

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

What Is It?

Whom Does It Embrace?

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INTRODUCTION.

THE Author of this little treatise on the great and glorious subject of the Kingdom of God has given me the privilege of reading it before publication, and I am glad to commend it, with the earnest hope that it will prove helpful to many. His remarks on the Kingdom in its different stages and aspects call for careful attention, and the subject of Chapter IV., on the condition of entrance into the Kingdom, is specially important at the present time to those who value the gracious call of God to His kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2. 12). As I have lately published a pamphlet on the same subject, it may be well to say that Mr. Hoste's and mine were written quite independently of each other, and that where we may have said the same thing, our words should be read as giving a twofold testimony to what we believe to be the truth.

W. H. BENNET.

YEOVIL.

SYNOPSIS.

INTRODUCTION BY MR. W. H. BENNET, OF YEovil.

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The Kingdom of God :

What Is It? Whom Does It Embrace?

CHAPTER I.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

THE Kingdom of God is a theme which may well stir the affections and quicken the interest of all the people of God, for the King will be Jesus, Emmanuel, the Christ of God, their Saviour and their Lord.

An earthly prince destined to succeed to his father's kingdom is trained with this in view, and no pains are spared to acquaint him with the history, people and government of his country and with what is becoming in one of so high a destiny. As all believers hope one day, and rightly so, to share in the coming kingdom, they too should keep their inheritance in view, and walk worthy of their high and holy calling.

The phrase " Kingdom of God " is employed in various senses in the word of God. Sometimes it stands for the Kingdom as announced by John the Baptist, which, though rejected then, will be eventually manifested in all its glory during the millennial reign. This Kingdom will have height as well as breadth, a heavenly and an earthly side. The former is referred to in 1 Corinthians 15, 50, as that which " flesh and blood cannot inherit," but the earthly Kingdom will be inherited by men of flesh and blood as we shall see later. Sometimes " Kingdom of God " stands for that which is set up in the hearts of true believers and sometimes more generally for that condition of things brought about

in the world by the preaching of the gospel in this age. In this latter aspect the Kingdom will need purging of false profession. Then, lastly, there is "the Eternal Kingdom" of which the millennial Kingdom is the first phase. In this, righteousness will no longer simply rule but will dwell. Then the last enemy shall have been destroyed and God will be all in all. Then at last will the whole universe bow the knee and every tongue confess, even in the fearful regions of the lost, that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

We should expect the Kingdom to be a theme much dwelt upon among Christians, but, whether from the difficulty of distinguishing its various phases, or from the mistaken idea that it is not of practical bearing, it is a subject seldom referred to. But its importance in our Lord's estimation is clear from the fact that the Kingdom formed the burden of His instructions to His disciples after His resurrection "being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." (Acts 1, 3.) True, it was not for them to know then whether the Kingdom would be at once restored to Israel, for that depended on how the nation would treat the Pentecostal message. Their rejection of it showed that the true answer to the disciples' question was in the negative, but the fact remains that the Kingdom in a broader sense did occupy a large place in the early testimony (see Acts 8, 12; 14, 22; 19, 8; 20, 25; 28, 31).

This last reference at the very close of the Acts is of peculiar interest. It effectually disposes of the theory held by some that all Kingdom teaching is Jewish and was finally superseded for us by the higher revelation of "the prison epistles," as they term 'Ephesians,' 'Philippians,' and 'Colossians.' This, the last verse of the book, shows us the apostle "preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching the things of Jesus Christ" during this very "prison period." How could his oral and written teaching be in disagreement?

He saw no inconsistency between the "gospel of the grace of God" and Kingdom teaching, as his address to the Ephesian elders shows. "The ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my face no more." (Acts 20, 24-25). The former gives us the privileges of the gospel where all is of grace, the latter the responsibilities of those who are partakers of that grace. We do not enter a sphere of self-pleasing when we believe the gospel, but of Christ-pleasing, and the path that leads to the future Kingdom is not one of soft delights but of "much tribulation."

The prophet Obadiah ends his short but severe prophecy against Edom with the assurance of Jehovah's ultimate triumph, "The Kingdom shall be the Lord's," but this will only be in the face of the deadly opposition of man and Satan, when Christ returns in person "in power and great glory."

This is quite outside the scope of modern thought. Even the religious world derides the literal fulfilment of what it calls "Jewish Apocalypics." To such "the Kingdom" means only an improved order of things brought about by religious reform and social legislation. But the King to reign over their renovated world will not be the Christ of God, but the Great "Super-Man" of their desire, the product of all that is best in modern thought and progress, with something else thrown in, for another "will give him his own power and seat and authority."

It seems likely indeed that Satan, who is the great counterfeiter of divine truth, will succeed in deceiving the world with a brief semblance of the true reign of peace.

The answer to all this will be a terrible laugh. "He that sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision. . . . Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. When men shall say 'Peace and safety' then sudden destruction shall come upon them . . . and they shall

not escape." The "divine event to which the whole creation moves" is not the final salvation, but the final suppression of every rebel and the complete exaltation of God in Christ. No wonder then that this theme should permeate the Word of God.

Psalmists sang of it. Prophets foretold its rise and glories. Apostles saw it in vision and the Lord Himself proclaimed it. The reason is not hard to find. The setting up of the Kingdom will mark the triumph of Christ, the manifestation of the saints, the restoration of Israel and widespread blessing to the world. Peter describes it in his address to the nation in Acts 3, as "the restitution of all things"—the great antitype of the day of jubilee—when "Ye shall return every man unto his possession and . . . every man unto his family" (Lev. 25).

No wonder this was the Spirit-given theme of all the holy prophets since the world began, and that while they told of "the sufferings of Christ," they should also speak with rapture of "the glories that should follow."

What Is the Kingdom?

Webster defines a kingdom as "the sphere in which the authority of a king is recognised." Not an exhaustive definition perhaps, but it will serve our purpose. The Kingdom of God is the sphere in which His authority is recognised.

We must not confound the Kingdom and the Church any more than we would confound Great Britain and the Royal Family. The Kingdom began before the Church was born, and will outlive it down here. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Old Testament saints who never were in the Church, will sit down in the Kingdom of God (Matt. 8, 12). The saved of Apocalyptic times who never will be in the Church will reign with Christ (Rev. 20, 4).

The centre is the same all through, but the circles are

different. In the present dispensation all who are in the Church are in the Kingdom, though not exactly in their quality as members of the Church, but rather as "children of the Kingdom." But the Kingdom is not coterminous with the Church but, though including it, stretches out on every side like the atmosphere around an air balloon. The Kingdom now includes the false with the true, all who merely "profess and call themselves Christians," along with the true household of faith. Even in the Millennial Kingdom this will hold good, and along with the true saints there will be those who yield feigned obedience (Psa. 18, 44 ; 81, 15).

Does it not behove all who "name the Name of Christ to depart from iniquity?" The solemn testing time is nearing, "His fan is in His hand and He shall thoroughly purge His floor, and gather the wheat into His garner, but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable." The mixed sown field is not the Church but the world. When the King comes back the tares will be gathered in bundles and burnt. "All things that offend and they which do iniquity shall be gathered out" of the Kingdom and judged (Matt. 13, 40). Note carefully that these are not said to be unfaithful children of God, but "children of the evil one."

How Distinguished?—Kingdom of Heaven (lit. of the Heavens) and Kingdom of God.

Some say that the "Kingdom of Heaven" includes the false with the true, while the "Kingdom of God" excludes all but the true. This would be very simple if it were true. But, unfortunately, it is not borne out by the Scriptures. The fact that the parable of the mustard seed and leaven are in Matthew 13 referred to the Kingdom of Heaven, and in Luke 13 to the Kingdom of God is enough to show it.

Besides, in Matthew 13, 11, and Luke 8, 10, the expression "Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven" and "of God" are used interchangeably. The two terms really mean the

same thing from slightly different standpoints. In "Kingdom of God" it is the person who rules who is in view, in the "Kingdom of Heaven" the centre from which He rules, as one might say equally well: The Empire of King George or the Empire of Great Britain. The Kingdom in both aspects ought ideally to be true now—but the enemy has sowed tares and there is confusion.

"Kingdom of Heaven" and the "Heavenly Kingdom."

Of course, these must be carefully distinguished as being essentially different. The term "heavenly kingdom" describes that side of the kingdom in which the heavenly saints will have their part. "The Kingdom of heaven" is the earthly side of the kingdom administered from heaven, and going on as we see in Matthew 13, even now in mystery. In the latter a saved Israel and spared Gentile nations will share. These two aspects of the kingdom are like the upper and lower stories of the same mansion. Had Israel as a nation accepted the Lord Jesus as their Messiah, His sufferings would have been no less indispensable, but they would not have been inflicted by Israel. Clearly the Romans would not have acquiesced quietly in the setting up of a Jewish kingdom, and by their hands alone He might have died, to the grief of Israel, rather than to their guilt. Had Israel as a nation accepted the testimony of the apostles to a risen Christ "their sins would have been blotted out, times of refreshing" would have been ushered in, and the Lord would have come back and set up His kingdom (Acts 3, 19, 20).

I believe that the meaning of the disputed words in John 3, 12, is to be found in the difference here drawn. "If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things." The contrast here is not between the "new-birth" and "eternal life." New birth is from above and is essentially a heavenly thing.

Nor, indeed, is this contrast found at all, as I judge, in the former and latter parts of our Lord's discourse to Nicodemus. The contrast is rather between what the Lord had previously announced to the Pharisees as the representatives of the nation—"the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (this was an earthly hope for an earthly people)—and the truth that the Lord was propounding all through to Nicodemus, which was of a different order and on a heavenly plane—the new birth and the possession of eternal life. Entrance into the Kingdom of God in its true and spiritual character entailed "a birth from above." The words of the Lord in fact were in view of the darkness of Nicodemus who represented the Pharisees as a class. 'If you did not believe My simple testimony as regards the national hope of Israel, how could you be expected to believe when I tell you of a spiritual Kingdom?'

Setting Up of the Kingdom.

BUT why should the Kingdom need setting up? Is it not universal? Through the rebellion of angels and men immense tracts of the moral universe lie to-day outside the Kingdom of God. Men ask petulantly why God did not prevent it? They forget that the creation of responsible beings capable of moral choice could not but make the misuse of that faculty a possibility, though not a necessity. How could moral freedom be confined and its possible misuse eliminated? As we know too well this faculty of choice has been perverted. Hence temporary but terrible confusion in the universe.

The Kingdom of Darkness.

When Satan fell a new kingdom was set up, an "imperium in imperio"—the kingdom of Darkness—a dark blot on the hitherto unsullied universe of God. This kingdom is doubtless a highly organised and cunningly devised imitation of the Kingdom of God. For we read of a hierarchy of princi-

palities and powers and rulers in it as in the heavenly sphere. These are governed by Satan as the Prince of the power of the Air, with all his perverted wisdom and age-long experience. This kingdom received a vast extension when man fell. We little realise the immense triumph that accrued to Satan, when the whole human race was swept at one blow into his kingdom. Like a phoenix rising from its ashes, he became henceforth the "Prince of this World" and their god. We need not suppose Satan was without legal right to the former title, or our Lord would not have recognised it? Nor was it a false offer he made to Christ, when he offered Him "all the kingdoms of this world and their glory," for how could he have hoped to win the coveted worship with rewards he could not bestow?

