

## Sermon 6 – The Kingdom

*TEXT: And in the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." Dan.2:44.*

The second chapter of Daniel introduces five universal kingdoms which were to succeed each other. The first four kingdoms are earthly and perishable. The fifth is immortal, and will stand forever. The first four kingdoms are represented by the great metallic image, the several parts of which are composed of gold, silver, brass, and iron mixed with clay. When these shall be broken in pieces, and entirely removed, then will the immortal kingdom fill the whole earth. We will now call attention to Dan.2:31-45.

Verses 31-36: "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold, a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee, and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out, without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces; then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. This is the dream, and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king."

But first let us notice some important points mentioned in this dream:

- 1. The stone smote the image upon his feet.
- 2. Then was the iron and clay, the brass, the silver and gold, broken in pieces.
- 3. The wind carried them away, like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, so that no place was found for them. No language can describe
- 4. Then, and not till then, the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

**Verses 37, 38: "Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of Heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art [or thy kingdom is] this head of gold."**

Babylon was the first kingdom of universal empire. It was founded by Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah. See Gen.10:8-10. It lasted nearly seventeen hundred years, though under different names; sometimes called Babylon, sometimes

Assyria, and sometimes Chaldea. It continued from the time of Nimrod, to that of Belshazzar, who was its last king.

Verse 39 (first part): "And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee." The Medo-Persian kingdom succeeded Babylon. See chap.5:28: "Thy kingdom [Babylon] is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." The Medo-Persian was the second universal kingdom represented by the breast and arms of silver.

Verse 39 (last part): "And another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth." In chap.8:5-7, 21, we learn that Grecia conquered the Medo-Persian kingdom, and became a kingdom of universal empire. This took place under Alexander. Here, then, we have the third kingdom, which is represented by the brass of the image.

Verse 40: "And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron; forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things; and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise." The fourth kingdom is generally admitted to be Rome. It is a universal kingdom that is to break in pieces all that went before it.

Rome alone answers the description. That did have universal empire. See Luke 2:1: "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." Caesar Augustus was a Roman emperor. Here we have the fourth kingdom, represented by the legs of iron.

Verse 41 (first part): "And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potter's clay and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided." The Western Empire of Rome, between the years A.D. 356 and 483, was divided into ten divisions, or kingdoms:

1. The Huns, in Hungary, A.D. 356;
2. The Ostrogoths, in Mysia, 377;
3. The Visigoths, in Pannonia, 378;
4. The Franks, in France, 407;
5. The Vandals, in Africa, 407;
6. The Sueves and Alans, in Gascoigne and Spain, 407;
7. The Burgundians, in Burgundy, 407;
8. The Heruli and Rugii, in Italy, 476;
9. The Saxons and Angles, in Britain, 476;
10. The Lombards, in Germany, 483. Thus the kingdom was divided, as designated by the ten toes.

Verses 41-43 (beginning with last part of verse 41): "But there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry

clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay."

This language is descriptive of the state of the kingdoms into which the fourth kingdom should be broken. Some of them should be strong as iron, and some feeble as clay. Yet as iron cannot be permanently united to clay, so the stronger kingdoms shall not be able to annex the weaker to themselves in a permanent union. Nor shall the intermarriage of the reigning families succeed in causing these kingdoms to cleave together. Next come the words of the text, which distinctly point to the period of the setting up of God's imperishable kingdom:

Verse 44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

The kings mentioned in the text are most certainly the ten kings, or ten kingdoms, of the divided fourth kingdom; for they are the subject of discourse. The phrase, "In the days of these kings, " does not refer to the days of the kingdom of Babylon, of Media and Persia, of Greece, nor to the days of Rome before it was divided into ten kingdoms. But it does refer to Rome after it had been divided into ten kingdoms, represented by the ten toes of the image. Therefore the kingdom was not set up at the time of the first advent of Christ. Neither could it be set up, according to the text, until the Roman kingdom should be divided into the ten kingdoms, which division took place between the years A.D. 356 and 483. The setting up of this kingdom is evidently a future event.

