

The Kingdom of God

A Present Reality or A Coming Event?



Harold Barber

Our subject presents a proposition to us that needs to be interpreted according to the Scriptures. We need to know whether the Kingdom of God is a present reality or a coming event. It is a tragedy the way the false theory of the millennium is being propagated through-out the length and breadth of Christendom, and multitudes are accepting it as truth. Again, I say we need to know the truth concerning this doctrine, because there is much importance attached to it. If people are looking for something to come in the future which already exists, it is an evident fact they do not know what they are looking for and are blind.

First, I would like to tell you the word *millennium* does not appear in our English Bible. Neither does it appear in the original Hebrew Old Testament, nor in the Greek New Testament. As well as the word *millennium* being absent from the Bible, so also is the doctrine missing. In order to substantiate the doctrine of the millennium, the Scriptures must be misinterpreted and wrested, and several others completely ignored. This doctrine has been propagated so much by blind leaders that the misinformed multitudes have accepted it as Bible truth.

When we begin studying the idea of a king and a kingdom, we want to go back into prophecy. Let us go back to Isaiah the prophet, who prophesied some 700 years before Jesus came into the world. He said, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

In these two verses Isaiah spoke definitely of the coming of Jesus to reign on the throne of David, and His kingdom, to order it and establish it forever, saying also, "The government shall be upon his shoulder." Now let us look to Jeremiah, the prophet. He said, "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" (Jeremiah 23:5).

Jeremiah also spoke of the coming of Jesus into the world and called Him a King who shall reign and prosper and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. There are other prophetic utterances concerning the coming of a king and the establishing of a kingdom that might be sighted, but space will not permit. Suffice to say, the prophets saw eye to eye on the subject. They prophesied of the kingdom and the King who was to come.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea, He came of "the house and lineage of David." We find this truth in Luke 2:1-4. In those days, Caesar Augustus sent out a decree that all the world should be taxed. All went to their respective cities to be taxed. Joseph took Mary, his espoused wife, from Nazareth, which was in Galilee, and went up to Judaea unto the city of David, which was Bethlehem, "because he was of the house and lineage of David."

While they were in Bethlehem to be taxed, Jesus was born unto Mary, which truly was a fulfilling of the quoted prophecy of Isaiah 9:6, which says, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." During the course of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, he affirmed

this truth without any doubt. "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne" (Acts 2:29-30).

Then in verse 36 we read, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Peter also testified before the court and said, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour" (Acts 5:31). Matthew called Him "the son of David" (Matthew 1:1). Paul spoke "concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:3). According to these foregoing texts, Jesus was raised up as the branch and the King who was to reign and prosper and execute judgment and justice in the earth as spoken of by Jeremiah 23:5. Multitudes of people, including many preachers, will acknowledge Jesus to be the

seed of David according to the flesh but refuse to grant Him the kingship and the kingdom that is so plainly taught in the New Testament. One of these truths is as plain as the other in the New Testament.

John the Baptist came as the forerunner of Jesus. He came preaching, and the theme of his ministry was, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Jesus followed John in the ministry, and the theme of His preaching was, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Later, Jesus commissioned His apostles and told them to go and preach as they went, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Before this the prophets for the past 700 years had been telling of the coming of the King and the kingdom. Then along came John the Baptist preaching a message the world had never heard before: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Certainly they had heard the message of repentance all through the prophetic age, but never "the Kingdom of Heaven is *at hand*." It had always been taught as a future event, but now John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles were preaching it is "at hand." This expression *at hand* means near or close by. How can anyone

interpret this expression to mean nineteen hundred years in the future? Everyone who believes the Kingdom of God is still a future event surely does an injustice to the teachings of Jesus and the English language. Jesus stood one day with a group of His disciples and made this statement: "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1).

There is one of three things we must conclude from this statement of Jesus. First, the Kingdom of God has already come with power; or second, some of those people who stood there with Jesus are still living today, making them approximately nineteen hundred years of age; third, Jesus made a false statement. Of these three conclusions, I will with the Scriptures prove the first one to be true. The Kingdom of God has already come with power. Jesus said, "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it" (Luke 16:16).

On one of Paul's missionary journeys, he retraced his travels to encourage the saints of God, and Acts 14:22 reads like

this: "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." In these two Scriptures both Jesus and Paul spoke of people entering into the Kingdom of God. This would hardly be possible unless the kingdom existed, or were it to be a future event, they very likely would not have made such statements. Jesus said, "Every man presseth into it," making it present tense.

People in their gross darkness and spiritual ignorance are looking for a literal kingdom. They expect Jesus to come back to this world and reign on a literal throne and govern the nations of the earth. Beloved, the Bible does not teach such a doctrine, if it is rightly divided and interpreted correctly. Jesus is reigning on the throne of David now and has already established His kingdom, which has thousands and thousands of members.