After the cross Satan is never called the "Prince of this World." There his power was destroyed and principalities and powers were spoiled. Christ became the owner of this earth by purchase, and its rightful King. But the whole world remains under the Usurper's spell "lying in the wicked one," while believers are delivered by the Father "from the power of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of the Son of His love." (Col. 1, 13). "We see not yet all things put under Him," for the time has not yet come to crush His enemies. God can still be just and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. To rebel man the message still goes forth: "Be ye reconciled to God." To Christ has been entrusted the double work of Mediator and "Repairer of the Breaches." The victory was won on Calvary, manifested at Joseph's empty tomb, and will be consummated when death itself shall be destroyed.

Still mercy holds back the sword of judgment, and "grace reigns through righteousness," but the Lord is returning to set up His Kingdom, and then righteousness will reign. This reign will last a thousand years. It will be overshadowed for a moment by the great final rebellion of man and Satan

(Rev. 20, 8, 9) only to shine out again, like the sun after a partial eclipse, in its final and eternal phase—as “ the Everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” It will be after the last Judgment of the Great White Throne—“ when the last enemy shall have been destroyed ” that the Lord Jesus shall deliver up the Kingdom to His Father that “ God may be all in all ” (1 Cor. 15, 24-26).

Delivering Up the Kingdom.

It is most important to understand this phrase. Can it mean that the Lord will cease to reign ? Some have thought so, and have intercalated what I believe to be a purely imaginary period between the millennial Kingdom and the Eternal state. This they have styled “ the dispensation of the ages of the ages,” at the close of which alone Christ will “ deliver up the Kingdom ”—but “ the ages of the ages ” means by New Testament usage Eternity and nothing short of it. (See Gal. 1, 5 ; Rev. 4, 9 ; 11, 15 ; 19, 3 ; 20, 10). Besides, it is “ when the last enemy is destroyed ” that Christ will deliver up the Kingdom, not “ ages of ages ” afterwards.

There is another fatal flaw in this interpretation. Though it puts off the final day as long as possible, it admits the eventual end of the reign of Christ, whereas we know this will never be, for Daniel 7, 14, tells us “ it will never pass away,” and Luke 1, 33—“ Of His Kingdom there shall be no end.” No, not even at the end of a fancied period, “ the dispensation of the ages of the ages.”

How then understand the expression “ deliver up the Kingdom ? ”

The identical verb is used in this same chapter (1 Cor. 1, 15), “ I delivered unto you the gospel which I also received.” The apostle did not give it up himself when he “ delivered it up ” to the Corinthians : it might be said “ he presented it to them ” but kept it himself. So Christ will present

back the Kingdom of God purged of every hostile power and influence and fully restored to its allegiance, but without any thought of ceasing to be the Viceroy of Jehovah.

“The Son Himself Subject.”

But how are we to understand the words in the same chapter, “Then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15, 28). Does not this mean, it is asked, that some change will take place in the relationship of Christ to the Father? Or that His humanity will, in some unexplained way, be reabsorbed into the Godhead? No, it means the very opposite. The Lord has for ever “taken upon Himself the form of a servant,” and as such He became subject to the Father. He is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever” and can never change. The order of the words in the Greek, as the late Dr. Dale, of Birmingham, has pointed out, is important. They should read, not “Then shall the Son also,” but “Then also shall the Son” be subject. “Also” qualifies the word “then” not “the Son.” The words, far from denoting a change, preclude it. Then no less than before shall the Son continue to be the servant of Jehovah, and as such reign over the new heaven and the new earth. To compare great things with small, when the Indian Mutiny broke out, in 1857, John Lawrence was Governor of the Punjab. He ruled on behalf of the East India Company. On his shoulders fell the chief burden of the great struggle. His mainly was the brain and his the hand that crushed the rebels and handed back the jeopardised provinces to British rule. He did not for that become an Independent Sovereign, even less cease to rule, but as Lord Lawrence he ruled on, in a wider sense than ever, as Viceroy of the British crown.

So the Lord, when He has crushed the great rebellion, destroyed His foes, and handed back the Kingdom to God in

enhanced glory' and stability, will continue to rule, in a fuller sense even than before, over the new heaven and the new earth, but still only as the Viceroy of Jehovah "that God may be all in all."

The phrase "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. 15, 27) has been taken as an additional reason for asserting that He will cease to reign. But "till" has not necessarily this limited meaning, as reference to such passages as Romans 5, 13 will show. "Until the law sin was in the world" and afterwards too, as we know too well. (See also Matt. 24, 38; Acts 7, 18; Rev. 2, 25). The point is that nothing can really interrupt His reign till His final triumph, no rebellion of man, no inrush of fallen spirits. This is true, however, without prejudice to the continuance of His reign.

CHAPTER II.

THE KINGDOM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

WE will now consider the Subject of the Kingdom as revealed :—

1. In the Old Testament; 2. In the New; 3. As to its subjects; 4. As to its character.

The History of the Kingdom of God divides itself naturally, as all history does, into past, present, and future, but it has this peculiarity over all other history, that it is God-breathed and therefore of divine accuracy, and God-planned and so of divine significance. In Old Testament times the Kingdom was portrayed in figure, and foretold in prophecy and vision as to its future literal manifestation. In the Old Testament certain principles of the Kingdom were revealed, but as their carrying out was entrusted to man failure came in all along the line, failure apparently hopeless and final.

We may divide the consideration of the Kingdom in the Old Testament under the aspects of Theocracy, Autocracy, Viceroyalty, and Interregnum.

1. THEOCRACY.

The first lesson God would teach the universe is that He must be King. This is most reasonable, for He alone has the right, and most desirable, for He alone has the power. It is the last lesson man in his independence will learn. "Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?" was man's reply to God under law. "We will not have this Man to rule over us" was man's reply when God revealed Himself in grace. But the heart taught of God humbly confesses, "O Lord our God, other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us, but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name." "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The first surrender to Christ is the beginning of eternal blessing.

The first mention of a word in the Scriptures often helps as to its subsequent meaning. The first reference to the Kingdom is in the Song of Moses (Ex. 15), "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." This is the first recorded song in the Bible, and what was the subject of it? It was Israel's first experience of salvation and they wished to crown their Saviour King. Notice the beautiful order: first, "The salvation of the Lord," then a song before the Lord, lastly, submission to the Lord. Deliverance calls for a *Te Deum* and then an oath of fealty to the Deliverer. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." This was a God-given thought, it was His purpose to be their King. "Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19, 6). "He was King in Jeshurun" (Deut. 33, 5). This was to be a national position not the prerogative of certain faithful men. The giving of the law was the legislation of the kingdom and though that law was too often broken, the sacrifices

permitted Jehovah to retain His seat between the cherubim in the midst of His people. This was Theocracy, the personal rule of Jehovah. He was a Shepherd-King, for He led them as a flock through the wilderness. "He brought them in, and planted them in the mountain of His inheritance." All through the times of Joshua and the Judges, though for their sins He left them for long periods in the hands of their enemies, He never ceased to rule over them, and would have continued to be their King had they been satisfied to go on with Him. But they were not, they must have a king like the nations around, a visible king to lead them against the Ammonites. To be reduced to count upon God alone is, in man's esteem, a terrible pass to be brought to : anything but that, a golden calf, a worldly king, an unconverted leader. This led to the second aspect of the Kingdom.

II. AUTOCRACY.

This really meant rejection of Jehovah. The rule of Judges was of a different character. They were raised up by God to bring the people back to Him, but God will not share His throne with another king. Samuel was grieved for was it not he whom Israel was rejecting ? "No," answered the Lord, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Sam. 8, 7). However, He let them have their way that they might learn that it is "an evil thing and a bitter to forsake the Lord their God." He did not, however, grant their request without warning them of what it would mean to have a king ; selfishness on his part, the words "He will take," are repeated to them six times ; servitude on their part, "ye shall be his servants." We see this illustrated in the whole history of Saul, the man after their own heart. Nearly 400 years later Jehovah reminds Israel of their fatal choice, in case they might even then learn their lesson. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thine

help. I will be thy King. Where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath" (Hos. 13, 9-11). "He gave them their request but sent leanness into their soul." Saul thus became king in his own right. He acknowledged Jehovah as far as it suited him. God is useful against Philistines but when God saved him from the Philistines and told him to destroy utterly the Amalekites—figure of the flesh and its works—it was another thing. "He spared the best . . . and all that was good and would not utterly destroy them." Many a man will profess to serve God till his pocket suffers, but breaks down under the strain of £ s. d. Saul had admirable qualities. He was nature at its best estate, but he was a murderer at heart. He began with rebellion and ended with witchcraft, and stands as a figure of the "Anti-Christ" who will begin with an acknowledgment of God, but will eventually "deny the Father and the Son" (1 John 2, 21).

Saul the autocrat rejects the word of the Lord and is himself rejected from being King. Man has had his chance and failed. Now God comes in with His resources. "I have provided Me a King," is His word to Samuel, "a man after mine own heart who shall fulfil all my will." This brings us to the third aspect of the Kingdom.

III. VICEROYALTY.

The anointing of David introduces the divine ideal: David was to rule in dependence on Jehovah, figure of the true Viceroy to be born in Bethlehem "to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old from everlasting" (Mic. 5, 2).

As has been said, the Kingdom in the Old Testament was in figure only. It could not be otherwise till the true King came. David is the figure of Him that is to come, the

anointed Shepherd who showed he was the man of God's choice by slaying Goliath, as Christ did when "through death He destroyed him that had the power of death." It was in His death he proved Himself to the man whose eyes God had opened, to be truly God's King. "Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

Rejected and pursued, David became the centre for "everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was bitter of soul." Not very high motives it may be rejoined, but how many come to Christ from high motives? Nevertheless, though Adullam and the desert were not pleasant places, we do not read that a single one of these gathered ones went back to Saul, for they had a heart for David. "Thine are we, David, and on thy side . . . for thy God helpeth thee." They had also the word of God represented by Gad the seer, and the priest of God, Abiathar with the ephod. Thus they had, as we have to-day in Christ, a prophet, priest, and king. Those who came to David in this, the period of His rejection, Benjamites, Gadites, and men of Manasseh were comparatively few. But the chief of them are inscribed by name. The Lord will confess the names of those who confess Him now in the day of His rejection. Those who came to David in Hebron, when he had been crowned king, were numbered by thousands and their names are not given. We may again notice a fact that bears on our general subject that David eventually became king over the whole of Israel, not over a favoured class of those who had been specially faithful to him in his rejection. No doubt these latter had special places of honour but the point is that all were made to share in the kingdom. The period of David's rejection will have a further fulfilment in the days of Anti-Christ, antitype of Saul, the one who will come in his own name and be received by an apostate nation. The final testimony from the faithful remnant of Israel will then be "the gospel of the kingdom," to be clearly distinguished

from "the gospel of the grace of God," though both are based on redemption. The burden of this testimony will be "The King is coming."

