18, 25). It is also called *the perfect law* and *the law of liberty* (James 1:25; 2:12) because the Spirit is the vital atmosphere, so to speak, of that Kingdom, *and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty* (2 Corinthians 3:17). It is the law of liberty for the further reason that they whose high privilege it is to obey the law of Christ are under no compulsion save that of love; even as Christ Himself has said: *IF YE LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS* (John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10).

We purpose to return later on to the subject of the law of God's Kingdom. Here we wish to speak of the two spiritual kingdoms of opposite character to which reference is made in the Epistle to the Romans 5, to one or the other of which every living member of Adam's race is in subjection. In the first five verses of Romans 5, we find the truth upon which Paul's definition of the Kingdom of God, which we have quoted above, is based. Chapters 3 and 4 set forth the great doctrine of justification by the grace of God through faith; to wit, that *the righteousness of God, by faith of Jesus Christ is (offered) unto all and is upon all them that believe* (3:22); that believers are *justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, in order that God might be just and the justifier of him Who believeth in Jesus* (3:24–26); that *a man is justified by faith without the works of the law* (3:28); that *to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness* (4:5); that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness while he was yet uncircumcised, *that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised* (4:9–11); that *the promise That he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith* (4:13); that justification is *of faith that it might be by grace — i.e., without works or merit on the part of those whom God justifies — to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed*; and finally that it was not written for Abraham's sake alone that his faith was imputed to him for righteousness, *but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him Who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up (to the executioners) for our offences and was raised again for our justification, i.e., in order that we might be declared righteous* (4:23–25).

It may be necessary to recall for the benefit of some readers that to justify is to make just or righteous; and that justification means that act of God whereby He, upon the righteous and amply sufficient ground of the sacrificial death of His Son, declares righteous (or just) all who believe on Jesus

Christ as having died for their sins and having been raised again for their justification. This brings us to Chapter 5 where Paul, in the first five verses, sets forth the blessed consequences of Christ's death and resurrection to all who believe on Him, that is, to all who have been justified by faith. He says that, being possessors, by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, of the **RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD**, We have **PEACE** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by Whom also we **REJOICE** in hope ... because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by **THE HOLY GHOST** Who is given unto us; and at verse 11, without a break in the thread of his subject, he adds: And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the atonement.

Here then is God's own answer to Job's famous question, How can a man be righteous with God. And here also is the fulfillment of God's promise concerning the blessed inhabitants of Zion, given through the word of His prophet: Thy people also shall be all righteous (Isaiah 60:21). And here we have likewise the description of the blessings possessed by all citizens of God's Kingdom: righteousness and peace and joy, in the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17). We observe in passing another blessed trio in this great passage (Romans 5:1-5) in addition to that with which we are specially engaged (righteousness, peace and joy). For mention is also made in these verses of the three heavenly things that shall abide when prophecies fail, when miraculous tongues shall cease and when knowledge shall vanish away — **FAITH**, **HOPE** and **LOVE** (1 Corinthians 13:13). So we find these three expressly named among the foundation things of God's Kingdom, as set forth in Romans 5; and, moreover, we find them here in the same order as in the well known passage in 1 Corinthians 13. For we read that, being justified by **FAITH** ... we rejoice in **HOPE** which maketh not ashamed because the **LOVE** of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, Who is given unto us.

The greatest of these is **LOVE**. Accordingly it is most appropriately declared in this connection that God commendeth His own love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (5:8). Wondrous revelation! Far indeed beyond the grasp of our comprehension; yet we can receive and believe and rejoice in it. And we are able also to follow the apostle's reasoning whereby, from this revelation of that which moved the heart of God in giving His own Son to die for the sin of the world, he deduces that if while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, then much more, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him (5:9). This should afford strong consolation to every believing heart and banish all and every sort of apprehension as to the future. But God would have our assurance made doubly sure as to this; and therefore He inspired His servant to give yet another convincing reason, in these words: For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (verse 10).

Knowing therefore the efficacy of the blood of Christ as the divinely provided basis for the reconciliation to God of every believing sinner (Romans 3:25; Colossians 1:20), we can appreciate the force of the apostle's argument that God, having reconciled us to Himself while we were aliens and enemies in our minds through wicked works (Colossians 1:21), could not conceivably fail to save us from the coming wrath, seeing that now we are no longer enemies but have been (past perfect tense) reconciled to Himself.

The apostle urges a like argument in Romans 8, where he encourages the saints to perseverance and confident assurance despite all obstacles and adversities by saying: He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32). And the strength of the argument is greatly augmented by the consideration that, whereas it was the death of Christ that was instrumental in effecting our reconciliation to God, it is by His life that our eternal salvation is assured (Romans 5:10).

Death Reigned: Sin Hath Reigned Unto Death

We come now to the first of those great spiritual kingdoms or dominions that form the subject of this section of our work — the kingdom of **SIN** and its co-reign, **DEATH**. Sin was not indigenous to this world; for at the creation and during the first days of the world's existence, everything in it was

very good. Sin is an intruder. At first it was outside. But on an occasion, briefly recorded in Genesis 3:1–6, Sin entered into the world, and death by sin (Romans 5:12). Sin's entrance was effected through Adam's betrayal of the trust that God had reposed in him as the responsible head of His perfect creation. By one man — not, be it noted, by one woman — sin entered into the world. The consequence was that death passed upon all men, for that all has sinned. And thus was established a dominion, to which the whole human race was in subjection, a dominion wherein death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression (Romans 5:14) and wherein sin hath reigned unto death (verse 21).

Nor did Moses, through whom the law entered (verse 20) effect any curtailment of the dominion of sin and death; though Moses was mighty in words and in deeds (Acts 7:22). On the contrary, the law entered that sin might abound. The dominion of sin is referred to in Romans 6:14 and the dominion of death in Romans 6:9. Thus, although the purpose of God in the creation of man was that he should have dominion ... over all the earth and over every creature in earth, sea and air (Genesis 1:26), yet through one man's disobedience the whole race became the bond slaves of sin (Romans 6:17, 20, etc.) Sin reigned unto death over each and all. And so it would have been to the end. But how then should the declared purpose of God be fulfilled, so definitely expressed in the words: Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion ...? The answer of the Word of God to this question is that His purpose concerning man was to be fulfilled, yea is now being fulfilled, in a second Man, a last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47). Our passage indicates how the dominion of sin and death has been already broken and is ultimately to be destroyed. That was what the law could not do (Romans 8:3). It was powerless to deliver a single soul from death's dominion, being weak through the flesh. But here we read that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath **NO MORE DOMINION OVER HIM** (Romans 6:9).

Let us intently contemplate, with the eyes of our hearts wide open, the astounding and unspeakably blessed state of things which these few words reveal. For here we have the gospel of the Kingdom, the gospel of God concerning His Son, to which the apostle had been separated! In the first place, what this Scripture (Romans 6:9) proclaims is that death's dominion, which had been established upon all men (5:12) has been broken, broken by a Man, by the Son of God Who became man for this very purpose; and that it has been broken beyond repair; for death hath no more dominion over Him. Here is a truth, so immense in itself and so immeasurably great in its consequences that we need, in order to apprehend it, not only the utmost stretch of our spiritual understanding, but also the special aid and illumination of the Spirit of Truth; Whose ministry, as we gladly recall, includes the taking of the things that pertain to our risen Lord and showing it unto us (John 16:14).

This breaking of death's dominion over mankind would have been an astounding manifestation of the power of God even if it had affected Jesus Christ alone; for in His resurrection from the dead was displayed a power greater than the might of death itself. For God here displayed a power that was able not only to resist, but actually to reverse, the current that for four thousand years had been sweeping the members of Adam's race out of the realm of life and light into that of death and darkness. This was not the case of a man who, like Enoch, did not die, but the far different case of One Who died and rose again. This, considered in itself alone, is incomparably the most stupendous happening in the annals of the human race.

But this mighty work of Omnipotence is even greater in its consequences than in itself. For the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was the beginning of the **NEW CREATION OF GOD**, which will have its culmination in the New Heavens and New Earth where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain (Revelation 21:4). For the blessed truth, here revealed and confirmed by other Scriptures, and which constitutes the very essence of the gospel of God concerning His Son, is that even as Adam's sin and death involved all who were created in Adam (that is, the entire human race) so likewise the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead involves all who are re-created in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:10). The effect of Christ's resurrection in bringing into being a new race of men is in itself a subject so vast that we can here

make but the briefest reference to it. So we confine ourselves to the remark that the truth in this connection is clearly and concisely stated in these words: For as in Adam all die; even so in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22); and that it is also set forth in that part of Romans which we are now studying, particularly in Chapter 5:12–6:14.

What we would specially bring to the reader's attention is the revelation in these Scriptures of the existence of two distinct humanities; that of the first man, who sinned and died, thereby bringing every member of his family into the dominion of sin and death; and that of the Second Man, the Last Adam, Who Died unto sin once and is risen from the dead, bringing all who are in Him into newness of life. Therefore the truly vital question for every reader and for every human being is: To which of these human families do I belong? Am I in Adam, or in Christ?

It is declared in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation (for so the word here translated creature is usually rendered and so it should be rendered here). Hence it is properly the first concern of every man to know whether his permanent place is in the old creation or in the new. Leaving that question, which is for the individual, we would point out as a matter of interest to all who are in Christ that, whereas the old creation began with the heavens and the earth and culminated in the creation of man, the order is reversed in the new creation, which began with the resurrection of the New Man from the dead and culminates in the new heavens and new earth.

Under Grace

Continuing to trace the subject of the Kingdom as presented in this part of the Epistle to the Romans; having noted that the dominion of death was broken by the resurrection of Christ from the dead (6:9) we further note the important statement of verse 14 (which is also a promise) For SIN shall not have DOMINION over you; for ye are not under the law but under grace. The preceding verses (6–13) declare the emancipation from sin's dominion of all who are in Christ Jesus, this being brought about by their participation in His death and resurrection. For how shall we that died to sin live any longer therein? Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin — that is, as a bond slave serves his master — For he that died has been freed from sin (6:6–7; we give the tenses of the verbs as they stand in the original). Death severs the bond between a master and his slave; and inasmuch as the death of Jesus Christ, the new Man, the last Adam, is attributed to, and its benefits are shared by, all who are His, they all are emancipated through His death from the dominion of sin.

God has declared this great truth for the hearing and acceptance of faith. Hence the exhortation that goes with it: Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof ... For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace (6:12, 14). To be under grace is to be in the Kingdom of God; that being the second of the contrasted spiritual kingdoms that we proposed to consider in this part of our study. In the passage before us the Kingdom of God is identified by its distinctive character of Grace and is referred to as the domain wherein Grace reigns. The close association of law and grace in this passage of Romans reminds us of the sententious declaration in the first chapter of John's Gospel: For the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

In Romans 5 the apostle speaks of our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand (verse 2), which indicates that those who have been justified by faith and reconciled to God by the death of His Son, have a new standing before God. The word grace is used a number of times in this chapter, but it is enough for our immediate purpose to quote from verses 20–21: Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. Probably we have gained by our experience in this life a sufficiently clear idea of the reign of sin; how absolute, how despotic, how well-nigh universal its sway; and thereby we may form an idea of the absolute character, the irresistible power of the reign of grace; for the last quoted verse presents a comparison: As sin hath reigned ... even so shall

grace reign. The potency of grace is in fact the power of Him Who is mighty to save, able indeed to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, He being The Son, Who is consecrated for evermore (Hebrews 7:25–28).

The truth that is revealed in these chapters of Romans concerning the two contrasted spiritual kingdoms and concerning the salvation of God whereby repentant and believing sinners are, through the death and resurrection of His Son, delivered out of the one and placed securely in the other, is stated, though in different terms, in Colossians 1:12–13: Giving thanks unto the Father, Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love (margin). It is evident that the power (or regal authority) of darkness is the same dominion that is referred to in Romans as that wherein sin and death reign, and that The Kingdom of the Son of God's love is the realm wherein grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. The last verse of Romans 5 is of great significance in respect to our main line of thought; for it indicates the relation of the two spiritual kingdoms to each other and the manner in which the Kingdom of God gradually enlarges itself at the expense of the other: That as sin hath reigned unto death even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

The sovereignty of sin over its servants (Romans 6:17, 20, 22, which word signifies bondslaves) is never relaxed and there is no escape from it except by death. The death of the wretched bond slave of sin does indeed free him from that tyrannical despotism. For he that is dead is freed from sin (6:7). But that does not better his condition, for after this the judgment awaits him (Hebrews 9:27). For those, however, who have gained admission into the Kingdom of Grace through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:1) death is already a past event. For, as the Scriptures plainly declare and as is represented by the believer's baptism (Romans 6:3–4) the death of Christ is reckoned theirs (6:8); or in the words of 2 Corinthians 5:14, if One died for all then all died (as the original text reads). And for them the reign of grace ends not in judgment but in everlasting life and glory. Grace reigns unto eternal life.

Moreover, in the light of these verses (and in that of other Scriptures) we can plainly see, by the exercise of that spiritual vision which is the endowment, in some measure, of every child of God (Ephesians 1:18), the manner of growth of the Kingdom of God by the gradual extension of its borders over the very domain where sin and death long held undisputed sway. These verses illustrate the saying of Christ: "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation" (Luke 17:20); for they show how its jurisdiction is being steadily enlarged in territory without causing commotion or attracting the attention of the world at large.

Referring again to the contrast between these two spiritual dominions as presented in Colossians 1:13 the power of darkness and the Kingdom of God's dear Son, we may see there also the manner of the growth in numbers (as well as in the extent of its domain) of Christ's Kingdom, at the expense of that of the adversary. For every soul that is regenerated by the Holy Spirit and enters the Kingdom of God by the door of the new birth, which is its only entrance (John 3:5), has at the same moment escaped, by the door of Christ's death from the dominion of sin and darkness. Thus there goes on unceasingly, and has gone on for nineteen centuries, a flow of population from the one domain into the other, the stream being always in the same direction; and thus what the one kingdom gains in population, the other loses. And here we have the fulfillment of the words spoken by our Lord in response to those who said (not audibly to the ear of man, but He knew their thoughts) that He cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils (Matthew 12:24–29; Luke 11:15–22). On that occasion He spake expressly of the two kingdoms we have been discussing, saying:

"If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? ... But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house." (Or, according to Luke, He taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils!)

This prophecy has been in course of fulfillment for well nigh two thousand years, and is in course of fulfillment today; but truly without observation on the part of “the children of this world”, though discernible by the children of light. For after that the conquering Redeemer, in bringing many sons unto glory, had tasted death for everyone, and through His own death had destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil (Hebrews 2:9–14) and thus had bound the strong man, He began forthwith the glorious work of despoiling that defeated enemy of his goods (Matthew 12:29; Luke 11:21–22). This saving work continues until now and it will continue until that great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindred and people and tongues, seen by John in his Patmos vision standing before the throne of God (Revelation 7:9) shall have been saved and glorified.

Likewise when we survey in the relatively dim light of history the extension of the Kingdom of God geographically, we perceive the same gradual and unostentatious enlargement of its borders. From its insignificant beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47) on the day of Pentecost (the total number of the disciples at the dawn of that day being about one hundred and twenty, Acts 1:15), the confines of the Kingdom of light and life and liberty have been extending themselves in every direction, ever encroaching upon the domain of gross darkness that had spread its pall over all the earth enveloping all the inhabitants thereof in its sable shroud. The borders of that dark domain have been pushed farther and farther towards the confines of the habitable earth until in our day there remains but a comparatively small part thereof to which the true Light, which lighteth every man has not penetrated, and which has not been reached and illumined in some measure by This Gospel of the Kingdom (Matthew 24:14).

There is but one way of expelling darkness; but that way is infallible. It is to let the light in. That was God’s way with the physical darkness at the beginning (Genesis 1:3) and it has ever been and is His way with the spiritual darkness. And God’s instrument for admitting the light is His Word; for the entrance of His words giveth light (Psalm 119:130). Accordingly, when God said LIGHT BE;, immediately Light WAS. It is in keeping therefore with the revealed ways of God that He has sent forth by His servants the word of the Kingdom, this gospel of the Kingdom, to be the instrument of deliverance from the power of darkness of those whom He forthwith translates into the Kingdom of the Son of His love (Colossians 1:13).

What shall we then say to these things? Can we be indifferent to the great work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58) that goes ceaselessly on, though without observation, in the energy of the Holy Spirit, and whereof we have heard in the word of the truth of the gospel? And can we be indifferent on the one hand to the responsibility this revelation lays upon us and on the other to the wondrous opportunity it opens to us? For to be in this Kingdom of God’s dear Son, where grace reigns unto eternal life, means that there are responsibilities to be faced and rewards to be won — or lost. It is through no merits or efforts of our own, but through the gift of God and the atonement of His Christ, that we possess that righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees and in virtue of which we have entered into the Kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20). But is that all? By no means. For in the preceding verse our Lord speaks of those who are least in the Kingdom of heaven and those who are great in the Kingdom of heaven. The difference there between the highest and the lowest will doubtless be very great. And what will make the difference? He has left us in no doubt at all that that difference will be determined by the response of our hearts and lives to His commandments. And there is one commandment of His that has a special claim upon the loyalty of His people, because it relates particularly to the extension of His Kingdom. For the King’s chief concern is His Kingdom. Therefore the words *Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature* have a special claim upon all His people.

When the great king Ahasuerus issued a royal proclamation for publication in all the provinces of his vast empire, the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being pressed on by the king’s COMMANDMENT (Esther 8:14). The commandment we have heard is that of the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is to be obeyed — not of compulsion, but — from the heart. It has not yet been fully accomplished, but soon the door of opportunity for participation in its

accomplishment will be closed. Let us then delay not to go forth on the greatest of all missions, being hastened and pressed on by **THE KING'S COMMANDMENT**.

9

FORESHADOWINGS OF THE KINGDOM

The spiritual realities of God's new creation in Christ Jesus have had — for the most part at least — each its prophetic foreshadowing in the times of the old covenant. The old heavens and earth were a shadow of the new; the first Adam was a type or foreshadowing of the last Adam; Israel after the flesh was a prophetic type of the Israel of God; the Zion and Jerusalem on earth had each its heavenly and eternal counterpart. The priests, who offered gifts and sacrifices according to the law of Moses, served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things (Hebrews 8:5). For the law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image (or substance) of the things, can never, with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto (those who approached to worship God) perfect (Hebrews 10:1).

Inasmuch, therefore, as the establishment of God's everlasting Kingdom, which the Psalmist celebrated in song and the prophets foretold (Psalm 145:13; Daniel 4:3) is chief among His eternal purposes which He has purposed in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3:11), we may warrantably expect to find prophetic foreshadowings thereof in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. And such are indeed to be found, even in the earliest Book of the Bible; but it will best serve our purpose to begin with that remarkable foreshadowing of the Kingdom which meets us in the Old Covenant itself, whereof all the features, as is plainly taught in Hebrews, were typical of corresponding features of God's New and Everlasting Covenant.

The old covenant, whereof Moses was the mediator, was made between the Almighty God and a people who were all born in servitude to a despotic world power, Egypt, which typifies the spiritual kingdom of darkness, sin and death; a people who were all redeemed out of the hand of the oppressive power under the typical blood of the paschal lamb, a people who were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that went with them (*margin*); and *That Rock was Christ* (1 Corinthians 10:1–4). That all these things happened unto them for types, is declared in verse 11 of the last cited chapter (*margin*); and this is warrant enough for taking both the old covenant people themselves and their entire history also as typical foreshadowings of the Israel of God; and this is, moreover, abundantly confirmed by the New Testament Scriptures.

After the Israelites had been delivered out of Egypt, had crossed the Red Sea, had been guided by the pillar of cloud and fire, had drunk of the spiritual Rock and eaten the spiritual food — all in the short space of thirty days — they encamped in the wilderness at the foot of Mount Sinai; and there God entered into a covenant or a compact with them, which, after its terms had been unanimously accepted by the people, was ratified in the most formal and solemn fashion, and amidst manifestations of the most awesome description terrifying sights and sounds such as never before or since have attended the validation of any covenant.

We read (Exodus 19:3) that Moses, in his character of mediator of the covenant — *i.e.*, the one who mediates or negotiates between the parties, conveying to one the terms proposed by the other, reporting back to the first and finally bringing them into agreement — went up unto God, and received

from Him the terms of the covenant into which He graciously invited the people to enter and by which He agreed to be bound. The terms were plain; the conditions to be fulfilled by them were fair and reasonable; the promises conditioned thereupon were exceedingly great and infinitely precious. Reminding them of what He had done to the Egyptians, as they themselves had seen, and how He had borne the people as upon the swift and powerful wings of an eagle and had brought them unto Himself, the Lord their Deliverer proposed an agreement with them upon these express terms: Now therefore, if ye will obey My Voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine; and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation (Exodus 19:4–6).

The promise is threefold. God solemnly pledged Himself, upon the sole condition of obedience and fidelity on their part, to constitute them, first, a *peculiar treasure* unto Himself; second, a *kingdom of priests*; and third, an *holy nation*. It is not easy to find an English equivalent for the word here translated *Peculiar*. It is frequently used to express how dear God's people are to Him (Deuteronomy 14:2; 26:18; Psalm 135:4; see also Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9). Being derived from a Hebrew word signifying wealth, it is appropriate as a description of that which the owner cherishes as inexpressibly dear. But, in addition to a people to be cherished by Jehovah in a very special way *above all people* (for, as He here asserts, all the earth and all its inhabitants are His, see Psalm 24:1; 50:12, etc.), He pledged Himself to make them a Kingdom of Priests; and this is the feature of that covenant which is of special interest in connection with our present subject.

This Kingdom, which God promised conditionally to the people of Israel (the condition being their obedience to His Voice and their fidelity to His covenant) was to be distinguished from other kingdoms in a very remarkable way; for it was to be a kingdom of priests. What it means to be a kingdom where all are priests unto God is far beyond our present powers of apprehension; though it is one of the glorious things for which the redeemed of the Lord have been *apprehended of Christ Jesus* (Philippians 3:12; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 5:10). But we know that to be a priest unto God, which involves having access to His presence, is an exceedingly high honor, one that no man can take unto himself or confer upon others. For it is written of our Lord that He *glorified not Himself to be made an high priest* (Hebrews 5:4–6). And this much concerning the honors and privileges of the priestly office must suffice for our immediate purpose.

There is need, however, that we impress strongly upon our minds the important fact that the promises of the old covenant were purely conditional, and that — the covenant having been flagrantly broken by the people of Israel, their kings, princes and priests — the promises of necessity lapsed. It is needful to emphasize this for the reason that, despite the plainest statements of Scripture to the contrary, one often meets in current expository writings references to the promises of Exodus 19:4–6 as if they were still valid and were yet to be fulfilled to Israel after the flesh in a future dispensation. In fact the covenant of Sinai never went into operation; for it was flagrantly broken by all the people under the leadership of Aaron while Moses was yet up on the mountain receiving from the LORD the statutes, judgments and ordinances they had pledged themselves to observe as His covenant people. To this we will come presently; but first will briefly rehearse the intervening events in the order of their occurrence.