Let us look to the eighteenth chapter of John, verses 33-37. Here Jesus is found in Pilate's judgment hall, being tried and condemned to death. "Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? . . . Thine own

nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? 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. . . ."

On this occasion Jesus told Pilate very plainly He had a kingdom but it was not of this world. In other words, it is not literal. He also said, "I am a King," which is present tense and not something in the future. He did not say, "I am going to be a King," but "I *am* a King." Little did Pilate realize he was dealing with the King of glory, but such was true. That was the purpose of Jesus' coming into the world the first time. He came to purchase redemption for the human family through His shed blood on the cross and to establish His kingdom and to execute judgment and justice on the earth.

One time the Pharisees asked Jesus when the Kingdom of God should come, and Jesus answered them and said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observa-

tion: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21). It cannot be observed with the natural eye; therefore it cannot be a literal kingdom. Since Jesus said, "It is within you," that put it over into the spiritual realms.

Dear reader, things in the spiritual realms are just as real as things in the natural realms, even though they cannot be seen with the natural eye. Paul gave a little more insight into the fact that it cannot be seen and is within you. In fact, he gave a definition of what the Kingdom of God really is: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). Again, in 1 Corinthians 15:50 Paul wrote, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

The word *inherit* means to come into possession of a thing, and Paul stated that "flesh and blood cannot inherit [or come into possession of] the kingdom of God." What shall we do then with the theory that Jesus is coming back to reign on a literal throne? Beloved, let us cast it aside as false doctrine, which it is, and take the blessed Word of God. The Kingdom of

God is the righteousness and peace and joy we receive into our hearts when we yield ourselves completely to Jesus. He was "to be sin for us . . . that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus told us how to get into the Kingdom of God in His teachings to Nicodemus. He said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). This brings us back to the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus concerning repentance. They said, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

A genuine forsaking and repenting of our sins before God in prayer is the only way to enter into the Kingdom of God. All who have repented of their sins and are living holy before God are the sons of God and members of His kingdom. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13).

People who repent and believe in Jesus with all of their heart are born of God and become a son of God. They

enjoy the righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, which is the Kingdom of God (Romans 14:17). Jesus, in His prayer, said, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. . . . I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:12, 14).

Remember, Jesus told Pilate His kingdom was not of this world. Then, in His prayer He said His disciples were not of this world. Praise God for that heavenly kingdom that is made up of souls who have been born of God! They have had a heavenly birth, and Jesus is their King, Lord, and Master. He rules in their hearts supreme. They are still in the world, but are not "of the world" even as Jesus was in the world but not of it. The Kingdom of God is a heavenly kingdom, and the subjects of it are of heavenly birth. It is a spiritual kingdom of Christ ruling in the hearts of His spiritual children.

Perhaps someone will ask about the twentieth chapter of Revelation, where

some mention is made of a thousand years. This is a favorite chapter for the millennialist, but he has no footing here. There is not one verse, not one line in this chapter that says one thing about the saints of God reigning with Christ in this life, and the Scripture is grossly misinterpreted to get such a teaching.

John did say, "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which has not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they [the souls John saw] lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4). He saw the souls of the martyrs of Jesus as they lived and reigned with Christ in paradise. That is where the departed souls of saints go—to the paradise of God. The Bible does have somewhat to say about people reigning in this life with Christ, but makes no mention of a thousand years in connection with it.

Paul said, "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Romans

5:17). When a soul repents of his sins and is pardoned, he immediately begins to reign with Christ. He is delivered from the bondage of sin and has conquering grace in his heart, and "sin shall not have dominion over you [or him]" (Romans 6:14). We are made kings and priests unto God and His Father (Revelation 1:5-6).

According to the teachings of the New Testament, there is only one literal resurrection future. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29). He states here that "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth." This does not leave any in the graves, either saints or sinners. Some come forth unto the resurrection of life and some to the resurrection of damnation. The wicked and just are both included in this last general resurrection.

Then, in Matthew 25:32 we see all nations as they stand before God to be judged and separated as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. To

those on the left hand, He will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (verse 41). Verse 46 states, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." This in no way intimates a thousand years in this world, but consigns both the righteous and the wicked to their eternal abiding place.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:24, "Then cometh the *end* [there is no time after the end, not even a thousand years], when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power."

Jesus is coming back as a thief in the night to judge the world in righteousness, to receive the bride (the church), and to deliver up the kingdom to God, the Father, not to establish it. Now is the time to repent of sin and be born of the Spirit so that you may enter the kingdom now and enjoy its rich blessings. The day is far spent, and the night draweth near when no man can work (repent). The Kingdom of God is a present reality, and God offers you all of its blessings, if you will repent and be born from above.

Church of God, God's Acres
675 N. Cedar Street
Newark, OH 43055 USA

www.church-of-god-online.com