Many of the Psalms belong to this period and describe the sufferings of the faithful witnesses at the hand of Anti-Christ. There are three specially which we may notice, all beginning with the same words "The Lord reigneth," Psalms 93, 97, 99. In the first, the Psalmist speaks of "the floods lifting up their voice": in the second of "all they that serve graven images that boast themselves of idols." The third is addressed to Israel, who are exhorted to tremble. In spite of all "The Lord Reigneth," "He is mightier than the waves of the sea." "He alone is worthy to be worshipped, "Worship Him, all ye gods."

It is easy to see how such a testimony will be needed, when the idol of the Man of Sin, the great head of the Roman empire, will by satanic power have been quickened into life by Anti-Christ—and set up "where it ought not," probably in the very Holy of Holies of the Temple at Jerusalem (see Matt. 24, 15). He will sit there personally himself no doubt now and again, but will usually, we may infer, be represented by his "abomination" or idol. (2 Thess. 2, 4; Rev. 13, 15).

The reign of David, divided into two periods of seven and thirty-three years, shows us Christ reigning in the midst of His enemies, gradually extending His rule to the ends of the earth. This will be a reign of righteousness in which the Lord will "rule the nations with a rod of iron, and dash in pieces like a potter's vessel," those who rebel. Then will be fulfilled the promise of Psalm 2, 8, which is often misapplied to the conquests of the gospel. "Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

The latter part of David's reign, when "he had been delivered from all his enemies," and specially the glorious times of Solomon's era seem to apply strictly to the times

when God shall have given His Anointed rest from all His enemies, the day of final victory, when the Lord will have put down all authority and power.

Looking back for a moment over the Kingdom in the Old Testament, we see a truth illustrated which runs through the Scriptures that the creature unsustained by divine power sooner or later fails. Lucifer, the anointed cherub, that covered the throne of God and was His representative in universal government, and a light bearer to the universe, failed through pride, another name for independence. What has marked the history of man but self-sufficiency and failure? Of this Adam, Noah, Nadab and Abihu, Korah and Solomon are examples out of many. Solomon who began so well at Gibeon, afterwards did the very things forbidden to a king (Deut. 17, 16, 17). He multiplied horses from Egypt, silver and gold in abundance and—what is worse—wives. The kingdom was divided. All the kings of Israel were guilty, not by the mere fact that they were kings of the separated tribes, but because they followed the sin of Jeroboam who made Israel to sin. It was the calves that were wrong, not the mere fact of the continuance of the state of division. Every king of Judah failed, even men of faith like Asa, Uzziah, Hezekiah, at least in their closing days. At last, after years of long suffering such as none but Jehovah could have displayed, the cup was full and judgment fell first on Israel and then on Judah. The kingdom was taken away from them and entrusted to the Gentile powers. This introduces the last great phase of the kingdom in its earthly aspect which has lasted ever since.

IV. THE GREAT INTERREGNUM.

From Daniel we learn under two prophetic figures that these Gentile powers were to be four, and only four. The Carthaginians came very near to superseding the Roman power and setting up a Punic empire in its place. The

Mussulman power later on nearly succeeded in establishing a fifth monarchy, but failed at Tours and Vienna. The word of the Lord by Daniel must hold good. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream the golden head represented Babylon, the silver shoulders the kingdom of the Medes and Persians, the brazen loins Greece, and the iron legs the Roman empire. The metals decrease in value and increase in strength. The kingdoms decrease in moral character but increase in brute force. In the last phase of the Roman empire, an element of weakness, the clay, will be introduced denoting what we see around us to-day, rule from beneath, the rule of the people—as far removed from God's ideal as the East is from the West. It is as a magnificent image that the Gentile powers stand before the great Monarch. But to God's prophet, these same powers appear as brute beasts decreasing in moral worth and increasing in ferocity. Here the lion, the king of beasts, represents Babylon in the person of the restored Nebuchadnezzar: the bear, the Medo-Persian empire "raising itself on one side," the Persian element more powerful than that of Media. The four-winged leopard, the Grecian empire of Alexander divided among his four generals, namely, Cassander, who seized Macedonia and Greece; Antigonos, to whom fell Asia Minor; Seleucus, whose share was Babylon and the Eastern provinces; and Ptolemy, who became ruler of Egypt. Then, fourthly, the nameless monster, "dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly," representing the great Roman empire. Some have thought that these four beasts must represent four nations, whose power will develop remarkably around the shores of the Mediterranean in the last days, possibly Britain, France, Italy and Greece, and this on the ground that the prophet sees them existing at the same time and that they cannot therefore represent successive monarchies. But the same objection might be raised to the generally accepted interpretation of the image of ch. 2. The four empires there,

though successive, are seen in the vision as contemporaneous. I think the sense of sequence in the four kingdoms represented by the beasts is clearly conveyed in the interpretation of the vision in ch. 7, 17 (e.g. v. 23) "The fourth beast shall be the **FOURTH KINGDOM UPON EARTH . . .** and the ten horns out of his kingdom are the ten kings **THAT SHALL ARISE.**" This last phrase goes on to the final development of the fourth empire and corresponds to the ten toes of the image in ch. 2.

The little horn of Daniel 7 will be, I have little doubt, the Man of Sin of 2 Thessalonians 2, the first beast of Revelation 13, the last great governmental head of the revised Roman empire. He is quite distinct from the Anti-Christ, the second beast of Revelation 13, the false prophet, as he is called later, the religious head, if we may so term it, of the last days. These two will, however, work hand in hand and are so closely identified that they are sometimes confused. We must carefully distinguish again from either of these the little horn of Daniel 8, who will, I judge, be the king of the North, at once an opponent of the two former beasts and a deadly enemy of Israel. And these great godless Gentile powers will not be subdued to God by the preaching of the gospel, as some have hoped, but by direct divine interposition. The king of the North will be first dealt with as described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 and Joel 2, 20, by judgment from heaven, the beast and the false prophet by the final coming of Christ in power and judgment as described in Revelation 19. "The stone cut out of the mountain without hands," on which Israel has stumbled and been broken, will fall on them and will grind them to powder. These two monsters of iniquity will suffer summary judgment in the lake of fire, and their armies will be slain by the sword of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Such, then, is an outline of the Kingdom in the Old Testament. It begins in the hands of God, and ends in the hands of the Gentile powers.

CHAPTER III.

THE KINGDOM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE Gentile interregnum had lasted 600 years when suddenly the wise men from the East arrived with their startling enquiry. "Where is He that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." The first question in the Old Testament was God seeking man, here it is man seeking God. The question fell "like a bolt from the blue" on Herod and Jerusalem. "A King! our King! we neither know him nor want him" was their reply in effect. King Herod's attitude is easily apprehended, but why should the Jews themselves prefer an Edomite to a king of their own? Because it was perfectly well understood that he who claimed to be their king would prove to be their Messiah (see Matt. 2, 4), and they were not in a moral state to desire such an one. The wise men will "rise up in the judgment and condemn them." For was it not strange that they should "come from the uttermost parts of the earth" to see the infant heir to the petty throne of Judea and stranger still that they should desire to worship Him? No doubt God had, in His own way, taught them that the Kingdom of that babe should one day "stretch from shore to shore" and that He would be their King, who was even then worthy of their worship.

The consideration of the Kingdom in the New Testament may be divided under four aspects, as in the case of the former dispensation. The Kingdom :—1. Presented; 2. Rejected; 3. In Mystery; 4. Manifested.

I. THE KINGDOM PRESENTED.

When a man claims an inheritance he must show his credentials, much more when he claims a throne. A claimant to the ancient throne of the house of David must satisfy the most exacting tests. Ever since Eden, the world had had the promise of a Deliverer. For centuries His coming, His race, and His tribe, the manner of His birth, and the works He would perform had been the common property of all who could read the Jewish Scriptures. How impossible then for any but the true Messiah to fulfil in his person such manifold conditions! If a man can off-hand produce a key which perfectly fits a complicated lock of nine wards, the chances are the key is the right one and that the man who made the key had something to do with making the lock. In this case the key fits the lock and the heir fits the throne. God did not send His Son to claim the throne of David without authentic and adequate credentials. Let us exhibit nine of them.

1. HE COMES OF

The Right Stock.

Two genealogies are put in, as the legal phrase has it, one by Matthew and the other by Luke. That of Matthew traces down from David through Solomon: that of Luke traces up to David through Solomon's younger brother, Nathan. But in Matthew, Joseph is said to be the son of Jacob, and in Luke the son of Heli. But how can one person have two grandfathers? Only in one way, through his father and mother. The name of Joseph, then, must take the place of Mary in one of the genealogies. There can be no reasonable doubt that this is the true explanation. If the genealogy of Matthew be that of Joseph, and ch. 1, 16 would seem to make it clear, then that of Luke gives us the line of Mary, through whom our Lord became literally of

“ the seed of David,” and, according to the words of Gabriel, “ would sit upon the throne of David His father.” By Jewish custom, the name of a woman, though it may occur in a genealogy (as for instance Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, Tamar, in Matt. 1) must not occur in the direct line : thus, though the names of the daughters of Zelophehad are given in Joshua 17, 3, they are only incidentally referred to in the genealogies of Manasseh (1 Chron. 7, 15). Accordingly the name of Joseph, the son-in-law of Heli, is substituted for Mary, and he is called the father of our Lord. And, indeed, he was so properly by Jewish law, by his marriage with Mary, the child Jesus becoming his legal son and heir. Thus Luke, by tracing the genealogy of our Lord up to Adam, proves His qualification to be the “ seed of the woman ” foretold in Eden. Matthew, by showing his lineal descent from Abraham, Judah, and David, makes clear that He fulfilled the necessary condition that the Messiah should be at once of the “ seed of Abraham ” (Gen. 13); Shiloh of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49), and a son of the royal house of David (1 Sam. 7, 14-17). All this proves that the wise men from the East were truly taught of God to recognise in the babe of Bethlehem the royal heir and the Divine Messiah.

2. HE WAS BORN OF

The Right Kind of Mother,

a VIRGIN, according to the sign proffered to Ahaz by the mouth of Isaiah (ch. 7, 14), “ Before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Ghost,” nor “ did they come together till she had brought forth her first born son.” Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet. “ Behold a virgin shall be with child and bring forth a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel ” (Matt. 1, 22-23). Cyrus was named 150 years before his birth, and King Josiah 300 years before his. The name of Immanuel was conferred

750 years before the prophecy was fulfilled. It is foolish, as well as false, to pretend that the Virgin Birth is not a fundamental article of faith. If the Lord could not offer this credential, His claim to Messiahship must have failed.