Moses, having received from the LORD the terms of the proposed covenant as already stated, came down from the mountain and called for the elders of the people and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him (Exodus 19:7). Evidently the people realized that, under the proffered covenant, they were assured of blessings and honors of priceless worth; whereas on the other hand all that was demanded of them in return was what they were already obligated to render to God — obedience to His Word and fidelity to His covenant; for all the people answered together and said, *All that the LORD hath spoken we will do*. This was an unanimous acceptance on their part of the terms of the proposed covenant; and accordingly Moses returned the words of the people to the LORD (verse 8).

The parties to the compact having reached an agreement as to its terms, it only remained for the Lord to make known the commandments and ordinances the people had pledged themselves to keep, and then to perform the ritual acts which were to constitute the formal execution of the covenant — what answered in those days to the signing, sealing, attesting and delivery of formal compacts or agreements of our day; due allowance being made for the fact that, in the case we are considering, the Almighty God Himself was one of the contracting parties. According to the appointed ceremonials the LORD was to descend upon the mount in a thick cloud and speak to Moses in a voice audible to the people; so that they all might hear when He spake to Moses and believe Him forever (verse 9). Meanwhile the people were to cleanse themselves and wash their clothes and be ready against the third day when the LORD, enveloped in a thick cloud, would come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. Moses also was to set bounds round about the mountain; and warning was to be given that whosoever should even touch it should surely be put to death (verses 10–13). These commands Moses duly executed.

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning that there were thunders and lightening and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that were in the camp trembled ... And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake and God answered him by a voice ... And the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount and Moses went up (verses 14–20).

Then, after more warnings to the people, **GOD SPAKE ALL THESE WORDS — and thus, by the Voice of the living God were spoken the Ten Commandments, or as the Hebrews termed them the TEN WORDS, in the hearing of all the people. It appears from the inspired description of this marvelous event that the most awesome of all its terrifying incidents was what the writer of Hebrews refers to as *The Voice of Words*; which they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more (Hebrews 12:19). According to the account in Exodus 20, The people ... removed and stood afar off; and they said to Moses, Speak thou with us and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die (verses 18–19). Nothing can be imagined that would be better calculated to make a deep and lasting impression upon the hearts and consciences of mortal men.**

And such was its purpose; for forty years later, after all but a few of that generation had died, Moses, in giving his parting admonitions to the next generation, specially recalls “the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb; when the Lord said unto me, Gather Me the people together, and I will make them **HEAR MY WORDS**, that they may learn to fear Me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children. And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness (gloom). And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: Ye heard the Voice of the Words, but saw no similitude; only a Voice” (Deuteronomy 4:10–12). Well might Moses comment upon this marvelous and unprecedented event saying:

“For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing, or hath been heard like it? ... Out of heaven He made thee to hear His Voice, that He might instruct thee; and upon earth He showed thee His great fire; and thou heardest His Words out of the midst of the fire” (Deuteronomy 4:32–36).

The Same Voice Heard At another Mountain

Certainly this event, which stands at the beginning of the history of the old covenant people, was without parallel up to that time. Yet, as with other outstanding events in the history of that people, it

has its counterpart in the history of the New Covenant people, the Israel of God. For, at the beginning of their history, as recorded in the New Testament Scriptures, we read of a great concourse of people gathered at another mountain to hear the Voice of the same Almighty Lawgiver, speaking the commandments, statutes, and judgments which they were to observe. Thus far there is similarity; but what differences in respect to the details! Special attention should be paid to these; for they clearly exemplify the differences between the two Covenants.

In the first place, there are here no prohibitions against drawing near; no bounds are set round about the mountain; there is no fire, smoke nor earthquake; no trumpet blast; and specially no terrifying Voice of Words. Nor did the Lord in this case come down upon the mountain, enveloped in a thick cloud. On the contrary, we read that, when Jesus went about all Galilee ... preaching the gospel of the Kingdom and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people, His fame went throughout all Syria; ... and there, followed Him great multitudes from various regions. And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain. Nor did the multitudes stand afar off; but When He was set, His disciples came unto Him. Thus the Voice of the Omnipotent Lord says at one mountain, *Stand afar off, come not nigh*, and at the other *Come unto Me all ye that labor*. Nothing could better illustrate than this the essential difference between the two covenants; the old covenant of works (this do and thou shalt live) and the new covenant of grace (believe and live). Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: And here follows a discourse that for nearly a score of centuries has been the admiration of all sorts and conditions of men, which begins with the words: **BLESSED — BLESSED — BLESSED**, *nine* times over. As was written concerning His hearers on another occasion, And all bare Him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth (Luke 4:22).

Such was the manner of the giving of the law of the New Covenant. This law of Christ is not written upon tables of stone, but is inscribed by the Holy Spirit upon the fleshy tables of the hearts of those who, responsive to the call of the gospel, come unto Him in repentance and in the obedience of faith. But our limitations permit only the briefest reference to the resemblances and the contrasts between the beginning of the history of the Old Covenant people the history of a people who were disobedient, faithless, stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, who did always resist the Holy Ghost (Acts 7:51); Who went in the way of rebellion and apostasy to final ruin — and that of the New Covenant people, the Kingdom of God, who proceed through tribulation and distress and sufferings and long patience, yet from victory to victory, more than conquerors through Him Who loves them unto the end, to an assured and complete triumph over all enemies and obstacles, and an eternity of bliss.

So the people stood afar off while Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was (Exodus 20:21); and there the LORD gave him statutes and the ordinances of worship they were to observe. These constitute a complete code of laws. They occupy Chapters 21–31 of Exodus. The concluding words of Chapter 31 are: “And He gave unto Moses, when He had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God” (31:18).

Which My Covenant They Brake (Jeremiah 31:32)

When Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together and demanded of Aaron that he make them gods who should go before them, *i.e.*, should lead them (32:1). This demand eventuated in the making of a calf of gold (presumably in imitation of the sacred cow of Egypt) which, when the people saw it, they said, *These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt* (verse 4). Thereupon Aaron built an altar before the graven image and proclaimed a feast; on which occasion, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play (verse 6). Thus was the Covenant flagrantly broken before it became practically effective. What chiefly concerns us in this history is that the proposed covenant of Sinai never went into effect; and especially

that the great promise that, upon condition of their obedience to His Voice, they should be to Him a peculiar people, a kingdom of priests and an holy nation, was never thereafter renewed to that people. What happened in respect to God's dealings and relations with them after the apostasy of the golden calf was, concisely stated, as follows:

In response to the earnest intercession of Moses, the Lord turned from His declared purpose that He would consume them forthwith (32:9–14); and in remembrance of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which Moses pleaded (32:13) God charged His servant to lead the people to the land which He had sworn to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it (33:1). But, in giving that charge to Moses, He was careful to make clear that He disowned them as His people. His words were: “Depart and go hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt. Indeed He had previously disowned them, saying to Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people which thou broughtest out of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf and worshipped it and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (32:7–8).

Further, God refused to go up in the midst of them (*cf.* Matthew 18:20) and this they rightly regarded as evil tidings (33:2–4). Moses therefore took the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp (33:7); and there the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend (verse 11). In that intimacy Moses continued to intercede for the people; specially asking that God would consider that this nation is Thy people; to which the response was: “My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest” (verses 13–14); and then followed this great promise and declaration: “I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the Name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy” (verse 19). From that time the nation of Israel was to God *Lo-ammi* — not My people (Hosea 1:9); but His decreed purpose in grace was to show mercy to chosen individuals, the elect remnant (Romans 9:6–15, 18).

A Temporary or Ad-Interim Covenant

In the next chapter (Exodus 34) the LORD reiterated His firm purpose to visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children, while *keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin* (verse 7); whereupon Moses renewed his petition for the people, saying, *If now I have found grace in Thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray Thee, go among us; ... and pardon our iniquity and our sin; and take us for Thine inheritance* (verse 9). Still the Lord refused to acknowledge the people as His own; but He made a temporary covenant — not *with*, but *for* them — according to which He would do marvelous things before Moses' people, such as had not been in all the earth, even driving out before them the inhabitants of the land. The terms of this temporary covenant, which related only to the occupation of the land of Canaan, and the terms and conditions thereof, should be carefully noted. It begins at verse 10 where the LORD, speaking to Moses, says: *Behold, I make a covenant* — for the people were not a party to this covenant — *Before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth*; and after a recital of the terms (which are very brief) upon which they and their descendants were to occupy the promised land, the passage closes thus: *And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words; for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel* (verse 27).

Another Covenant with the Next Generation

Under this provisional covenant God led the people by the hand of Moses to the plains of Moab by Jordan; and about the time of forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness (Acts 13:18). And when all that generation had passed away, save Caleb and Joshua, the survivors were addressed by Moses, at the commandment of the Lord, in the plains of Moab, by Jordan, near Jericho (Numbers 36:13). And there the Lord made still another covenant, which is an amplification of the covenant of Exodus 34, and is of the same nature in that the people were not a party thereto and in that it related

solely to the continued occupation by them of the land which God had promised to Abraham and his seed, the boundaries of which were from the great sea to the river Euphrates (Deuteronomy 1:7).

The terms of this third covenant occupy the greater part of Deuteronomy (Chapters 5–27); and then at the beginning of Chapter 29 we read: “These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which He made with them in Horeb.” Thus the covenant of the land of Moab is expressly distinguished from that of Mount Sinai.

We shall not discuss this last covenant further than necessary to impress upon the reader that it differs radically in its nature and in its terms from the covenant that God made with the people of Israel in Horeb; and specially that it contains no provision that they were to be a peculiar people to the Lord, or a Kingdom of priests, or an holy nation. The covenant of Mount Sinai was at an end. This clearly appears by the record of events preserved in the book of Exodus; and it is briefly but forcefully declared by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah in connection with His promise of the New Covenant; which was “to be not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, though I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 31–32); to which the Holy Spirit, quoting these words in Hebrews 8:9, adds, and I regarded them not, that is, He rejected them.

It is of great importance for the purpose of our present study to note that the covenant of Horeb was a blood covenant, duly solemnized between the Almighty God and the people of Israel by the shedding of the blood of the covenant victim (Hebrews 9:19–20). And as regards the covenant of the plains of Moab, which was not a blood covenant, the book of Deuteronomy contains not only the terms but also (in Chapter 28) a prophecy of the outcome thereof. That chapter begins with the words, And it shall come to pass. In verses 1–14 Moses declares to the people he so dearly loved and had so faithfully served, the rich blessings that would come upon them in the land to which the LORD was leading them, if they would hearken diligently unto the Voice of the LORD, to observe and to do all His commandments (verse 1). Conversely, at verse 15 begins a recital of the grievous curses that should come upon them and overtake them, if they should not hearken unto the Voice of the LORD, to observe to do all His commandments; which recital occupies the rest of the chapter. Some of the penalties were extreme, to the point even of utter destruction (verse 20). However, those penalties would be visited upon them only in case they should refuse to hear and obey the commandments of the LORD their God; and it remained to be seen whether they would be incited to obedience by the great rewards to be gained thereby and on the other hand would be deterred from disobedience by the fearful consequences whereof they were so clearly warned. Knowing, as we do, their subsequent history, we could hardly be in any doubt as to the ultimate fate of that people as a nation. But it is evident that Moses himself clearly foresaw their end; for the latter part of the chapter assumes the tone of prophecy and declares, not things that might, but things that should, come to pass: things which now have come to pass, as is evident to all men.

Moses, in the latter part of the chapter, expressly foretells that they should be left few in number, whereas they had been as the stars of heaven for multitude (verse 62); that they should be plucked from off the land which they were about to possess (verse 63); that the LORD would scatter them among all people, from one end of the earth even to the other (verse 64); that among those nations they should find no ease, neither should the soles of their feet find rest; but the LORD should give them there a trembling of heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind (verse 65); that their life should hang in doubt before them and there should be no assurance of their lives (verse 66); inasmuch that in the morning they should say Would God it were even! and at even should say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of heart that should possess them and the sight of their eyes which they should see (verse 67). And so it is at this present hour.

Nevertheless there is salvation for the individual Israelite. The apostle Paul declares this plainly, and shows also the manner of it; where, using the olive tree as a figure and viewing them as its natural branches broken off (for thus he figuratively represents the fact that they are broken off from cov-

enant relations with Christ) he says: And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again (Romans 11:23). That the salvation of the individual Jew by faith in Jesus Christ, in other words that gospel salvation and none other is here contemplated, is plain from the context; and moreover is conclusively shown by the preceding chapter where the apostle says:

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, "Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:10–13).

This luminous passage follows immediately a quotation from Deuteronomy 30:12–14 (which the apostle prefaces with the words, But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise):

"Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down); or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is THE WORD OF FAITH WHICH WE PREACH: that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:6–10).

The whosoever of this Scripture is the individual soul; and whether it be of Jew or Greek is immaterial; for there is no difference between them for all have sinned. Confession with the mouth and belief in the heart are possible only to men as individuals. In the light, therefore, of this illuminating Scripture, it is plainly to be seen that Moses was speaking of hope for individuals, the believing remnant according to the election of grace in those far off times concerning which he said: "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee ... thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee" (Deuteronomy 30:1).

For Paul in this connection (Romans 9:27) quotes what Isaiah cries concerning Israel, "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved" (Isaiah 10:22–23). And it is also clear that the hope that Moses was holding out when he said: "if thou shalt hearken unto the Voice of the LORD thy God ... and if thou turn to the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (verse 10) was the hope of the gospel. For it is just at this point that Moses delivers that great utterance, "For the Word which I command thee this day is not hidden from thee; it is not in heaven ... neither is it beyond the sea ... but the Word is very nigh unto thee" (Deuteronomy 30:11–14; concerning which utterance the apostle says that this is the Word of faith which we preach (Romans 10:8).

The Institution of the Kingdom of Israel

The institution of the kingdom of Israel in the days of Samuel, who was the last of the line of the judges, properly has place among the foreshadowings of the Kingdom of God; for although the kingdom of Israel is not a type of the Kingdom of God, nevertheless it throws light thereon, howbeit the light is rather by way of contrast than of similarity. For first, that kingdom was not of God but of man. God had appointed judges to rule over the people; but the people became dissatisfied with His governmental arrangement and demanded that they should have a king to rule over them, like the Gentiles. This momentous epoch of their history has been concisely summarized by the apostle Paul in these words:

And when He (God) had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He divided their land to them by lot. And after that He gave them judges about the space of four hundred

and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterwards they desired a king and God gave them Saul the son of Kish (Acts 13:19–21).

In the days of Samuel the elders of Israel were, and with good cause, disturbed by reason of the manifest unfitness, of Samuel's sons, whom he (not God) had made judges over Israel (1 Samuel 8:1). Wherefore they gathered themselves together and came in a body to Samuel with the demand that he make us a king to judge us like all the nations (verses 3–5). *Secondly*, the pattern of the kingdom was not heavenly; for God bade Samuel to hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee, (verse 7) that is, to grant them what they had demanded, a king such as ruled over all the nations (the heathen). *Thirdly*, and this is the weightiest reason of all, the people, in asking for an earthly king, had not rejected Samuel, but, as the LORD said, They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me **THAT I SHOULD NOT REIGN OVER THEM** (verse 7).

Therefore, there is the widest possible difference and the greatest possible contrast between the kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of God. In the light of the origin of the former, the disciples' question to the risen Christ, *Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?* (Acts 1:6) looks foolish indeed. But, before giving the people what their elders had impiously demanded, Samuel was bidden of the LORD to protest solemnly unto them and declare plainly to them how they should be treated by the king whom they desired to reign over them. Samuel accordingly told all the words of the LORD unto the people, declaring in detail the hardships, exactions and severities they would have to endure, and faithfully warning them of the grievousness of the afflictions they were bringing upon themselves, saying: And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. But it was to no purpose; for

“Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us and to fight our battles. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice and make them a king” (1 Samuel 8:8–22).

This action of the people of Israel in rejecting the sovereignty of God is recalled by the Lord Jesus in His parable of the Nobleman Who went into a far country to receive for Himself a Kingdom and to return, whose citizens hated Him and said, We will not have this Man to reign over us (Luke 19:12–14). The Scripture gives us to know how completely the LORD fulfilled the express demand of the people for a king like all the heathen; for the king He gave them was a very choice specimen of physical manhood, one who from his shoulders and upwards was higher than any of the people (1 Samuel 9:2) — every inch a king, as would be said nowadays. He was a choice young man and a goodly; insomuch that there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he.

Doubtless it was the divine intent that the people of God in later times should compare, for their profit and instruction, this inspired description of man's ideal king with the description subsequently given of the One Whom God, through the Psalmist speaks of as my KING (Psalm 2:6). That description is not found in one of the Gospels; for it is a remarkable fact, one that affords striking proof that those historical records are not of human authorship that they contain not a word concerning the appearance of Him Whom the human writers adored as their Lord and Savior. That description was written six centuries before the promised King came in lowly guise for the salvation of His people into the world He had created. The prophet announces His coming as the Servant of Jehovah (Isaiah 52:13); and goes on to say that He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant — a twig, suggestive of frailty and insignificance and as a root out of a dry ground — a soil incapable of supplying proper nourishment for a plant. (Is there in these words a dry ground a hint of the sterility of Israel?) “He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him” (Isaiah 53:2–3).

We refrain from comment, which could only detract from the effect and the effectiveness of these words of God concerning the outward appearance of Him Who nevertheless is the desire of all na-

tions (Haggai 2:7), and to the anointed eye the chiefest of ten thousand, the altogether lovely (Song of Songs 5:10, 16). Therefore we only point out that we have here a striking illustration of that great truth which God Himself declared to Samuel on a subsequent occasion, when the prophet, was sent to select from among the sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite Saul's successor to the throne of Israel; concerning whom He said, "For I have provided Me a king among his sons" (1 Samuel 16:1). On that occasion Samuel was captivated by the appearance of Jesse's eldest son and he exclaimed: Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him. But the LORD said unto Samuel, "Look not on his countenance or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him; for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart" (verse 7).

It is appropriate at this point to observe yet another contrast that presents itself as we compare the record of the inception of the kingdom of Israel with that of the inception of the Kingdom of God, a contrast in which they who are spiritually minded will perceive an illustration of fundamental truth. For it is recorded that Saul, at the time he was chosen for the throne of Israel was engaged in an unsuccessful quest for his father's lost asses, which quest was undertaken in obedience to the paternal command, Arise, go seek the asses (1 Samuel 9:3). On the other hand, David, when sought for the kingship, was engaged in the very different occupation of keeping his father's sheep (16:11), and thus, in this particular as in others, David became a type of Him Who, on His way to the throne of the universe, was sent unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24); and Who spake of Himself as The shepherd of the sheep (John 10:2).

The Secession of the Ten Tribes

The apostasy of the old covenant people in rejecting Jehovah as their King and demanding that He give them a king like all the heathen soon bore fruit in a further act of rebellion which disrupted the commonwealth of Israel and led ultimately to the extinction thereof as a nation. For, at the beginning of the reign of Rehoboam, the third of David's line, ten tribes rebelled against the house of David and made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king over all Israel. There was none that followed the house of David but the tribe of Judah only (1 Kings 12:19-20). From that time onward the name Israel is consistently applied in the Scriptures to the northern kingdom. Of the two tribes that remained under the sovereignty of the line of David, the tribe of Benjamin soon lost its separate identity, so that the people which continued nominally to acknowledge Jehovah as their God was reduced virtually to a single tribe (Judah) and they came in time to be called Jews.

Not only did the historical Israel cast off at that time the governmental authority of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but they also repudiated Him as their God; setting aside completely His sacrifices, His priesthood and His ordinances of worship, thus becoming in fact a heathen nation. For one of Jeroboam's first official acts upon his assumption of the throne of Israel was to revert again to the idolatry of the golden calf. For it is recorded of him:

"The king took counsel and made two calves of gold and said to the people, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (1 Kings 12:28).

That the worship of the golden calves continued thereafter to be the national worship of Israel appears by 2 Kings 10:29, although Baal had a large following. Thus Israel, after their marvelous deliverance by the arm of the LORD out of the degrading servitude and cruel oppression of Egypt, after witnessing His mighty acts, after the enjoyment of His countless mercies, forgiveness and loving kindness in the land He had promised their fathers to give them, rejected His authority, denied His deity, and deliberately chose for themselves the grossest and most debased idolatry. They continued to exist as a nation after the rejection of God as their King for nearly four hundred years; and their national existence came to an end when Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, took Samaria and carried Israel away into Assyria (2 Kings 17:6). Thus the nation of Israel came to an inglorious end. And not only is the historical fact recorded in the Scriptures, but the reasons are clearly set forth. We read (verses 7-23):

“For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, Who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt ... And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the LORD their God ... For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers ... And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He made with their fathers. Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of His sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until He had cast them out of His sight ... For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did ... until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight.”

Due account must be taken of the fact that the Scripture discriminates carefully between the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah; and even were it otherwise, the single tribe of Judah could not warrantably claim for itself promises that were distinctly and in terms for Israel. The perpetuation of Judah as an historical and racial entity was for purposes which are plainly revealed in the Scriptures and which are wholly apart from the fulfillment of the unconditional promises made to Abraham and his seed and to Israel. It is recorded that the apostasy against Jehovah began with Solomon and that because of his idolatries the LORD said to him: “Forasmuch as this is done of thee and thou hast not kept My covenant and My statutes ... I will surely rend the kingdom from thee and give it to thy servant” (1 Kings 11:11). Nevertheless, for David’s sake, God did not do this in the days of Solomon, but in the days of his son and successor. Moreover, the LORD gave one tribe to Solomon’s son, in order, as He said, “That David My servant may have a light (candle) always before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen to put My Name there” (verse 36).

Again in the reign of Abijah, who walked in all the sins of his father, Rehoboam, king of Judah, it is recorded that “Nevertheless, for David’s sake did the LORD his God give him a lamp (candle) in Jerusalem to set up his son after him” (1 King 15:4). And still later, in the reign of Jehoram, who walked in the ways of the kings of Israel as did the house of Ahab, it is recorded that Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah for David His servant’s sake, as He promise him to give him always a light (candle) and to his children (2Kings 8:18–19; 2 Chronicles 21:7).

Thus the house of Judah, and specially the house of David, were preserved until the promised Messiah of Israel should come, and until He should suffer the things that had been prophesied concerning Him and should enter into His glory. Thus the tribe of Judah served as a connecting link between the old covenant people and the new covenant people; and served also to keep intact the genealogical line from Abraham through David (Matthew 1:1–16) to the promised Seed Of Abraham, the Heir of the world (Romans 4:13; Hebrews 1:2) and the promised Son of David, the destined occupant of the throne of God’s everlasting Kingdom.

In the light of these facts, which are recorded in the Holy Scriptures for our enlightenment, it is plainly to be seen that the Israel of promise and prophecy is the Israel of the New Covenant, referred to by the apostle Peter as a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people (1 Peter 2:9; see Revelation 5:10) and which the apostle Paul significantly designates **THE ISRAEL OF GOD** (Galatians 6:15–16).

