

The Teaching of CHRIST

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PART III

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE REDEMPTIVE PROCESSES – THE CROSS

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”
(Matthew 16:16).

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19).

“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (Matthew 16:21).

“Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Matthew 16:28).

“And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matthew 17:3-5).

“And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3-4).

“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I

have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:17-18).

“The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:21-32).

“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18:36-37).

WE now proceed to consider the teaching of our Lord concerning the redemptive processes for the establishment of the Kingdom of GOD on earth.

The contrast between the fundamental conception of JESUS as to the Kingdom of GOD, and His view of the existing anarchy is complete. On the one hand He saw clearly what the rule of GOD over the realm of the whole earth and all men would be; and how glorious the results, harmonizing with His nature of holiness and love. But on the other hand He saw that rule of GOD unknown or disregarded, and the realm consequently in chaos; with results of abounding pollution, and all that was contrary to love. He claimed, as we have seen, that in His coming the Kingdom was brought to men. His mission then most evidently was that of dealing with the anarchy, in order to restore the Kingdom.

We turn now to consider His own teaching as to the processes by which this is to be accomplished.

Let it be immediately recognized that in all His teaching there is no trace of a tremor or a doubt. He never spoke speculatively as to the ultimate issue. He moved quietly and calmly forward, both in word and deed, towards a consummation of which He Himself had no doubt. Keenly conscious of the anarchy, protesting against it, thundering against it, weeping over it; He nevertheless walked ever in the light of the glory that is to be; the calm assurance filling His

heart from the beginning of His ministry to the end, that at last, though a wide compass first be fetched, the Kingdom of GOD must be established.

In His teaching we have very clear evidences of His own conceptions as to how that consummation is to be reached. That teaching may thus be summarized.

- He declared that the Kingdom can only be established by the way of the Cross.
- He declared that the instrument through which He would move towards the establishment of the Kingdom would be His Church.
- He declared that throughout the processes there would be a persistence of very definite and severe conflict.
- He declared that these processes would be completed by the crisis of His advent, in order to the ultimate establishment of the Kingdom.

Our present subject is that of His teaching concerning the way of the Cross.

The facts concerning our Lord's teaching on this matter are:

- First, that after the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi He explicitly declared the necessity for the Cross;
- Secondly, that this necessity was constantly reaffirmed during the days following that first declaration; and
- Thirdly, that in all His subsequent special teaching of His disciples, the principle of the Cross was evidently in His mind, and illustrated in many ways.

Let us take first, the explicit statements; and secondly, some of the instances of illustration.

First, then, as to the explicit statements of our Lord concerning the Cross. With the details we are not now concerned. They are perfectly plain and unmistakable. Our business is that of observing the relation of these statements to His Kingdom ideals and purposes. For this purpose we may confine our attention to the first occasion, that of Caesarea Philippi, for all subsequent explicit declarations were exactly of the same nature.

Let us, then, first carefully observe the facts of relationship between the Cross and the Kingdom as they are revealed in this teaching; proceeding in the second place to consider the reason of that relationship.

First, then, as to the facts.

The whole pronouncement at Caesarea Philippi must always be borne in mind when any part of it is under consideration. To take some one declaration, and not to consider it in the light of the whole, may be to misinterpret it entirely. This was the hour of the great confession, the hour in which in answer to the challenge of the Master, Peter, spokesman of the rest of the disciples, said to Him, "**Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God**" (Matthew 16:16).

That was the confession of a Hebrew, that JESUS CHRIST was the Messiah; the One for Whom

his people had been waiting for centuries and millenniums. It was a confession that at last the King had appeared, Who had been foretold by prophets, seers, and psalmists in bygone days. At last He had come, the King; and He had come for the establishment of the Kingdom.

That was certainly the meaning of the confession from the standpoint of the Hebrew. "Thou art the Messiah," not Elijah, not Jeremiah, not John the Baptist, not one of the prophets; but the One for Whose coming all had looked, and the purpose of Whose coming all had in greater or less degree indicated, in the course of their prophetic ministry. Thou art the King. Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living GOD.

Now observe what CHRIST said in answer to that confession.

He declared four things in close connection:

- First, the secret of the Church;
- Secondly, the necessity for the Cross;
- Thirdly, the inevitability of a conflict; and
- Finally, the certainty of the crisis of His own second advent.

The first matter to be noted is that of the unity of these things in the declaration of JESUS.