3. HE WAS BORN IN

The Right Place,

BETHLEHEM, which was foretold 710 years before by Micah to be the birthplace of the Messiah (ch. 5, 2), and certified as such by the chief priests and scribes in answer to the enquiries of Herod. "Out of thee (Bethlehem Ephratah) shall come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel whose goings forth have been from of old from everlasting." These three credentials, His race, His birth, His birthplace ought to have appealed convincingly to Israel. The next was specially addressed to the Gentiles who had not the Oracles of God.

4. The Right Kind of Sign.

To the wise men of the East, doubtless skilled in astronomical research, what would have appealed more eloquently than a portent in the heavens? What the star exactly was, or how it spoke to them, is not revealed. It left no doubt in their minds whose star it was and what it meant. "We have seen His star in the East and are come to worship Him." It was to them a convincing credential of the birth of the king. Nor was it challenged by the chief priests of Israel. We may compare with this Numbers 24, 17, where the appearance of a star is connected with the coming of Him who should rule Israel and destroy His enemies. "A star shall come out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel which shall smite the corners of Moab and destroy all the children of Seth." It would almost seem as if this prophecy of Balaam had been handed down through long generations by the providence of God till the star appeared, and then "the wise understood" the sign. "When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

It was the testimony to the One they sought once more revealed, and it was to Him they offered their gifts, it was Him they worshipped, not His mother.

5. HE RECEIVED

The Right Kind of Testimony from Heaven.

(a) The testimony of the Father at His baptism and on the mount. "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." "This is My beloved Son, hear Him." The Jews deny that God could have a Son, but their own Scriptures demand that the one who should be king should also be the Son of Jehovah (Ps. 2). The one whom Jehovah calls My "King," in verse 6, He affirms to be "His Son" in verse 7; see also Isa. 9, 5-6. "The Son given" was to be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." But when speaking of the Divine Son, we must, of course, avoid the thought of succession in time involved in our terms father and son. He was the Eternal Son. "There never was a time when He was not."

(b) The descent of the Spirit upon Him at His baptism fulfilled a necessary condition foretold of the Messiah. It is written in such Scriptures as Isaiah 11, 2, "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him," Isaiah 61, 1, "The spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He hath anointed Me." These Scriptures clearly refer to the Messiah, the Anointed One, and were always so understood by the Jews themselves.

6. HE RECEIVED

The Right Testimony on Earth.

The testimony of John the Forerunner. It was not "Behold the Man of God," but "Behold the Lamb of God," because every offering for sin, and every burnt offering of the past dispensation, demanded an antitype, and the prophecies demanded a suffering Messiah who should be "led as a

lamb to the slaughter," and be " smitten for the transgression of His people."

The testimony of all to His Holiness. Because the Lamb must be without blemish. The angel Gabriel, His apostles, His enemies, His judges, His betrayer, the dying robber, the demons themselves (though He refused their testimony) all bore witness that He was the Holy, Spotless One.

7. The Right Fulfilment in His Person

OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PREDICTIONS

(e.g., Matthew 4, 14-16 ; 8, 17 ; 21, 4 ; 26, 54 ; 27, 35).

8. The Right Character of His Works.

Miracles *per se* do not prove a Divine Messiah, for the Anti-christ will perform great wonders (Rev. 13, 2 ; 2 Thess. 2, 9), but the Lord could not have been the Messiah had He, like John the Baptist, done no miracle. He could read out Isaiah 61, 1 in the public synagogue, without fear of challenge (Luke 4, 18), and could refer to His miracles as a sufficient proof that He was " He that should come " (Matt. 11, 5 ; see also John 5, 36 ; 14, 11).

9. The Right Culmination of His Earthly Ministry.

His death fulfilled Daniel 9, 26, " Messiah shall be cut off." His burial fulfilled Isaiah 53, 9, " He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death." His resurrection fulfilled Psalm 16, 10, " Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption." And His ascension and session at the right hand of God fulfilled the words of Psalm 110, 1, " Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."

These credentials have been examined and accepted by millions who felt their need of a Saviour, and have found the need more than satisfied in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. They have been generally ignored by millions more,

but who can deny with the proofs before them that it is unbelief that is unreasonable, not faith ?

Summary of Matthew's Gospel.

A very brief summary of the gospel of Matthew will enable us to grasp the three first aspects of the Kingdom in the New Testament. After the formal proclamation on the part of John, and then of the Lord Himself, that the " Kingdom of Heaven was at hand," the laws of the Kingdom are promulgated. Men who acknowledge that they cannot keep the Sinaitic law, desire to place themselves " under the Sermon on the Mount," not perceiving that the latter is broader and deeper and is thus more difficult of fulfilment than the former. I believe this Kingdom code will come into force literally when the Kingdom is once more being announced by the chosen heralds of Israel, sealed with the spirit for this testimony, and will naturally not cease to apply when the Kingdom is set up, and when " a King shall reign in righteousness," and when He shall early destroy " all the wicked of the earth." But in its application to ourselves, and we can apply it with blessing to our own life and conduct, it must be understood with and be qualified by the rest of the New Testament. Such words as " Give to him that asketh of thee and from him that would borrow of thee turn thou not away," should be taken with other words equally inspired. " If any would not work, neither should he eat," and again " Owe no man anything." That it is not intended to apply literally to the present time seems clear from a comparison of John 18, 22-23, and Acts 23, 2-3, with Matthew 5, 39, for neither our Lord nor the Apostle turned the other cheek when smitten. A somewhat shallow objection has been raised to the above exegesis, that it destroys the unity of the word of God. But this unity does not consist in ignoring dispensational truth, but in acknowledging unity of authorship and design. One wonders why such objectors do not carry out

Jewish ceremonial, or adopt Matthew 10 as their Missionary handbook for the present day.

In chapters 8 and 9 the Lord proves that the Kingdom of God was among them, by showing His authority over disease (8, 16), the elements (8, 26), demons (8, 31), the wills of men (9, 9), blindness and death (9, 25-29), and then in chapter 11, by communicating the same powers to His disciples. These are the "powers of the world to come" manifested in the early days as long as the setting up of the Kingdom was left still an open question and which will be seen again before its final establishment.

II. THE KINGDOM REJECTED.

This has been foreshadowed from the first by the opposition of the Scribes and Pharisees, the responsible representatives of the nation. The accusation of chapter 9, 34, repeated in chapter 12, 24, "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils," marks a turning point in our Lord's attitude to the nation, for it discounted His final rejection when He offered Himself in chapter 21 as the promised King. This led on immediately to His crucifixion and death.

The rejection of the Kingdom introduces us to the third and present phase

III. THE KINGDOM IN MYSTERY.

The miracles and works of the Lord, chapters 8—12, were a proof that the Kingdom of God was with His people. The Pharisees, by imputing these works to Satanic power, rejected the Kingdom. Henceforth the Lord changes His method of address and "without a parable spake He not unto them." The Kingdom was henceforth for the time being "not of this world." For when the King is rejected the Kingdom cannot openly be set up. It did not, however, cease to exist. It assumed a new character, that of a Kingdom in mystery.

A mystery in the New Testament is not something incomprehensible, but an altogether new and unexpected development of a truth already known, resulting in something hitherto unknown. The mysteries of God are God's answers to man's failures; those of Satan are the full development of those failures. Thus, the coming of Christ in glory was not a mystery. It was clearly revealed in the Old Testament, but that that coming should have a preliminary stage by which His people should be caught away from the evil to come and never thus have to pass through "the great tribulation," or even death, was a mystery revealed in 1 Corinthians 15, 51. "Behold I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed." In this sense the Kingdom was not a mystery. The prophets had all foretold it, but always in connection with the King sitting upon the throne. How could it otherwise exist? This was the mystery. The Kingdom exists now in a hidden form. It cometh not with observation, but it is there.

The seven parables of Matthew 13 are the mysteries of the Kingdom. The two first explain why the good seems to fare so ill. In the first the soil is bad; in the second, bad seed is mixed with the good. The next two show why the bad seems to fare so well. The bad becomes great like the great tree and attracts to itself. The bad, like leaven, spreads by its very nature. The culmination of the mustard seed will be the "Man of Sin," and "Anti-Christ," that of the leavened meal, "mystery Babylon." The next two parables assure us that God's purposes will not fail in spite of man and devil. He will have His treasure, the elect of Israel, His pearl, the whole aggregate of the true children of the Kingdom. We see then here a contrast between the human and the divine. The great tree and the great pearl, the hidden leaven and the hidden treasure, professing christendom and the elect of God. The seventh parable may represent the gospel of the Kingdom in the last

days of Israel's testimony in Pentecostal power. Many will be gathered in, but the results will be tested at the end of the age. These seven parables are succeeded in chapters 18—25 by seven other parables, in which principles of right conduct and acceptable service in the Kingdom are illustrated, taking us right on to the time immediately preceding the return of the Son of Man in judgment, when, as has been referred to above, Israel shall be once more God's witnesses on the earth, perhaps the greatest missionaries the world has ever seen, and the most successful.

Now the gospel of the grace of God is proclaimed. All who obey it become children of God as to relation, members of the Body of Christ as to distinctive position and privilege, and children of the Kingdom as to responsibility.

This third period of the Kingdom in Mystery, though greatly lengthened by the long-suffering mercy of God, will one day give place to the fourth aspect of the Kingdom.

IV. THE KINGDOM ESTABLISHED.

This will not be brought in gradually by gospel effort, much less by civilization and social reform as many dream, but by the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." The stone cut out without hands will fall on the feet of the great image of the Gentile powers and "grind them to powder," and then become a great mountain and fill all the earth. The proclamation shall then go forth: "The kingdoms of the world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever."

CHAPTER IV.

WHO WILL SHARE IN THE
KINGDOM?

A LAWYER, whose business it was to be constantly perusing wills, was engaged one day on one when an event occurred which made the monotonous task supremely interesting. He found his own name in the will. We, too, read in the Word of God of a glorious inheritance, "the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ," and we would fain learn if our names are in the will. Can we who have believed in Christ look forward with assurance to one day sharing in the coming Kingdom glories, or is it, as some assert, "a supreme uncertainty?" Surely the enquiry is sufficiently interesting and important. The whole character of our Christian walk, of our attitude of soul to God, must depend on whether we are heirs, exhorted to walk worthy of our high calling, or mere claimants on suffrance, doomed to exclusion from the Kingdom unless some unknown standard is attained. The heart of man is legal to the core, and legal conditions may commend themselves to some, but legality never yielded fruit for God. Let us then examine the word of God, and may His grace teach us how to walk and to please Him.

Workings of Grace in the Kingdom.

(1) We may notice then, first, that heirship depends on sonship. "If a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4, 7). With this agree the words of Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who . . . hath begotten us . . . to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1, 3-4), and

those of our Lord to Nicodemus, " Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." A Divine work had to take place *for* the soul before one sinner could have a right to enter the Kingdom. This is the work of redemption. A Divine work must take place *in* the soul before one sinner could be fit to do so. This is the work of regeneration. The new birth is the " open sesame " of the Kingdom. The Lord's words give no hint of some other undefined condition lurking in the background. If entrance to an exhibition is advertised at a shilling, we should be surprised to find at the turnstile that this was only a preliminary condition of entrance. New birth entails new life, and new life produces new fruit, but all who are born of God will share in the Kingdom of God.

