

GOD'S KINGDOM

Br. Ted Jennings

I have taken as my text Dan. 2:44, “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.”

We are all familiar with the declaration in our Lord's model prayer—“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matt. 6:10) You will recall that it was after the announcement made by John the Baptist in Matt. 10:7 (“the kingdom of heaven is at hand”) that our Lord taught his disciples that prayer. It is very easy to see what kingdom the Lord had in mind when he taught his disciples this prayer. On one occasion he said, referring to the time of his second advent, his second presence, that he would cast out of his kingdom all who do iniquity. (Matt. 13:41) Who would know that was the kingdom he had in mind when teaching us to pray, “thy kingdom”? Do you think there will be any person who will practice iniquity in his completed kingdom? No, that kingdom will be perfect, and when it will have prevailed over all the earth, all things will be perfect as in heaven—“thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.”

You will recall that God, all down through the years had regarded all of Abraham's descendants as his people; that they were all called Israel, and that the term Zion applied to the nation as a whole. Therefore, during that period, the true and the false Israelites constituted Zion. These were all God's people. We read in John 1:11, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” But the true (called wheat) and the false (called chaff) were separated during the harvest at the end of the Jewish Age. And, similarly all professed Christians (true and false) have constituted spiritual Zion, the kingdom in its preparatory state during the Gospel Age. So during this harvest the true Christians called wheat, and the false Christians called tares, are separated. The Lord takes these out of his kingdom, as we read in Matt. 13:41, “And they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.” Also in the church, there is a class of Christians called “foolish virgins.” These will not be on the throne, but will be before the throne in the completed kingdom.

Many sincere Bible readers fail to see the distinction made between the kingdom in embryo (church militant) and the completed kingdom (church triumphant). In Luke 19:11 we read, “And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.” Here our Lord plainly shows that God's kingdom was not then existing on earth in the full sense, and would not until the “young nobleman” (Jesus) returns from the far country which is heaven itself. In Luke 19:12 we read, “He said therefore, a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom

and to return.” The disciples had become convinced that Jesus was the Messiah and hoped that he would at once set up his kingdom. Our Lord used that parable to teach them that it would not be set up during his first advent. Then in 1874 he returned to establish his kingdom.

In Acts 1:6 we read, “When they therefore were come together, they asked of him saying, Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” What was Jesus’ reply? Did he say to them, that the kingdom had been already set up. No, he did not; but what he did tell them was to Tarry at Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit which would enable them to understand the matter better. (Luke 24:49) Now notice how Peter, after receiving the Holy Spirit, understood that the Kingdom would be set up at our Lord’s second advent. We read from Acts 3:19-21, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive [retain] until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” It is a plain Bible teaching that the kingdom will be fully established upon the earth during our Lord’s second presence. He is now present and the kingdom is being set up. Restitution times have also begun—it all began in 1874.

Could you imagine some as saying “did not Jesus plainly say that nobody would ever know the time of his second advent?” No, he did not say that; for it is written in Matt. 24:42, “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” There was but one person in the universe who knew, and that was our Heavenly Father—God himself knew, but Jesus did not. Why? He did not yet possess all power in heaven and earth. He did not know at the time of his first advent (when he was the man Christ Jesus) when his second advent would occur. At his resurrection all power in heaven and earth was given him, but he did not have that power before his resurrection.

We read in Rev. 1:1, “The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him.” Again in Acts 15:18, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” In due time God revealed his plan to his Son because his Son was faithful. Then in due time Jesus made known its various features to his faithful disciples. God made his plan thousands of years ago, but did not open it up to anyone until the resurrection of his Son—then he revealed it. The Apostle Paul, addressing the church at Thessalonica said in 1 Thess. 5:1-5, “But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you, for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night, for when they shall say peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape, but ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you as a thief, ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night nor of darkness.”

This brings us back to our text (Dan 2:44), “In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom.” Here the prophet tells us that this kingdom is to be established during the times of these kings, not before, not after, but during “the days of these kings.” This is the reason why our Lord Jesus returned the second time. He returned to set up his kingdom which will be one thousand years long, commencing at the time of his second presence, i.e. 1874. So we see, dear friends, that the kingdom is already established on the earth during the days of these kings. The thousand years of Christ’s Reign began in 1874—not some time in the future as some would lead us to believe. I would suggest a careful rereading of Volumes 2, 3 and 4. This kingdom is to be set up on the earth. God’s enemies are on this earth; therefore, Jesus establishes his kingdom on the earth and will rule to subdue all God’s enemies so as to relieve the earth of the “curse” as pronounced by God, when he said to Adam (in Gen. 3:17), “Cursed is the ground for thy sake.” The whole earth will be “Paradise” as Eden was, before the Curse was pronounced. Rev. 24:3.