10

CONTRASTS BETWEEN OLD AND NEW COVENANTS

Our preceding studies have shown that God did propose, under the original terms of the covenant He proffered the children of Israel in Horeb, to make them unto Himself a kingdom wherein all the people should be priests; which covenant, however, they brake even before it was fully consummated; that thereupon, after the death of Moses, who led them through the wilderness and by whom God gave them His holy oracles — His law and ordinances — He appointed a succession of judges to govern them from Joshua to Samuel, about the space of four hundred and fifty years; that in the days of Samuel the elders of Israel formally demanded of Samuel that he make them a king to judge them like all the Gentiles; and that God granted them their desire, though not until He had solemnly and faithfully warned them of the hardships and exactions wherewith their king would afflict them and until they had nevertheless insisted, and with one voice, in their demand.

From that time and onward God's Kingdom and His King became the subjects, and indeed the most prominent subjects of prophecy. The most distinct of the many prophecies relating to the coming Kingdom of God, is that given by the mouth of the prophet Daniel (2:24–45), to which reference has been made above. The prophecy forms a sequel to the prophet's interpretation of king Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image, whose head was of gold, his breast and arms of silver, his belly and thighs of brass, his legs of iron and his feet also of iron but commingled with clay; which image was utterly demolished by a stone that smote it upon its feet and broke it into pieces so fine that the wind carried them clean away. After explaining that the four parts of the image represented a succession of world empires — easily identified as Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman, Daniel said (verse 44):

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”

This prophecy had a very prominent place in the teaching of the Jewish rabbis, who assumed that the Jews were the inheritors of the Kingdom which the God of heaven would set up. Hence when the successive eras of three great world kingdoms had passed and Palestine was under the oppressive rule of the fourth, and when in the reign of Tiberius Caesar came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judaea and saying, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:1–2), his announcement was understood as having reference to that Kingdom which the God of heaven would set up, as foretold specifically by Daniel the prophet and prophesied also by all the prophets, though in more general terms. The popular doctrine that the Jews, as descendants of Abraham, were to be the people of that Kingdom of heavenly origin received a blow from John when he saluted the upper crust of the Jewish community, the Pharisees and Sadducees, with the startling words,

“O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ... And think not to be saying within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham” (verses 7–9).

And that comfortable doctrine received another blow, this time from the Lord's own mouth, when He prefaced His promulgation of the laws of the heavenly Kingdom with the declaration that the Kingdom of heaven was for the poor in spirit and for those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. And further, in His last discourses in the temple at Jerusalem and in the presence of the chief priests and Pharisees, He plainly said: *Therefore say I unto you, that the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof* (Matthew 21:43). And His next words identify that Kingdom of God with the stone that demolished the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream: *And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder* (verse 44). Needless to say that the nation bringing forth the fruits thereof is that holy nation referred to by the apostle Peter, to whom the keys of the Kingdom of heaven had been committed (1 Peter 2:9), which nation is composed of those concerning whom another apostle writes, *Ye have your fruit unto holiness* (Romans 6:22). And that without a doubt is the nation concerning whom Daniel said, *And the Kingdom shall not be left to other people* (Daniel 2:44).

The Scriptures exhibit in several passages the contrast between the old covenant and the new; which contrast embraces the people, the law and the ordinances of the respective covenants. One of the passages we have in mind is found in the first chapter of John, where we read that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us ... full of grace and truth ... And of His Fullness have all we received and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:14, 16-17).

The apostle here contrasts Moses, the mediator of the old covenant, and Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant; the particulars of the comparison being that whereas the law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The law did not come by Moses. He was merely the human channel or agent by whom God gave it to the people He had redeemed out of Egypt. But grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; for He is the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; and the apostle goes on to say, And of His Fullness have all we received and grace for (or upon) grace.

In this comparison the single term *law* is put in contrast with the couplet, *grace and truth*. But the completeness of the comparison appears when it is remembered that the law, as given by Moses, comprised two main divisions — commandments and ordinances as it is written, *Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service* (Hebrews 9:1). Now the Kingdom of the new covenant is that in which grace reigns (Romans 5:21), so that grace is appropriately put in contrast with the law, as in Romans 6:14, For ye are not under the law, but under grace (*cf.* Galatians 5:18). The commandments that were associated with the old covenant were negative, *Thou shalt not ...* being prohibitive of things contrary to the righteousness and holiness of God, which the natural heart of man inclines him to do. In contrast, the commandments of the new covenant are condensed into one, which is not negative, like the commandments of the law, but positive, *Thou shalt love ...* The law of the old covenant, especially as interpreted and applied by the Scribes and Pharisees, was a yoke which, said Peter, *neither our fathers nor we were able to bear* (Acts 15:10). On the other hand, *the law of Christ* (Galatians 6:2) which is *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus* (Romans 8:2) is not imposed with penalties for infractions thereof, but is willingly taken by His disciples who find it true as He said, *My yoke is easy* (Matthew 11:30).

Likewise with respect to the ordinances of divine worship that were given to the Israelites by Moses, there was, of course, nothing in them that was contrary to the truth; but quite otherwise. Therefore the apostle's affirmation that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ must not be taken as implying that the truth of God had not been previously revealed; for the contrary is manifestly the case. What is to be understood by truth in this text is God's revelation through Jesus Christ of the true way of approach to God, Christ being Himself THE TRUTH (John 14:6) and the One through Whom the Spirit of Truth was to be given (John 14:16-17). The ordinances and appointments for worship which were a part of the law given to the Israelites by Moses were but temporary representations of the true or real appointments for the worship of God. As stated in Hebrews 9:24, they were but figures of the true. But by Jesus Christ came the true sanctuary, the true altar, the true sacrifices, the true priest-

hood, the true incense, and the true worshipers. For with Him came the time as He Himself announced, when the true worshipers should worship the Father in spirit and in truth; and He gave also as the compelling reason in this great revelation: “God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23–24). Thus TRUTH as well as GRACE came by Jesus Christ; and this radical change He Himself announced, and to one of that despised race with whom the Jews had no dealings (John 4:9), saying:

“The hour cometh and now is when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23–24).

A like contrast between the old and new covenants is found in 2 Corinthians 3; the comparison here being accompanied by additional details. In this remarkable passage the apostle Paul presents Moses — not, be it observed, as the mediator of the old covenant, but — as a minister or servant thereof, in comparison with himself and Timothy as *ministers of the new covenant* (verse 6). After disclaiming sufficiency (or ability) of themselves to think anything as of themselves, and ascribing their sufficiency (or ability) wholly to God (verse 5), the apostle says of Him, *Who also hath made us able* (or sufficient, using the same word as in verse 5) ministers of the new covenant; and proceeds to set forth, in brief but vivid terms, points of difference between the two covenants that are of a very striking, not to say startling character.

Before quoting and commenting upon the language here used we note the important fact that the new covenant is here spoken of as being then in existence; for obviously Paul and Timothy could not have been ministers of a covenant which had not at that time come into existence but belonged to yet a future era, as is held by some expositors of our day. Furthermore, this statement, which declares that Paul and Timothy were ministers of the new covenant even as Moses was a minister of the old covenant, links the new covenant closely with the gospel of Christ and the Kingdom of God.

The manifest purpose of the passage is to demonstrate that, while the old covenant was distinguished by the attribute of divine *glory* — *as indeed must needs have been, seeing that the Almighty God was a party thereto* — *the glory of the new covenant greatly exceeded that of the old. To accomplish this object and to present the more excellent glory of the new covenant in the clearest light, the apostle characterizes the ministry of Moses, (in his office in connection with the covenant written and engraven in stones,) as the ministration of death, whereas that of the new covenant is the ministration of the Spirit (and in this connection we recall that, by the same apostle’s teaching, the Spirit is life, Romans 8:10). Paul points to Moses’ ministry as the ministration of condemnation, whereas that of the new covenant is the ministration of righteousness; and to the old covenant as that which is done away (or is being done away) whereas the new covenant is that which remaineth, i.e., abides eternally (2 Corinthians 3:5-11).*

Physical evidence was given of the glory of the old covenant by the radiance of Moses’ countenance, which was of such intensity that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold it (verse 7). The giving of the new covenant and the administration thereof are not distinguished by physical manifestations of a supernatural character; for an essential characteristic of the Kingdom of God is that *it cometh not with observation* (Luke 17:20), that is, it does not manifest its presence by displays of divine power and glory visible to the eye of man. The expression *Not as Moses* (verse 13) applies to this and other features of the new covenant. The first ministers thereof were unlearned and ignorant men (Acts 4:13), taken from humble walks of life; and even of the apostle whose words we are now considering, though a man having culture and a high order of mentality, it was commonly said, as he himself declared (2 Corinthians 10:10) *that his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible*. The mighty operations of the Spirit of God upon the ministers and people of the new covenant effect marvelous and lasting changes — not in their outward appearance, but — in their hearts, changes that are manifested in godly lives and by the fruits of righteousness.

It is a point of interest, to which we call special attention, that the purpose for which Moses put a veil over his face when he spake with the people of Israel after coming from the presence of God was

not that they might not behold the glory of his countenance, as has been inferred from a superficial reading of verse 13 (aided by the unwarranted insertion of the word “vail” in verse 14), but that they might not see that the radiance was not permanent but quickly faded away. This testimony as to the fleeting, evanescent character of the old covenant constitutes the climax of the passage.

“And not as Moses, who put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished” (verse 13).

The words, *to the end*, put us on the track of the right meaning, which further study makes definite and certain. *That which is abolished* (or being abolished) is the old covenant, as clearly appears by the next verse: *But their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old covenant*. Thus far the meaning of the verse is clear, and we learn thereby that the putting of the veil over Moses’ face was a symbolical action of definite import. But the insertion of the italicized word *veil* in the last clause of the verse as given in the A. V. is misleading. The reading is *which veil is done away in Christ*. But the sense of the entire passage requires that the supplied word should be covenant, not veil; for clearly it is the covenant, not the veil that was to be done away. This is evident from the use of the same expression in verses 7, 11, 13 (rendered *abolished* in verse 13). In those verses *that which is done away (abolished)* is manifestly the old covenant and its glory, as the word *veil* has not occurred thus far; and this usage controls the meaning of the same expression in verse 14. To this agrees, moreover, the reading of nearly all the Greek texts that are regarded as authoritative. According to those texts the last clause of verse 14 reads: *Which in Christ is being annulled*. Furthermore, when the removal of the veil is spoken of (in verses 14, 16) different words (from that) rendered done away in the A. V. are used; and very properly, for it could not be said that a veil is done away, or abolished, or annulled.

Furthermore, the proper reading of the text, as well as the important lesson it conveys, come clearly into view in the light of the Old Testament passage on which it is based. The incident to which the apostle is here referring occurred in connection with the temporary covenant described in Exodus 34, which has been discussed above. That temporary covenant was also accompanied by the Ten Words that God had inscribed on the first tables of stone, which Moses had broken; with this difference, however, that the substituted tables of stone were hewn by Moses, not by the LORD (verses 1–4). When Moses had ascended the mountain with the tables of stone hewn by himself,

“The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the NAME, of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation” (verses 5–7).

Then follow, in verses 10–28, the provisions of this temporary covenant which are few and brief in comparison with those of the covenant of Sinai. It was after Moses had descended from the mountain, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. That reflected glory of God in the countenance of His servant lingered awhile, for

When Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him; and Moses talked with them (verses 29–32).

Let it be noted that up to this time there was no veil over Moses’ face. Verse 33 (quoting from the A. V. and omitting the supplied word *till*) reads: *And Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; the meaning plainly being that Moses, having done speaking with them, put a veil on his face*. Therefore *had* should be *having*, and the verse should read: *And Moses having done speaking with them put a veil on his face*. But when ... etc. That this is the correct reading and that the unwarranted

introduction by the translators of the word *till* reverses the sense, clearly appears by the next verse (34), which reads in the A. V. *But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he took the veil off until he came out.* This absolutely requires that *when* (not *till*) Moses had done speaking with Aaron and the people, he put the veil on his face. Verse 34 continues: *And he came out and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded; no veil being on his face.* And if there were any room for doubt as to that, verse 35 would remove it; for there we read: *And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone; and Moses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with Him.* And thus it was that, although the children of Israel were permitted to see the reflection of the divine glory in the face of Moses after he came out from speaking with God, they were not permitted to see that the transformation of the face of Moses was but transient and that the glory quickly faded away, being absent until Moses went again into the presence of the Lord, when the illumination of his countenance was renewed temporarily.

The apostle gives us to know in the passage we have been studying, that the putting on and the removing of the veil, whereby the children of Israel were not permitted to look to the end of the illumination of Moses' countenance, were symbolical actions, which signified that they were to be judicially blinded to the fact that the covenant mediated and ministered by Moses was to be done away. And the apostle explains that the veil which Moses put over his face had been, as it were, put over the hearts of the people of Israel, so that, until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old covenant, which in Christ is done away. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. And thus,, when Moses is read, they still see, as it were, the light shining in his countenance, being blinded to the fact that, even as that light had faded away, so, in Christ and in consequence of His consummation of the New Covenant by His sacrificial death (Hebrews 9:16–18), that old covenant has been completely done away.

This passage is, in the writer's estimation, exceedingly important; for it exhibits, in few words, the vast differences between the old covenant, which had merely the passing shadows of good things to come, and the new covenant, which has the substance and verities of all those shadowy types and secures them forever to all who are in Christ Jesus. For what greater differences can there be than that between death and life, between condemnation and righteousness, between that which is done away and that which abides forever?

And this is not all; for there remains yet to be pointed out the most impressive contrast of all. It is the contrast between the face of Moses (3:7) and *The Face of Jesus Christ* (4:6). The old covenant had to do with externals. Its effects were evident to the physical senses, sight and hearing. Its glory manifested itself in a supernatural radiance that shone for a little time in the face of Moses, the minister of that covenant. The new covenant, on the contrary, affects the inward parts. Its laws and precepts are written — not in tables of stone, but — in fleshly tables of the heart. And so with its light. The ministers of the new covenant, represented by Paul and Timothy, were not as Moses, who put a veil over his face. Paul claims a great superiority for the ministers of the new covenant, saying: *Therefore, seeing we have received this ministry — which affects not the outward but the inward, is not of death but of life, not of condemnation but of righteousness, which is not of the letter but of the Spirit, gendering not to bondage but to liberty, is not transient but permanent — We faint not. If therefore the gospel ministered by them should be hid, it is not by a veil that darkens the radiance of their testimony. It is the work of the god of this age, who has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them.*

“For God, (says this minister of the new covenant] who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined (not in our faces, but) in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in **THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST**. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (4:1–7).

Our Lord's several relations with the New Covenant, as set forth in Hebrews, are: those of **High Priest, Surety, Mediator**, and also what in our A. V. is called the **Testator**.

1. The High Priest

We are earnestly exhorted to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus (3:1) of Whom it is said that He took part of flesh and blood that by death He might destroy him that had the power of death, the devil (2:14), and that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God (verse 17). And in Chapter 4 is this exhortation: Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession; for we have not an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities (4:14–15). And again we read that it was to and of Him that the prophetic word of Psalm 110:4 was spoken: Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec (5:10). The importance of the Melchisedec priesthood of our Lord in the mind of the Holy Spirit is indicated by the fact that the subject is continued through Chapters 6–7 and 8; wherefore it is deplorable that the people of God receive so little teaching concerning the priesthood of Christ and what it means to God and to them. In Chapter 7 it is declared that, unlike the high priests of the Aaronic order, the Son of God was constituted a Priest by the oath of God, as it is written, "The LORD swore and will not repent. Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec" (7:21); the grand conclusion of it all being that therefore, He is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an High Priest became us (was suited to our condition and need) who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once (for all) when he offered up Himself (7:25–27).

Chapter 8 begins thus. Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum — the principal thing, so let us not miss it or its significance — We have such an High Priest, Who is set (*i.e.*, enthroned) on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man.

2. The Surety

In Hebrews 7 very much is made of the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ, Who sprang out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood (verse 14), was made a Priest not after the law of a carnal commandment but after the power of an endless life (verse 16); having been consecrated for evermore (verse 28). These things are said of Him in order to make known the immeasurable superiority of the order of His priesthood over that of the sons of Aaron. For the measure of that superiority is the measure also of the superior excellence of the new covenant over the old; the new being by just so much the better covenant. The words are (verse 22): *By so much was Jesus made a SURETY of a better covenant.*

A surety is one who voluntarily pledges himself and all he possesses for the faithful performance of the obligations of another, thus making himself liable for the punctual fulfillment of all those obligations and for all the consequences of a failure in respect to any of them. The Greek word here translated surety is not found elsewhere in the New Testament (surety in Acts 12:11 being a different word with a different meaning). But the corresponding word occurs about ten times in the Old Testament, mostly in Proverbs. The first occurrence is in Genesis 43:9, where Judah solemnly made himself responsible to his father for the safety of his brother Benjamin, saying:

I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him; if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame forever.

Solomon, in several of the Proverbs, earnestly warns against assuming the responsibilities of a surety, even in behalf of a friend; saying that he who does so is a man void of understanding (Proverbs 17:18), and that he is snared with the words of his mouth (6:1–2). And as to becoming surety for a

stranger, his stern admonition is: He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it (11:15). Now it was while we were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise (Ephesians 2:12) that Jesus Christ the Son of God became Surety for us to His Father, assuming and making Himself responsible for all our liabilities, sins and transgressions. For He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities ... and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:5–6). And even as Judah did pledge himself to bring again Jacob's youngest son to his father, and to set him before him, even so did that ever blessed One, Who sprang out of Judah, pledge Himself to the work of bringing many sons unto glory (Hebrews 2:10) and of presenting them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24); and in so doing, He verified also that saying of His wise ancestor according to the flesh: He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it. For the Hebrew lexicon informs us that the word which our translators have rendered smart, in this its solitary occurrence in our English Bible, signifies to be sorely marred and broken, to suffer grievous affliction and distress.

There was no surety for the old covenant. The performance of its obligations rested wholly upon the fragile promise of the people: "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8). The context of Hebrews 7:22 indicates that it was in connection with our Lord's responsibilities as Surety or Guarantor of the new covenant that He assumed the office of High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, who typifies (as the context clearly points out) a perpetual and an unchangeable priesthood. For the writer goes on to say that, whereas the Aaronic priesthood required a succession of high priests because, by reason of death, they were not suffered to continue in the exercise of their office, Christ, on the contrary, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood; the blessed consequence being that therefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them (7:23–25).

Much more might be said on this feature of our subject, but the above will suffice for giving an idea of what the redeemed of the Lord owe the Son of God for assuming the office of High Priest after the order of Melchisedec and for becoming *Surety* for the many sons whom God is bringing unto glory. May it serve also to awaken in the hearts of some a desire to look further into this wondrous topic, so neglected in the teaching of the day?

3. The Mediator

It is in respect to the office of **MEDIATOR** of the covenant that Moses stands as a type of Christ; and in respect to the functions of that office there is no need to add to what has been said above. What is now to be emphasized is that the superior excellence of the new covenant is further manifested in that whereas Moses, in his ministry relative to the old covenant, was serving only *unto the example* (or type) *and shadow of heavenly things*, Christ Jesus the Son of God has *obtained a more excellent ministry*, the measure thereof being *by how much also HE is the MEDIATOR of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises* (Hebrews 8:5–6).

It is in this connection that the covenant mediated by Christ is first designated the *new* covenant and is thus expressly identified with the covenant foretold through Jeremiah in the quoted words, *Behold, the days come saith the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in My covenant and I regarded them not — i.e., He rejected them. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days ...*; and then follows a recital of the leading features of the new covenant, namely, (a) the writing of God's laws in the hearts of His people (the gift of the Holy Spirit); (b) all to know Him from the least to the greatest (the gift of eternal life); (c) their sins and iniquities to be remembered no more (Hebrews 8:8–12).

There is no room whatever for uncertainty as to the time of the fulfillment of this prophecy. Not only does the Epistle to the Hebrews make plain that its fulfillment is in the era of grace that was in-

augurated by the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit, but our Lord Himself has unmistakably declared this day of salvation and grace to be the era of the new covenant by the words of the institution of His memorial supper. This cup is the new covenant in My blood (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25).

In the light of all the pertinent teaching of the New Testament it is plain that the terms house of Israel and house of Judah in Jeremiah's prophecy are used as designations of the covenant people of God. But the fulfillment of God's promise of a new covenant has its accomplishment also in what is sometimes (though inaccurately) called a "literal sense", in that the first to enter into that covenant belonged, by their natural descent from Jacob through Judah, to the house of Israel and house of Judah. And this literal fulfillment is likewise to be seen in the light of the Holy Spirit's explanation through the apostle Paul that they are not all Israel who are of Israel (Romans. 9:6), and he is not a Jew who is one outwardly ... but he is a Jew who is one inwardly (Romans 2:28–29) that is by faith in Jesus the Messiah, whereby he is born into the family of God. And this is strongly confirmed by the statements of Romans 11:1–7 to the effect that not all the natural seed of Abraham, but only the believing remnant of them, constituted the true Israel of prophecy and promise; because of which, while it was literally true that Israel (as a nation) had not obtained that which he seeketh for, nevertheless the prophecy and promise were fulfilled even then in Paul's day, in that the election hath obtained it and the rest were blinded, according as it is written (quoting Isaiah 29:10) unto this day (Romans 11:7–8).

What is specially emphasized in this connection in Hebrews 8 is that God, by merely speaking of a new covenant that was to come had made the first covenant old; and to this is added the further revelation that the old covenant, which was even then in a state of decay and waxing old, was ready to vanish away (verse 13); which happened shortly thereafter when, by the utter destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish people throughout the world, every vestige of the priesthood, sacrifices and ordinances pertaining to that old covenant, vanished completely away.

Hebrews 9 begins with a reference to the ordinances of divine service and the sanctuary, a worldly one that pertained to the first covenant. These included the tabernacle and all its appurtenances, special reference being made to the inner sanctuary, into which the high priest alone went, and he but once each year and not without blood. And it is declared that the Holy Ghost signified by those appointments that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, and that the first tabernacle was but a figure for the time then present (verses 6–9). And then follows a statement which marks in the clearest way the beginning of that new era of grace and salvation for all the world, wherein all promises and prophecies were to have their fulfillment and of which all types and figures were but the shadow — the era of good things to come — "But Christ being come, an high priest of good things to come" — (verse 11)! What language can depict the marvelous change effected by that stupendous event, the coming of the Son of God into His own creation in the likeness of sinful flesh! We shall not attempt it, but shall confine ourselves as closely as may be to pointing out the main differences between that first covenant, which was old, decayed, ineffective for the purging of the conscience and ready to vanish away even in the days of Jeremiah, and the new and everlasting covenant whereby the Holy Spirit is given and whereof the Son of God is the High Priest and Mediator, Whose blood purges the consciences of His people from dead works to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14).