(2) Heirship depends on faith not on faithfulness. Only God can fit us for the Kingdom. The blood of Christ alone can be our title. All saints will be in the Kingdom, that is by grace through faith. All saints will not be in the same place in the Kingdom, that is of reward through faithfulness. James tells us that " God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which God hath prepared for them that love Him." These last words, " them that love Him," is a generic description of all the people of God—rich as well as poor—for if " any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema " (1 Cor. 16, 22). For those who love Him the Kingdom is prepared, for those who do not, anathema ; and there is no third choice.

(3) The believer has already the pledge of the future inheritance. We read " If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His " (Rom. 8, 9), and the presence of the Spirit in the believer is " the earnest of our inheritance " (Ep. 1, 14). An earnest is a pledge and guarantee of full blessing to come. He that has the earnest will enjoy the inheritance.

(4) Moreover, the Kingdom is not merely a future promise,

it is a present possession. We enter it now, and this fact is used in the Word as a stimulus to true service. "We receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12, 28). Some would reverse this order, and make it read, "Let us serve God acceptably, that we may receive the Kingdom" but the old order is better. To make a part in the Kingdom depend on attainment, as if some servant had warned the prodigal, when already partaking of the fatted calf, that his father would not receive him unless he served him faithfully. The Kingdom is set up in hearts now. "Not meat and drink," not religious forms and observances "but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14. 17).

Divine exhortation is not based on a threat of exclusion from the Kingdom, but on our inclusion in Christ. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth" (Col. 3, 4). The apostle indeed prays for many things for the saints of Colosse (ch. 1, 9, 10), but he does not pray that they may get into the Kingdom, he thanks the Father that they are in it (v. 13). We have the same truth addressed to the seven churches. "Unto Him that loved us . . . and hath made us a Kingdom of priests unto God" (Rev. 1, 6).

(5) There is no thought in Scripture of true believers being turned out of the Kingdom. When Christ comes the Kingdom will be purged. All that offend and work iniquity will be cast out (Matt. 13), but are these unfaithful Christians? No, they are "the children of the wicked one," ungodly professors, corresponding to the tares and bad fish of the second and seventh parables.

There is no desire here to smoothen the pillow of the mere professor but to resist an inverted teaching.

Responsibility in View of the Kingdom.

Without doubt there is a danger of minimising the responsibility of the believer and of reducing the judgment seat of Christ to the semblance of a mere parade. It is true that only the redeemed will be there, and they in their glorified bodies, and that their sins will not then be remembered, for He who will be Judge will be their Redeemer : but who can lightly think of the solemn possibility of his life work being consumed. Though in certain hymns Christians are encouraged to thank God now for the crown I know of no Scriptural authority for doing so until it be actually obtained.

Just as the day of Jubilee influenced all land purchase in Israel, so ought the judgment seat of Christ to influence our waking hours, for all will then be seen and weighed in the light of God.

The fact that a boy is his father's heir, and has a place in the house secured, does not make the examinations at the end of the term less real. " We must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ " (2 Cor. 5, 10). Sins committed before conversion are all and for ever blotted out. Sins incurred since, which have been judged and confessed and forsaken will not, if I judge rightly, be brought up again. " For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged " (1 Cor. 11, 31). These words, though they primarily refer to temporal judgments, seem to contain a general principle of God's government. But how many sins have never really been judged : wrongs inflicted, debts unpaid, promises broken, accusations of false doctrines levelled, unrighteous ways allowed in the home, in the place of business and in the church of God.

The rights and wrongs of things, divisions, quarrels, doctrine, practices, will then be made manifest. Things highly esteemed, even among Christians, may there prove

“ wood, hay and stubble,” and reputation and character, perhaps, in some cases, stand out in startling contrast. But how much unknown service, hidden prayers, secret gifts, unpublished records, will there shine forth as “ gold, silver and precious stones ? ” The teaching as to the Kingdom, which is here resisted, is no doubt a reaction against the abounding antinomianism of the present day, but it really substitutes a worse antinomianism in its place. It is like curing a tobacco slave by offering him the opium pipe. It warns professors that they will lose the Kingdom if they are adulterers, fornicators, drunkards, and this is perfectly Scriptural, but it hastens to assure them that they may still go to heaven, for heaven is of pure grace, and that is grossly antinomian. Whatever a man’s profession may have been, we have no right, as long as his life is openly vicious, to tell him he is a Christian, or indeed to comfort ourselves with the thought that he may be one.

If Christians are Excluded?

When we ask what will become of Christians excluded from the Kingdom, the answers are, as we should expect, perplexingly diverse, for one man’s theory is as good as another’s. One writer warns us “ not to be wise above that which is written,” and the next moment attempts to be so. “ Some, *perhaps*,” he suggests, “ from the lower heavens of Enoch and Elijah, will behold without entering.” But this is the mere speculation. What does he know about the heavens of these two prophets ? “ Others,” he affirms, “ will return temporarily to corruption and their souls to Hades.” He does not explain how “ one who has put on incorruption ” can return to corruption. It is a contradiction in terms of which there is not one hint in Scripture. “ Others are to be cast into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Gnashing of teeth is used in the Word (see Ps. 33, 5 ; 37, 12 ; Acts

7, 54) as the expression of hatred and rage. Can this be the attitude of soul of a child of God under what is supposed to be his Father's corrective discipline? This is most subversive doctrine, but there is worse to follow. "The Lord's people guilty of the very gravest offences are temporarily in Gehenna (!) . . . it will continue during the reign of Christ." The comparative emptiness of the lake of fire during the Millennium is adduced as an argument by one of these teachers to point ominously to its use for "wicked Christians," on the same ground, I suppose, that the emptiness of a prison from lack of convicts would clearly indicate that the governor intended filling it with his relations and friends!

One crumb of comfort is thrown to these poor, perishing Christians. "They shall not perish for ever," which, we are assured, is the true meaning of the Greek in John 10, 29, instead of "My sheep shall never perish," as we have it in an authorised and revised translation. This is the sort of emendation which a man self-taught from an interlinear translation of the Greek Testament might be expected to make, but there is not a scintilla of ground for translating the Greek idiom in this way. The exact form of the Greek with the negative, as we have it here, occurs in five other places, all in St. John's gospel, chapters 4, 14; 8, 51, 52; 11, 26; 13, 8. If John 10, 28 must be altered, then the same change must be made in all, and a strange sense is the result. Fancy Peter meaning, in John 13, 8, when he said "Thou shalt never wash my feet," that our Lord might wash his feet, but "not for ever." The form of the Greek really excludes perishing at all for the sheep of Christ.

This teaching of a Millennium in the lake of fire for "wicked Christians" as a governmental punishment from God, is the true Romish doctrine of Purgatory, and worse. Those who hold it must be the most anxious or the most self-complacent of men.

This doctrine naturally grafts itself on to the deadly doctrine of Universalism, for if some are raised from the second death why indeed not all ?

Thank God for His will that none should perish, for His salvation provided for all at the infinite cost of the blood of Christ, and for the promise that all who believe, " being now justified by His blood, shall be saved from wrath through Him," but equally true is it that " He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Between these two portions there is a great gulf fixed, and the whole drift of revelation precludes the thought of transference from one to the other after this life.

There is one other explanation put forward to explain the future position of those Christians who are, according to this theory, excluded from the Kingdom. " They will be simply left in their graves." But what will become of those living on the earth when the Lord returns ? If they are worthy neither to be taken away nor to inherit the Kingdom, how are they to be disposed of ?

A Partial Resurrection and Rapture !

I believe the doctrine of a partial resurrection and rapture is without solid base. The 144,000 of Revelations 14 are said to be these favoured raptured saints ! But in chapter 7 we learn they are Israelites chosen in equal number from the 12 tribes. On what principle can Judah, Simeon, Benjamin mean the church ? If this were so then " the church " in which there is no Jew or Gentile, might mean Jewish tribes in which all are Jews. The Bible becomes a gramophone which will say anything you like to put into it. No, the church will have been taken away years before the 144,000 Jewish witnesses even begin their testimony, much more before these are seen with the Lamb on Mount Zion.

But does it not say that " to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation ? "

(Heb. 9, 28). Yes, but the context does not favour the idea that these are certain faithful Christians. The atmosphere of the chapter is the day of atonement. On that day the altar of incense was supposed to be transferred into the Holiest, being conventionally represented by the golden censer. In verse 5 of Hebrews 9 we see this order actually noted, which shows that this special day is in view.

On the day in question Israel was divided into two classes. The High Priest alone in the Holiest, the rest of the nation outside the tabernacle. The antitype is now in progress. The Great High Priest has entered in. Those that look for Him are the people of God in contrast with the world—Amalekites and Edomites—who have no interest in such matters. The word translated “look for” occurs in five other places—Romans 8, 23-25; 1 Corinthians 1, 7; Galatians 5, 5; Philippians 3, 10, and always in connection with the coming of Christ. The Apostle takes for granted that all these saints, whether their state was good like that of the Philippians, or low like that of the Corinthians and Galatians were looking for Christ. If these last named churches were in a bad state they were, according to the “partial rupture” theory, in danger of being left behind, and they ought to have been told so. Why does the apostle not warn them? Why is it to these fallen Galatians he writes, “we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith” (not by faithfulness). Why is it to these carnal Corinthians he reveals the mystery, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed . . . the dead shall be raised incorruptible.” Could anything be more inclusive for sleeping and living saints? It was thus the apostle was taught of God to revive these failing saints, not by threats of passing through the great tribulation or of losing their part in the Kingdom, but by unfolding to them the exceeding grace of God.

“Wicked Christians” in Hell.

Even more explicit is 1 Thessalonians 4, 16-18, “The dead in Christ shall rise first . . . then we which are alive and remain (lit., who are being left) shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” “The dead in Christ,” none left in their graves; “We which are alive,” none left on the earth. Not a hint of a partial resurrection, not a word of any saint being left behind, not a whisper of a third class of unworthy saints, of “wicked Christians,” who will be shut up in darkness or hell fire. The apostle closes by exhorting the saints to “comfort one another with these words.” How could they if in “supreme uncertainty” of their own fate or that of their beloved dead? It would be like telling a man whose wife had sailed on the “Titanic,” to take comfort in the thought that she was alive and well before there was the slightest news that she was. This would be truly to “sing songs to a heavy heart.” In the last chapter of this same epistle the apostle adds one word more of assurance to these saints to gladden their hope and encourage them to holiness. “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake (i.e., be wakeful—the same word employed in verse 6) or sleep (i.e., be sleepy—the word used in verses 6 and 7 and quite distinct from the word translated “sleep,” in chapter 4, 14), we should live together with Him.” The Spirit seems to have anticipated this erroneous teaching when he uttered, by the mouth of Zechariah, the words, “The Lord my God shall come and *all the saints* with thee” (chap. 14, 5), and, by the mouth of Paul, “at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with *all His saints*,” and again “when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired *in all them that believe*.” How could the Lord come with all His saints, if some had never been taken away. How

could all believers admire Him if some are "in outer darkness," "in Hades," or "in the lake of fire?" To ignore the plain teaching of such Scriptures and to build on a disputed interpretation of Revelation 14 and on inferences and analogies, is like a Unitarian going to the book of Exodus to refute the divinity of the Lord, and ruling out the writings of John.