The stone did not smite the image on the head, Babylon; nor on the breast, Media and Persia; nor on the sides, Grecia; nor yet on the legs, Rome Pagan. The stone did smite the image on his feet. But it could not smite the feet before they existed, and they were not in being till several hundred years after the first advent of Jesus Christ. We still wait for the dashing of the image, or the destruction of all earthly governments, before the stone shall become a great mountain and fill the whole earth, or the immortal kingdom be fully established in the earth.

The stone has nothing in common with the image. Mark well the events here stated. The stone breaks the image, and it becomes like the chaff of summer threshing-floors, and the wind carries it away so that no place is found for it. All earthly kingdoms are first broken, and cease to exist; then, and not till then, does the stone fill the whole earth.

The kingdom here mentioned is not a spiritual kingdom established in the minds and hearts of mortal men. In no sense of the word whatever can it be said that the kingdom was set up about the time of the first advent of Christ. If it be said that the

kingdom of grace was set up by our Lord Jesus Christ at his first advent, then we inquire, Had God no kingdom of grace before that time? If not, then Enoch, Noah, Lot, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and the prophets, have perished without hope; for certainly no man can be saved without grace.

It is true that the phrase, "It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms," gives the idea that the kingdom of God, for a time, is contemporary with perishable kingdoms. And in view of this fact, many adopt the popular view of the spiritual reign of Christ, the conversion of the world, commonly called the temporal millennium. Some others, who reject the spiritual reign, suppose they have a strong-hold in this phrase for the mixed millennium, the literal reign of Christ on the earth with the immortal righteous of all ages, among the mortal nations. But we reject both these views as being opposed to the plainest declarations of the sacred Scriptures, and invite attention to one which we regard as scriptural and harmonious.

The establishment of the eternal kingdom is by a succession of events, the first of which occurs prior to the destruction of earthly governments.

1. The Son of God, at the close of his ministration for sinners, and before his second appearing, will receive the kingdom from the Father. In the seventh chapter of this prophetic book we read these words: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom, that which shall not be destroyed." Dan.7:13, 14.

This language describes a grand transaction in Heaven between the Father and the Son. The Son, at his second advent to this world, does not approach the Father. So far from this, that the apostle represents the Father as remaining in Heaven, and sending his Son. "And he [the Father] shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you." Acts 3:20.

The words of the Psalmist are to the point: "Ask of me [says the Father to the Son], 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." Ps.2:8, 9.

Before the Son makes his second advent to this world, he receives from the Father "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom." The heathen are his, and the uttermost parts of the earth are his possession. Thus the God of Heaven sets up the kingdom by

investing his Son with royal authority before sending him to manifest it in the earth among his enemies.

2. After the coronation of the King of kings, the opening heavens will reveal him coming in grandeur and in glory, leading on the armies of Heaven to the last great conflict with the beast, the false prophet, and the kings of the earth.

See Rev.19. "His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns." "And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, "Kings of kings, and Lord of lords." His mission then will be to "judge and make war."

On one side will be the beast, and the kings of the earth and their enemies; and on the other side will be the King of kings, followed by all the holy angels. The armies of Heaven achieve a glorious victory.

"And the beast was taken, and with him, the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth."

In Rev.19, we see the complete destruction of all wicked men, or the dashing of the nations in pieces as a potter's vessel, (comp. Rev. 2:27) or the image broken by the stone, and utterly destroyed and removed like the chaff before the wind. (Dan. 2:35) The destruction of the enemies of the Lord, represented by the several names of "man of sin, " "mystery of iniquity, " and "that wicked, " is thus described by the apostle - "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the with the brightness of his coming." 2 Thess.2:8.

3. At the second advent of Christ, the righteous dead will be raised, the living righteous will be changed, and thus the subjects of the eternal kingdom will be made immortal. 1 Thess.4:14-18; 1 Cor.15:51-55. This is the first resurrection at the commencement of the millennium.