Verse 15 expressly declares the reason why He became the Mediator of this new covenant: "And for this cause, He is the Mediator of the new covenant; namely, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions (committed) under the first covenant, they who are called — not all the natural descendants of Jacob and not only they of his lineage, but all both Jews and Gentiles who are effectually called, might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

In Chapter 12 the Lord Jesus is again referred to as The Mediator of the new covenant and here again it is in connection with the shedding of His blood for giving effect thereto. There we find a recital of the things of priceless worth to which the redeemed people of God are come, and verse 24 reads, And to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh

better things than that of Abel, Here is one of the most vivid and most important statements, from a doctrinal standpoint, in this Book or in all the Bible. The blood of Abel, the first human blood that was shed, cried to God for vengeance from the ground (Genesis 4:10); the blood of Jesus Christ pleads for forgiveness in heaven (Hebrews 9:12, 14; 10:19, 22).

4. The Testator

The word *covenant* is found in the English text of the Old Testament about three hundred times, and the word *testament* not once. In both Testaments the highest use of the word covenant is in connection with God's dealings with men, when His dealings take a form which obligates Him to do certain specified things, a form which, when the dealings are between man and man, is commonly called "a contract." Our present concern is solely with covenants to which the Almighty God has, in wondrous grace, condescended to make Himself a party and hence to be obligated by its terms. Now it is self evident that the document, which in modern legal parlance is called a "last will and testament", or a "testamentary devise", could not be used, in a figurative sense or otherwise in connection with the living God. It is, therefore, much to be regretted that the Greek word (*diatheke*) which is rightly and in harmony with the Old Testament translated covenant in Luke 1:72; Acts 3:25; 7:8; Romans 11:27; Hebrews 8:6–10, 13; 9:1, 4; 10:16, 29; 12:24; and 13:20, is in other passages (Matthew 26:23; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6–14; Hebrews 7:22; 9:15–20; Revelation 11:19) wrongly and confusingly translated *testament*, which word conveys to the modern reader's mind the idea of obtaining something through the death of its previous owner — in this case, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Needless it is to say that, while His redeemed people are indeed beneficiaries through His sacrificial death, they are not in any sense whatever His testamentary legatees. Hence it is a cause of confusion that, whereas in Hebrews 9:1,4 the word in question is translated covenant, in verses 15–20, the same identical word, designating the very same thing, is translated *testament*.

It is in this passage that the misleading word testator occurs twice. It is not found elsewhere in the A. V. Here are the verses:

For where a testament is there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth (9:16-17).

By employing the word testator to represent the Greek word διαθημενος (*diathemenos*), the translators of the A. V. have given to the quoted verses a rendering which conveys the idea that the death of Christ made the new covenant effective to the beneficiaries thereof in the same way that the death of a man makes his "last will and testament" to vest in his legatees the properties of which his death divested him. It needs no knowledge of New Testament Greek, but is only necessary to read attentively the verses that immediately precede and those that immediately follow the verses just quoted, to perceive clearly that the quoted verses (16-17) cannot have that meaning. For verse 15 states that the purpose of the death of Christ as Mediator of the new testament was for the redemption of the transgressions (that were committed) under the first testament. verse 18 reads: Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood; which plainly shows that what is here called a testament is properly a compact of such importance as to demand that it be dedicated, or rather consecrated, by the shedding of blood. Therefore we need not go beyond this verse to assure ourselves that the testament in this case is not an instrument that goes into effect by the death of the one who makes it and thereby disposes of his property. The text continues:

(Verse 19). For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people (verse 20) saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you (verse 21). Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry (verse 22). And almost all things

are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission (verse 23). It was necessary therefore that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these (sacrifices); but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

It clearly appears by these verses that the all-important matter in the inauguration or validation of a covenant of the nature of God's old and new covenants, was — not the death of the testator but the sprinkling of the blood of the covenant. In respect to each of those two divinely ordained covenants the Scripture uses the expression the blood of the covenant. In the case of the first, Moses sprinkled both the book, or scroll upon which the terms of the covenant were inscribed and all the people, saying: This is the blood of the covenant which, God hath enjoined unto you (verse 21); and this has its counterpart in the words of Christ, Who, speaking to all His people, says: This is My blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Drink ye all of it (Matthew 26:27-28).

True that in our A. V. (that is, KJV), (which, notwithstanding its imperfections, this writer prefers to all other English versions) the translators have substituted the word *testament* in verses 16, 20, of the old covenant and the new covenant mentioned in Jeremiah's prophecy, quoted in Chapter 8 as is recognized in Chapter 9:1, 4; and notwithstanding that, where the A. V. quotes Moses as saying:

This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you, the Old Testament record declares, according to the A. V., that after Moses had read the book of the covenant in the audience of the people and they had said All that the LORD hath said will we do, then Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold, the blood of THE COVENANT which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words (Exodus 24:7-8).

It is manifest, in the clear light of this Scripture that the A. V.'s rendering of Hebrews 9:20 involves us in contradictions and even impossibilities of a very serious character. For clearly, if testament is the right word in Hebrews 9:20, it is the right word in Exodus 24:7-8, which surely is not the case, the translators of the A. V. themselves being witnesses. And not only so, but, if testament is the right word in Hebrews 9:20, then the children of Israel inherited under that testament and by the death of the testator the properties devised thereby, and, most preposterous of all and most destructive of the truth typified by that transaction, the beasts whose blood was sprinkled for the validation of that testament were — that being the theme and oft-recurring refrain of Chapter 11. *But ye are come unto Mount Zion*. This is, of course, that heavenly Zion which the Psalmist praised and the prophets saw in rapturous vision. Specifically it is God's holy mount upon which He pledged Himself to enthrone His Son as King (Psalm 2:6), His dwelling place, from which goes forth the Scepter of His Strength (Psalm 76:2; 110:2). The things to which we are come under the covenant of grace and which therefore should be the objects of our liveliest interest, are thus listed (according to a literal translation and a correct punctuation):

“Unto Mount Zion;

and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem;

and unto myriads of angels, the universal assembly;

and unto the church of the first born ones, enrolled in heaven;

and unto God, the Judge of all;

and unto the spirits of the just, who have been perfected;

and unto Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant;

and unto the blood of sprinkling, speaking better things than Abel.”

In passing we call attention to the fact that the structure of the passage, which is a parallelism, calls for punctuation such as to connect the universal assembly with the myriads of angels and *not* with the church of the first born.

The exhortation that follows this contrast is based on the word of the Lord spoken through His prophet Haggai, prefaced by a reminder of what occurred at Sinai, Whose Voice then shook the earth; but now He hath promised (Haggai 2:6) Yet once more I shake, not the earth only, but also heaven. And here the Holy Spirit contributes His own exposition of this prophecy, pointing out (what otherwise we should not have known) that this word Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain (Hebrews 12:26–27).

It may be that the second shaking here foretold, which is to be a finality, is that described in Revelation 16:18, where we read. And there were voices and thunders and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great. But there are things even here on earth that cannot be shaken, and the conspicuous thing, the only one here mentioned, is **THE KINGDOM OF GOD**, which we, His New Covenant people have received as little children (Mark 10:15). Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved (same word translated shaken in preceding verse) let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (verse 28).

Thus in the climax of the revelation of truth given in the Epistle to the Hebrews are brought together The Mediator of the New Covenant, The Church of the first born, and The Kingdom which cannot be shaken. In this Epistle it is written that the law made nothing perfect — brought nothing to maturity — but the bringing in of a better hope did; by which we draw nigh unto God (Hebrews 7:19). Again we read that the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image (the substance itself) of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect (10:1). And again, If perfection were (attainable) by the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people received the law, what further need was there that another priest should arise? (7:11). Frequent reference is made in Hebrews to the better things that pertain to the new covenant as compared with the old. We read of a better covenant, better promises, better sacrifices a better substance a better country, a better resurrection. But in no respect does the new covenant excel the old so strikingly as in respect to its better hope, which is likened unto an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast and which entereth into that (sanctuary) within the veil (6:19).

The lesson which Mount Sinai taught most impressively was that God in His righteousness and holiness is unapproachable by man. With a voice of thunder it said, Come not nigh. But the better hope of the new covenant brings the redeemed soul nigh unto God. This is the blessed effect of the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel (12:24), whereby they who once were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13).

It is appropriate to observe, in concluding this part of our study, that while the Old Testament, in practically every part thereof; looks forward to the Kingdom which the God of heaven would establish, over which the Messiah would reign forever, there is no distinct promise or prophecy of the Church He was to build for the habitation of God; though it is indeed possible for us now, in the light of the New Testament Scriptures, to see typical foreshadowings of the Church of Christ in the Old Testament.

The significance of this fact is much enhanced by the further fact that the four Gospels, which constitute four parallel accounts of the beginnings of the Kingdom of God, the reign of His Christ on earth, make no mention at all of His Church, with the exception of Christ's own announcement of His purpose to build it at an unannounced time thereafter; while the book of the Acts, which continues the history of the Kingdom of God down to about the year A. D. 63 makes no mention at all of this

heavenly Church, though it records the beginnings of many churches of God both in Judea and Samaria and among the Gentiles.

Thus it very clearly appears by the Scriptures that, up to the end of the historical books of the New Testament the only institution on earth to which the name Church was given, was the local congregation of believers in Jesus Christ. And this is true of all the books of the New Testament and not of the historical books only.

11

THE USAGE OF “CHURCH” AND “KINGDOM” IN ACTS

It is evident upon close attention to all the pertinent passages in Acts that the words *church* and *Kingdom* are never used interchangeably, that the former is always used to designate a local congregation of people and the latter to designate the reign of God throughout the world, regardless of locality, over all who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and yield willing obedience to the law of Christ. The first occurrence in Acts of the word *church* in the A. V. is in the last verse of Chapter 2, which reads: “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” Evidently what is here called the *church* is the *local congregation* of believers at Jerusalem, and therefore the passage is in accord with the uniform usage of the word throughout the Scriptures. But inasmuch as many leading authorities reject the words to the church and make the passage read added to them, we do not rely on this verse as helping to establish the Biblical usage of the church.

The next occurrence, however, (Acts 5:11) is undisputed: And great fear came upon all the (the whole) church, and upon as many as heard these things — that is the swift judgment that was visited first upon Ananias and then upon his wife. This local assembly of believers at Jerusalem was the first congregation on earth to which the appellative church belonged. Other churches, however, soon came into existence. The next verse (Acts 5:12) records a fact which, though of much interest, has received but little notice in the commentaries; namely, that the meeting place of the first Christian church on earth was in one of the spacious corridors of the temple, the one known as Solomon’s Porch. This was the place where our Lord was wont to teach (John 10:23); and it appears that it continued to be the meeting place of His disciples after His ascension (Acts 3:11). It was the place where they assembled at a stated hour for prayer (Acts 3:1).

We should not think it strange that, at that time, the disciples of Christ should have been accorded the privilege of assembling within the precincts of the temple; for that privilege was granted without discrimination to all the sects of the Jews — Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and others — regardless of their wide doctrinal differences. Therefore, even to the sect of the Nazarenes, as they were colloquially designated (Acts 24:5), was accorded at that time a meeting place within the sacred precincts of the temple. For until the great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), the disciples enjoyed favor with all the people (Acts 2:47), insomuch that the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith (6:7). But that comfortable state of things could not continue; for it was not in accordance with God’s plan for the extension of His Kingdom throughout the world that the disciples should keep together and continue to be in favor with the priests and people at Jerusalem; and therefore He permitted a great persecution to arise, the result being that they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles (8:1). This great persecution was directed against the church which was at Jerusalem, which by that time embraced many thousands of members. But the result of that great persecution reduced the number of disciples there to a very few. It is recorded that

As for Saul he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and, haling men and women, committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching

the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them (verses 3–5). And when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God ... they were baptized, both men and women (verse 12).

Thus according to the usage of the Scriptures there is so great a difference between the church (on earth) and the Kingdom, that the very same event which made havoc of the former brought about the extension of the latter, through the sowing of the good seed, *i.e.*, preaching the Kingdom of God, over a wide area. Manifestly it would be impossible to substitute either one of those terms for the other. For it could not be said either that the persecution which arose about Stephen made havoc of the Kingdom or that it enlarged the church. This discrimination between the two institutions of God in the world, His churches and His Kingdom, is carefully maintained throughout the Scriptures, and the need for distinguishing clearly between them is as great now as it was in those early days.

Yet another reference is made (Acts 11:19) to those who were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen. It is recorded that some of them traveled as far as Phenice and Cyprus and Antioch (Acts 11:19). But the apostles remained at Jerusalem, and it appears that James was the recognized leader; for it was he who delivered the judgment of the conclave upon the great occasion chronicled in Acts 15:13–21). Moreover, the Epistle of James is addressed to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad (James 1:1).

The word *church* occurs in Stephen's address, where speaking of Moses, he said (Acts 7:38): This is he that was in the *church* in the wilderness. This is an appropriate use of the word *church* and is in accordance with the uniform usage of Scripture; for the people of Israel were all together in the same locality, and Moses was in that *church*. The word is synonymous here and elsewhere with *congregation*, which is used about two hundred times in the Old Testament to describe the company of the children of Israel.

In Acts 9:31 is the first occurrence of churches. Immediately following the description in that chapter of the conversion of Saul is this statement. Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified and ... multiplied (verse 31). This Scripture is useful as a guide to those engaged in evangelistic effort, showing that the Kingdom of God should be so preached as, not only to make disciples, but also to draw together the converts in each locality, thereby forming a church of God wherein the Holy Spirit may preside and administer the manifold grace of God by distributing the gifts of ministry to every man severally as He will (1 Corinthians 12:11).

This usage of the plural *churches*, to designate the totality of the assemblies of a province or state, as Judaea, Samaria, etc., instead of saying the church of Judaea, the church of Samaria, the church of Asia (as has been the usage of Christendom for many centuries) is likewise instructive and important. There is no argument here against a nationwide organization of the churches of God. But it strongly emphasizes the individuality and completeness in itself of each several church; and it shows that to call the entire association of individual churches the church of England, or other nation or state, is a departure from the clear guidance of Scripture and must needs entail regrettable consequences. The plural form of church is found in the following additional passages in the Book of Acts:

“And he (Paul) went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches” (15:41).

“And so were the churches established in the faith and increased in number daily” (16:5).

As well as in 19:37. (Here the word *churches*, found in the A. V., is not in the original, which instead of robbers of *churches* has a compound word signifying *temple plunderers*.)

Reverting to the use of *church* in the singular, we find two occurrences thereof in Chapter 11. These are instructive, especially when considered together. Verse 22 reads: “Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas that he

should go as far as Antioch.” Only a short time previously there was but one *church* in the world, the church at Jerusalem. Hence it was at first called simply the *church*. But soon it was but one among many churches, each of which had an equal right to the name. Hence it is no longer the *church*, but is identified as *the church which was at Jerusalem*. But its members are not isolated from other Christians. On the contrary, its ears are eagerly attentive to tidings from every part of the Kingdom of God, especially from another church. So Barnabas departed upon his mission, going first to Tarsus to seek Saul; and having found him, *he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch*. Here we have an example of comity between the several churches in respect to *the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship* as from the beginning (Acts 2:42). We observe also that the appellation *the church* belonged as well to the assembly of Christians at Antioch as to that at Jerusalem.

But the church at Jerusalem was not to escape further persecution. For about that time Herod the king (Herod Agrippa I) *stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword; and because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also ... Peter therefore was kept in prison (to await the approaching feast of the Passover) but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him* (Acts 12:1–5). The only comment these verses call for is that the church mentioned in them was that at Jerusalem, where the apostles had remained when the others were all scattered abroad. And now one apostle is slain and another is imprisoned. But *the church*, whose members resided so close together that they could assemble when necessary, continued unceasingly in prayer for the latter.

Chapter 14 contains the continuation of the account of the first journey of Barnabas and Paul through certain provinces in Asia Minor, including Pisidia, Pamphylia and Lycaonia. At verse 21 we read *that when they had preached the gospel to that city (Derbe) and had made many disciples (margin) they returned again to Lystra and Iconium and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith and that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church ... they commended them to the Lord* (verses 21–23); after which they returned to Antioch, from whence *they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work they had fulfilled. And when they were come and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles* (verses 26–27). In this passage the church is composed of a company of people dwelling so close together that they could readily be gathered at one place.

The *much tribulation* whereof the apostles spake and through which they said we must enter into the Kingdom of God, was apparently that through which they themselves had just been passing (13:50; 14:5, 19). In these passages we observe again the importance of maintaining a clear distinction between kingdom and church; for, on the one hand, it would be manifestly incongruous to say that we must through much tribulation enter into the Church of God; and equally so on the other hand to say that the apostles, when they were come to Antioch, gathered the Kingdom together. We note also that elders were ordained *in every church*, which again marks the individuality of each church; and we remark in passing that there are no *elders* among the officials of the Kingdom.

In Chapter 15 it is recorded of Paul and Barnabas that, having been deputed to go with certain others to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles about the question of circumcision, *being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria; and that when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church and of the apostles and elders* (verses 1–4). This passage bears clear testimony to the fact that the church is a relatively small local body; and again we note the impossibility of substituting *kingdom* for *church* in either of the two occurrences of the latter word.

In Chapter 15:22 is the following: *Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas*. It is evident that *the whole church* of this passage was the local assembly at Jerusalem, identified also as their own company as distinguished from that at Antioch.

In Acts 18:22 it is recorded concerning Paul that *When he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up (to Jerusalem) and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch*. Here again it is evident that the church was a relatively small company, capable of being assembled in one spot and of being saluted. The incongruity of speaking of saluting the Kingdom of God is obvious.

In Chapter 20 are found the last occurrences of the word *church* in the Book of the Acts. It here occurs in the affecting account given of the apostle's tender taking leave of the elders of the church at Ephesus. He did not visit Ephesus on that occasion, but from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church (verse 17). To them he declared his intense desire to finish his course with joy and the ministry he *had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God*; and then said:

“And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone, preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my face no more . . . Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood” (verse 28).

Here as elsewhere throughout the Book of the Acts the *church* is a local congregation of God's peoples. The passage teaches also that every church that is true to the New Testament pattern is entitled to regard itself as *the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood*, and that it is also a *flock* of God over which the duly constituted elders are qualified by the Holy Spirit to feed (or shepherd) them. Moreover, we perceive from this Scripture again how clearly the *church of God* and the *kingdom of God* are distinguished the one from the other. We cannot even conceive of the apostle's saying he had gone among them *preaching the church of God*, or of his enjoining the elders to *feed the kingdom of God over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers*.

12

THE USAGE OF “CHURCH” IN THE EPISTLES

We have no proof that the order in which the books of the New Testament are now arranged in our Bibles was divinely planned. Yet it is easy to be seen that there is a fitness therein manifested such as to suggest a divine superintendence in the making of that arrangement. Especially it is recognized that the Epistle to the Romans is, because of the supreme importance of its doctrinal contents, entitled to the place of precedence given it. Therefore it is significant for the purpose of our present study that whereas the Kingdom of God in its relation to the gospel of God concerning His Son is the main theme of Romans, that book makes no reference at all to the heavenly Church, the body of Christ, and only casually mentions (in the last chapter) local churches existing at the time.

We do not take this fact as indicating that God’s Kingdom has greater importance in His eyes than His Church. Nor do we think that such a comparison is called for or is even possible. Both the Kingdom and the Church of God are supremely glorious; but each has its own distinctive glory, whereof our best ideas are pitifully inadequate. Nevertheless, the stated fact — concerning the prominence of the doctrine of the Kingdom in Romans — is calculated to impress upon the people of God that, in this life, they have close and vital relations with the Kingdom of God and with the churches of God, whereas they will not come into conscious relations with the Church which is being builded for God’s eternal habitation, until the coming of the day of glory. It is also a notable fact that Romans contains the most comprehensive definition of the Kingdom of God in the entire Bible. Moreover, when that definition is carefully examined it is found to be a summary of the doctrine of the entire Epistle: *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost* (Romans 14:17).

The negative part of this definition — not meat and drink, or more accurately, not eating and drinking — was specially designed no doubt to present the Kingdom of God in strong contrast with the ideal kingdom of beneficence and worldly prosperity cherished and expected by the Jews of that day; which ideal was based upon what is recorded in the Scriptures concerning the inauguration of King David’s reign. For upon that great occasion the princes and the mighty men of all the tribes of Israel came to Hebron to make David king over all Israel ... And there they were with David three days, eating and drinking. For those of the nearby tribes brought abundance of all manner of good things to eat and drink on asses, camels, mules and oxen; and there was joy in Israel (1 Chronicles 12:38–40). The Kingdom of God is of wholly different character, not eating and drinking and joy in Israel, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

As has been already pointed out, Romans proclaims and describes a Kingdom wherein grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life over men, both Jews and Gentiles, who have received the gift of God’s righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ; they having been delivered from the dominion wherein sin hath reigned unto death. And the message that proclaims the existence of this Kingdom, that describes the blessedness of those who enter it, and that points out the way and the conditions of entrance, is,

“The gospel of God ... concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (1:1–4).

The entire letter bears witness to the very close connection between *The Gospel of God*, and *The Kingdom of God*; showing indeed that the existence of that Kingdom, established upon the lasting foundation of the sacrificial death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of David, is the good news, and indeed the best of good news, for all mankind. This is the glad tidings ordained of God to be preached for the obedience of faith among all nations (1:5).

By thus showing what the Kingdom of God is, the Epistle reveals also the difference between it and the Church. For none of the things said about the former is applicable to the latter. It could not be said of the Church of God, for example, that it is not meat and drink, but is righteousness, peace and joy. That description would not fit the Church at all; for its glory is of an altogether different sort, though equally divine. The Epistle to the Romans is rightly regarded as the foundation of the doctrinal part of the New Testament in that it contains the divine revelation of truth which is of primary importance to all men in their natural state of sin and misery. For the immediate spiritual need of every human being is a divinely authoritative answer to the question, “How can a man be righteous with God”? And here is the answer; which answer is so given that countless millions have through it found lasting peace for their consciences and satisfaction for their hearts. Therefore, the fact that Romans contains no reference at all to the Church which Christ is building for an habitation of God proves at least that the truth in respect thereto is not needed for meeting the primary needs of men, and also that there is a great difference between the Kingdom and the Church.

This difference is emphasized by the further fact that, while there is no reference in Romans to the heavenly Church, the last chapter does contain several passing references to local churches existing at the time. In verse 1 we read: I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant (deaconess) of the church which is at Cenchrea; and in verses 3–5: Greet Priscilla and Aquilla my helpers in Christ Jesus: who for my life laid down their own necks; Unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. And in verse 16: The churches of Christ salute you.

These apostolical greetings show: (1) that wherever the gospel of God, which is the gospel of the Kingdom, was preached at the beginning, churches of Christ came into existence; (2) that an assembly of saints was a church, even though its place of meeting was a private house; (3) that the aggregate of Gentile Christians did not constitute the Gentile church, but the churches of the Gentiles; and (4) that the aggregate of Christians in the world did not constitute the Church of Christ, but were distributed among the churches of Christ.