"Attaining Unto the Resurrection."

But some one may urge that Paul himself was striving "if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead?" Yes, but what do the words mean? The noun, which only occurs here, is literally "the out-resurrection." The verb occurs thrice in the New Test., but never in the sense of resurrection. How could Paul mean that he was striving to attain to physical resurrection, seeing he did not expect to die, see Philip. 1, 24, 25, but on the contrary to be alive when the Lord returned to share in the blessings of His coming with all his fellow saints (3, 20-26). How could this be a matter of reward for faithfulness, if he was sure of it for himself and them? As has been well said, "A text out of its context is a pretext." Present spiritual experience, not future physical resurrection, is I believe the thought here.

In Romans 5, 2, we see that rejoicing in hope of the glory of God belongs to the justified. This agrees with 8, 17, "If children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together with Him."

We suffer with Christ by the fact that we are one with Him. "The suffering with Him," as one has said, "implies a pain due to union." The only other place this exact word occurs is in 1 Corinthians 12, 26, "If one member suffer, all the members *suffer with it*." The suffering is inseparable in one form or another whether the believer is a Great-Heart, of a Faint-Heart, for he has Satan against him because he belongs to Christ, the flesh lusting because he is a temple

of the Spirit, and the world opposing because he is of the Father. But he makes up his mind to be identified with Christ in suffering now, so as to be associated with Him later in glory. That the word translated "if" here does not necessarily imply doubt seems clear from a reference to the only other places where it is used: Romans 3, 30; 8, 9; 2 Thessalonians 1, 6; 1 Corinthians 8, 5, 15, 15.

Suffering for Christ is somewhat another thought. This was granted as a special gift to the Philippians, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1, 29). That a share in the glory is the outcome of faith is clear from two other expressions in Romans 8, verse 18, where the apostle speaks unhesitatingly of "the glory which shall be revealed in us," and verse 20, where the glory is so assured as to be regarded as already granted, "whom He justified, them He also glorified."

Mistaken Teaching as to the Kingdom.

If we are to escape this mistaken teaching as to entrance into the Kingdom, we must avoid the erroneous premisses on which it is based.

(1) The first is that all who are called disciples in the gospels were genuine, and that, therefore, every warning addressed by our Lord to such must apply to-day to true children of God.

A member of parliament might address a public meeting in his constituency as his electors without any illusion on his part that all were so. The Lord said to some that believed on Him, "If ye continue in My word then are ye My disciples indeed."

Some of those addressed were "sons of the devil" (see John 8, 44). In John 6, 66, we read, "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him," and the Lord had "known from the beginning" that these did not really believe in Him. The word disciple means a learner, and a man might be ever "learning (same

word) and never come to the knowledge of the truth." Judas was among the disciples, when the Lord spake of "cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye" and might have benefitted by these warnings, but, alas, "he loved the wages of unrighteousness." So with the word servant. If Satan is transformed into an angel of light, no wonder his servants take the place of ministers of righteousness. The evil servant of Matthew 24, 48, had taken the place of the true servant, but was a hypocrite at heart, and was judged accordingly.

(2) **The next mistake is to imagine that all in the early churches were true saints.** The epistles were addressed to the saints in the churches, but not all in the churches were therefore saints. As Augustine says, "The church has children among her enemies and enemies among her children." John, speaking of such, says "They went out from us but they were not of us," and Jude speaks of "ungodly men who had crept in unawares and were turning the grace of God into lasciviousness." There were those, too, among the Hebrews, who had "forsaken the assembling of themselves together" and become in some cases apostates. Such were false professors who, though admitted by error into the local churches, had never possessed true faith in Christ. How fitting then are the warnings imbedded in the epistles. If some taking their place as believers acted like the ungodly, let them take heed lest they should prove to be so. The licentious man of Corinth was not put away as "a failing brother," but as a wicked person, till his deep repentance showed him to be the former. The apostle is careful to make the distinction between a brother and "one that is called a brother." This man was put away, that "the spirit might be saved in the day of Christ." This has been quoted triumphantly to prove that the apostle recognises him all through as one saved. With all deference I should say it rather proved that he was one who needed to be saved.

What would be more likely to bring a false professor to repentance than the drastic treatment this man received? In the next chapter a condition of disorder is noted. Brother was going to law with brother, and that in the ordinary law courts. Could they not settle these difficulties among themselves? If not, why not suffer unrighteous treatment? But it was they who were acting unrighteously. If they were acting like the unrighteous, let them take care they did not prove to be unrighteous men. Then follows a terrible list: fornicators, idolators, adulterers, drunkards, revilers, who would not inherit the Kingdom of God. We are asked to believe that this list describes "unfaithful Christians," who will eventually get to heaven after a thousand years of hell fire. But thank God the next verse disproves this. The apostle is describing not Christians at all but types of the unrighteous world, for he goes on to say, "And such **were** some of you, but ye were washed, ye were sanctified, ye were justified, etc." A David may fall into immorality, a Noah into drunkenness, a Lot may settle down in Sodom, and a Peter may deny his Lord, even thrice, with oaths and curses; but one swallow does not make a spring, nor does even one grievous fall constitute a believer an unrighteous man. Lot never ceased to be righteous even when living among the Sodomites. David was never characteristically an adulterer, nor Noah a drunkard, nor Peter a blasphemer. But the apostle warns the Corinthians not to give way to unrighteousness, lest they should belie their profession and prove, after all, never to have been in reality anything but unrighteous men. The matter is not really so very difficult; a king issues a proclamation to his kingdom, and as a whole it is suitable to his loyal subjects and only such, but it contains warnings to all and sundry whom it may concern, lest certain tendencies noticed should develope, and some professing to be subjects prove to be only rebels. The epistles are for saints, the warnings in them for professors.

“ No whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolator, hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God.” This verse has been embodied in a circular widely distributed by post, and is quoted in the interests of this mistaken teaching as “ explicitly asserting the exclusion of certain believers (!) who are warned that their crown is in jeopardy.” Is it not shocking to speak of such as “ certain believers ? ”

Then in Galatians 5, after the enumeration of the works of the flesh, the warning note is sounded, “ they that do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.” These “ workers of iniquity ” are again supposed to be failing believers, but in the philosophy of these teachers no room is found for the radical distinction that exists between “ practising ” sin, and being “ overtaken in a fault.” But the distinction is drawn in the very context of the passage above quoted, in the first verse of the next chapter. Truly the flesh is in the believer, and there is no sin he may not “ be overtaken ” in (Gal. 6, 1), but he does not become “ a man in the flesh ” for that. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, all fell into lying and other faults, yet they will not spend the Millennium with all liars in the lake of fire, but will sit down, as we have already seen, in the Kingdom of God (Matt. 8, 12). But murderers, whoremongers, and idolators are classed with the fearful, the unbelieving, and will have their part in the lake of fire, though they might all have been saved in virtue of the precious blood of Christ, had they been willing to repent of their sins and believe God. To blunt the edge of the warnings to these wicked men by supposing they may be Christians who will eventually enter heaven, is very like “ turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.” The word of God speaks with no uncertain sound. “ Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,” and where men are characteristically and openly vicious and unholy they will never see the Kingdom nor Heaven either.

“Overcomers.”

3. A third misconception which lies at the root of this mistaken teaching is that there is a particular class of believers who are described as “overcomers,” while the rest are the “overcome.” Though many hold this view I believe it is erroneous. It would be like saying that some living fish swim up stream and some never succeed in doing so, whereas we know there is in every living fish a power that enables it to overcome the current which sweeps away the dead.

Such words as “he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death” are pressed by some to show that there are believers who will be hurt of the second death. But the contrast is not between one class of believers and another, but between physical death and eternal death. The promise was for the consolation and strength of the persecuted saints at Smyrna. They might be hurt of the first death, they would never feel the second. “He that overcometh” describes a true believer who is proved to be real. Overcoming does not imply never being overcome, but overcoming at last. A general may suffer reverses and yet conquer in the long run. Then his reverses are forgotten. He is now the conqueror. Of Gad it was said, “a troop shall overcome him but he shall overcome at last.” And thus he proved an overcomer. When Joshua fought with Amalek and Moses held up his hands in prayer, then Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed, but by the power of God Joshua proved to be eventually the victor. And so by grace the church will overcome her Amalek at last.

“Jehovah is our strength,
And he shall be our song,
We shall o’ercome at length
Although our foes be strong,
In vain doth Satan now oppose
For God is stronger than our foes.”

The final victor in the great spiritual conflict of this life is the overcomer. Overcoming is the prerogative of the child of God and is by faith. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5, 4, 5). This overcoming is attributed to those who are of God, because they are of God, and because of the greatness of Him Who indwells them. "Ye are of God . . . and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4, 4). "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8, 37). It may be objected that all the passages quoted from John refer to overcoming the world, whereas the "overcoming" in Revelation 2 and 3 is more general; but what could be more general than the verse just quoted from Romans promising final victory and more than victory over "tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or sword," and over the nine-fold opposing forces of the following verses?

On the other hand, if we sum up the promises of recompense to the overcomer, what is there left for these believers who are, by this theory, in no sense overcomers? I do not maintain that "overcoming" is automatic. No true believer would say so; he feels his weakness, he knows the power of the enemy, he watches and prays for overcoming grace. His cry is increasingly "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe," but in praying thus he does not prove himself to be an extraordinary Christian, he proves himself to be a Christian.

To refer again to Revelation 21, 7, 8, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; . . . but the fearful, and unbelieving . . . shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." Are these "overcome believers?" No, they are expressly said to be unbelievers. Instead of over-

coming by the grace of God they have rejected that grace, and are eternally lost. And notice there is no intermediate class.

“Blessed and Holy.”

But does it not say “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power?” (Rev. 20, 6). Can it be said that all believers are “blessed and holy?” Will there not, therefore, be some who will not qualify for the first resurrection, and over whom the second death will have power? We have seen that there is no such thing in Scripture as a partial resurrection of the just. “Blessed and holy” is merely a characteristic description of the just, of all the people of God. Not one of such will ever taste of death. And this is exactly what our Lord says, “If a man keep My saying (the equivalent of obey the gospel), he shall never see death” (John 8, 51). This is expressed in equivalent terms by the Pharisees. “He shall never taste death.” Again, “He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.” “This is the bread that came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.” Even physical death is abolished for the believer, he sleeps, but does not die, much more will he never taste the second death.

