

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1. BELIEF IN THE KINGDOM

A right belief regarding the Kingdom of God is essential to salvation. Christ said to the apostles *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:15-16). Now the gospel is the good news of the Kingdom of God, for it is written that Christ called his twelve disciples and *“sent them to preach the kingdom of God”* (Luke 9:2) *“And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel (Luke 9:6). This proves that to preach the kingdom is to preach the gospel.*

Again it is written *“when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised”* (Acts 8:12). The things concerning the kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ are what the first century hearers believed before baptism. There has been no change in these truths since then.

2. THE KINGDOM WILL BE ON EARTH

The kingdom of God or kingdom of heaven is not, as some churches teach, a present spiritual possession in the heart or a future inheritance in another world in a heaven beyond the skies. The kingdom of God is taught in all the Scriptures. It is a kingdom which is to be established on earth when Christ returns, when the kingdoms of men will be superseded and the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. At that time the prayer of the faithful will be fulfilled *“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”* (Matt.6:10) Again, *“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth”* (Matt.5:5). This promise of an inheritance on earth includes a promise of change to immortal nature, as Paul writes *“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”* (1 Cor.15:50-54)

3. HISTORY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In the booklet “The True Hope” it is shown that the Scriptures teach of the working out of the purpose of God, that this purpose is centred in the Messiah “Christ” who is to be King over the whole earth, and those, who through belief and obedience embrace the *“exceeding great and precious promises”* (2 Pet.1: 4), would reign with Christ.

It is shown how, when men sinned and filled the earth with violence and corruption, that God destroyed them in the flood, and saved Noah and those with him in the ark. Then when men again turned away from God, Abraham was called to forsake his country and his father’s house and was promised that he would be made a great nation, and would be given the everlasting inheritance of the land now known as Israel. It is shown how Abraham’s descendants were brought out of Egypt and established in the land and how David was chosen to sit upon the throne of the Kingdom of the Lord over Israel. It is shown how the Jews were disobedient and the Kingdom overturned about 600 B.C., how some were allowed to return, how Christ was born King of the Jews, and how the Jews rejected Him, how after His crucifixion, Christ was raised from the dead and taught His disciples about the Kingdom, a Kingdom which they realised would be established on earth, as Old and New Testament Scriptures teach, the Kingdom of Israel restored.

It was shown how the same hope was extended to the Gentiles, how through belief and baptism into Christ they became Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise. (Gal.3:29)

Therefore the faithful in Christ Jesus look for the return of Christ when the kingdoms of men will be overthrown and the Kingdom of God will be set up on earth.

John writes *"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."* (Rev.1:5-6) And again *"and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."* (Rev.5:10) and again *"and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."* (Rev.20.4)

4. THE HOPE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

This belief in the Kingdom of God to be established on earth was the hope of the early believers. Gibbon writes:

"The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ ... and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon earth..." ("Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" chapter 15)

Evidence of this early Christian belief is in the writing of Justin Martyr, c.160 A.D. The Dialog of Trypho. Translation, A Lukyn Williams. S.P.C.K.

"But I, and all others entirely orthodox Christians, know that there will be a resurrection of the flesh, and also a thousand years in a Jerusalem built up and adorned and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah, and all the rest, acknowledge" LXXX-5 (p.171).

Gibbon continues that this belief:

"...must have contributed, in a very considerable degree, to the progress of the Christian faith. But, when the edifice of the church was almost completed, the temporary support was laid aside. The doctrine of Christ's reign upon earth was at first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism."

Here is evidence that about the time of Constantine (c.320 A.D.) so-called Christianity had departed from the Scriptural teaching in rejecting the doctrine of the reign of Christ on the earth.

From this time the main groups of orthodox Christianity have rejected the true teaching and lost the true hope.

5. EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

There is much information in the Scriptures regarding events leading up to the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

It has been shown that the kingdom of Israel established in the time of David was the Kingdom of God, and that the Kingdom of God will be initially the kingdom of Israel restored in the land of Palestine and later will be extended to a world-wide kingdom,

In 70 A.D. Jerusalem was destroyed as Christ had prophesied *"For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."* (Luke 19:43-44)

In 135 A.D. the Jews were driven from the land and scattered among the nations, despised and persecuted as was prophesied in Deut. 28: 63-67. But it was also prophesied that they would be gathered to the land again, not because of their righteousness, for they would be gathered in unbelief, but because it was part of God's purpose. *"Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land."* (Ezek. 36: 22-24) The land which was desolate would become fruitful again, and it would be a witness to the nations that it was the hand of God (Ezek. 36: 34-36). This prophecy has been fulfilled. The Jews have returned to the land. The nation of Israel was proclaimed on 14 May 1948 and since that time more Jews have been gathered.