4. The immortal subjects of the kingdom will ascend with their Lord to the eternal city, and reign with him in the judgment of the wicked a thousand years, during which time the earth will be desolate. We have seen from New-Testament testimony that all wicked men will be destroyed at the second advent. See 2 Thess.1:7-9; 2:7, 8; Matt.13:26-30, 37-43; 3:12; Luke 17:26-30. The prophets of the Old Testament clearly describe the desolation of the earth during the millennium. See Isa.6:8-11; 13:9; 24:1-3; 34:1-15; 28:21, 22; Jer.4:20, 27; 25:32-38; Zeph.1:2, 3; 3:6-8.

5. At the close of the millennium, the wicked will be raised from the dead. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Rev.20:5 They will then be destroyed. "And fire came down from God out of Heaven, and devoured them." Rev.20:9. Satan, and all the fallen angels, and all wicked men, will then be consumed by the fire of Jehovah's wrath. Rev.20:10; Matt.25:41; 2 Pet.2:4; Jude 6.

In the general conflagration of that time, the old earth and atmospheric heaven will pass away from the face of Him that sitteth on the great white throne. Rev.20:11. "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also; and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Pet.3:10.

6. From the old earth, melted and cleansed from sin and sinners, will come forth, molded by the hand of the great Restorer, the new earth, free from all the marks of the curse. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." Rev.21:1. Then will be fulfilled the words of David: "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." Ps.37:10, 11. And Christ refers to the same in his sermon on the mount. "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." Matt.5:5.

It is at the close of the one thousand years of Revelation 20, after the final destruction of all God's enemies, that "the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever." "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." Dan.7:18, 27.

Then will the kingdom in all its parts - the King, the subjects, the territory, the holy city being the metropolis - be complete. Then the stone will have become a great mountain, so as to fill the whole earth.

We have seen that the establishment of the immortal kingdom will be by a succession of events. The kingdom in its first stage, when set up in Heaven, by the God of Heaven, is represented by a stone cut out of the mountain. When complete and fully established in the earth, it is represented by a mountain filling the whole earth. The kingdom, in its stone condition, is contemporary for a while with the perishable kingdoms of this world. Hence it is said that "it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms." Dan.2:44. This accomplished, and the earth restored to its Eden glory, the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, will be the eternal inheritance of the redeemed.

Contrast with this harmonious series of events in the establishment of the kingdom, that view which has the kingdom established on the earth when Christ comes, and the one-thousand-years' reign of Christ with his people on the new earth. That view necessarily has Satan let loose on the new earth, after the saints, with Christ in their midst, have enjoyed its glories for a thousand years! Then Satan's vast army, "the number of whom is as the sand of the sea, " is raised from the dead out of the new earth! and, with Satan at their head, come tramping up over the fields of living green on the breadth of the new earth! to surround the city of the saints. And to crown the absurdity of this position, fire comes down from Heaven and consumes the vast multitude of the wicked of all ages upon the new earth! In our opinion, the inconsistencies of this view have led many to adopt the mixed millennium, and follow on in the almost endless fancies of what is called the Age-to-Come.

If it be objected that our view of the subject has the city of the redeemed resting upon the old earth before it shall be regenerated by fire, we reply: This may be in the plan of God, that all sinners may see what they have lost, that the redeemed may witness the terrors of that death from which they are saved, and that the assembled intelligences of the universe that have not sinned, may also be impressed with the holiness and dignity of the divine law, the penalty of which is death.

Tremendous execution! Satan, and all the angels that revolted with him, and all men who have died in their sins, from the murderer Cain, down to the last sinner that shall refuse salvation, perish in the lake of fire poured upon them as they gather around the city of the redeemed to take it. How fitting a place will the old world be - the marks of the curse now doubly visible - for this terrible execution.

"And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley." Zech.14:4.