Some ask this question, “do you mean to say that Jesus and his Bride will live on the restored earth?” No, dear friends, they will all be glorious spirit beings, and are to reign over the earth during the Millennium, to accomplish the restitution work of which all the holy prophets wrote and spoke about. Jesus plainly told his disciples that he would prepare a special place for them, and we read from John 14:2, 3, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also;” and that on his return to earth they will be received unto that place. The same thing is taught by Paul in 2 Cor. 5:1-3, saying, “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.” Restored human beings will reside on the perfected earth. (See Ezek. 36:24-33; 37:1-4; 16:44-63) I have not time to read these now, but you can read these at your leisure.

When Jesus said to his disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you,” he evidently had in mind the kingdom referred to in his model prayer (“Thy kingdom come”) and in the parable recorded in Luke 19:12-27.

In Matt. 25:34 our Lord, speaking of restored mankind said, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Not declaring it in so many words, yet the Scriptures plainly teach, to the eye of faith, that it is Jehovah’s purpose to permit sin to curse the earth for 6,000 years without any relief; permitting the curse to increase until the Millennial Age. Then during the Millennial Age, the Son and his Bride associated in glory, constituting the seed of Abraham, will reign on the earth as kings and priests, gradually removing the curse.

From the time of Adam's transgression until the time that God made the covenant with the Jewish people, God had no kingdom on earth. The same was true even after the twelve tribes came into existence and for several centuries afterward. God showed great favor to the Jewish people and dealt with them under Judges—not as a kingdom or monarchy. God's kingdom came into existence when Saul became Israel's first king. Then God had a kingdom on earth. We read in 1 Chron. 29:23, "then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord instead of David;" but when Zedekiah was taken captive, God's kingdom on earth ceased to exist.

All of us here are familiar with the words in Ezek. 21:25-27, "And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God; remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." What would be overturned?—the Kingdom—until he comes whose right it is, and "I will give it to him." As we all know this refers to our Lord Jesus. In Volume II, page 76, par. 1 Bro. Russell makes these comments, "This overturning of the crown, or dominion, has been accomplished. It was first turned over to Babylon, then to Medo Persia, then to Grecia, and then to Rome. The character of these empires, as recorded on the pages of history, we have found to agree perfectly with the prophetic descriptions, as portrayed in Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the great image and in Daniel's vision of the four beasts. This overturned condition of Israel's dominion was to continue until Christ, the rightful heir of the throne of Israel and all the earth, who purchased it with his own precious blood, would come and take control. His, as we have seen, will be the fifth universal empire of earth, the Kingdom of God under the whole heavens. But unlike the preceding four dominions which were permitted for an appointed time, and therefore recognized, though not approvingly, this one will be approved and established by God, as his representative in the earth. It will be God's Kingdom, the Kingdom of Jehovah's Anointed. It will be established gradually during a great time of trouble with which the Gospel Age will close and in the midst of which present dominions shall be utterly consumed passing away amid great confusion."

Dear Friends, let us cast our minds back to the vision of Nebuchadnezzar. You remember the image he saw with the head of gold, the other parts of the body of different metals, representing four powers. Daniel saw them portrayed from a different standpoint—as four beasts; and the fourth was very ferocious, a kind of beast Daniel had never seen before. He saw the kingdoms represented from God's standpoint—as beastly. Not that the people, who were under these governments were regarded by the Lord as beastly, but the governments themselves imperfect and beastly. Nebuchadnezzar saw them from the worldly standpoint. Picture in your minds, dear friends, the image, beginning at the top of the head, right down to the soles of the feet, and you have a mental picture of the

length of the Gentile times—2520 years long; beginning when Zedekiah was deposed (606 B.C.) and ending in 1914 A.D. Our Lord referred to this period as the Times of the Gentiles. He said that “Jerusalem must be trodden down of the Gentiles.” (Luke 21:24) They did end in 1914.

Brethren we are in that time or period that Daniel wrote of in Dan. 12:1. We read, “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book.” This prophecy began to be fulfilled in 1874—Michael has “stood up.”

There are many people today who are not Bible readers, who see that socially, politically and financially, conditions are not satisfactory, with the result that their hearts are failing them for fear, and they are saying that there will be a crisis of some kind. Yes, dear friends, the Bible certainly tells us about the impending crisis that will take place upon the earth. Right here another text applies—Zeph. 3:8, 9. We read, “Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.” It here speaks, you will notice, of the fire of God’s jealousy. There will be a destruction, but this does not mean the destruction of the literal earth for the kingdom of God sits upon the earth, and it “shall never be destroyed.” (Dan. 2:44) What earth is it that “is to be devoured”? It is the present social order, the present institutions based upon selfishness. The people will be free and will be under the Lord’s righteous rule, and it will be a permanent blessing. Every time we pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth,” we are praying for these very things.