Dealing now with events yet future, it is written that afterwards God would cleanse the Jews and give them a new heart. *"Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doing that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you:"* (Ezek. 36: 31-32).

The Scriptures teach that at the time of the end when Israel is re-gathered and at peace, a great power to the north of the land of Palestine will invade the land (see Ezek. 36 and 39). It will be a northern power (v.15) a confederacy of many people (v. 5, 6). They will come like a cloud to cover the land (v.16) but they will be destroyed by the mighty power of God (v. 21-23), Then Israel will acknowledge God (39: 28). This time is also spoken of in Zechariah, where it is written *"Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east "* (Zech. 14:1-4) . So the city will be delivered *"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."* (Zech. 12: 9-10) *"They shall look on me whom they have pierced"* has reference to Christ (see John 19: 37 and Rev. 1: 7). It is the time when Christ has returned and He, and the redeemed who have been raised from the dead, will come to deliver Jerusalem from the invading power, and the Jews who are left alive will acknowledge Him: *"And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."* (Zech. 13.6) So, after about 2000 years, Christ will return to Jerusalem, and there, on the mountain of Zion, the redeemed will receive immortality *"As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."* (Psa. 133:3)

Here, in Palestine, will be the nucleus of the kingdom. Jerusalem *"the city of the great King"* (Matt. 5:35) *"And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem."* (Micah 4:8)

But the nations of the world will not acknowledge Christ *"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."* (Psa. 2:1-3) and again *"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, (Christ) and against his army"* (Rev. 19:19). Yet Christ will prevail and the kingdoms of men will be overthrown. *"Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. . . . Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel"* (Psa. 2: 6-9). The redeemed will also have a part in this work *"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father."* (Rev. 2: 26-27)

These Scriptures show that the idea of the world being gradually changed to Christianity is quite unscriptural. The nations will be overthrown by the power of God, and Christ's Kingdom established. Then the prophecy will be fulfilled *"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and 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; a he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."* (Isa. 2:2-4) *"And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles."* (Zech. 14:16) *"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD*

OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." (Jer. 23: 5-6) At that time there will be great changes in the land and a great earthquake at the mount of Olives. (Zech. 14: 4,10) Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and a magnificent temple erected and the land divided amongst the twelve tribes of Israel who will be brought back. (Ezek. 20: 33-44) Details of this temple and city and the dividing of the land are given in Ezekiel chapters 40 to 48.

6. THE KINGDOM WORLD WIDE

Christ and the redeemed will reign for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6) over a mortal population. This mortal population will consist of the Jews who acknowledged Christ when He delivers Jerusalem and those Jews afterwards gathered from the nations when the rebels are purged out (see Ezek. 20: 33-38) and those gentiles of the nations who respond to the call of "the everlasting gospel". *"Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters"* (Rev. 14: 6-7). A thousand years of peace will follow when open rebellion will not be allowed, the adversary will be bound (Rev.20.2) and *"a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment."* (Isa. 32:1)

But human nature will still be the same as now, and even under the righteous rule of Christ and the redeemed the mortal population will rebel. The restraint on open rebellion will be withdrawn (Rev. 20:7) at the end of the thousand years and some person or persons will rise up to deceive the nations (Rev. 20:8). The rebellion will grow *"the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."* (Rev. 20:8-9)

7. THE CONSUMMATION

There will be a resurrection of those who have died during the thousand years (Rev. 20:5) and a final judgment of these and the mortal population who are alive at that time. Those judged worthy will be raised to immortality. Death and the grave will be destroyed (Rev. 20:12-15) The earth will be populated with a race of immortals consisting of the faithful of every generation, each of whom in the days of their probation have embraced the Truth and manifested a true faith and obedience. The words of 1 Cor. 15: 28 will be fulfilled and God will be "all in all".

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