These teachers only ask us to revise our whole conception of scriptural teaching. We thought, and still believe, that the travellers on the broad road are worldlings going down, unless they repent, to a lost eternity; but we are told they may be true Christians on their way to eternal glory, but in danger of forfeiting a place in the Kingdom. So with those described as “adulterers, fornicators, drunkards, etc.” We are asked to believe that they may be citizens of heaven, who must be shut out of “the Kingdom of God,” as a punishment for their sins. This kind of difference between heaven and the Kingdom simply does not exist in the word of God. “Entering the Kingdom” is a Scriptural

equivalent for being saved. Thus the disciples understood our Lord's words in Luke 18, 25, 26, and our Lord did not correct their phraseology. "Who then can be saved?" they exclaimed, when the difficulty of a rich man entering the Kingdom of God had been explained. Thus He Himself interpreted the matter by His answer to the question in Luke 13, 23, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" "Strive to enter in at the straight gate," for many will seek when it is too late, and find themselves shut out of the Kingdom (see verse 28). The antithesis to being in the Kingdom is being cast out into outer darkness, and there is no hint of any deliverance from that awful condition. It is "the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 13). Again, in Matthew 25, 31-46, those who do not "inherit the Kingdom" will go into eternal punishment, that "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." These persons are addressed as "Ye cursed!" Is this the way in which the Lord would address His redeemed, the beloved of the Father, "blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ?" Truly this teaching is subversive of all sane and sober interpretation of God's word. These teachers affirm that companies like the wonder workers of Matthew 7, 22; the foolish virgins of Matthew 25, 12; the professors of Luke 13, 24-30, may perfectly well be children of God shut out of the Kingdom but on their way to heaven. But one of the prerogatives of all true sheep is to be known of the Good Shepherd, who said, "I know My sheep and am known of mine." How then can those be sheep to whom the Lord says, "I never knew you?"

Let us close this chapter with a brief word as to what will determine

Place in the Kingdom.

When the question was asked the Lord, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" (Matt. 18, 1), He did not at once answer the question, but dealt with another first: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children,

ye shall not *enter* the Kingdom of Heaven.' They must be sure of entrance first before enquiring as to precedence. Then He takes up their question proper : If you want to be *greatest* you must humble yourself as a little child : a high place here entails a low place there, the humbler you are here, the more exalted you will be there. We cannot be too clear about this. A man's work shall be tested. That which stands the test will take the prize. Those who have been faithful in that which was another's, will have entrusted to them that which they may call their own. And the reward will be proportional. The man who has turned his pound into ten pounds will rule over ten cities, and so forth. It is not said that the man whose pound remains unfruitful will be cast out of the Kingdom, as in the case of the man with one talent of Matthew 25, but that he will lose his reward and his pound. In Colossians 4, 11, the apostle speaks of the Kingdom as the goal where service would be rewarded ; in 1 Thessalonians 2, 11, 12, as the impetus and standard of a worthy walk. ' Charging you that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory.' No doubt is raised as to the call being effectual. 2 Thessalonians 1, 5, is in perfect harmony with this. The apostle boasts of their patience in tribulation as that which will manifest the rightness of God's decision to count them worthy of the Kingdom of God. The Thessalonians were proving themselves in the hour of temptation, in which mere stony ground-hearers fall away, to be genuine believers destined to share in the Kingdom with all true saints. An abundant entrance into the Kingdom depends on attainment in grace. The Kingdom is never spoken of as the reward or prize in itself, but an incorruptible crown is offered to the one who can win it. Let us so run that we may obtain.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE
FUTURE KINGDOM.

THE true Kingdom in its present phase is, as we have seen, hidden from the eyes of men. It is not given to them to know its mysteries. God keeps silence but for the still small voice of grace, drowned for most men by the busy roar of this world's shifting scene. In the absence of the King, the great usurper seeks to hold the balance of power and rule the world for his own ends. As "the god of this world" he blinds men's minds with religious systems, and prepares the way for the acceptance of "the lie." But still there is a remnant of Jews and Gentiles who have ears to hear the call of God. These form the church, the bride of Christ, and are in this age "the children of the Kingdom."

The coming day will be a day of great reversals. "Our God shall come and shall not keep silence." The great powers will be humbled and Israel, now despised, will be exalted. The mighty cities of the world will be levelled to the dust, and Jerusalem will become "the joy of the whole earth." Clearly the Kingdom will have two sides, the earthly and the heavenly, running their course contemporaneously, like the overhead and low level lines of the same railway system, but Christ will be King of them both.

Those who partake of the heavenly calling will enjoy heavenly glory, but flesh and blood will not partake of it. The earthly saints will come into the earthly inheritance promised to Abraham and his seed, and in this, as we have seen, flesh and blood can take part. It is this latter aspect

of things that we have chiefly here before us. Necessarily a very brief statement must suffice, otherwise the whole prophetic word must pass in review.

1. The first characteristic of the world to come will be

The Presence of the King.

That our Lord will be once more in this scene in person may seem strange, but it is certain. Men try and evade the plain meaning of words, or postpone indefinitely their fulfilment, but the words of the heavenly messengers could not be more precise. "This same Jesus . . . shall **so** come in **like manner** as ye have seen Him go into Heaven." He went personally, visibly, suddenly. He will return personally, visibly, suddenly. His feet left the Mount of Olives when He ascended to heaven. His feet will stand on that self-same Mount when He returns. This will be not, as some teach, at the end of man's millennium, when the world will have become such a paradise without Him as to constrain Him to return, but before the millennium when all nations shall mourn because of His return. "Every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him" (Rev. 1, 7). His personal presence is needed and it is assured. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him." (Ezek. 21, 27). His glory will then be manifested, He will come to reign. Not that He will of necessity be continuously on the earth. He will reign over as well as on it. But communication will once more be established between heaven and earth. The true Jacob's ladder will be set up and "the angels of God will be seen ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." He will be the centre. His glory, His mighty deeds, His divine wisdom will fill the earth. His dominion will stretch from sea to sea. To Him all kings shall bow and offer gifts. All nations shall serve Him and daily shall He be praised.

2. THE KINGDOM WILL BE

The Sphere of Rewards.

All the saints will share in it, but not all will have the same place, rank, reward or responsibility. Some will be nearer the person of the King. Some will have a larger sphere. The difference between the parables of the talents and the pounds may be that, in the first (Matt. 25) it is a question of gift and ability. These vary with the individual, but all men, saved and unsaved alike, have gifts for which they will be held responsible. A Balaam, a Judas, a Caiaphas may have gifts as well as a Peter, a John, or a Paul. In the parable of the pounds, it is a question of what only children of God have, the power to serve Him which grace confers. In this sense we are exhorted "not to receive the grace of God in vain." The man who hid his pound lost his pound. The man who hid his talent lost his soul. Some will have ten cities, others five according to faithfulness. The rewards will have been allotted "at the resurrection of the just" before the judgment seat of Christ, but will be enjoyed in the Kingdom. The first resurrection will extend over a period. Christ, "the first fruits," the saints who rose immediately after Him form, I judge, a first part of it, then also those who will awake from sleep when He comes and rise to meet Him in the air, and, lastly, the martyred saints of the last great tribulation. (Rev. 20). "This is the first resurrection," as if the apostle would say, "Up to this is the first resurrection." Then all will pass in review: Mary's ointment, Dorcas' garments, Epaphras' prayers, Paul's testimony, and all other life and service for the Lord. The apostles will have a special reward, they will sit on twelve thrones, judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel (Matt. 19, 28). Some will have so run so as to obtain the incorruptible crown. To those who faithfully endure will be assigned a crown of life; to those who love His appearing a crown of righteous-

ness. A crown of glory awaits faithful pastors of the flock of Christ (1 Pet. 5, 4), a crown of rejoicing, those who have won souls for Christ (1 Thess. 2, 19).

3. THE KINGDOM WILL BE

A Time of Universal Peace and Prosperity.

The promise of Isaiah will at length be fulfilled. "They will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Is. 2, 4). But this will not be as the result of Hague conferences or Arbitration treaties, but by the coming of Him "who maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth." But He will "make desolations" first. War from heaven will alone end war on earth. Before swords become ploughshares, ploughshares will have become swords. (See Joel 3, 10). The guiltiest battle ever fought will be waged when Christ returns. Man will have set himself to measure swords with God. It will be the strangest battle too, for the first act in it will be the summary judgment of the two great rebel leaders, and the last the total annihilation of their great world hosts. Then the groaning creation shall enter into rest. "The wolf shall lie down with the lamb . . . and the lion shall eat straw like the ox." Humanity will be relieved of its two most crushing burdens, sacerdotal religions and standing armies, and the wasted energies of men will be turned into other channels. The desert and neglected places of the earth, the dark wastes of Africa, the unploughed prairie lands of America, the vast virgin plains of Asia and Australia will be turned to profit. "The wilderness shall be glad and the desert shall blossom as the rose." No doubt this will apply in a special sense to the great desert lands between the Jordan and the Euphrates which are destined to form part of Emmanuel's land, a great triangle nearly as large as India, south of Calcutta and Bombay, but all lands

will share in the blessing (Gen. 15, 18 ; Deut. 11, 24). “ He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. . . . His name shall endure for ever . . . all nations shall call Him blessed.”

4. THE KINGDOM WILL BE

A Reign of Righteousness.

“ A king shall reign in righteousness.” This could not possibly have been had an impenitent Israel crowned Him King. The same blood that bought redemption, purchased the inheritance. The Lord will reign by undisputed right. The passages quoted above show that the idea that millennial blessing will be almost limited to Israel, while the rest of the nations lie in a chronic state of seething rebellion is an entire exaggeration. But if men do rebel they will find the rod that rules them a rod of iron. To-day men’s sins are not imputed in the sense of being summarily dealt with, but then a universal “ Habeas Corpus Act ” will be in force. “ I will early destroy all the wicked of the land, that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord ” (Ps. 101). The opening scenes of the Kingdom will be of judgment—of the Twelve Tribes and of the living nations of the Roman earth and Christendom generally, whose armies will have been slain by the Lord at His return, but during the progress of the millennial reign, immediate judgment, when called for, will at once be meted out. Open evil will no longer be tolerated. The Lord will rule in the midst of His enemies. His rule will be a blessing to the righteous, a scourge to the wicked. Wrongs will be righted, abuses abolished, “ every transgression and disobedience ” will receive at once “ a just recompense of reward.”

5. THE KINGDOM WILL BE MARKED BY

The Absence of Satan.