At the close of the millennium, the Lord will stand upon the mount of his ascension; and, after his voice shall call forth the wicked dead, the mount will cleave asunder, leaving a plain sufficiently extensive to receive the New Jerusalem. Around this city, Satan and his vast forces will gather to take it. And at the very moment of attack, fire from Heaven will come down upon them to that extent that the vast scene, necessarily covering a large portion of the old earth's surface, is represented as a lake of fire and brimstone. Then "the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also." But whether that portion of the earth where the city shall rest, having been prepared by a miracle of divine power for the reception of the beloved city, will remain unaffected by the fires of that day; or whether the melting earth and heaven, fleeing from the face of Him that shall be seated on the great white throne, Rev.20:11, shall be removed from the city during regeneration

by fire, may not be important to the present discussion of the subject. Either of these can be done by the power of Him who will do greater things in the grand work of the restitution.

Two conditions of the people of God are expressed in the Scriptures by the word kingdom:

1. God's arrangement in the future reward of those who shall be saved by grace. This we shall term the kingdom of glory.
2. God's arrangement to save men by grace. This we shall term the kingdom of grace. "Let us, therefore, " says Paul, "come boldly unto the throne of grace." Heb.4:16. A throne of grace supposes a kingdom of grace.

It will appear evident that the word kingdom in many cases refers to the future immortal kingdom, and cannot be applied to the means of grace. That the immortal kingdom was not set up at certain periods spoken of in the New Testament, will appear by referring to some of those Scripture expressions which apply to the future kingdom of glory. It was not set up when our Lord taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come." Matt.6:10.

The prophets, Christ, and the apostles, all point the church forward to the coming and kingdom of Christ as the time of the consummation of her faith and hope, the end of her toils and sorrows, and the fullness of her joys. Hence, in the pattern prayer for the Christian church of all ages is the petition, "Thy kingdom come."

The mother of Zebedee's children understood the kingdom to be future when she desired our Lord to grant that her two sons might sit, "the one on the right hand, and the other on the left, " in his kingdom. Matt.20:20, 21.

Again, the kingdom was still future when our Lord ate the last passover with the twelve. He said to them, "I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." Luke 22:18.

But did Christ set up the kingdom before his ascension to Heaven? Just before his ascension, the disciples inquired, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" It was not then set up.

When James wrote his epistle, the immortal kingdom was yet a matter of promise. He says: "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" James 2:5.



Both Jesus and Paul associate the kingdom with the second advent. Jesus addresses those who are waiting for his coming and kingdom, thus: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." Luke 12:35, 36. In this connection he comforts his people with these precious words: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Verse 32. Paul solemnly charges Timothy: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom." 2 Tim.4:1.

The apostle also states that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22. This address was made to those who were already Christians, yet they were not in the kingdom. The immortal kingdom is the reward to be given to all who march boldly on through tribulation here. And again he says, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor.15:50. This settles the question that there is a kingdom not to be enjoyed by the saints till they put on immortality, or till they enter the immortal state, which the apostle says, verse 52, is "at the last trump."

The miniature exhibition of the kingdom of God at the transfiguration is designed to show the nature of the kingdom, and when it will be set up. "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. 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." Matt.16:27, 28. "Till they see the kingdom of God." Luke 9:27.

This promise was shortly fulfilled on the mount. "And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. 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." Matt.17:1-5.

Notice the following points:

1. Jesus Christ appeared there in his own personal glory. His countenance shone like the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.
2. The glory of the Father was there. It was a "bright cloud" of the divine glory, out of which came the Father's voice.
3. Moses and Elias appeared; the one, the representative of those saints who shall be raised at Christ's coming, and clothed with glory; the other, Elias, the

representative of those who will be alive and be changed at the appearing of Christ. 4. The use the apostles made of the scene. Peter was one of the witnesses; and in view of the importance of the kingdom of Christ, he, in his second epistle, has given believers of all coming ages instruction how they may insure an abundant entrance "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ." "For we have not followed cunningly-devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty." This, he says, was "when we were with him in the holy mount." 2 Pet.1:16-18.

This scene was a demonstration of Christ's second, personal, and glorious, coming, and shows that the kingdom will be immortal when set up, and that it will be set up at the period of the second advent, and resurrection of the just.