Confining ourselves to the subject particularly before us, we notice in the course of this teaching two definite references to the Kingdom; first when He said to Peter concerning the Church, "**And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven**" (Matthew 16:19); and again, when at the close of the discourse He uttered the words: "**Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom**" (Matthew 16:28).

The whole thought of JESUS was moving within the realm of the Kingdom of GOD. The Cross is not something as apart from the Kingdom. It was most evidently and intimately associated in the mind of our Lord with the Kingdom purpose.

He declared that in order to the establishment of that Kingdom He must go to the Cross.

The must that declared the necessity for the Cross declared the necessity for the Cross in the interest of the Kingdom. The joy that was set before Him was that of the Kingdom established, the establishment of the rule of GOD over the realm of the whole earth, with the gracious results of holiness and love, and the consequent blessedness of humanity; and He distinctly said that in order to reach that goal, He must go by the way of the Cross.

Reverently then, let us press a little closer to these assertions, and inquire the reason.

How far does this particular passage and these repeated explicit declarations throw light upon this subject? The King said that He must go by the way of the Cross, thus affirming the necessity for it. Does He give us in any measure to see the reason for that necessity? The answer is self-evident. The reason why He must go by the way of the Cross is first of all to be discovered in the

anarchy in the midst of which He lived. It is Secondly to be discovered in the authority under which He was acting in His mission in the world. And Finally it is explained by His activity under that authority in the midst of that anarchy.

The anarchy is focused, and focused in a way that; think we are apt to see but dimly, in this first explicit declaration of our Lord. He said the Son of Man "**must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes**" (Matthew 16:21).

These were all distinctly named by our Lord at that point, because in the naming of them He covered the whole ground of the forces that were antagonistic to Him and to the Kingdom of GOD.

The Sanhedrim was composed of these different orders, all exercising authority; the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes.

First we have what to-day we should speak of as the lay authority, or the civic authority, that of the elders. The authority of the Jewish State, as it existed at that moment in Jerusalem, was vested in them.

Then we have the religious authority of the hour as it was vested in the chief priests.

And Finally we have the ethical authority of the hour as it was vested in the order of the scribes.

Now the Lord distinctly declared that all these phases of authority that gathered within the Sanhedrim would be against Him, and that at their hands He must suffer. The lay authority of the elders, the religious authority of the chief priests, the ethical authority of the scribes; all were against Him. All authority was degraded, all authority was false, and all authority was antagonistic. He being the Representative of the Divine authority, the King Himself appointed of GOD over the Kingdom of GOD, faced the opposition to that Kingdom as it was focused in those who were themselves in authority. The causes of their opposition we need not now deal with. We have already done so when speaking of the existing anarchy.

The results of the reign of these men, of their rule and their authority, were manifested in the condition of the people, over which CHRIST mourned. They were as sheep, scattered, fleeced, harried, having no shepherd. Into that atmosphere, which was the atmosphere of anarchy, of antagonism to the reign of GOD, He went.

It was in view of these things that He declared He must go to the Cross.

But we are immediately conscious of the fact that this has not brought us to the deepest note as to the necessity for the Cross. Why not leave these anarchists to work out their own anarchy to its end, which must inevitably be destruction?

Why the must of JESUS? We give the central answer when we declare that the necessity for the Cross was not the anarchy alone, but the authority under which He was moving. That is clearly revealed in His own words, not recorded by Matthew, but by John. "**Therefore doth my Father**

love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:17-18).

By that declaration of the Lord Himself we learn that the necessity for the Cross was created by the nature of GOD, which is love; and that the compulsion of His determination to establish His reign of love was the central factor in the must of JESUS. It may be said, and with a partial accuracy, that the reason for the Cross was the necessity for the establishment of righteousness; that the profoundest reason for the Cross is to be discovered in the holiness of GOD. But might not the principle of righteousness have been satisfied, if we take the principle of righteousness alone, by the sweeping out of the things that offended, by the destruction and annihilation of all evil men and things?

I affirm that this principle might have been satisfied in that way. But when behind righteousness, inspiring it, is love, then the necessity is created for dealing with anarchy, and with the men steeped therein, in such a way as to save the men. " **This commandment have I received of my Father.**"

The King moved towards the focused manifestation and expression of anarchy in the opposition of elders, chief priests, and scribes; and He moved towards it, because it must be dealt with in such a way as to save the men; and it must be dealt with in that way because GOD is love.

