

The Kingdom in History and Prophecy

by

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CHAPTER ONE

THE THEME

THE Bible revelation regarding the Kingdom presents the purpose, process and final realization of a divine government in the earth. This objective is the heart of the Kingdom prayer: "**Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.**" The Kingdom revelation is a distinct body of Scripture running through both the Old Testament and the New and its study, of necessity, leads to some definite conclusions touching the meaning of much unfulfilled prophecy, the two advents of CHRIST, the present age of Grace and the future of both Jews and Gentiles.

Considering only Kingdom passages, both historical and prophetic, such definite conclusions are not difficult from the fact that this revelation is presented in those Scriptures which are more easily harmonized than the familiar body of truth from which are drawn the doctrines of salvation. Salvation revelations are sufficiently clear; but upon them the theological discussions of centuries have been centered. On the other hand, such general study has not been given to Kingdom truths. In fact, many students of theology are confessedly ignorant on this subject. However, there is no conflict between Salvation and Kingdom themes. They cover widely different fields of Biblical doctrine.

In view of these facts, it may be helpful to note some of the essential values accruing from, and conditions governing, the study of Kingdom truth:

1. Bible interpretation is incomplete without it.

It stands to reason, since one-fourth of the Bible is in prophetic form, and five-sixths of the Bible is addressed to one nation to whom the Kingdom promises are given, that any plan of study which avoids prophecy and ignores, or "*spiritualizes*," GOD's covenants with His chosen earthly people will be incomplete, misleading and subject to mere human assumptions.

The accurate study of the Kingdom in the Old Testament and the New affords the only comprehensible approach to the New Testament doctrines of "**This present evil age**" (Galatians 1:4), "**The church which is his body**" (Ephesians 1:22, 23), and "**Things to come**" (John 16:13).

It has been pointed out that two distinct revelations were given to the Apostle Paul.

In Arabia he received directly from GOD the gospel of grace (Galatians 1:11, 12) which he has presented, in the main, in the Roman and Galatian letters. This is a revelation of a new order, a new relationship to GOD, which is neither a perpetuation of Judaism, nor a modification of that system. Judaism remains intact and follows its predicted course, according to Scripture, to the end. The new revelation of "**the grace of God which hath appeared**," and which is made possible only by the Cross, should not be colored by the Judaic teaching. It is a complete system in itself and, like Judaism, continues intact to its predicted end. For what else is Paul contending in Galatians if it is not that these two distinct systems shall not be mixed? And yet to what seeming avail are those pleadings to law-ridden, Judaized Protestantism to-day?

The second revelation came, in the main, from Paul's two years of imprisonment. This body of truth embraces the plan of the ages, the whole doctrine of the Church and the present out-calling of a heavenly body and Bride as recorded in the Ephesian and Colossian letters. It is this advance body of truth which is never comprehended apart from the exact lines of distinctions laid down in Kingdom revelations.

Theology, as usually presented, is disproportionately concerned with the Arabian revelation and a grave harm is done when such theology, creeds or catechisms, built largely on one aspect of New Testament teaching, are supposed to be adequate interpretations of the whole divine revelation. The theological student who enters his ministry with such presuppositions and limitations, inaccurate in many of his conceptions and prejudiced toward whole bodies of truth about which he knows little, will be incompetent to minister the whole Word.

An illustration of this may be drawn from I Timothy 4:1-6. It is set forth here that the young Timothy may win the high title of "**a good minister of Jesus Christ**," if he is faithful in putting the brethren in remembrance of the awful apostasy with which the present age must end (see also II Thessalonians 2:1-10). How shall any minister discern an age-closing apostasy with its divinely ordered relations to the final triumph of GOD in the earth if he does not know these exact revelations which form the whole program of the Kingdom according to Scripture?

No minister, therefore, can "**preach the Word**" in its right proportions, or be a "**good minister of Jesus Christ**" who habitually ignores the great prophetic themes. Nor is he excused in his neglect, or prejudice, by virtue of the fact that he represents a majority, or that other ideals have been set before him by his teachers. What is the particular knowledge that gives proficiency to the minister of CHRIST if it is not a thorough understanding of the Scriptures? Successful men of other professions apply themselves continually to the acquirement of accurate knowledge covering every phase of their chosen calling. Are these the accepted standards of the ministerial profession? Would we choose to be operated on by a physician who knows no more of surgery than the average theological student knows about prophecy? Yet the knowledge of prophecy, in its main features, is distinctly a part, and a very large and qualifying part, of the material committed to those who are called to "**preach the Word**."

2. Knowledge of prophetic truth qualifies all intelligent Christian life and service.

The careful student who distinguishes the various purposes of GOD in the ages has discovered that there is a distinct rule of life and program for service in the present age which can never, reasonably, be confused with that which has gone before, or that which is to follow. It is a serious mistake to press law-observance in the face of repeated revelations that the believer of this age is not under law as his rule of life (Romans 6:14; 10:4, 5; Galatians 5:18; II Corinthians 3:11, 17). So also it will be found that, at present, service is the accomplishment of divine undertakings never before revealed, and its motives are alone the mighty governing principles of grace. A real zeal in service will result and a beginning of interest in Bible study will develop when these plain distinctions are carefully taught and observed.