Each of the Corinthian Epistles is addressed to the church of God which is at Corinth. This is another reminder that the august title, The Church of God, does not belong to the totality of Christians on earth, but to any and every congregation of the Lord, wherever located. See also the recurrence of the phrase church of God, in 1 Corinthians 10:32 and 11:22, and other occurrences thereof, as pointed out below.

The word *church* occurs *thirty-one* times in the two Corinthian Epistles; *seventeen* of these occurrences being in the *singular* number and *fourteen* in the *plural*. By this alone it may be seen that those Epistles are rich in church truth. This is a big topic in itself and it does not lie within the scope of our present study. What concerns us therein is the strong and clear testimony which these letters bear to the meaning of the word church. Here are some of the most significant occurrences, all the others being entirely consistent: As I teach everywhere in every church (1 Corinthians 4:17); Who are least esteemed in the church (6:4); When ye come together in the church (11:18); Have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God? (11:22); Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding ... than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue (14:19); If therefore the whole Church be come together into one place ... (14:23). These verses plainly declare the Bibli-

cal meaning of the word to be the assembly of the people of God in a particular locality; and the explicit teaching of Chapter 12 is that each church of God should be so constituted as to function as an organism, the analogy being the human body (verses 13–27). There we read that God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him (verse 18); and likewise that God hath set some in the church (verse 28). It is manifestly a necessity that the members be in contact with each other in order to function as a body.

On the other hand, the *fourteen* occurrences of churches equally declare that the churches of a particular country, state, province or district, do not constitute a church. We quote the following passages: And so ordain I in all churches (1 Corinthians 7:17); We have no such custom, neither the churches of God (11:16); As in all churches of the saints (14:33); As I have given order to the churches of Galatia (16:1); The churches of Asia salute you (16:19); The grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia (2 Corinthians 8:1); The brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches, and ... who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us (8:18–19); They are the messengers of the churches (8:23); I robbed other churches, taking wages of them to do you service (11:8); That which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches (11:28).

Because of the strange doctrine of recent origin that has been based upon 1 Corinthians 10:32, there is need perhaps of special comment upon that verse: *Give none offense; neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles (Greeks) nor to the church of God*. This verse is taken by some as having the effect of dividing all living human beings into just three classes: Jews, Gentiles and Christians; and this is advanced as an instance of *rightly dividing the word of truth*. This interpretation, and the system of which it is a part, are of recent origin (dating from about 1850); yet the system has gained a sizable following. Our present concern is only with so much of the exegesis as makes *the church of God* to be synonymous with *Christians*. That interpretation is not only without warrant, but is directly contrary to the usage of the phrase *church of God* in this very Epistle and indeed wherever else it occurs in the New Testament. Finally the interpretation under discussion is alien to the substance of the passage in which the quoted verse occurs.

In Galatians the word *church* occurs once in the singular and twice in the plural form. In Galatians 1:13 the apostle makes the same confession as in 1 Corinthians 15:9, saying *Beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it*. The *church of God* here referred to was the only church in existence up to that time, the church at Jerusalem, concerning which it is written: *And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committing them to prison* (Acts 8:1, 3).

This Epistle is addressed — not to a single church, but — to *the churches of Galatia* (1:2) and in the same chapter, (verse 22), Paul states that after his first visit to Jerusalem to see Peter, and subsequently, when he came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, he was *unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea, which are in Christ*. Each occurrence of the word *churches* is a witness against the use of *church* in the collective sense.

As has been shown above, Ephesians is unique in that its subject is the Church which Jesus Christ is building upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, (He Himself being the chief corner stone) for an habitation of God through the Spirit (Chapter 2:20–22). The word church occurs *nine* times in this Epistle, each time in the singular form, and each time referring to the Church which Christ loved, for which He gave Himself and which He will hereafter present to Himself a Church of glory, not having spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:25–27).

Philippians contains *two* occurrences of church. One of these refers again to the apostle’s persecution of the church at Jerusalem (3:6); and the other is in a passage in which he recalls the thoughtfulness of the Philippian saints for his temporal needs, saying: “No church communicated with me ... but ye only” (4:15).

In Colossians are *four* occurrences of church. Two of these refer to the Church of eternity: And He is the Head of the body, the church (1:18); For His body's sake, which is the Church (1:24). The other two occurrences refer each to a local church here below: Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church which is in his house. And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans (4:15–16).

Each of the Thessalonian letters is addressed to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. These are the only occurrences of the word in the singular form. Each Epistle contains also the word churches. “For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 2:14). “So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God” (2 Thessalonians 1:4).

In Paul's first epistle to Timothy the word church occurs *three* times. It appears by 1 Timothy 1:3 that when Paul went into Macedonia he left Timothy at Ephesus to exercise supervision of the work there. He now writes instructions for the guidance of his own son in the faith (verse 2) relative to the affairs of the church in that city; especially as to the qualifications of bishops (or overseers) and deacons. Concerning the former the apostle says that a bishop should be one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. “For if a man know not how to rule his own house how shall he take care of the church of God?” (3:4–5). Then, after like instructions concerning deacons, the apostle says:

“These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly. But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (3:14–15).

Thus again a local assembly of saints is declared to be the church of God ... the house of God, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. The third and last occurrence of church in the Epistles to Timothy is in 1 Timothy 5:16, which reads: “If any man or woman that believeth hath widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged.” This calls for no comment.

Philemon 2 contains a reference to the church in thy house.

Hebrews 2:12 quotes Psalm 22:22 thus: “In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee.” In the Psalm quoted the words are, in the midst of the congregation. Thus we are given to know that the New Testament word *ekklesia* is the equivalent of the Old Testament word represented in the A. V. by the English word *congregation*. Comment has already been made on the mention in Hebrews 12:23, of the church of the first born which are written in heaven, and there is no need for further remarks thereon.

Prominence is given in Hebrews to God's present Kingdom over which the Son of God rules and reigns. The opening words proclaim Him as the One through Whom God has spoken unto us in these last days, and Who, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high — that is, ascended to the throne of God, in fulfillment of Psalm 110:1 (Hebrews 1:1–3). And this is followed by a reference to His throne and His scepter: But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy Kingdom (verse 8, quoted from Psalm 45:6–7). The throne He occupies is a throne of grace (4:16). That righteousness is the outstanding characteristic of His Kingdom is again brought to mind in the presentation of Jesus Christ the Son of God as the antitype of Melchisedec; who was by interpretation, king of righteousness (7:2). In Chapter 8:1 is another reference to the fact that Christ is now seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; and this is repeated in slightly different terms at Chapter 10:12–13. Thus, throughout the unfolding of the truth of the New Covenant, the closely related subject of the Kingdom of God is kept constantly in view. And lastly that Kingdom, which we have received, is here declared to be the one thing which will survive the final shaking of all things (12:26–28).

The Epistle of James contains solitary reference to the church: "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church" (James 5:14). Obviously the church of this passage is a local body.

The Epistles of Peter *do not* contain the word church (church in 1 Peter 5:13 being a supplied word). However, as has been already pointed out in these pages, there is a clear reference in 1 Peter 2:4–6) to that eternal Church which Christ had declared His purpose to build, though the word church is not used. For the apostle speaks of those to whom his letter was addressed as living stones who were being built up a spiritual house, upon Christ as the chief corner Stone of Isaiah's prophecy (28:16).

On the other hand, Peter indicates very plainly the relation of the redeemed of the Lord while here on earth to the Kingdom of God as His new covenant people; for he declares that they *are a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a purchased people* (1 Peter 2:9, *margin*); *which in time past were not a people, but now are the people of God* (verse 10). Also in his second Epistle Peter speaks of an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:11); which reminds us that to Peter were committed the keys of that heavenly Kingdom (Matthew 16:19).

The Epistles of John contain *three* references to the church; these being all in his *third* epistle, which is addressed to an individual, the well beloved Gaius. The apostle commends him because both brethren and strangers had borne witness of his charity before the church (verse 6). In verse 9 the apostle says: "I wrote to the church; but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not;" which suggests a reason why this letter was addressed to a private individual. The apostle then goes on to rehearse some of the evil deeds of that usurper of ecclesiastical authority, among which were that neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church (verse 10).

It is clearly apparent that these references in John's third Epistle are all to a local congregation. The last of the citations shows that evils which have beset the churches of God in the past and are prevalent therein today, had their origin in the days of the apostles. It is evident that even at the beginning of our era; church membership did not guarantee perfection of heart and behavior.

Before completing our survey of the Epistles, it is appropriate to call attention to the progress of doctrine observable therein as the several books are arranged in our common versions, an order that has come down to us from very early times. In Romans prominence is given to the gospel of God concerning His Son (Whom He calls in Psalm 2, My King,) which is intimately related to the reign of God over His redeemed people; the Church of Matthew 16:18 being out of sight. In the Corinthian Epistles the subject of the gospel of the Kingdom is presented as to its outcome in the formation of local churches, which are the prominent subject of these Epistles. Galatians supplements the teaching of Romans, with the manifest object of bringing clearly into view the wide difference between law and grace, between Judaism and Christianity, and exhibiting the effect of the cross of Christ.

These matters — the Gospel, the Kingdom and the local Church — with which the redeemed people of God are immediately concerned during their earthly sojourn, having received due attention, the apostle to whom God committed the major part of the duty of teaching His people, gives attention to their place of future sojourn, the heavenly places, and to the things which are above, where Christ is sitting on the right hand of God, the chief of those heavenly things being the Church which is now being builded for an habitation of God through the Spirit; those things being the prominent subjects of Ephesians and Colossians. The Thessalonian Epistles are occupied largely with the subject of the second coming of Christ, and are therefore in their logical place. The remaining Epistles are chiefly of a practical character having to do with the believer's behavior in his relations with God, with his brethren and with them which are without.

13

THE KINGDOM AND THE CHURCHES IN REVELATION

The Book of the Revelation has a special claim upon the affectionate regard of the people of God. For it is His last communication to them, being the completion of His written Word; and not only so, but it contains the final message of their glorified Redeemer, which He spake to them from heaven. That final message is avowedly prophetic in character; for John refers to its contents as the words of this prophecy (1:3); and in the last chapter we have from the lips of the angel who showed John these things the phrase, thrice repeated, *the sayings* (or words) *of the prophecy of this book* (22:7, 10, 18) and once, *the words of the book of this prophecy* (22:19). Therefore, notwithstanding it also contains references to what existed or had already happened at the time of the writing of the book, it is mainly occupied with things which lay in the then future. For that reason the information it contains concerning the subjects of our present study are of special interest and value; for it shows us not only the past but also the future usage of the words *Kingdom* and *Church* according to the vocabulary of heaven.

This book is properly to be classified with the historical books of the New Testament, the Gospels and Acts; for it is mainly a chronicle of events, *things which must shortly come to pass*; which things are none the less historical because at the time of writing they were yet in the future. And not only so, but the, inspired writer places at the very forefront of the book the most transcendent of all events that were yet to happen in the history of the world; for, *having announced the message as from Him Who is and Who was and Who is to come; and from the Seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ the faithful Witness, the First begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth*, the writer exclaims, as one who is enraptured with the glory of that far-off vision: **BEHOLD, HE COMETH WITH THE CLOUDS!** (The definite article before clouds signifies the special clouds which indicate the presence of Deity; Exodus 13:21–22; 1 Kings 8:10; Psalm 18:12; Matthew 24:30; 26:64).

Thus when, by the aid of the light here given, we look toward that long expected and ardently desired event, which stands upon the verge of eternity, our eye sweeps over all the intervening time. Many and various are the objects thus presented to our view, and all are of enthralling interest. But we may not comment upon any of these, it being needful that we should confine ourselves strictly to the subject in hand. Therefore we come to this last book of the Bible with the question: What does it reveal touching “those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ?” namely, His Kingdom, His Church and His churches? Preliminarily, and by way of a short answer to this question, what chiefly impresses the present writer is that, while the Kingdom of this Prince of the kings of the earth, this glorious King of kings and Lord of lords, is given great prominence; and while He has many things to say concerning and unto the *CHURCHES*, there is never a word here to the *CHURCH*. Indeed there is not to be found in this book the faintest indication of the existence of such an institution throughout the vast period of time covered by it. On the other hand, the reference to the approaching Marriage Supper of the Lamb and the announcement that His wife hath made herself ready (19:7) immediately precede the fulfillment of that first prophetic vision of the book, Behold He cometh. For the next word is:

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth He judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire and on His head were many crowns; ... And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (19:11–16).

But the Bride, the Lamb’s Wife, is not seen in this vision, it being merely said of her that *she hath made herself ready, and to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints*. Assuming, as is generally agreed, that the *Bride* is a symbol for the whole company of the redeemed of the earth, in a word the Church, it is noteworthy that the Bride appears only as a part of the new creation, being seen in the vision of the new heaven and new earth, whereof the first recorded feature is *the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, adored as a Bride for her husband* (21:2). This feature of the new creation, to which such prominence is given, is of special interest to all the people of God because of the statement of the apostle Paul that *the Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all* (Galatians 4:26), and because also of the fact recorded in Hebrews 11, that Abraham was in his day looking for the *city which has the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God* (Hebrews 11:10). But this is not all; for this first revealed object of the new creation of God is made yet more conspicuous by the impressive manner in which it was brought to John’s attention. For he writes:

“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the Bride, the Lamb’s Wife” (21:9).

There is a significant contrast here with the vision of Chapter 17, where (as here) there came to John one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, who said to him, *Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters* (17:1); concerning whom it is written at the end of that chapter, *And the woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth* (17:18).

For the purpose of that vision, John was carried away *in the spirit into the wilderness* (17:3). But here we read: *And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone most precious*. This was the city, distinguished by its foundations, for which Abraham was waiting in his day. For John records that *the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb* (21:14).

Thus Abraham, from the first book of the Bible, directs the expectation of all the household of faith, who are the true seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:7, 29), to this vision in the last pages of the last book thereof; and this is enough in itself to show that they do greatly err who say that to Abraham and his seed were given earthly promises, which were to be fulfilled in, and in connection with the earthly Jerusalem, which is here referred to as *the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified* (Revelation 11:8; Isaiah 1:10).

So much for what the last book of the Bible reveals of that holy Church, concerning which it is elsewhere written, as an example and admonition to all Christian husbands, that: *Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it unto Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish* (Ephesians 5:25–27).

The Kingdom and Patience of Jesus Christ

The greeting of John, by whose hand this book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ was written, is addressed to *the seven churches which are in Asia* — not, be it noted, to the Church of Christ; and for those churches he invokes the blessings of grace and peace from Him Who is and Who was and Who is to come;

and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the First begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. And to Him John ascribes special honor in these terms — Unto Him that loved (more correctly, loveth) us and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, even His Father — to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (1:4–6).

Before inscribing the messages of Christ — the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending — to the seven churches in Asia, John identifies himself in these terms: *I, John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ — (1:9)*. It is an enlightening fact that John here describes himself as the companion of those for whose benefit this book was written — not in the Church of Jesus Christ, but — in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. This is conclusive proof that the Kingdom of Jesus Christ was then in existence, and that John and those also who are addressed in this book were companions therein; that is were sharers together of all the benefits as well as of all the obligations and responsibilities incident thereto. This not only is very pertinent to our present subject but is, moreover, a truth of immense practical importance. The saints of God on earth are, each and all, members, component parts, of a divinely constituted body; and therefore it is of prime importance to each of them that he should clearly understand the nature of that body, the purpose of its existence, and his own part, place and duty therein. That body is called, in the Scriptures of the New Testament, a Kingdom, and specifically the Kingdom of God. It is that dominion (verse 6) over which Jesus Christ the Son of God rules and reigns in resurrection power from God's throne in heaven.

Therefore the people of God should habitually think of their relations with Jesus Christ, with one another, and with the unsaved, in terms of a Kingdom. Christ is *THE KING, eternal, immortal, invisible*, Who saves them from their sins and their enemies, and to Whom they owe willing obedience and loyal service under constraint of His words *If ye love Me, keep My commandments*; to Him they are an holy nation, a royal priesthood, a purchased people; to other Christians they are *companions* in His Kingdom and His endurance; to those who do not acknowledge His sovereignty and render Him their allegiance, they are *ambassadors for Christ*, to beseech them in His stead to be reconciled to God; and in the warfare which He continually wages against the enemies of God — the principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, the hosts of spiritual wickedness in heavenly places — they are to *endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ*. These things are plainly written in the Scriptures of the New Testament; but, for lack of scribes who are *instructed unto the Kingdom of heaven* (Matthew 13:52) God's people are not taught them. And it is one of the deplorable results of the substitution in Christian nomenclature of the word *Church* for *Kingdom*, that the fact of the Kingdom, the truth that pertains to it and the enthusiasm which it is calculated to arouse, have all but disappeared from the consciousness and from the experience of the people of God.

It is not only unbiblical, but is also incongruous, to apply to the Church the terms which the Scriptures apply to the Kingdom. The incongruity of speaking of the conflicts, the warfare and the triumphs of the Church is manifest; for a building in course of construction, a body whose members are incomplete, and especially a bride awaiting her espousals, cannot engage in battles or gain victories. Such expressions — so common in Christian literature and hymnology — as “the Church victorious,” “the Church militant,” and such lines as “Like a mighty army moves the Church of God,” make utter discord with the harmonious words of Holy Writ; and no less so because this discordant terminology has been prevalent for centuries of time. The essentials of a kingdom are: a king, his people and a domain. In the case of the Kingdom of God, Jesus Christ, Who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, is the King all glorious, Who rules that Kingdom from the throne of God in heaven; His people are all they who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and translated into His Kingdom by God the Father; the domain of that Kingdom is this earth, which God has given to the children of men. Manifestly those essentials of the Kingdom of God do not pertain, and cannot be fitted, to the Church, which is the building of God, the body and bride of Christ. Nor do they pertain to any one or more of the churches of God. In the light of all the Scriptures these distinctions are perfectly clear.

Therefore, having pondered long and earnestly upon the present state of affairs, both in the Kingdom of God and also in the churches of God, we cannot regard it as a matter of indifference but rather of grave concern, that in our day the existence of the Kingdom of God as a present reality, the place and responsibility of every regenerated person therein, and the great and precious truths and promises that pertain thereto, have all but faded out of the consciousness of those who have entered into that Kingdom by the door of the new birth; while at the same time the important word **CHURCH** has been divested of the meaning it invariably has in the divine vocabulary and is forced to do duty for the forsaken word **KINGDOM**.

Therefore it is deeply impressed upon us that there exists at this critical hour no need more urgent than that those who realize the existing state of affairs, which has been but faintly and inadequately depicted in these pages, should be anxiously seeking God's remedy there for; and specially seeking a revival of the long neglected duty of preaching the Kingdom of God (Acts 8:12; 20:25; 28:31); teaching the things which concern the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3); persuading the things concerning the Kingdom of God (Acts 19:8); and expounding and testifying the Kingdom of God (Acts 28:23). These Scriptures are not meaningless. They are not obsolete. And they cannot be disregarded without incurring serious loss.

We should not miss the significance of the fact that John couples the Kingdom of Jesus Christ with the patience of Jesus Christ, and that, in direct connection therewith, he speaks of tribulation. The need of patience in the present era of the Kingdom, while awaiting the glorious appearing of the King of kings, and the connection of tribulation with patience is strongly emphasized in the Scriptures. We read that *tribulation worketh patience* (Romans 5:3); that *if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it* (Romans 8:25); that we *have need of patience* (Hebrews 10:36); that the trying of your faith worketh patience (James 1:3); and we are admonished to *be patient unto the coming of the Lord*, imitating the example of the husbandman who *waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth and hath long patience for it* (James 5:7). This Biblical patience, which is befitting the citizens of God's heavenly Kingdom, is a state of cheerful and hopeful endurance of tribulation, a quiet constancy and patient continuance in well doing and in the will of God, as having perfect assurance concerning the outcome of all trials and griefs. The companionship which John speaks of in this passage and which subsists between all the citizens of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is closely akin to the important Bible word *communion*. There is much instruction in this.

The Lord's Final Testimony to Those in the Churches

We have seen that the Kingdom and the churches are prominent at the beginning of the book of Revelation, being put plainly before our eyes as divine institutions with both of which the people of God, each and all, are closely related while on earth. On the other hand, the Church of Christ, first mentioned in Matthew 16:18, is conspicuous only by its absence. Nor is it otherwise at the end of the book. For there, in addition to the references to Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, already cited, we find these impressive words: *I, Jesus, have sent Mine angel to testify these things unto you in the churches. I AM the root and the offspring of David and the bright and morning star* (22:16).

The phrase "these things" obviously refers to the entire contents of the book. It has the same significance as the things which must shortly come to pass of Chapter 1:1. The verse just quoted (22:16) is notable as containing the last of our Lord's great *I AM*'s; and we must not miss the significance of the fact that this *I AM* connects Him in a remarkable way with King David. It seems as if He wished, by His very last descriptive reference to Himself, to impress upon His people that in Him are fulfilled all the manifold and glorious prophecies and promises that are associated with the name of David, many of which came through David himself.

Moreover, the descriptive phrase *Root and Offspring of David*, occurring here at the very end of the New Testament, reminds us of the twice-repeated words, David the king at the very beginning thereof (Matthew 1:6). From this it may fairly be inferred that the *Kingship of Jesus Christ, Son of David* (Matthew 1:1) is the great theme of the New Testament from beginning to end. And such is in-

deed the case. It surely is not without significance that David's is the first and also the last name mentioned in the New Testament of one who was but a mortal man; and that in both instances David's name is so closely associated with that of Jesus the Messiah. One important truth of which we are thereby reminded is that Jesus Christ, being of *the Seed of David according to the flesh* (Romans 1:3) is the Heir of all the blessings that are comprehended in that comforting promise: *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* (Isaiah 55:3; Acts 13:34).

In this, the last *I AM of Christ*, He asserts His preexistence to David and also that He was *the Root* from which David sprang. This is equivalent to declaring that He was David's Creator; and this brings us near the great truth that *of Him* as the Source, and *by Him*, as the creative Agent, and *unto Him* as the Heir, *are all things* (Romans 11:36). Or as it is elsewhere written for the comfort and instruction of those whom God the Father *has translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son*, that,

“By Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers, all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist ... For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell” (Colossians 1:16–17, 19).

So we have here the last message from the glorified Redeemer, sent by Him in His character of Prince of things of the earth (and as such entitled to the allegiance of all men), the promised Son of David, while at the same time He is the *Root* from which David sprang; the message having been sent by the hand of His angel, to the end that these things should be testified in the churches.