As soon as the Man of Sin and Anti-christ have been consigned to the lake of fire, and their hosts slain, Satan will

be cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years, "that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled" (Rev. 20, 3). That there should be no doubt of the identity of this awful person, he is called here by his four names, "the dragon," the first person of the Great Triad of evil; "that old serpent," the original seducer of the race; "the devil," the accuser of the brethren; and "Satan," the great adversary of God and man. Doubtless in the name Satan is here included his angels, demons and evil spirits, for they could not be allowed liberty while he is bound. All will be shut up with him, and the world delivered for a thousand years from every Satanic influence (Is. 24, 21-23). The bottomless pit, or abyss, must not be confounded with Gehenna. From this last there is no exit possible. From the abyss there is (see Rev. 11, 7, and Rev. 20, 7). Accordingly, at the end of the Millennium, Satan will be let loose for a season, to prove that a thousand years in prison will not change him, nor a thousand years of Kingdom glory convert man. Except Israel, and the saved from among the nations of Christendom (Matt. 25), all will have a sinful nature, and will certainly have to experience temptations from within, but all Satanic excitement from without will be suppressed. To live in a powder magazine cannot be pleasant at the best of times, how much less when under an enemy's fire? How great the relief were this to be silenced; so too the relief will be immense when the great enemy will be no longer able to harass mankind. When, however, the final test comes, and Satan is set free to deceive the nations, vast numbers, "as the sand of the sea shore for multitude," will flock to his standard, proving, as has already been said, that man apart from the grace of God is incorrigible. A deluge of fire from heaven will destroy them, and the devil will be cast into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet are, and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev. 22).

6. THE KINGDOM WILL BE CHARACTERISED BY

The Universal Knowledge of God.

When the sun is shining in its strength it needs neither wit nor grace to see it. When Christ shall appear in glory "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11, 9), or, as Habakkuk has it "with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord." This can never be true before the Lord comes, nor will it even then imply universal conversion. Not all will be savingly converted, as we have just seen. As for Israel, all who survive the last great tribulation will be convicted and converted by the coming of Christ (Zech. 11). "And so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11, 26).

Of course, this only refers to those who will be alive when the "Deliverer shall come out of Sion and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." These will experience the blessing of the new covenant to be made with them after these days. "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31, 33). I have quoted here in full to show that this is no promise of universal blessing to the nations of the world, much less of universal salvation in the eternal state, as has been perversely put forth, but only of national blessing to Israel, with whom alone the covenant is made, and of whom alone it is said, "Thy people shall be all righteous." (Isa. 60, 21). And they will continue so, for they will receive a blessing unknown before in any dispensation, not only cleansing from their sins but "a new heart;" God will 'take away the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,' and Jehovah adds, "I

will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments and do them." Thus they will be sustained by divine power in the path of obedience and holiness, both they and their children; for it is written, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isa. 54, 13). Besides this, "The inhabitant (i.e., of Jerusalem) shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Isa. 33, 24), "neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20, 36). This not only applies to those who will be raised, but to those who will "be counted worthy to obtain that world," i.e., the Millennial Kingdom. This also applies to those of the nations who are acquitted and blessed at the judgment of nations. They are "the blessed of the Father," and so will "enter the Kingdom," or go "into life eternal" (Matt. 25, 46). They too, no doubt, will have a physical and spiritual constitution suitable to their new condition, and will be sustained in holiness and blessing throughout the Millennium. Who then will be those who will join in the post-millennium rebellion? Whence will they come? I believe they will belong to other and outside nations who will not be on trial at the Judgment of the nations, just referred to (Matt. 25). I think, for various reasons, that those present there will be "all the nations" of Christendom, but not all the nations of the globe. How could such countries as Tibet, Patagonia, the Sudan be judged according to their treatment of Israelities, in the absence of such among them? No doubt the whole world will have sorely felt the Apocalyptic judgments, but the direct effects of the final catastrophies will fall on the countries of Christendom, and, when these latter are once and for all dealt with, it would seem that large portions of the nations of the earth will be allowed to continue. Otherwise, how understand such an expression as "As concerning

the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away : yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time ” (Daniel 7, 12), for this follows immediately on the destruction of the fourth empire ? How else explain the fact noted in Isaiah 19, 24, that nations will exist as such in these latter times ? “ In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land,” or the statement in the last chapter of Isaiah, already referred to that one of the privileges of Israel in the Millennium will be the carrying of the news of the glory of God to Tarshish, Pul and Lud, “ and to the isles afar off that have not heard My fame, neither have seen My glory ; and they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles ” (Isa. 66, 19). In the previous verse we read, “ I will gather all nations and tongues ; and they shall come and see My glory.” Who are these nations that will not have seen His glory ? Who are those kings of Tarshish, and of the isles, who will bring presents, those kings of Sheba and Zeba that shall offer gifts ? (Psalm 72, 10). Who are those families of the earth who are threatened with judgment if they do not come up to Jerusalem to the feast of Tabernacles ? Who are the heathen whom the Lord will rule with a rod of iron ? Who else but the spared nations of Asia, Africa, and the isles of the sea, who will not be held responsible as the nations of Christendom will, for positive rejection of the grace of God, and for determined rebellion against His Holy One ? No doubt untold millions of these nations will be saved through the testimony of Israel, but the mass will remain unregenerate, and they will be ready to join Satan in his last desperate onslaught on the saints and the Beloved City. The inhabitants of the millennial earth may thus be divided into three classes. The saved of Israel ; the spared of those nations of Christendom who came against Jerusalem (Zech. 14, 16) ; and the surviving outside nations, called in Zechariah 14, 17, “ the families of the earth.” The first two classes,

as we have seen, will all be saved. The third class may again be subdivided, from a spiritual point of view, into three divisions :—Those who turn to the Lord and are savingly converted ; those who are openly rebellious and are summarily dealt with during the course of the millennial reign ; and, perhaps the largest class of all, those who “ yield feigned obedience ” (Ps. 66, 3, margin), and who will only be manifested in their true character when Satan is loosed.

7. THE KINGDOM WILL BE DISTINGUISHED BY

The Hegemony of Israel.

Amid the clashing rivalries of the Great Powers, the idea of hegemony, or world leadership, though usually unexpressed, occupies no small place in the thoughts of men. The question will be settled in an unexpected way. The coming King will “ turn the world upside down.” Israel, now scattered and downtrodden, will be head, the proud nations of the earth will be tail (Deut. 28, 13). The old order will give place to the new. Israel will be the masters and “ strangers shall stand and feed their flocks and be their vinedressers ” (see Isa. 61, 5). “ The nations and the Kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish ; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted ” (Isa. 60, 12).

Israel in the Land.

Before the Kingdom is set up, yea, even before the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord come, Israel will have been restored in part to their own land, as we see from the prophecy of Joel. They will be at first in a general condition of backsliding from Jehovah, but the menace of the northern army (Gog and Magog, of Ezekiel 38, 2), and a call from God, will bring them to repentance. A great revival will take place. God will intervene in power to destroy the Northern army, and grant a period of unexampled material prosperity, ‘ restoring to them the years that the canker-worm hath eaten.’ But a greater blessing than this awaits

them. A great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, compared to which the experiences of Pentecost will be but as the droppings, will be shed forth on the Lord's servants in view of a world wide testimony, and all this before the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord (Joel 2). This solemn day will be immediately preceded by the gathering together of the nations of the Roman empire against Jerusalem (Joel 3), which will be delivered, in its last extremity, by the Personal advent of Jehovah. Him the spared remnant will recognise as the Man of Calvary and their Messiah. Full acknowledgment of their guilt (Zech. 11) will lead to full cleansing (Zech. 12), and full restoration to Jehovah (Isa. 12). Though unfaithful to Him in the past, and as a woman divorced, Israel will be married to Him again. "The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the Mighty God" (Isa. 10, 21). "They shall serve the Lord their God, and David their King whom I will raise up unto them" (Jer. 30, 9), and "out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry" (Jer. 30, 19). To them the Lord shall say, "Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever" (Isa. 60, 21).

Israel Restored.

There will be beside a general gathering and restoration of the scattered flock of Israel. The Lord will seek for His people as a shepherd, "and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt . . . And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11, 11-12). "The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, yet will I gather others to Him, besides those

that are gathered unto Him ” (see Isa. 49 ; 56, 8). Miraculous events will accompany their restoration, the tongue of the Egyptian sea will be dried up, and the river smitten in, or unto, the seven streams (Isa. 11, 15 ; Rev. 16, 12). This drying up of the Euphrates is generally taken to mean the drying up of the Turkish empire. Does, then, the destruction of the Egyptian sea mean the destruction of Egypt ? Surely it ought to, to be consistent. But we know that blessing is reserved for Egypt (Isa. 19, 21-25). Why not take “ the sea ” and “ the river ” to mean what they say and believe that they will be, at least temporarily in the case of the Euphrates, dried up to facilitate the return of Israel from the South and from the East ? Then will be fulfilled the words of the prophet, “ The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads : they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sighing and sorrow shall flee away ” (Isa. 35, 10).

Jerusalem Rebuilt.

Then will Jerusalem be rebuilt on a new and magnificent scale. Jerusalem “ shall be builded upon her own heap ” (Jer. 30, 18). “ The sons of the strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee ” (Isa. 60, 10). And Jerusalem shall have a new name, “ ‘ Jehovah-Shammah ’ the Lord is there. ” (Ezek. 48, 35). “ The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary ” (Isa. 60, 13). Not only will the city be rebuilt but the temple also, after the pattern shown to Ezekiel 2,500 years before (Ezek. chs. 40, 44). And the land shall be divided to the Twelve Tribes on a new plan (Ezek. 48), Israel and Judah shall no longer be separated kingdoms but one people. “ I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick,

and they shall be one in Mine hand. . . . And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two Kingdoms any more at all " (Ezek. 37, 19-22). " Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim " (Isa. 11, 13). They shall be for ever delivered from the abomination of idolatry (Ezek. 37, 23). And shall become indeed and in truth according to the purpose of Jehovah "a Kingdom of priests " unto Him. (See Ex. 19, 6). " Ye shall be named the priests of the Lord, men shall call you Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves " (Isa. 61, 6). For then it will be, as we have already seen, that Jehovah will make with them His new covenant (Jer. 31, 31), an everlasting covenant (Jer. 32, 40), as enduring and constant as the Noachian covenant of the day and night (Jer. 33, 20).

Sacrifices Restored.

The sacrifices will be restored in a commemorative sense, not pointing forward like the sacrifices of old, as figures of that which was to come, but looking back, as the symbols of the Lord's Supper do, to that which has been already perfectly done once and for all. " Neither shall the priests and the Levites want a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually," and besides, Israel will be as we have seen God's witnesses to a renovated world (Isa. 66, 19). Thus will Jerusalem become in very deed " The joy of the whole earth," the religious and political centre of all the nations. " All nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob . . . for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The centre of all will be Him whose " name

shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"—Jehovah-Jesus. "They shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem" (Jer. 3, 17). And if they will not come they will be judged without mercy (Zech. 14). Thus will Israel at last be what God intended her to become, His channel of blessing to those of the nations who love her. Such are accordingly called to rejoice in the blessing of His people. "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad . . . that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory . . . ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees (Isa. 66, 10-12). "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious." (Isa. 11, 10). "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

For the Kingdom is the Lord's;

and He is the Governor among the nations. . . . A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that

" HE HATH DONE THIS."