His determination was to establish anew the kingdom of love and light and life where anarchy reigned, and amongst men who were suffering as the result of sin.

We have the explanation of the necessity most perfectly revealed in the actual activity, wherein, again to refer to the word in John, He laid down His life. In the hour of that Cross He experienced the ultimate of anarchy. Sin expressed itself completely and finally when it flung itself against Him.

In the Cross; see the unmasking and unveiling of sin as it came to its most appalling and final expression in human history. There is no other problem of evil so terrific as the Cross. In the annals of history there was never any such naked, awful manifestation of evil as the action that put Him on the Cross; and to that bursting of the storm of evil He bared His own bosom; He gathered all into His own Person. That is the holy of holies! That is the central and constant mystery! I cannot apprehend all that transaction, because I cannot apprehend the Person Who accomplished it.

If I had no more than His declaration of intention, and the fact of the Cross; If I had seen Him move thus heroically to face the anarchy, to gather its ultimate issue into His own heart, and nothing more; His heroism would be to me finer and more wonderful than the mind of man had ever dreamed; but neither for myself, nor for the world should I have either light, or hope, or expectation of ultimate results.

The Cross would be a forlorn hope, the heroism of an uttermost despair, the splendid dream of a misguided enthusiast, and nothing more. But when, according to His own constantly repeated

affirmation that He would rise again, I see Him rise again; then I discover that in the mystery of that Cross, He was not only the Sin bearer; in the activities of that dark hour, He was the Sin destroyer; in some infinite transaction beyond human power of thought, He destroyed the works of the devil.

That is proved by the fact that He emerged from the dark hour triumphant in the glory of His resurrection.

So, by these activities, I have an interpretation of the meaning of His declaration as to the necessity for the Cross. In order to establish the Kingdom He must Himself gather the sin to Himself, and deal with it, grapple with it, master it, negate it; and, emerging from the struggle victorious, communicate life, in the power of which other souls shall be able to enter into the same struggle, and with a like result.

Thus in order to establish the Kingdom of GOD in an individual, He dealt with that which had destroyed the Kingdom of GOD; and created for men a new liberty of action, both spiritual and moral. He must go to the Cross in order to reach the Kingdom, because His Kingdom can never be finally established merely by the exercise of an iron rule that holds evil things in suppression.

His Kingdom must be finally established, a Kingdom having within it no element that destroys, having within it no possibility of a new outbreak of anarchy, or final destruction of the high purposes of GOD. Therefore He moved to that infinite mystery focused in the dark hour on the green hill; and there He took hold of the forces that had spoiled, and spoiled them; of the forces that had destroyed, to destroy them; of the evil things that had wrought the ruin, in order to ruin them; and thus provided the remedy for the individual soul, and ultimately for the race.

From this all too rapid examination of the explicit statement and teaching, let us pass to glance at some instances of His illustration of the principle in His subsequent teaching. To make selections here is very difficult. We shall simply glance on a little way in this same Gospel of Matthew.

What immediately followed? The holy mount.

Each evangelist giving the record of Caesarea Philippi gives also the record of the holy mount, and links the two events by the selfsame declaration: "**There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom**" (Matthew 16:28).

There were far wider values in that declaration than I now suggest, but in that holy mount He gave some of them to see in picture something of the ultimate Kingdom.

Let us then observe it, noticing only two things:

- The vision they beheld, and
- The voice to which they listened.

What was the vision of the holy mount? The central fact is, that the supreme interest of their

glorified Lord was manifested in the subject of His converse with Moses and Elijah. Behold Him in His glory, His face as the sun shining in its strength, His very garments white and glistening! Oh, the rapture of that hour when the three disciples looked upon Him in all the glory of His perfected humanity.

In such an hour, of what did He think, of what did He speak? "**And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him**" (Matthew 17:3); and Luke tells us that they talked of the exodus which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. He talked with them of the very subject of which He had spoken to these men for the first time at Caesarea Philippi. He talked with them not of the death He was about to die merely. The subject was far more majestic and wonderful than that; He talked of the exodus He was about to accomplish. He must go and suffer and be killed and be raised. He was going to accomplish, not to be defeated! He was not moving to Jerusalem as a Victim, but as a Victor. There, on the holy mount, the disciples heard Him talking about that victory!