Believing, as we do, that the inspiration of these Holy Writings is not confined to the substance thereof, but extends to the words, we can but feel deeply concerned that, in respect to these supremely important things, there has been a widespread departure from the form of sound words (2 Timothy 1:13) on the part of those who teach the household of God, that departure being so radical that any who should give in his own words the substance of the verse upon which we are now commenting (Revelation 22:16) would say, *testify ... in the Church* instead of (as it is written) *in the churches*. This has come about, notwithstanding it plainly appears (by the message our risen Lord has sent to be testified in the churches, and by all the other Scriptures as well) that there is no Church to which all the people of God on earth belong; that *the holy church throughout all the world*, whereof that venerable anthem, the *Te Deum* sings, is a figment of the imagination of man. On the other hand, and this we re — not the Church going up from the earth to heaven to dwell with God, but the Church *coming down from God out of heaven*, in order that *the tabernacle of God may be with men, and He shall dwell with them*. Seeing that these things cannot be gainsaid, is it not greatly to be desired — for the truth's sake and to keep alive in the consciousness of the people of God the existence of His Kingdom and the nature of their relation to it — that its proper Biblical designation be consistently given it? The writer's conviction is that this question should be answered by a strong affirmative.

What the Spirit Is Saying To the Churches

All the seven letters have the same beginning, the only difference being the name of the particular city in which the particular church is located. *To the angel of the church of — write: These things saith He* — and each letter has the identical formula, *He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit says* (or, *is saying*) *unto the churches*. We perceive in the first place that each church is an entity, a unit, complete in itself and having no organic connection with other churches.

Further we perceive that each is addressed by the risen King of glory directly and not through an intermediary. There is no supervisory authority on earth for the individual churches, each being directly subject to Christ, and the Holy Spirit being the Administrator in all alike. Further it is seen that, as between the individual churches, there is perfect equality; there is no disparity. On the other hand, as to condition and circumstances, each church differs from every other; and Christ knows and

is concerned about the spiritual state, the trials, failures, difficulties of each one. To each He says, *I know thy works*. This phrase, found in each of the seven letters, declares in the clearest way the individuality and completeness of each local church of God. The local church, according to the heavenly pattern is a unit, complete in itself. But the aggregate of the churches do not form a larger unit; they do not constitute *the Church*. There is no trace of any aggregation of churches.

This we believe to be a matter of capital importance; for it may be readily and clearly seen that the well-nigh universal departure, throughout Christendom and from near the beginning of our era, from the Biblical pattern of the churches, has served the purposes of the great enemy of the truth. The seemingly inescapable tendency of each denominational group has been to form a national ecclesiastical organization, in which property is vested and to which the local churches are subordinated. The result is seen in what is happening at the present hour in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, whereof the Modernists, having by stealth and craftiness gained control of the national organization, are forcing those who are loyal to the Christ of God and the Truth of God to choose between submission to the domination of unbelief or separating as individuals from the *Church* to which they are attached by personal ties and family traditions. Manifestly, had the independence and autonomy of the individual churches been maintained, it would be an easy matter for those, whose membership is predominantly loyal, to preserve their heritage of faith and sound doctrine and to keep the lamp of their testimony alight. To what extent the universal departure from the Biblical usage of the words *Church* and *Kingdom* has contributed to this lamentable state of affairs in the churches, the discriminating reader himself can readily judge in the light of what has been set forth in these pages.

Moreover, in the light of history it is clearly to be seen that every organized ecclesiastical system, which comprises a number of local churches or congregations, is fated, sooner or later, to be first invaded and eventually dominated by the enemies of the truth; and this notwithstanding it was soundly orthodox in its inception and despite all painstaking provisions on the part of its organizers to keep it so. And this must needs be the case, seeing that all such organized ecclesiastical systems are patterned *after the traditions of men*, with their executives and other officials, their judicial tribunals, their legislative bodies — *and not after Christ* (Colossians 2:3).

The Kingdom of God, on the contrary, is not organized according to the rudiments of the world, but is established by the decree of the Almighty God, is ruled by God's King, Whom He has enthroned in heaven and is administered by the Spirit of God sent down from heaven. This is why it abides from generation to generation despite all political changes, and why it is the one institution in the world, which, according to the Scriptures, will survive that great and final shaking that *will convulse not the earth only, but also heaven* (Hebrews 12:26–28).

From the facts set forth above it follows that, in the purpose of God the responsibility for the preservation of truth and sound doctrine was committed to the individual churches. And the wisdom of this is apparent; for if error finds entrance into one of the churches and is adopted and fostered by its leaders, it need spread no further, since other churches can easily take measures to protect themselves. On the other hand, the unbiblical policy of a territorial ecclesiasticism — national, state or diocesan — having jurisdiction over a number of local churches, widely separated the one from the other, facilitates wholesale departure from the faith.

But while each of the churches (according to the heavenly pattern, should be complete in itself and independent of the others, the same Spirit works and administers in each (1 Corinthians 12:4–11). Thus the Spirit Himself constitutes a divine link — not connecting the churches together into a larger unit, but — connecting together those individuals in each church that have ears to hear, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying unto the churches*. This is immensely important. The hearing ear is the peculiar and distinguishing endowment of every regenerated person, that is, of every child of God, of every member of the household of faith; for *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*. The Spirit is ever saying to the churches the words — that is the command-

ments — of Christ. For this is the law of the Kingdom of God, even *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*; and those individuals to whom God has given *ears to hear* are obligated to *hear* — *that is to obey* — *those commandments*. *Yet it is not a forced obedience that He asks; there is no compulsion; no constraint save that of love: If ye love Me, keep My commandments*. So, instead of saying they are obligated to obey the commandments, it were more fitting to say that, having enjoyed the great blessing of receiving *the perfect law of liberty* it is their high privilege to walk according thereto in fellowship with God, doing the things that are pleasing in His sight.

Thus the Spirit of Christ has been ever speaking to them that have ears to hear, saying — *Give ear, O My people to My law* — *incline your ears to the words of My mouth (Psalm 78:1)*. *Hearken unto Me, My people, and give ear unto Me, O My nation; for a law shall proceed from Me (Isaiah 51:4)*. *Hearken unto Me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is My law (Isaiah 51:7)*, those that are here addressed being God's new covenant people (Jeremiah 31:33); *Incline your ear and come unto Me; hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you (Isaiah 55:3)*. In the New Testament this word *He that hath an ear let him hear*, is often on the lips of Christ Himself, and always in connection with a matter of great importance; and none other uses it, unless Revelation 13:9 be an exception. Therefore we should give the more earnest heed to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

In the light of the Scriptures we have been examining it is easily to be seen that the individual churches are transient institutions, which, like the tabernacle in the wilderness, serve only a temporary purpose in the world. They belong to the world that now is, the individual believers in each being joined with all other believers throughout the world by the One Spirit in such manner as to constitute the one Kingdom of God, whereof the Spirit of God is the Administrator on earth. It is of the essence of the character of the Kingdom of God that *it is not of this world and that it cometh not with observation*. Like the Spirit Who animates and energizes it and accomplishes all that is accomplished in it, beginning with the regeneration of all who enter it, the Kingdom itself is invisible. Though it may be said of it as our Lord said of the Holy Spirit, *The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof*, yet none can tell *whence it cometh or whither it goeth (John 3:8)*. The Kingdom has no organization, no manifest existence in the world. There are no officials, no armies with banners, no tax collectors, no parades or demonstrations of any sort. Its King rules His Kingdom from heaven and is Himself *invisible (1 Timothy 1:17)*; and His soldiers are, as regards their relations with the various kingdoms of this world, peaceable and law-abiding citizens and subjects, who willingly subject themselves to the powers that be, knowing that they *are ordained of God*, who pray *for kings and all that are in authority* and who render *tribute to whom tribute is due*.

Since, therefore, there is on earth no all-inclusive Church, it follows that the only organized Christian institutions in the world, whereof the Bible takes cognizance or for which Biblical warrant can be found, are (1) the Kingdom of God, which is wholly spiritual in character and in which man exercises no authority at all, and (2) *the churches*; these being companies of Christians who assemble themselves together from time to time for worship, prayer and mutual edification. The functions of these *churches of the saints* world-ward include all those activities that are comprehended by the word *testimony*, because of which the Biblical symbol of a church of God is a lamp or candle. It follows that a church is not fulfilling the purpose of its being unless it is shining as a light in the darkness of this benighted world, holding forth the Word of life. Note the penalty for failure in this, Revelation 2:5.

As with all else that is constituted of human elements, the churches manifest frailties, disorders and imperfections of various sorts. It was so in the early days. These letters to the churches of Asia are the vehicles of stern reproofs and warnings; but they are the warnings of faithfulness and the rebukes of love, conducive to zeal and repentance; *As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent*. The word *repent* is of frequent occurrence in these letters. Moreover, the churches, like everything else that has human constituents, are ephemeral. They spring up into existence wherever the gospel of the Kingdom is preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; they subsist for a while; and they pass away. But the Kingdom of God goes on and on. Whether any

church will survive that final shaking foretold in Hebrews 12:26–28, which will convulse *not the earth only but also heaven*, we are not told. There is, however, one thing that will survive, even **THE KINGDOM WHICH CANNOT BE SHAKEN**. (To get the force and emphasis of verse 28, it must be understood that the word *moved* in the A. V. is the identical word which in the immediately preceding verse is twice rendered *shaken*.)

The Unity of the Spirit

It is pertinent in this connection to observe that there are manifestations at the present time of a widespread desire among Christians, amounting often to intense longing, for a realization in themselves and a manifestation to the world of their organic oneness in and with their risen Head, Jesus Christ; and, moreover, it may be assumed that this desire, so accordant with that expressed by our Lord Himself in prayer to His Father (John 17:21) is finding expression likewise in the prayers of His people today.

They who are thus minded (and it were well if such were the case with all) should be aware that the desired unity of the Spirit is not to be realized in any ecclesiastical system or church; for both the Bible and history testify the impossibility of this. But on the other hand, they should remember that the oneness of believers already exists, and has existed since Pentecost, in the Kingdom of God; wherein all who believe on the risen Christ are united by the tie of their heavenly birth, are under the one Sovereign Lord, being subject to His law, are enjoying His protection and are led by the One Spirit of God. Hence a movement towards the manifestation of that divinely wrought oneness will have begun when Christ's willing people shall with one consent set themselves, in obedience to the King's command, to seek first the Kingdom of God.

14

NOW UNTO THE KING

“**M**Y heart is bubbling up of a good matter: I am speaking the things I have composed touching **THE KING**” (Psalm 45:1). “Yet have I set my KING upon My holy hill of Zion” (Psalm 2:6). “God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth” (Psalm 74:12). “He is the living God and an everlasting King” (Jeremiah 10:10). “The LORD is our King; He will save us” (Isaiah 33:22). “He is a great King over all the earth” (Psalm 47:2).

When the apostle admonished the Lord’s people to honor the king, he had the earthly ruler or sovereign in contemplation. But his admonition serves nevertheless to remind us of the superlative honor that is due from all mankind to God’s King, Whom God Himself has enthroned upon Zion, His holy mountain, and Who is The King, eternal, immortal, invisible (1 Timothy 1:17).

Amongst all peoples and tribes of earth the king has an incomparable and an inalienable claim to the honor and allegiance of his subjects; and this — not because of his nobility of character, his superior attainments, his daring exploits or his royal munificence, but — simply and solely because he is **THE KING**, and as such is invested for the time being with certain divine prerogatives, including a measure of the authority of God Himself. For there is no power (authority) but from God (Romans 13:1). Now if such be the case with respect to kings who are but perishing sinners, partakers of all the frailties that pertain to flesh and blood, who can justly estimate the weight of the obligation which rests upon all men everywhere to render the superlative honor justly due to The KING of kings, to Him Whom God emphatically designates My KING and Whom He has invested with all regal authority both in heaven and on earth?

God has imposed that obligation upon all mankind by the proclamation of the Kingship of Jesus Christ, His Son. For the purpose of the gospel of God concerning His Son is, first and foremost of all, to publish to all the world the stupendous fact of the investiture of Jesus Christ, *Whom He has raised from the dead, with universal and unlimited sovereignty in heaven and on earth. This gospel is preached by the commandment of the everlasting God for the obedience of faith among all nations* (Romans 1:5; 16:26), and it is good news indeed to all who receive it submissively; but its proclamation carries with it the obligation, which none who hear it can evade, to yield themselves willingly to the authority of God’s King; for while the gospel message promises unspeakable blessedness for all who believe, it plainly declares the fearful end of them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17). For those times of ignorance, which God winked at, are gone, and now He commandeth all men everywhere to repent; to which command He has appended this tremendous sanction, *Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead* (Acts 17:30–31). The repetition of all men and the comprehensive term the world are impressive.

By these and by other Scriptures we learn that God’s first and imperative command to all men by His gospel is that they repent. That was the dominant note in the preaching of the herald of this gospel era (Matthew 3:2); the reason being that God’s will for all men is that they be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). And by this we learn also that the salvation of the individual is conditioned upon his obedience to

this first commandment of the gospel. And, in order that this vital matter might be made unmistakably plain, God has caused it to be written that the gospel presents to all men these alternatives: repent or perish. For the seemingly long delay in the second coming of Christ is not to be taken as an indication that God is slack concerning His promise, the true explanation being that He is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should **PERISH** but that all should come to **REPENTANCE** (2 Peter 3:9).

Nor should we think it strange that God places so high a value upon the souls He has created as to procure salvation for them at infinite cost to Himself. His purpose in their creation and in their redemption is, as has been shown in an earlier chapter, to provide for Himself a congenial and an eternal dwelling place. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose Name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit; because of which He adds that He will not contend forever nor be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before Me, and the souls, which I have made (Isaiah 57:15–16). Abraham Kuyper, commenting upon this passage, aptly says:

There is a subtle charm about the thing that we have made; and this is by no means because of its intrinsic value, but rather because we have made it ourselves ... This holds true in every department of life ... And by this trait of our human heart God comforts the sinner. This trait is in us because it is in God. And of this trait God says that it operates in the Divine Father-heart for good because, where there is a soul at stake God can never forget that He Himself has made it.

True indeed. And not only so, but this regard of the Creator for the souls which He has made should furnish a powerful incentive to those who know of the Kingdom of God and the authority of His Christ, and who know that entrance into the former depends upon the obedience of faith, to cease not in making known to others the truth of the gospel and the peril of those who refuse its call to repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ.

God's Controversy with Mankind

Our immediate concern, however, is not for the unrepentant majority of mankind, but rather for them who are of the household of faith. For these are under special obligation to ascribe honor and glory, and to render loyal obedience — and not with their lips only and upon formal occasions, but at all times and in all the activities of their lives — to Him Whom God has exalted to the throne of the universe and has invested with all authority in heaven and on earth. Failure in this all-important matter must needs entail serious consequences; and because of the ever imminent danger of such failure (by reason of the infirmity of the flesh) it behooves us to be ever mindful of the word that admonishes us to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith.

For in writing as we have done in these pages we are not contending merely for the principle (important as it is) that the people of God should be ever careful to designate Biblical things by their Biblical names, and especially in speaking of matters of such high importance as the Church of Christ and the Kingdom of God; rather are we contending for a more fervent recognition on their part of the honor due to God's King; which recognition it is specially incumbent upon them to render now in the day of His rejection by the nation of the world.

The final act in the trial of Christ before Pilate, and the final repudiation of God's King by the people He had chosen for Himself, occurred in the city He had chosen to set His Name there. The precise location was the place of judgment. There Pilate had taken his official seat, which stood upon a tessellated pavement, called in the vernacular *gabbatha* (the knoll) because of its elevated position (John 19:13) ...

“Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers perse-

cuted? And they have slain them which shewed before the coming of the Just One; of Whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers” (Acts 7:51–52).

Thus stands to this day the controversy between God Almighty and that people; and it is plain to all who know the Scriptures that their subsequent history and their present distressful condition agree marvelously with what Moses foretold should come upon them should they turn away from Jehovah to serve other gods:

“But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee” (Deuteronomy 28:15).

Then follows a long and detailed recital, occupying more than fifty verses, of the calamities that should befall them, a recital which reads less like a prophecy than like a summary of their history for the past three thousand years. It closes with these solemn words:

“And it shall come to pass that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest. but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see” (Deuteronomy 28:63–67).

But God’s controversy concerning the rejection of His Son is not with the Jewish nation alone, though with them primarily and chiefly; for the whole world is involved therein. And this too was predicted by the prophets, as by David in the second Psalm, the application of his prophecy being given in Acts 4, where it is recorded that the company of believers, upon hearing that the temple authorities had charged and threatened Peter and John — commanding them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus lifted up their voice to God with one accord and said:

“Lord, Thou art God, Who hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of Thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done” (Acts 4:24–28).

Choose You This Day

Because of these things, which are actual historical events and are of supreme importance to all men, the gospel of God concerning His Son makes it necessary for everyone it reaches that he take sides in this tremendous controversy, either for or against God and His King. Each individual who hears the gospel message is confronted with a demand similar to that Joshua made to the people of Israel when his administration as their divinely appointed leader was approaching its end: **Choose you this day whom ye will serve** (Joshua 24:15). And none can escape making this choice, a choice which determines his eternal destiny; for the Lord Himself has said, He that is not with Me is against Me (Matthew 12:30). Not to range oneself on the Lord’s side is to take sides against Him. The issue is as sharply drawn and the inescapable choice to be made is just as fateful as that which Moses pre-

sented to the people of Israel on the occasion of their worship of the golden calf, when he stood at the gate of the camp and cried *Who is on the Lord's side, let him come unto me* (Exodus 32:26). Not to come meant to remain in the congregation of the damned and be exposed to the sword of judgment. Even so it is now. When God's King cries "Come unto Me", He utters a gracious invitation indeed, but it is an invitation that has all the force of a royal command, whereof the penalty of disobedience is eternal judgment. Here is the great Kingdom question, and hereby we may perceive what hinges upon it.

What shall we then say to these things — we who have acknowledged the sovereignty of God's King, who have confessed with our mouth Jesus as Lord and who truly believe in our hearts that God has raised Him from the dead and has enthroned Him at His right hand on high? What further responsibility have we, whom God the Father has delivered from the kingdom rule of darkness and has translated into the Kingdom of the Son of His love? We profess to believe that God the Father has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; that through faith in Jesus Christ and by the operation of the Holy Spirit we have entered into the Kingdom of God by the door of the new birth; and that those who believe not in the Son of God are condemned already.

This is not poetry. It is not imagination. Nor is it surmise or speculation concerning matters of a transcendental sort, remote from the interest of ordinary folk. It is fact — solid, sublime, stupendous, divinely certified, and of vital and immediate concern to every member of Adam's race. God is at this very moment a great King over all the earth; He is the living God and an everlasting King, working salvation in the midst of the earth; He has enthroned His King upon His holy mountain. The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hand. Unto the Son He saith, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy Kingdom." The hand that now wields the scepter of the universe is the hand that was nailed to Golgotha's tree. And that is why salvation is now possible and is instantly available for the worst of sinners.

What then should be our attitude towards this great controversy between God and the world? Is it enough, does it suffice to discharge our responsibility, is it all that God requires and desires of us, that we should stand aloof from the conflict while serenely professing confidence as to the outcome thereof? and professing confidence also as to our full participation in the fruits of the assured victory? Truly the victory is assured and the Almighty God has no need of our puny aid in achieving it. Yet the attitude, so common among Christians today, of languid indifference toward the Kingdom of God and the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, or the attitude of halfhearted interest therein, is not only unworthy of those who confess Him as their Lord and Savior, but may entail for them serious loss and deep humiliation in that day. No, it is not sufficient that we sincerely believe the things under consideration to be true. It is needful that our hearts be stirred to their depths because of the immense importance of these truths alike to Christ, to His people and to the world; because of the indifference to them of His people, whose supreme business is to make them known; and because of the complete ignorance of these things on the part of the people of this world, who are perishing in their ignorance.

But how shall we impress those perishing ones with the truth and reality of these things? How shall we make them realize their imminent and awful danger? We cannot impress others with the truth and reality of that whereof we are not deeply impressed ourselves. To succeed in so doing it is needful that our languid enthusiasm for the Kingdom of God and the things which concern our Lord Jesus Christ be kindled into flaming zeal. How then can this be brought about? One of the first steps should be to search out the causes that have contributed to the change of attitude on the part of God's people towards His Kingdom whereof we have been speaking, a change such that, instead of its being now, as at the beginning, the object of their highest concern and their most earnest endeavors, it is at best but a subject of lukewarm and academical interest. It is mainly as an aid to the ascertainment of those causes that these pages have been written.

Then we can each commune with his own heart concerning these things. Each can earnestly seek, in the energy of the Holy Spirit, to set his own affections upon them; and for this the Scriptures supply both precept and example. The apostle exhorts the people of God to seek those things which are

above where Christ sitteth (enthroned) on the right hand of God; and to set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth (Colossians 3:2). This exhortation clearly implies that the saints of God are able to exercise control over their affections and that, having this ability, they are responsible to use it. Furthermore, for our guidance and encouragement we have David's word and example, who said: Because I have set my affection to the house of my God ... I have prepared for the holy house (1 Chronicles 29:3). That to obey this admonition and to follow this example is not an easy matter that it requires earnest concentration of will and resolute purpose of heart, must be admitted. But that it is possible through faith and prayer, the Scriptures do clearly testify; and that the object to be attained is worthy of every effort and sacrifice of personal inclination and carnal ease none will deny. God has made it possible by the provisions of His grace for every child of His to say, in the words of the apostle, "I can do all things through Christ Who empowers me" (Philippians 4:13).

Again and again we read of those who prepared their hearts to seek and to do the will of God (1 Samuel 7:3; 1 Chronicles 29:18; Job 11:13); and of those who prepared not their heart to seek the Lord (2 Chronicles 12:14). We read of those who obeyed from the heart that pattern of doctrine which was delivered to them and who purified their souls in obeying the truth (Romans 6:17; 1 Peter 1:22); also of those who did not obey the truth (Galatians 3:1; 5:7). It is all a question of the state of one's heart. In that secret place, whence are the issues of life, this great issue must be decided by the individual believer, this great conflict between the will of God and the inclinations of the natural heart must be fought to a finish. The chief adversaries in this case are indifference and spiritual lassitude. But they can be overcome. Help is available if we will avail ourselves of it. But ye shall receive power, the Holy Spirit having come upon you (Acts 1:8). Therefore it behooves us diligently to prepare our hearts by cherishing and meditating constantly upon the glorious truth of the supreme lordship of our glorified Redeemer as THE KING, eternal, immortal, invisible, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords. For by meditating upon these things, delighting in them and giving ourselves wholly unto them, keeping them constantly before the eyes of our hearts, steadfastly maintaining, and upon every suitable occasion testifying, that Jesus Christ is LORD to the glory of God the Father, our profiting will appear unto all and we shall both save ourselves and them that hear us (1 Timothy 4:15-16).

It is not that God stands in need of our help in the accomplishment of His eternal purpose and in the overthrow of His enemies, but that He graciously Romans 12 gives His people opportunity to participate therein, to the end that they may share eternally, and in proportion to their efforts and sacrifices, in the glory and the rewards of a victory that is assured beforehand. Therefore, we repeat, the question is not how the conflict will end, for God's purpose will certainly be accomplished with our help or without it, and this gospel of the Kingdom shall certainly be preached in all the world and as many as have been ordained to eternal life shall believe; but the question is whether we will embrace the opportunity now offered us of taking part therein. Shall we be sharers of the glorious rewards of victory? shall we be overcomers, yea, more than conquerors through Him Who loveth us? or shall we be like those who, in the day of battle, chose to abide among the sheepfold listening to the peaceful bleating of the flocks or like the inhabitants of Meroz, who came not to the help of the LORD against the mighty foes (Judges 5:16, 23)? This is the question which presses now for decision and which each must decide for himself.