It will also appear evident that in many instances the word kingdom applies to the means of grace, and can have no reference to the future kingdom. The word is so used in many of the parables of our Lord.

The parable of the wheat and the tares applies to the present imperfect state, when sinners may enjoy the means of grace, and not to the future state of glory. This is evident. But the sowing mentioned in this parable did not commence at the first advent of the Son of God. The children of the kingdom, and the children of the wicked one, both appeared long before Jesus died for sinners. Abel and Cain represented the two classes. During the entire period from the time of these sons of Adam to the close of the day of grace, this parable has a clear and forcible application.

In this parable the word kingdom is used four times. Once it refers to the earth, which will be the territory of the immortal kingdom, and once it has a distinct reference to the future kingdom of glory when fully established in the earth. The word kingdom may refer both to the means of grace necessary to prepare men for the future life, and also to the future life itself. No doubt, in this parable both the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory are brought to view. They are very nearly related, the kingdom of grace reaching down very near to, and being preparatory to the enjoyment of, the kingdom of glory.

The parable of the mustard seed forcibly illustrates the kingdom of grace, embracing at first only our first parents immediately after the fall, and finally, in its grand results, embracing all the redeemed of every age, and from every land. "The kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field; which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." Matt.13:31, 32.

The parable of the leaven hid in three measures of meal illustrates the work of grace in the believer's heart. "The kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." Matt.13:33

This parable teaches entire sanctification of the mind and heart to God. The apostle expresses this sentiment when he says, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thess.5:23.

The parables of the treasure hid in the field, and of the pearl of great price, teach the value of salvation through Jesus Christ, and the sacrifices that should be cheerfully made to obtain it. "Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Matt.13:44-46.

The parable of the net that gathered good and bad fish, shows that although both good and bad men may be gathered into the church, the final separation will declare the true character of each. "Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Matt.13:47 -50.

In Matthew 25, the kingdom of Heaven is likened to an Eastern marriage. This parable illustrates the action of the church just before, and not after, the second advent. "Then shall the kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom."

In this connection our Lord points to a specific time, in which the work of divine grace upon the minds and hearts of believers would give them an experience that would be likened to an Eastern marriage.

The mental struggle in order to break away from the powers of darkness, and by faith receive the blessings of the kingdom of grace, is thus described by our Lord: "And from the days of John the Baptist, until now, the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Matt.11:12 See Luke 16:16.

The apostle speaks of the blessings of the kingdom of grace thus: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy

Ghost." Rom.14:17. The connection shows that Paul applies the word kingdom to the present dispensation, and not to the future period of reward.

John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Matt.3:1, 2. "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Mark 1:14, 15. And as Jesus sent forth the twelve to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, he said to them, "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Matt.10:5-7.

We have now reached a very important point in the discussion of this subject. Many will meet us here with the popular view that the kingdom was set up at the time of the first advent. They will use the phrase, "The kingdom of Heaven is at hand, " expressed by John, Jesus, and the twelve, with force upon the minds of those who do not study the subject in all its bearings. But, as we have shown, in no sense of the word whatever was the kingdom set up at the time of the first advent of Christ. The words, "kingdom of Heaven, " and "kingdom of God, " have but two significations: first, the plan to save men by grace; and second, the future condition and reward of the saved. The plan of salvation, or the kingdom of grace, was instituted soon after the fall; and the reward of the saved, or the kingdom of glory, is future.

The Greek word translated "at hand, " as used by Jesus, John, and the twelve, is engizo, and is defined by Greenfield as follows: "To approach, draw near. By metonymy, to be at hand, to impend. Matt.3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Luke 10:9, 11; Mark 1:15" The immortal kingdom was not at hand, according to this definition, or the obvious meaning of the phrase, in the days of John and of Jesus. In fact, Paul warned the church at Thessalonica against the idea that the day of Christ - the day to destroy earthly kingdoms, and establish the immortal kingdom - was even then at hand. "Be not soon shaken in mind, " says the apostle, "or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." 2 Thess.2:2.