We all know that suffering is on the increase today in the world, and all of us here know that the Lord has something better to establish in the place of the present order of things. So, then dear friends, you and I recognize the fact that we have been enjoying our Lord’s second presence which began in 1874, and since then we have been in the time Peter calls the “times of restitution of all things.” We should refresh our memories on these things by reading the volumes again and again. What I am trying to bring to your attention is that the Scriptures which relate to this subject, and the signs of the times, show that we are in the last day, the Great Seventh Day, the Millennium, and we know that certain prophetic lines prove that our Lord Jesus returned in 1874, and since then He has been setting up his kingdom; and this is the time the Lord inspired Daniel to write about, when he said, “In the days of these kings.”

My dear friends, for what did our Lord Jesus come the first time? For what was the Word made flesh? For the sole purpose that he might give his flesh for the world—as we read in Heb. 2:9, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” Again the Apostle Paul said in Heb. 12:2, “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Does each one of us here see Jesus? We should if we are Christians. How? With the eye of understanding. Paul, speaking to the church at Ephesus said (Eph. 1:18), “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.” That is the way “we see Jesus.” If every eye shall see (discern) him, then, we see Jesus (with the eye of understanding, the eye of faith) made a little lower than the angels (he came down from the spiritual plane to the human plane), for the suffering of death, that he by the grace of God might taste death for every man.

Our Lord humbled himself, took upon himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, that is, he took on the same form, the same nature that fallen humanity have, only his nature was perfect, while ours is imperfect. After becoming a man he humbled himself to the death of the cross. Then God highly exalted him to a higher nature than human nature and to greater power and wisdom. He has the divine nature and possesses divine power and wisdom. After his resurrection all power in heaven and earth was given him, and he is now the express image of the Father’s person.

Our Lord said to Nicodemus, as we read in John 3:8, “The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” Was Jesus born of the flesh? Yes, born of a woman. Then he was a human being but perfect. At his resurrection he was born of the spirit, and became the first-born from the dead, the first fruits of them that slept and the first-born among many brethren.

In 1 Peter 3:18 we read, “Put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit.” In his resurrection change our Lord became that Spirit. If you recall what our Lord said in Luke 24:39, “for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” I have met many people who have misunderstood and unscripturally interpreted these words. They believe that Jesus has a flesh and bone body. Do you think that Jesus is exactly like Jehovah? Yes, because he is the express image of the Father. The Bible says, no man can see God and live, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. If Jesus has a flesh and bone body he is not like the Father, because the Father is a spirit being.

Jesus simply assumed the flesh and bone body to communicate with his disciples—to

convince them that he was no longer dead, and to instruct them in respect to their future work. In the past, holy angels created human bodies and covered them with appropriate clothing, communicating with Abraham, Sarah and others. After Jesus was resurrected he was on earth forty days, none being aware that he was on earth but the disciples. He ascended and the world knew nothing about it; and he has returned in the same manner —“as a thief.” (Rev. 16:15)

The Apostle Peter in 1 Pet. 2:10 said that “the day of the Lord” would come as a thief (Diaglott), and in verse 8 he says, “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” We as watchers know that he has come already as a thief and is judging—the Lord is judging the nations, not the people, as he will do that later on.

Since 1874 our Lord has been setting up his kingdom, and one of his first acts was the raising of the sleeping saints—in 1878. We read in Rev. 14:13, “And I heard a voice from heaven saying [unto me] write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works do follow them.” Here John tells us that since 1878 the Lord has been resurrecting his sleeping saints and points out that there is a work to be done both this side of the veil and the other side of the veil.

Finally, let us particularly note a certain text in Acts 1:9, “and a cloud received him out of their sight.” The Apostles saw Jesus enter a cloud, but did not see him go into heaven. The cloud obscured him from their sight. In Acts 1:11 we read, “In like manner” he comes again; and in Rev. 1:7 we also read, “Behold, He cometh with [or in] clouds.” People no more see him in the clouds, at his second advent, than the Apostles saw him in the cloud that “received him out of their sight.” Back there the cloud obscured, concealed him. Here at his second advent the clouds again conceal him so he came unknown to the world—only those who were watching knew of his second presence. Dear Friends, seeing the matter so, let us more and more pray, “Thy kingdom come!”—for the complete establishment of the kingdom. May the Lord add his blessing.