The Urgency of the Message

The Scriptures make it very plain that the proclamation of the Kingdom of God is a most urgent matter. We have already called attention to the fact that it was ever the most pressing business that the Lord committed to His servants while He was yet with them and very specially when about to part from them. For this reason alone they should ever be imitators of those who were commissioned to publish unto all people the edict of an earthly king, and of whom it is recorded that *they went out, being hastened and pressed on BY THE KING'S COMMAND* (Esther 8:14).

And it was so in *the beginning of the gospel*. For a special messenger was prepared from his very birth, being filled with the Holy Spirit for the announcement of the approach of the Kingdom of God (Luke 1:15). And although John did nothing else in his very brief career, nevertheless, and because of the greatness of his mission, it was declared of him by the Lord of Himself that he was *more than a prophet* (Matthew 11:9) and that *among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist* (Luke 7:28). If therefore a servant of Christ can gain distinction in no other way, he can do so by addicting himself to the message preached by John.

And so urgent was that message then — and will anyone be so rash as to say it is any the less urgent now? — that Christ Himself, at the beginning of His ministry, said to those who sought to detain Him in Capernaum, *I must preach the Kingdom of God to other cities also; for therefore am I sent* (Luke 4:43). Can the servants of Christ find a more suitable or more needful theme for their discourses? Furthermore, the subject of the Kingdom of God is one that drew crowds even into the wilderness; one in which human interest never palls, which always attracts hearers, and of which they do not tire. Men need not to be persuaded or lured to the place where the Kingdom of God as a present reality is proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit. For it is recorded that for two whole years hearers came to a private residence in Rome to listen to Paul, in durance under the charge of inciting sedition, who preached the Kingdom of God and taught those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 28:30–31).

And finally the preaching of the Kingdom of God was not to be for that day only but *for all the days, even to the end of the age* (Matthew 28:20) and *among all nations* (Luke 24:47). In view of all this, are we not warranted in the belief that what is chiefly needed for the furtherance of the work of the Lord is a revival of that preaching which so stirred the dry bones of Israel as to draw throngs of all classes of people into the wilderness to the baptism of John; and vast crowds to mountains and seaside, forgetful even of food and shelter, to hear the Word of Christ; and which, when proclaimed in far-off Macedonia, seemed to the astonished Jews at Thessalonica to be turning the world upside down (Acts 17:6)?

Serve the Lord with Fear and Rejoice With Trembling

A special obligation rests upon the people of God to give honor and glory to God's King in this day of His rejection by Israel and the nations of the world as foretold in the second Psalm. As has been already pointed out, we are certified by what is written in Acts 4:24–28 that this present era of the grace and long-suffering of God is the day foreshown in that magnificent prophecy; which is further distinguished by the fact that in it God, with emphasis and a tone of endearment, designates Christ as *my King* and *my Son*. Furthermore, this prophecy, in agreement with all other pertinent Scriptures, makes known that this day of grace, mercy, forgiveness and free salvation for all the world, will be followed by the day of *His wrath* (verse 12). We shall therefore be well repaid by giving attention to some of the things that are written for our instruction in this superlatively important prophecy.

That the second Psalm is based upon God's prophetic message delivered to David by Nathan (2 Samuel 7:8–17) may be clearly seen upon comparison of the two Scriptures. In the message sent by Nathan God promised that of David's seed He would raise up One to sit upon His throne. Concerning this promise, Paul, preaching in the Jewish synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, after a reference to David as a man after God's own heart, said: *Of this man's seed, hath God according to His promise, raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus, when John had first preached before His coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel* (Acts 13:23–24). And further the apostle said — these words being of special importance:

“And 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 up from the dead, now no more to

return to corruption, He said on this wise, *I will give you the sure mercies of David*" (Acts 13:32–34, quoting Psalm 2 and Isaiah 55:3).

It is to be observed that the you in Isaiah's prophecy, which Paul here quotes as finding its fulfillment in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is plural, and so cannot have Christ for its antecedent, but those who give heed to the call of the gospel foretold in Isaiah 55:3, *Come unto Me, hear and your soul shall live*. To these were promised *the sure mercies of David*. The Psalm is symmetrically divided into four strophes of three verses each. The first strophe puts vividly before us the banded conspiracy of kings, chieftains and peoples of the earth, against Jehovah and against His Anointed. Commenting upon these verses Alexander Maclaren says:

"It is no mere uprising of the common herd: *the kings of the earth* take their stand as in battle array and the men of mark and influence lay their heads together, pressing close to one another on the divan as they plot. All classes and orders are united in revolt; and hurry and eagerness mark their action and throb in their words. The rule against which the revolt is directed is that of *Jehovah and His Anointed*. That is one rule, not two, — the dominion of Jehovah exercised through the Messiah. The Psalmist had grasped firmly the conception that God's visible rule is wielded by Messiah, so that rebellion against One is rebellion against Both. Their bands are the same.

"This close connection and intimate union between Jehovah and His Messiah, His King, appears once and again throughout the Psalm — making evident that, as Maclaren says, The dominion of the latter is treated as that of the former and the rebellion is treated as against both at once. Further this Psalm plainly teaches that loyal submission to God's King is demanded of all the tribes of earth, their kings and rulers — not of Israel alone. And there is no escape from it. The gigantic conspiracy is "a vain thing". Quoting again:

"Plot and strive, conspire and muster, as men may, all is vanity and striving of wind. It is destined from the beginning to break down. It is as hopeless as if the stars were to combine to abolish gravitation. That dominion does not depend on man's acceptance of it, and he can no more throw it off by opposition than he can fling a somersault into space and so get away from earth. When we can vote ourselves out of submission to physical law, we may plot or fight ourselves out of subjection to the reign of Jehovah and of His Anointed. All the self-will in the world does not alter the fact that the authority of Christ is sovereign over human wills. We cannot get away from it; but we can lovingly embrace it, and then it is our life."

It is either that, or exposure to His consuming wrath, when that is "kindled in but a little while." Another fact, and one of high import, which this Psalm makes known, is that the day of the Messiah's investiture with royalty and with all authority in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18) is the day of His resurrection. His own Voice, as heard in the third strophe of the Psalm, announces that He Himself would tell of the decree of Jehovah, whereof the substance is, *Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee*. Concerning this passage Dr. Maclaren aptly says:

"The point of time referred to is not the beginning of personal existence, but of investiture with royalty. With accurate insight then into the meaning of the words, the New Testament takes them as fulfilled in the Resurrection (Acts 13:33; Romans 1:4). In it, as the first step in the process which was completed in the Ascension, the manhood of Jesus was lifted above the limitations of earth and began to rise to the throne. The day of His resurrection was, as it were, the day of the birth of His humanity into royal glory.

"Built upon this exaltation to royalty and Sonship follows the promise of universal dominion. *Surely the expectation of the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession* bursts the bonds of the tiny Jewish kingdom ... But the reference of these glowing words to Messiah's Kingdom is in accordance with the current of prophetic hopes and need cause no

hesitation to those who believe in prophecy at all. Universal dominion is God's gift to the Messiah. Even while putting His foot on the step of the throne He said, *All power is given unto Me*. This dominion is founded, not on His essential divinity, but on His suffering and sacrifice.

“The Divine Voice foretells victory over opposition and destruction to opposers. The scepter is of iron, though the hand that holds it once grasped the reed ... The truth of Christ's destructive energy is too often forgotten; and when remembered it is too often thrown into another world ... Destructive work has still to be done and its most terrible energy is to be displayed in the future, when all opposition shall be withered into nothingness by the brightness of His presence. There are two kinds of breaking: a merciful one, when His love shatters our pride and breaks into penitence the earthen vessels of our hearts; and a terrible one when the weight of His scepter crushes and His mighty hand casts down in shivers the *vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*.”

Who Is This?

The LORD'S purpose, spoken of in Psalm 2 as if already consummated, was to enthrone His King upon Zion, His holy mountain. We have seen that the resurrection of Christ was the virtual accomplishment of this purpose, since there by the opposition of earth's potentates was not only overcome, but was even made to further what His hand and His counsel had *determined before to be done* (Acts 4:28). But a period of forty days intervened between His resurrection and His ascension. That period He occupied in qualifying a great number of persons, in one case above five hundred (1 Corinthians 15:6), to be witnesses of His resurrection, and in imparting to the eleven apostles the instruction needed by them in *The things pertaining to the Kingdom of God* (Acts 1:3). The New Testament contains brief accounts of His bodily departure from the earth; but as to His ascension into heaven and to *The hill of Jehovah*, the best account we have is the prophetic and poetical reference thereto in Psalm 24.

This Psalm is a processional hymn in two parts, which are separated by the word *Selah* — pause. The first part contains the questions *Who shall ascend ... Who shall stand ...?* (verses 1–3); and the qualifications for entering into the presence of Jehovah and for standing in His holy place are stated in verses 4–6; the essence thereof being holiness. The second part of the Psalm (verses 7–10) vividly celebrates the ascension into heaven of the One Whose supreme right it is to enter and Who possesses fully and in perfection the stated qualifications. A voice is heard which, in a tone of authority, bids the closed gates to lift up their heads and the everlasting doors to be lifted up that the King of glory might come in. Then the doorkeeper from within demands: *Who is this King of glory?* Then we hear the response: *Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle*. And again the demand (according to the Hebrew manner of imparting emphasis by repetition) that the gates and doors uplift themselves to admit the King of glory; again the question, *Who is this King of glory?* as if to give occasion for the repetition of the invincible Name; and once more the answer peals forth — this time even more “sharp and authoritative, being at once briefer and fuller” (Maclaren): *JEHOVAH OF HOSTS, HE IS THE KING OF GLORY*. The question *Who is this?* has its echo upon the occasion of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, *Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee*. For we read that when He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, *Who is this?* (Matthew 21:10). But the answer was not that of Psalm 24.

Similarity is recognized between the grand scene outlined in this Psalm and other scenes pictured to the mind by the prophetic Scriptures. For example, Isaiah 63 begins with the startlingly abrupt question: *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? One Who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?* And the answer comes, *I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save*. There is no need to identify the Speaker; but it is pertinent to note, (in connection with Dr. Maclaren's observation quoted above, “The truth of Christ's destructive energy is too often forgotten,”) that the One Who here announces Himself as the *Mighty to save*, immediately adds: *For*

the day of vengeance is in Mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come (verse 4). Here again the day of vengeance is made to synchronize with the year of God's redeemed. So the Lord Himself plainly taught in the days of His flesh; as in Matthew 25:31–45, where He describes what shall happen when He shall come in His glory and all His holy angels and shall sit upon the throne of His glory, at which time He shall say to some, *Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*; and to others will say, *Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*. Likewise in John 5:28–29 is recorded His saying:

“For the hour cometh in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.”

And so likewise taught the apostle Paul, as where, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, he declares that *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord*; and that this shall be *when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe* (2 Thessalonians 1:1–10). The day of vengeance and the year of His redeemed are the same.

Another scene of sublimity and grandeur which is called to mind by Psalm 24 is that of which a glimpse is given in Revelation 5. There is seen the throne of heaven, and One is seated thereon in Whose hand is a book. And a strong angel exclaims with a loud voice, *Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof?* Again our present concern is not with the exposition of the passage, but with the manner — by a challenging question — of introducing the same invincible Conqueror, Who in this case is identified by the answer to the question of the strong angel, as *The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David*; but Who, when presented to the seer's view, was *A Lamb as it had been slain*. Him the heavenly hosts in transports of praise acclaim as *Worthy ... to receive power and riches and wisdom and blessing*. While every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth and in the sea unite in saying: *Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever*.

Such is the honor that is due *Unto the King*; and especially is it due from His redeemed people. With the eyes of our understanding resting upon these scenes, in each of which He is the central Figure, we must realize, and must with a sense of shame acknowledge, how feeble and unworthy our loftiest and sincerest praises have been to Him Who loves us and has loosed us from our sins with His own blood and made us kings and priests unto God the Father. The historical occasion most widely accepted as the origin of Psalm 24 is the removal of the ark of the LORD by King David from the house of Obed-edom to the tabernacle that David had built for it upon an eminence which previously had been a Jebusite fortress and which was captured by David and thereafter called *the city of David*. By its more common name of *Zion*, and because of the presence there of the ark of the LORD, it became the accepted Biblical symbol of the dwelling place of God, the City of God, the City of the Great King (Psalm 46:4; 48:1–2, 8, 12; 78:68; Isaiah 18:7, etc.). To quote but one verse: *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* (Psalm 132:13–14).

The account of the removal of the ark to Mount Zion in 2 Samuel 6:12–19 gives prominence to the exuberance of King David's enthusiasm and joy in that great occasion. His behavior, superficially viewed, may appear extravagant and even undignified; but in God's eyes it was evidently regarded with approval, for the account closes with an incident which may well serve as a warning to any who are disposed to look coldly upon the things which pertain to the Kingdom of God and to censure those who make much of those things: *Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death*.

“Whom the Heaven must receive until the times of restitution” (Acts 3:21).

Abraham Kuyper, in a meditation on the cry of the prophet, “O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, that Thou wouldst come down,” says:

“Where those heavens are, whither Jesus went, remains to us a mystery. Instinctively we seek them above. Moreover all Scripture tells us that the heavens of glory arch themselves above our heads. It is an inborn necessity of soul to seek the Throne of God — not around nor underneath us, but — above. The heavens are God’s Throne, the earth is His footstool. To those heavens we look up, where God’s stars sparkle in the firmament, whence the rain descends and waters the earth, spreading blessing around us. But the heavens are not of our materiality. They are not comprehended in the measure of the finite. And one day they will disclose themselves where we did not surmise them to be. In a glory as yet unknown to us they will open to us their everlasting gates. And it is into this glory that our Lord entered when He ascended.”

Therefore, to this devoted servant of Christ, *“The day of Ascension is a Divine memorial day; so glorious because of our Savior. For the work of redemption that had to be accomplished on this earth was now finished ... The glory of heaven beckoned to Him. He was called and drawn toward the place at God’s right hand in the heavens. There the crown awaited Him.”* True indeed; and in the assurance that His foreordained sufferings are fully accomplished and He has entered into His glory (Luke 24:26) His people should ever rejoice and be glad. Nevertheless, for them His entrance into heaven means separation. The heavens into which He is gone bar Him from their view. Of those who were with Him when He was taken up it is written that A cloud received Him out of their sight (Acts 1:9). And still, after nearly a score of centuries He remains out of sight. How often during those centuries have the hearts of His waiting people echoed the prophet’s cry: O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down!

But, in the light of revelation that has been given us, it is clearly seen that this is not our proper attitude. It is good indeed that we should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God. But we are not to wait with folded hands. In the first place it has been revealed to us that thus it must be, and why. When our glorified Lord shall rend the heavens and come down it will be to judge the world in righteous; it will be to usher in the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (2 Peter 3:7), and God is not willing that any should perish. Hence the seeming delay in the promised return of our Lord.

Furthermore, God has in this interim between the ascension and the return of Christ, the King of glory, given His waiting people the privilege of being workers together with God, and He expects them, in view of their high calling in Christ Jesus, to be always abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58). The last of the apostles, addressing the household of faith, describes himself as your brother and companion in tribulation and in the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:9). The day of His Kingdom is that also of His patience; for throughout that long day He is thenceforth expecting; and we, the companions of the apostles in His Kingdom are their companions in His patience also. Such being the case, the affairs of that Kingdom have the first claim upon our time, strength and wealth. But never should we forget that the service of our King is not compulsory. The subjects of earthly kings and rulers serve under the compulsion of force. Christ’s people can serve only under the compulsion of love. If ye love Me, keep My commandments. Forced obedience has no value in His eyes. Take My yoke upon you. My yoke is easy. He will not force it upon any.

The Epistle to the Hebrews makes known that the Psalm 110, has a special application to this era of the gospel. And that is apparent also from the opening words of that Psalm: “The LORD said unto My Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.” That until stretches from the ascension of Christ unto His coming again, when all enemies shall be put under His feet (1 Corinthians 15:25). In verse two, the same LORD speaking to the Son says: “Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies.” This points to a unique characteristic of the reign of Christ; He rules in the midst of enemies. Nothing is clearer to the minds of those who are enlightened by the Spirit of truth than that the Kingdom of God encounters opposition on every side and is encompassed by countless foes, both in the natural and in the spiritual realm. Nevertheless the Son of God reigns; for God has sent the scepter of His strength out of Zion (Psalm 110:2); that scepter being the rod of iron of Psalm 2:9.

The word until in Psalm 110:1 and in Acts 3:21, identifies the time of restitution of all things with the time when God will put all enemies under the feet of His King. And that will be the time to which the apostle had reference when he said: Until the Lord come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts (1 Corinthians 4:5); and when He said, Until the redemption of the purchased possession (Ephesians 1:14); and when he said, Until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6). That time was so constantly in the apostle's thought that he frequently referred to it simply as that day. Assuredly then God's King, His Anointed, is reigning now. But over whom does He reign? Let us read and ponder the answer as given in the next verse of the day Psalm 110: Thy people shall be willing in of Thy power. Now is the day in which all power is given Him in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). And that declaration from His own lips was the preface to His command, *Go ye therefore and disciple all nations*.

God has thus made known concerning His present Kingdom these two facts of outstanding importance: first, that His King now reigns in the most of His enemies; second, that He reigns only over a willing people. The first statement is manifestly true; for, His Kingdom being in the world and the unconverted denizens of the world being hostile thereto; it is plain that God's King is reigning in the midst of His foes. But it is to be understood that the statement is specially applicable to His spiritual enemies, the hosts of spiritual wickedness — demons of hatred, discord, lust, debauchery, cruelty, warfare, disease, death. It is to these spiritual enemies of Christ who exercise rule and dominion over men that the Scripture specially refers. For it is written that the end of this present era of the Kingdom of God shall come,

When He (Christ) shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is DEATH (1 Corinthians 15:24–26).

By singling out the great spiritual enemy, death, for particular mention here, the Spirit of God has made evident that spiritual enemies are especially in view. As regards the second statement (that Christ reigns only over a willing people), many Scriptures plainly teach that submission to the authority of God's King is, during this present era of grace, wholly a matter of choice (Matthew 11:29).

Seeing then that we, His willing people, are accountable for this knowledge, let us courageously face our responsibility by asking ourselves: Are we indeed His people? Is His will truly our law and our delight? Are we steadfastly purposed, despite weakness, failures and discouragements, to do the will of God from the heart? If we can say "Yes" to these questions (and by God's grace we can) then we will do wisely to take the example of Saul of Tarsus at the time of his conversion as the pattern of our conduct. For the importance of that example is certified by the fact that the Spirit of God has caused it to be thrice recorded in the Scriptures (Acts 9, 22, and 26). We read of the great light from heaven, which enveloped him and his traveling companions at midday, a light which, as he testified before king Agrippa, was above the brightness of the dazzling noonday sun, a light which blinded and prostrated him to the earth. Then the *Voice* addressing him by his name, twice repeated, *Saul, Saul* — the seventh and last time the duplicated call of God is recorded. The others are,

"Abraham, Abraham" (Genesis 22:11); "Jacob, Jacob." (Genesis 46:2); "Moses, Moses" (Exodus 3:4); "Samuel, Samuel" (1 Samuel 3:10); Martha, Martha" (Luke 10:41); "Simon, Simon" (Luke 22:31).

Each of those occasions was one of exceptional import. Then the question, **Who art Thou, Lord?** And, that question being answered, immediately came the second question, expressive of complete surrender, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? With this example for our encouragement, shall we not (if we have not already done so) and speaking from a heart fully surrendered to His blessed will, ask submissively the same question, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Surely, if indeed we desire the knowledge of His will with purpose to do it we can count upon the same answer: It shall be told thee what thou must do.

My People Are Destroyed For Lack Of Knowledge

Many are the rules of conduct which the Lord has been pleased to give to His people, and in the keeping of each of them there is great reward. But among them all there is probably none whose observance conduces more to the obedient believer's welfare and to his serviceability to God and his neighbors than His command to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. For to this royal commandment Christ has annexed the gracious promise — and needless to say He stands ready to fulfill it to all who take Him at His word — that the same Omnipotent One Who feeds the carefree and improvident fowls of the air and Who arrays the lilies of the field with robes of incomparable beauty, will supply all their temporal needs (Matthew 6:31–33). This promise is as sure as the word of The King eternal can make it; and for those who believingly embrace it; it not only insures the necessities of this life but also saves them from anxious care for the future. It guarantees them a supply as constant and regular as that which, day by day and with unflinching punctuality, met the need of the poverty stricken widow and her household, who, out of her scanty store, ministered first to the need of God's servant (1 Kings 17:8–16).

But where, we ask, are the servants of God in our day that are making it their business to impress upon His people the blessedness of giving their first thought and warmest devotion to the Kingdom of God? Where are those who are treading the path of service trodden by the apostle Paul, in preaching, expounding and testifying the Kingdom of God? If God's people are suffering, and the cause of Christ is languishing for lack of knowledge of these elementary things, does not the responsibility rest primarily with those who are charged with the duty of instructing them? Or, to present the question in a more hopeful form, are we not warranted in expecting a far happier and healthier state of affairs amongst His people and throughout human society in general, when the servants of Christ begin to realize their long neglected duty of preaching, expounding and testifying the Kingdom of God?

We think it not possible to emphasize too strongly the truth that preaching the Kingdom of God serves not only to put the hearers of the message in the way of everlasting life but also to put them in the way of a constant supply of all things that are needful for the life that now is (Matthew 6:33; 1 Timothy 4:8). The message, therefore, is eminently practical and productive of immediate benefits. It solves for all who are in the Kingdom of God the most urgent and most vexatious of the problems of those who manage the affairs of the kingdoms of this world — the problem of economics — how to secure to all the subjects or citizens of the realm a constant supply of the necessities of life. How many millions are needlessly suffering, and even dying, for lack of the things which God's omnipotent King has guaranteed by His word of promise to those who seek first the Kingdom of God! But whose is the fault if they are not instructed concerning the provisions that are pledged to those who made the Kingdom of God the object of their first quest? Does it not behoove each servant of the Lord to ask himself, "Are any of God's people being destroyed for lack of knowledge that I might have imparted to them?"

It is the present writer's profound conviction, after much pondering of these matters, that one of the most urgent needs of our day is a revival in the consciousness of God's people of the existence of His Kingdom as a present reality; and that the first step toward the accomplishment of that result is the resumption, by the servants of Christ, of the long neglected ministry of proclaiming that special message which their risen Lord committed to their trust, and by means of which He pledged Himself to accomplish, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the eternal purpose of God in the redemption of the world. This conviction is well grounded. For the things pertaining to God's great salvation, concerning which the prophets of old had inquired and searched diligently, to whom the Spirit of Christ in them had testified thereof beforehand, are the self same things which, in the first days of our era, were faithfully reported to all men, both Jews and Gentiles, by those who preached the gospel unto them with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (1 Peter 1:11–12). That gospel is the one, the only, the everlasting gospel of God, to which the apostle Paul was separated, and concerning which he said, For necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I'd preach not the gospel; and in another place,

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed (Galatians 1.6–9).