Was there not at least a remarkable suggestiveness in the visitors whom they saw on the holy mount?

- Moses, the founder of the Theocracy.
- Elijah, who came into the midst of the period of the degenerate kingdom, and thundered against its degeneracy.

The founder and the reformer talked with the King upon the holy mount of all He was about to do, which they had failed to do, and the way of accomplishment was realized to be that of the Cross.

Then there came the voice to the disciples. When Peter said, "**Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias,**" the voice replied, "**This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him**" (Matthew 17:4-5).

It was a rebuking voice. It took them back to Caesarea Philippi. There had been six days of silence; six days with no record of anything said between the Lord and these men. They had been afraid of the voice that had told of the Cross. They had now heard CHRIST speaking with Moses and Elijah of that Cross; and the Heavenly voice said, "**This is My beloved Son, in Whom; am well pleased; hear ye Him.**"

We have three records of that voice breaking the silence in the life of JESUS: once at the baptism in Jordan; once here; and once later, when the Greeks desired to see Him. Such Divine attestation always came when the Master was approaching the Cross in the interests of the Kingdom. When anointed as King He had consented to be numbered with the transgressors in baptism, as the symbol of His coming passion baptism; on the holy mount when in the glory of His own perfected humanity He talked with Moses and Elijah of the Cross as the way to the Kingdom; and later when the Greeks came and said, "**Sir, we would see Jesus,**" and JESUS said, "**The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified . . . Father, glorify Thy name,**" then said the voice, "**I have both glorified it and will glorify it again,**" and the Lord immediately

declared, **"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, If I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me"** (John 12:21, 23, 28, 31, 32).

All these illustrations reveal the fact that in His thinking and by His teaching, He was moving perpetually towards His Kingdom by the way of His Cross.

Pass on through Matthew, and every page gleams with the same revelation. Was He talking to His own disciples about the way of entrance to His Kingdom, and greatness therein? Then He told them that they must turn back and be as little children (Matthew 18:3, 4).

That is the way of the Cross. And if a man question this, let him practice the teaching, and he will discover that for a man to turn back to childhood is indeed the way of the Cross. Did He talk to them about the way in which to end disorder as within the Kingdom?

Then He took the parable of the man who was forgiven a debt, and being forgiven, went out to exact the utmost penalty from his brother; and so was rearrested, and his own indebtedness was claimed (Matthew 18:23-25).

This is one of the most singularly fine illustrations of what the Cross is. When a man forgives debt what does he do? He bears the loss resulting from another's wrong-doing. It is his personal loss, and he suffers it, in order to forgive. If GOD so forgive, by suffering loss on our behalf, He does it in order that we also may forgive, by suffering loss; and if we will not so forgive, then He will rearrest us, and claim the utmost penalty.

Or if presently He would speak to His disciples in answer to their request for power as He was on the way to Jerusalem, then He said, **"Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"** And they said unto Him, **"We are able."** To which He replied that they should, and He admitted them to the place of spiritual authority and power; but He indicated that the way thereinto was the way of the Cross (Matthew 20:17-28).

These are but instances. The principle runs through to the last conversation with Pilate. When Pilate said, **"Art thou the King of the Jews?"** He had said, **"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."**

The fact that the Cross was necessary for the establishment of the Kingdom of truth is focused in that conversation with Pilate.

The teaching of JESUS is perfectly clear. It declares the indispensability of the Cross in His own mission and in the process, to the crisis and the consummation. And why? Because by that principle of the Cross - which had its supreme manifestation and activity in His own Person; - by that, and by that alone, sin is exhausted, negated, destroyed; and by that principle, and that alone, through the victory over sin, righteousness is made possible. GOD's Kingdom must be so built that naught that defileth remains within.

Is not the testimony of experience in harmony with this revealed teaching of JESUS?

Is the Kingdom of GOD ever set up in a human life except by the way of the Cross? By the way of His Cross trusted in, and by our identification with that Cross in principle, whereby we die to the self - Me, which is of the essence of anarchy, and rebellion; we find our way back again into His Kingdom. And as that is the way in individual experience, it is also the true method for the ultimate establishment of His Kingdom. Always by the mystery of an apparent defeat will GOD's victories be won. Always by identification with such death as He died will life be liberated and become powerful.

The Kingdom of GOD will only be established by the way of the Cross.

~ end of chapter 15 ~

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