The Greek work translated "at hand" in this text is enistemi, and signifies, according to Greenfield, "To place in, or upon; to stand near, be at hand, impend. 2 Thess.2:2." In their bearing upon the subject of the kingdom, there is really no difference in the signification of these two Greek words.

But, does Paul contradict John, Jesus, and the twelve? Certainly he does not.

What, then, did John and Jesus mean in proclaiming the kingdom of Heaven at hand? Not that the kingdom of grace was soon to be set up. No; that had been instituted more than four thousand years before that proclamation. Neither did they

urge immediate repentance on the ground that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand in the sense of being the next universal kingdom! With this view, their fervent announcement would seem to lose its force. But their proclamation had direct reference to the wonderful manifestations of divine power and grace immediately to follow, during the work of confirming the covenant, Dan.9:27; first, by Christ, for three and a half years, and by the apostles, Heb.2:3, the same period of time. John looked forward to the ministry of Jesus, which was approved of God "by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him, " Acts 2:22, and proclaimed the kingdom of Heaven at hand. And Jesus looked forward to his own ministry, and also to that of the apostles as "they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following, " Mark 16:20, and proclaimed the kingdom of Heaven at hand.

This view of the subject is sustained by the commission given by our Lord to the seventy: "Go your ways. Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves." "And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." Luke 10:3, 8, 9. The kingdom of God in this connection can mean nothing more, and nothing less, than the manifestation of divine power and grace.

And with this agree the words of Christ addressed to the worthy scribe. "And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Mark 12:34. This scribe was sound on the fundamental principles of God's government. He only needed to know Christ and the power of his great salvation, in order to enjoy all the privileges and blessings of the kingdom of grace.

Deception has been the work of Satan ever since he so successfully deceived Eve. He led the Jews to expect in the Messiah a ruling monarch, instead of the meek and lowly teacher, and finally the sacrifice for sinners.

The Pharisees supposed the kingdom of Israel would then be established with outward show. "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:20, 21. But was the kingdom within the unbelieving Pharisees? The marginal reading - " among you" - helps the case. What was then among them? Christ had just cleansed ten lepers who showed themselves to the priests, and one of them returned to give glory to God. In their midst were the wonderful manifestations of divine power and grace in the miracles of Christ; hence he said to the Pharisees, "The kingdom of God is among you."

At the time of the second advent, and the establishment of the eternal kingdom, the people will doubtless be under as great deception relative to the nature of the

coming and kingdom of Christ, as the Jews were relative to his mission at his first advent. Then he came as the humble teacher of the people, closing his mission with giving himself a sacrifice for sinners. The Jews rejected Jesus because he did not meet their vain expectations. Satan led them to look for the coming of Messiah with outward show, and grandeur, when he was to come in humility. And now that he is to appear the second time in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, Satan has the delusion prepared for the people, that Christ comes at death, at conversion, or in the outpouring of the Spirit of God. Jesus anticipates the heresies of our time, and says: "The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here! or, See there! go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven; shine unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of Man be in his day." Luke 17:22-24.

But in order to enter the kingdom of glory, we must first be in the kingdom of grace, sharing all its privileges and blessings. The faithful John bears testimony: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Rev. 1:9. John was in the kingdom of grace.

Paul to the Colossians delineates true Christian experience in a style wonderfully rich and full. He sets forth the change necessary for a moral fitness to be partaker of the eternal inheritance, in words that should stir the soul, and burn their way to every Christian heart.

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Col. 1:9-14.

The apostle here sets forth real conversion. When compared with this, most experiences will be found spurious. True conversion is not always the work of a day, or of a year. It is, however, always an onward work, widening and deepening as it progresses. Those who are truly converted are delivered from the powers of darkness, and are translated into the kingdom of grace. In Christ they have a moral redemption, "even the forgiveness of sins." This passage has no reference to the physical redemption at the resurrection of the just. Its words of stirring interest describe the preparation necessary to inherit the eternal kingdom of God.