But, seeing that these things are too plainly written to admit of their being gain said, how may we account for the almost complete cessation in our day of the proclamation of the Kingdom of God? The question does not admit of a short answer. For in the first place, there are several contributing causes. Some, who assume the name of servants of Christ, dare to affirm that the gospel, preached by the apostles of Christ with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, while admirably suited to those primitive times, is wholly unsuited to these days of enlightenment and progress. But ignoring these, as being not the true servants of Christ and successors of His apostles, how can we account for the great and manifest departure from the preaching of apostolic times by those who maintain the unchangeableness of the ways of God? For certainly the subject of the Kingship of Jesus Christ and the advent of the long expected Kingdom of God, which formed the substance of the preaching of those, through whose agency the Christian era was inaugurated, has but an inconspicuous place (where it has any at all) in the preaching and teaching of Christian ministers today. During a discourse on a Scriptural topic one may hear occasionally a casual reference to The Kingdom of God, but to the vast majority of Christians those words stand for nothing that is real, that demands any serious consideration on their part, or with which they have any actual relations or dealings. To all who give thoughtful consideration to this matter it must be painfully apparent that the present day ignorance of God's people concerning His Kingdom and their personal relation to it is, in the light of what His Word teaches with respect thereto, a matter for serious concern.

The Greater Confession

It may serve further to impress upon the reader's mind the vital importance of this subject to recall that what is commonly called Peter's "great confession" — the greatness whereof lay in the fact that the truth he confessed on that occasion had been revealed to him, not by flesh and blood, but by none other than God the Father (Matthew 16:16–18) — was his acknowledgment that Jesus was The Christ, the Son of the living God; in other words, that He was God's King, of Whom David prophesied in Psalm 2.

This was indeed a great confession. But there is a greater; and the supreme greatness thereof lies in the fact that it was made by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and upon an occasion of unparalleled solemnity. The writer's attention was called to this subject by a paper entitled, "*The Greater Confession*", in the Evangelical Quarterly for October, 1935. That title the author, Prof. W. Childs Robinson, D.D., bestows, and most appropriately, upon our Lord's own confession of His Messiahship when He was solemnly adjured by the high priest in these words: "I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ the Son of God" (Matthew 26:63); or as recorded by Mark, Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? (Mark 14:61). It will be noticed that here again, as in Peter's confession, the matter involved was the superlatively important one of the identity of Jesus of Nazareth with God's King and God's Son, spoken of in Psalm 2. The reply was I AM: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Quoting, now, Dr. Robinson:

"An analysis of Mark 14:61; Matthew 26:63 shows that under solemn oath imposed by the high priest, Jesus affirmed: (1) that He was the Christ; (2) that He was the Son of the Blessed; (3) that He was the One Who would sit at the right hand of Power; (4) that He was the Son of man Who would return on the clouds of heaven. Each of these four affirmations is distinctly Messianic. Their cumulative Messianic effect is stunningly significant. Such scholars as E. Nestle, G.F. Moore, J.J.S. Perowne and Rawlinson, recognize that in His answer to the high priest our Lord combines two of the loftiest Old Testament Messianic predictions, namely, Psalm 110:1, in which Messiah, as *Adonai*, sits at Jehovah's right hand, and Daniel 7:13–14, in which Messiah as the Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days in order to receive dominion, glory and

a Kingdom. He thus unites two passages which associate the Messiah in Kingly dignity, power and dominion with Jehovah and applies those passages to Himself.

“The content of this great self-affirmation of our Lord, the solemnity of the occasion on which it was uttered and the tragic consequences which followed, justify one in describing this particular avowal as being par excellence Jesus’ Greater Confession. But perhaps someone is prone to ask how could Jesus affirm His Messiahship when He knew the shadows of death were closing in upon Him? Does not Messiahship connote a commission, an office, a series of functions, a work to be accomplished? How can one affirm that he is a Messiah when he is about to die? It was of the essence of the definition of Messiahship that the holder of the office should achieve his purpose; a Messiah with his work undone was no Messiah at all (Easton, *The Christ of the Gospels*). In answer to this objection we point to that particular Messianic affirmation which Jesus makes. He is not affirming a temporal, earthly kingship. His Kingdom is not of this world. Gathering up the great lines of a celestial and an eschatological Messiahship, He wrought them into a confession of His own glory. He affirmed that He was that Messiah Who could and would accomplish the Messiah’s work in spite of and even by means of death. In His death, through His death, beyond the grave, reigning at the right hand of Jehovah and returning in the clouds of glory, the Son of Man is the Messiah, the Son of the blessed God. In other words the celestial Messiahship is the only one which fits the occasion. The whole of the Greater Confession is part and parcel, warp and woof, of the structure of the event. No part can be dismissed as “liturgical elaboration.” This is life, not liturgy.”

Wherefore it is beyond contradiction that there is not, nor can there be, any other announcement to mankind that could possibly serve as a substitute for the good news of the Kingship of Jesus Christ, of the stupendous fact that God has established His King upon His Holy hill of Zion, from whence and from His capital city, the Heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the great King, He now reigns over His willing — the actual existence on earth of the Kingdom of God — has but an inconspicuous place, where it has any at all, in the preaching and teaching of today; the inevitable consequence being that, in the consciousness of the people of God, His Kingdom has but a shadowy existence if any. It has also been suggested for the earnest consideration of the servants and people of God that this lamentable state of affairs is due in some measure (and perhaps largely) to the displacement of the word *Kingdom* from its rightful and Biblical place in Christian vocabulary, and to the habitual substitution therefore of the word *Church*, which had been consecrated by the Lord Himself to a different use.

In offering this suggestion we are not depreciating the Church of God. Far from it. Rather do we seek to establish the truth concerning the Church and the unique place she occupies in the eternal purpose of God. For which cause we greatly desire to avoid the confusion that has inevitably resulted from forcing upon that exceedingly important word an extra-biblical meaning. The truth which God has been pleased to reveal concerning His Church, which Christ is now building through the Spirit, for the eternal habitation of God, Himself being the chief corner stone, is infinitely precious. But it is not saving truth. For the teaching of what the Scriptures have revealed concerning the Church cannot save a soul from the wrath to come. Saving faith comes only through the preaching and testifying of the good news of God concerning His Son (Romans 1:1–4). The Church of God is no part of that good news. The Church is not the subject of preaching or testimony. Its nature is such that it cannot be preached, or taught or testified. Both Christ Jesus Himself, His herald before Him, and His apostles after Him, proclaimed — not a Church, but — a Kingdom. The Kingdom of God was the very substance of that (said by the writer of Hebrews, when he spoke of the):

“So great salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost” (Hebrews 2:3–4).

The Church of God had no part at all in that great message of salvation proclaimed by the Lord. Throughout the Scriptures the salvation of God is presented as a Kingdom, wherein perfect security and unspeakable blessedness are the eternal portion of all who enter.

“Behold a King shall reign in righteousness and princes shall rule in judgment. And a Man shall be as an hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land ... And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever ... Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters” (Isaiah 32:1-2, 17-20).

And to the same effect speak all the Scriptures. There is not another gospel. It is elementary truth, which no Christian teacher disputes that it is through the preaching of the gospel of God concerning His Son that believers are regenerated and are brought into the Kingdom of God. But not all preachers and teachers are mindful of the imperative need that those who have entered that Kingdom through the door of the new birth should be fully instructed as to the great change that has taken place in their relations with the Triune God; and specially of the need that they be clearly taught and firmly grounded in the elementary truth that their relation with God the Father in the Kingdom of His Son is a filial relation. That they are “The children of God, being the children of the resurrection” (Luke 20:36).

Our Lord has given great prominence to this truth in His longest public discourse, the Sermon on the Mount. It comes into view with great distinctness in the Our Father. In those few words the Kingdom of God is twice mentioned, whereas there is no mention of the Church in any of His public utterances. How impossible to say, Thy Church come, or for Thine is the Church!

The King’s Business: Be Ye Reconciled to God

The Kingdom of God affords to all who enter it — not safety only with an assured supply of all needful things, but — opportunity also for fruitful and distinguished service. As an illustration of this we may refer to the fact that among the elaborate arrangements made by king David for the administration of the affairs of his kingdom were officers in all the business of the LORD, and in the service of the king (1 Chronicles 26:30). So likewise in the Kingdom of God, not only is there service for all as well as salvation for all, but there are also posts of honor and duties that bring distinction. Therefore it is fitting that all the people of God should earnestly covet the best gifts in order that they may be qualified for service of the highest order. This subject of service in God’s Kingdom is of such interest and importance as to merit much fuller treatment than we are able to give to it in this volume. Therefore we shall speak at this time of only one special service, which is selected for mention because, though of most honorable character, it is nevertheless a service in which every citizen of Christ’s heavenly Kingdom can engage.

In every kingdom the diplomatic service is justly regarded as the most honorable and most responsible, and as calling for the highest qualifications. And in the diplomatic corps of a nation the most exalted rank is that of ambassador. What a superlative honor then to be an ambassador for Christ, the King of kings! And this is an honor to which every citizen of God’s heavenly Kingdom may — and indeed should — aspire. This is not fanciful or imaginative, but sober fact. An ambassador is one who is charged with the responsible and most honorable duty of representing his sovereign’s interests and his cause in a foreign land; and it is evident that, for the proper discharge of that duty, qualifications of an unusual sort are indispensable. He must be, above all else, so devoted to his sovereign’s interests that these have the first place in his thoughts and the first claim upon his time and efforts. He must be trustworthy and discreet, gracious and courteous, and must be able so to represent the plans and policies of his sovereign Lord as to gain and preserve the good will of the denizens of the foreign country to which he is accredited.

This is but a bare outline, a very meager account, of the office of an ambassador; yet it may serve to bring before us for contemplation one of the most important of the relationships between the Lord's people and the people of the world and one of the most important services the former can render to Him. For those who have entered the Kingdom of God's dear Son are not of the world, though in it. Their citizenship is in heaven and hence on earth they are strangers and pilgrims. Aggregately they constitute, as declared by the apostle Peter, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; and this to the end that they should, individually and collectively, show forth the praises of Him Who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). The word praises here signifies excellences or virtues; the idea being that the people of God should so conduct themselves that others shall see the qualities of Christ reflected by them.

An exceedingly important part of The King's business is to establish peace on earth — not primarily or chiefly between warring nations and individuals, but — between man and God. One of the most disastrous consequences of sin is that all the offspring of the first Adam are born into a state of enmity against God (Romans 8:7). As declared in the apostle's appalling itemized statement of the condition of the natural man, Destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known (Romans 3:16–17). But, such being the case, the mission of the Son of God had this for one of its chief objects: To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace (Luke 1:79).

This work of reconciliation has been in progress throughout this entire day of grace and still the long-suffering of God waiteth, as in the days of Noah, that this ministry of reconciliation may be carried on, because He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Little regard, however, is paid in current teaching and preaching to the work of reconciliation and its importance (which is truly immense) is but faintly apprehended. It is easy to see, from the human viewpoint, the great importance of being saved from the power of death and from the wrath to come. Therefore, to many the salvation of God is limited to those merciful deliverances. Wondrously great they are indeed; but from ... And you, who were sometime alienated and enemies ... yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death (Colossians 1:19–22).

These Scriptures make evident that reconciliation is an exceedingly comprehensive work of God and that it is based directly and entirely upon the sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross. And, this being understood, we would call attention to the fact that the fullest and most illuminating passage that relates to this great truth presents it in connection with the subject of the ambassadorial offices of Christ's servants and makes known also that the ineffable state of peace with God is a prominent characteristic of the new creation. For, says the apostle:

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation. Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new; and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are **AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST**, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, **BE YE RECONCILED TO GOD**. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17–21).

The enmity is all on man's side, and therefore it is he who needs to be reconciled. God is not the enemy of man and needs not to be reconciled to man. On the contrary, He was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself; and now nought remains to make the death of Christ effective for its intended purpose but for the world to be reconciled to God. Here is where the perverse will of man can and does oppose itself to the purpose of God. And therefore, the servant of Christ, once himself an enemy of God, can engage in no higher service, no service that is of greater worth in the sight of God, than the ministry of reconciliation. For, in the performance of that ministry, in persuading the unpardoned sinner to be reconciled to God, he is serving the Most High God in the capacity of an am-

bassador for Christ. Here is a prospect and an opportunity for serving the King of kings that should fire our zeal and stimulate us to the utmost efforts whereof we are capable.

The Shout of a King

The prophecy of Balaam (Numbers 23:21) whom the king of Moab hired to curse the people of Israel is the earliest prophetic Scripture that speaks distinctly of a coming Kingdom of God. It is a notable prophecy for that reason alone. But it challenges attention for other reasons also. For it was uttered under circumstances of an exceptional sort; and its import was directly counter to the self-interest of the timeserving prophet who gave it utterance, who spoke it only because of the compulsion of Almighty God. It is therefore of special interest to take note of those particular features of the then far-off Kingdom which the reluctant prophet was constrained to foretell. The inspired record makes quite clear that the words of Balaam were what God compelled him to speak; wherefore we are bound to accept them as genuine prophecy, notwithstanding the corrupt motive by which the speaker was actuated. That part of the prophecy, which specially concerns us now, is in these words:

“Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel; The LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.”

It is a fourfold prediction, being composed of two members, each of which consists of two items. *First*, the people were to be all clothed with righteousness such that God would not behold iniquity in them or see perverseness (wickedness) among them. *Secondly*, the LORD their God should be with them, and would so manifest Himself as to evoke, as it were, a continual shout of exultation such as betokens the presence of a king. It is evident in the light of the Scriptures that the people seen in the vision of the prophet were God’s new covenant people, those described by the apostle Peter as a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation (1 Peter 2:9) and by the apostle Paul as the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16); who also applies to them the words used by David when, in describing the blessedness of those to whom God imputeth righteousness, said: “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered, blessed is the man to whom the LORD will not impute sin” (Romans 4:6–8). Moreover, we recall that it is of the heavenly Zion that the prophet was speaking when he said, *Thy people also shall be all righteous* (Isaiah 60:21). Also it is to them the LORD came as IMMANUEL, which being interpreted is, GOD WITH us, as is plainly declared in Matthew 1:21–23) and is confirmed by the LORD’S own words at the very end of that Gospel: *And Lo, I AM WITH You always, even unto the end of the world. Amen* (Matthew 28:20).

Thus the identification is complete. But where, it may be asked, is the fulfillment of the words, *The shout of a king is among them*? By this item of the prophecy we are to understand that the presence of their glorious LORD with them should be so realized and should keep them in such a state of exuberance as would naturally find expression in shouts of joy. The prophets, of course, when foretelling spiritual realities, spoke of them in terms of the natural; and we should not need to be told that when our Lord said, *Lo, I am with you alway*, and again where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them, He did not mean visible presence. Nor do we need to be told, on the other hand, that He did mean that He would be just as really and as literally present in person as if He could be seen and heard and touched. Therefore, if the faith of His people were not so pitifully small and weak as to be all but nonexistent, their spiritual state would always be that which answers to the state of the natural man when he cannot repress his exuberant joy or express it otherwise than by a loud and exultant shout.

But let it not be overlooked that it was a special kind of a shout that was to characterize the people of Balaam’s vision — the shout of a King. All human experience bears witness to the fact that there is nothing that so stirs the feeling of a people or impels them to such manifestations of enthusiasm as the presence of their king. Moreover, in this case it is not the presence of a king, or even of the king, but of One Who is the King of all who are kings and the LORD of all who are lords. What a rapturous shout should His presence evoke from the people whom He has redeemed with His own blood and

has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, who in time past were not a people, but now are the people of God! That shout was faintly heard at the Lord's last entry into Jerusalem, but was soon drowned out by the execrations of His enemies. It is recorded that a very great multitude of people spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees and strawed them in the way. And the multitude that went before, and that followed, cried saying, Hosanna to the Son of David ... Hosanna in the highest! (Matthew 21:8–9).

But from the book of Revelation we obtain a far better idea of what that shout of a king is, which Baa-lam's prophecy foretold. John records this experience in Revelation 19: And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for *THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH* (Revelation 19:6). Here the shout of a king reaches its climax. And what was the occasion? The seer tells what immediately followed in these words:

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His Name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a Name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords” (verses 11–16).

But when we look at the assemblies of God's professed people today and mark their appearance and their conduct — respectable and decorous, but languid and listless, more like a congregation of the dead than an army with banners — we are prone to ask incredulously, Can the prophecy be fulfilled in them? We answer this question by asking others: Has He not already fulfilled in His true people three parts of Balaam's fourfold prophecy? Has He not so dealt with their sins and iniquities, putting them out of the way and clothing His people with His own righteousness, that He sees no iniquity and no perverseness in them? And has He not made Himself their Immanuel? And if so, can He not also cause them to realize collectively His presence in such wise as to turn their apathy into fervid enthusiasm? None will doubt it.

But are there not conditions to be fulfilled? Doubtless there are; and in truth there is nothing more urgently needed than an earnest inquiry on the part of God's Israel as to the causes of their present moribund state and as to God's way of revival out of it. The Scriptures we have been reviewing point the way. That stupendous shout, which is likened in Revelation 19 to the voice of a great multitude and the voice of many waters and the voice of mighty thunders, was evoked by the announcement that *THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH*. This is The word of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:19). It is a reecho, on a scale of unparalleled grandeur, of God's proclaiming of old to the earthly Zion, Thy God reigneth (Isaiah 52:7). That was what the people of God needed then to hear, and they need it no less today. Those few words declare a truth that is as marvelous in its simplicity as it is stupendous in its importance. So essential is it to Zion's welfare to know that her God reigneth, that, in the prophet's vision, the feet of those who hasteth over the mountains, bearing the good tidings, were described as beautiful in the sight of God. And there is no question of its present application; for the apostle Paul applies it to those who preach the gospel (Romans 10:15).

But it may be asked, *Is not the gospel a message for the unsaved? Does Zion need to be told that her God reigneth?* Truly the gospel of the Kingdom, the glad tidings of peace, the good news of salvation, is for all men, whether saved or unsaved. But especially does God's Zion need to be aroused, encouraged and stimulated with the good tidings that her God reigneth.

Where then are the bearers of the message today? Where are those who are saying unto Zion, Thy God reigneth? It was written of old time, The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those that published it (Psalm 66:11). But there is no great host today that is engaged in publishing this lofty and glorious truth. Indeed it is not easy to find a single individual who is so doing. And may it not be that in this fact is to be found both the cause of the present distressful condition of Zion and also an indication of the remedy? The verse last quoted, when rendered in closer conformity to the original text than as given in our A. V., contains a valuable hint. For the last clause, literally translated, reads: Those (this pronoun being in the feminine gender and hence indicating the meaning, the women) who published the tidings is a great host. What we learn from this is — not that it is Scriptural for women to preach, for the verse has nothing to do with that subject, but — that no special qualifications are needed to fit one for bearing the good tidings to Zion that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. So true is this that even those who by nature are least adapted for the service, can engage largely therein. An academical course of study and a theological training are not requisite for this service, though they do not disqualify. Anyone who has heard and believed the good news can publish it to others. The saying of Psalm 68:11 belongs in the same category with another which is found in both the Old and New Testaments: *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength* (Psalm 8:2; Matthew 21:16). When men are not to be found for the work of the Lord, He will employ women and even babes for its accomplishment.

An apt illustration is found in the incident of our Lord's visit to Samaria, recorded in the Gospel by John the fourth chapter. There we read that, as He rested at Jacob's well, while His disciples were gone into the city to buy food, there came a woman of Samaria to draw water at noonday. Now it is well known that the custom of that country was for the women to draw water in the evening. But this woman, being by her own admission of such disrepute that respectable persons would not associate with her, came at that hour presumably to avoid meeting other women. Hence an encounter as wonderful in its nature and as fruitful in its immediate results as any that the Scriptures record. For our present purpose it is needful to note only the following significant facts: After our Lord had revealed to that social outcast that He was the Messiah (the King) for Whom Samaritans as well as Jews were looking, she straightway forgot her errand (though it was one of prime necessity), left her water pot, returned to the city and testified so convincingly of the Christ to her fellow townsmen that they went out of the city and came to Him. That was the result of the testimony of but a single person, a woman, and one who, judged by conventional standards of those days as well as these, was unfit for association with respectable folk. What then may not be accomplished by a great host, even of such as she, publishing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God in the simplicity of faith?

And the result of the good tidings published by that one woman gains immensely in value when contrasted with the results of the visit of Christ's own disciples, made that same day to that same city. They, chosen and called and taught by Christ Himself for the very purpose that they might be witnesses unto Him, returned to Him from Samaria with some food; and only to be mystified (and covertly rebuked) by His saying, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. On the other hand, the woman, who had never seen Him before that hour, returned with a company of men eager to hear and ready to believe on her sole testimony; and who besought Him that He would tarry with them, (an invitation He never refuses) with the result that many more believed because of His own word, and said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard Him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.

The message is not obsolete nor is its power diminished. It is the word of the King; and Where the word of a king is there is power (Ecclesiastes 8:4). It proclaims a fact which is not only of supreme importance to all men everywhere, but is also supremely glorifying to God. We are sure that He can, and we believe that He will arouse His people as to their responsibility for the publication of this vital truth. In so doing He will avail Himself, as aforetime (Judges 5:2; 1 Chronicles 29:9), of the services of those who wittingly offer themselves as bearers of the glad tidings, who will thereby not only insure themselves of great rewards hereafter, but will greatly rejoice even while engaged in the service, as it is written, The people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart

they offered willingly to the LORD. The Lord, seated upon His throne, high and lifted up, as seen by the prophet Isaiah, is asking, now as then, *Whom shall I send, and Who will go for Us?* (Isaiah 6:1–8). Shall the response of our hearts be, Here am I, send me?

This is an appeal to the hearts of God's people, with the object — not of adding to their stock of head knowledge, but — of putting their feet into motion. There is a knowledge that puffeth up, and the conditions of modern life conduce to the accumulation of knowledge of that sort. But there is also a knowledge of quite another sort, information as to matters of fact, received from such reliable source as to impart certainty, and of such nature as to impel the recipient, as a matter of duty, to make the facts known to others for their good. Of such sort preeminently is the truth that the Almighty and Everlasting God has established His own Kingdom in this world, over which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, The blessed and only Potentate, reigns from the throne of God in heaven. There is no truth comparable in value to this; for it is of prime importance to all men everywhere, seeing that upon their acceptance of it by the hearing of faith depends their eternal welfare. But God's own people, who presumably know the truth of this, need to be awakened to the reality thereof and to what it means to themselves and to those which are without. Hence the urgency of the word, Say unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.

**Now Unto the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the Only Wise God,
Be Honor and Glory For Ever and Ever. Amen.**