3. Kingdom and prophetic truths are being falsely represented.

The country is being swept by "*Russellism*" (so-called "*Millennial Dawn*," "*International Bible Students' League*," etc.), and the appalling progress of this system which so misrepresents the whole revelation of GOD can only be accounted for in the unsatisfied hunger of the people for the prophetic portions of Scripture. Such a false system, mixing truth with untruth, and designed to interpret all of the divine revelation, is evidently more engaging to the popular mind than only the Scriptural presentation of the fundamental doctrines concerning GOD, Man and Redemption. Satan's lies are always garnished with truth and how much more attractive they seem to be when that garnishing is a neglected truth! And insurance against the encroachment of such false teaching lies only in correctly presenting the whole body of truth rather than in treating any portion of it as impractical or dangerous. No minister need greatly fear any false system when he is intelligently and constantly feeding the people on the Word in all its symmetry and due proportions. This is not only true concerning the teachings of "*Millennial Dawn*," but is equally true of the teachings of "*Christian Science*," "*New Thought*," "*Spiritism*," "*Seventh Day Adventism*" and all unscriptural doctrines of Sanctification.

4. Unfulfilled prophecy is as credible as history.

No one will question that faith is taxed in the study of prophecy more than in the study of history. It is not difficult to believe what has assuredly taken place: it is quite another thing to believe confidently that unprecedented events will occur when based only on the bare predictions of Scripture. This failure in faith doubtless underlies much neglect of the prophetic Scriptures and accounts for a prevalent habit of allegorizing and qualifying prophecy until it is reduced to the limitation of a human opinion. Under this pressure men otherwise clear on the interpretation of the Bible have gone so far as to assert that what Paul wrote in his early ministry was abandoned or qualified in his later ministry. Revelation requires no such surgery. Such efforts reveal a state of mind which finds it easier to diminish Biblical authority than to increase personal confidence in the accuracy of Scripture. The mighty revelations of the purpose of GOD cannot be apprehended until the issue of believing His Word has been faithfully met.

5. Prophetic language is equally as accurate as other scriptures.

While some prophecy is couched in symbolic language, those portions which trace the forward movements of the Kingdom in the earth are largely free from problems presented by such

symbolism, and that body of truth appears in language and terms the meaning of which cannot reasonably be questioned. The pity is that Origen ever conceived the allegorizing method of interpretation, and that his misleading and violent liberty with the text has since found such fertile soil in which to propagate.

A mixture of the teachings concerning Israel, as a nation, with the revelations concerning the Church, the body of CHRIST, is groundless in Scripture. It is hopelessly confusing and grotesque, for under this plan only Israel's blessings are borrowed; her curses and penalties are, naturally, not wanted. No progress can be made in the Kingdom studies unless plain words are taken in their obviously plain meaning.

In the Bible:

- "**Israel**" is not the "**Church**";
- "**Zion**" is not the body of saints of this dispensation;
- the "**throne of David**" is not Heaven, nor will it ever be;
- the "**land of your fathers**" is not "**Paradise**" and
- the "**house of Jacob**" is not a host of Gentiles ignorantly attempting to force an entrance into Judaism.

All such borrowed habits of interpretation must be faithfully judged and abandoned if ever the Kingdom portions of GOD's Word are to assume any order or meaning.

6. Scripture must be rightly divided and applied.

It has been said "*All Scripture is for us, but all Scripture is not about us.*" It all bears a message to us, but is not all our rule of life. It will not do for Gentile believers to read themselves into the great portion of the Bible which treats distinctly of a chosen nation, still a separate people in the earth, under the special unbroken purpose of GOD and exactly where GOD intended them to be at this very hour.

So with CHRIST: He was "**a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers**" (Romans 15:8). This describes a strictly Jewish mission and purpose. He was also the grounds of personal justification to the Gentile believers (I Corinthians 1:3-8; II Corinthians 5:21); but the two are separate. Because He was great enough to fulfill the predicted requirements for both Jew and Gentile is no warrant for Gentiles to attempt to intrude into those divine ministrations which were evidently only for the Jews. A right division and application of Scripture demands that a portion of the earthly life and ministry of JESUS be recognized as belonging to the divine covenants with one nation in which Gentiles have no part (Ephesians 2:11, 12). During these ministrations Gentiles were not in view (Matthew 10:5) nor can they be made to so appear by any fair method of interpretation.

7. There can be but one true system of interpretation.

It is for the faithful student to discover this for himself. Accepted inferences of so-called Postmillennialism and Premillennialism as possible coexisting systems of interpretation constitute a serious challenge against the dignity and purpose of the Bible itself. Either the divine

revelation follows a definite order in the development of the Kingdom in the earth, or it does not. If it does, there could hardly be two distinct programs coexisting in the mind and purpose of GOD. If there is but one order, an individual who confessedly knows nothing of the Kingdom body of truth falls far short of being an approved workman, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, when he, through prejudice or preconceived conclusions, is not willing to be moved and molded by the exact and accurate words of revelation. And how much greater is his failure when guilty of withholding these mighty transforming themes from others!

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