

IS CHRIST COMING AGAIN?

by

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CHAPTER THREE

THE KINGDOM OF GOD—ITS LOCATION

“Verily I say unto you, That there be some here 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).

This is a proof text, popular alike with those students of the Word that say that the Kingdom of God is simply “His spiritual reign in the hearts of believers,” and with those that maintain that the apostolic expectation of a literal return of the Lord was not more mistaken than the kindred hope of a literal kingdom to be established in the apostles’ day.

By the first it is used to show that the Kingdom could not have waited until the Lord’s literal return for its establishment; and by the second, to prove the Judaizing influence that effected misconceptions of the Kingdom in the apostolic writers. The context, however, clearly indicates the exegetical blunder in both positions, for we immediately read,

“After six days, Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them; and His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them. And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus: Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. For he knew not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them; and a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear ye Him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves” (Mark 9:2-8).

The divine plan seems almost universally to involve instruction by types and symbols. Great events are adumbrated by the appearance of a miniature of the same, and the millennial Kingdom is no exception to this rule of Scripture. The Kingdom in miniature was seen on the mount.

“Moses and Elias, who appear with Christ in glory, prefigure respectively the risen and the changed saints translated and brought into one company at the appearing and Kingdom of our Lord; while the disciples who stand without the cloud and behold His glory are typical of those in the flesh, the Jews and the nations, who will still be left on the earth after the rapture of the saints.” (See Gordon’s *“Ecce Venit,”* page 290.)

That Kingdom, in miniature, Peter and others of them that stood by when Jesus uttered the first verse, beheld. It is of that Millennial Kingdom that we want to speak again.

Dr. Clark, in his "*Outline of Christian Theology*" (page 433), says, concerning the millennium,

"All the common discussions have for one of their fixed points this period (measured either literally or figuratively) of a thousand years, in which Christ is victorious on the earth. This period enters into all theories as an absolutely certain part, so important as to be the name-giving element. But when we seek to understand it better, it escapes us."

All of Dr. Clark's statements, save the last sentence, may be accepted without discussion.

On this, one must take issue with him or else admit that the Bible called "a Revelation," is yet "a Mystery." Believing that the purpose of that Holy Book is to reveal the truth rather than to conceal the same, we contend that the truth of the Kingdom can be alike formulated and comprehended.

It shall be our purpose in this chapter to discuss the location of the Kingdom. Keeping to the figure employed in the former discourse, we insist that the Kingdom is in embryo in the believer's heart: it will be in beauty over all the earth, while in full blessing it will be found in heaven.

IN EMBRYO IN THE BELIEVER'S HEART

The Church contains the seeds of the Kingdom.

In exposition of the parables of the Sower and the Wheat and the Tares, we called attention to the fact that the seeds of the Kingdom were saved souls. Some students of the Word may be troubled over the circumstance that Mark says, "**The sower sowed the Word,**" and yet he is in agreement with Matthew, speaking of the individuals, "**sown upon the rocky places**" and "**others that were sown among thorns**" and **others that were "sown upon good ground."** If one remember that man in his natural state is dead, and could only become a fertilized seed for the Kingdom when the Spirit quickened him with the Word, the difficulty vanishes. The Sower "**of his own will, begat us with the word of truth**" (James 1:18).

When one studies the character of the four kinds of seeds sown to the end of producing the Kingdom of God, he will find that they are just such as now make up the Church of God—men and women that have heard the Word, and all of whom profess to have received it. But when they are sown into the world some of them prove fruitless because Satan hath taken away the Word that hath been sown in them; others of them fruitless because of shallow natures, incapable of endurance against tribulation or persecution; and yet others unfruitful because the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things, entering in, choke the Word; while a fourth company receive the Word unto a good harvest, and become fruit-bearing seed unto the Kingdom, destined to produce "**thirty-fold; sixty-fold; a hundred-fold.**"

If anyone say that because premillennialists predict a long season between the time of seed-sowing and the final harvest at the Kingdom, their opinions comport poorly with the Word, (which makes little reference to all the “ages which were to crowd each other between His ascension and His second coming,”) our answer is, “The language of farming or fruit-growing is not commonly that of the growing process; but is that of **“seedtime and harvest.”** What man, speaking of next year’s harvest, will spend any time in discussing the period in process of growth? What company of men, interested in agriculture, can congregate without talking of seedtime and harvest? And this is the language of Christ. So far as the Kingdom of God is concerned; the seedtime is now; but **“the harvest is the end of the world”** (Matthew 13:39).

The Church prepared for the coming of the Kingdom.

It may be conceded in advance, as we have already said, that the sacred writers used the two terms, *Basileia*, or Kingdom, and *Ecclesia*, or church, discriminatingly. If **“the Church, which is the body of Christ”** (Ephesians 1:32), is made up of all those **“baptized by one Spirit into it, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, bond or free”** (I Corinthians 12:13), and the Kingdom is the institution by which and over which Christ is to reign at His coming, then believers, or the body of Christ, do well to pray as Christ instructed them, **“Thy Kingdom come!”** and the meaning of their language is clear when they add, **“Thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven.”**

The discrimination between Church and Kingdom voices itself not alone in the matter of time—the one *the institution of the present*, and the other *the institution of the future*—but equally in terms and phrases.

The New Testament declares the Church to have been founded by Christ, and the word employed (*oikodomeo*), though occurring more than a score of times in the New Testament, is never associated with the rise or “setting up” (*anastasis*) of the Kingdom; while in the New Testament references to the church the language of Scripture seldom describes a world-wide institution, but commonly a local body, **“Then had the churches rest”** (Acts 9:31), **“The churches of Christ salute thee”** (Romans 16:16), **“The churches of Asia”** (I Corinthians 16:19), etc. But the Kingdom is invariably a unity.

We know that men can get into the earthly church without regeneration, and that they go in now knowing no new birth, and we also know that no man will ever see the Kingdom of God except he be born anew (John 3:3). We know that the rich are much sought after by the churches, but it is as difficult for them to enter into the Kingdom of God as it is **“for a camel to go through the eye of a needle”** (Mark 10:25).

The Church was founded when the Spirit of God was poured out at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-11). The Kingdom of God will be **“set up”** in **“the last days”** and when He, who has gone to receive it, shall have returned (Luke 19:12). By application, one may be admitted to the literal church; and by regeneration to the spiritual; but translation into the Kingdom of the Son of his love is to be the experience of the redeemed (Colossians 1; 13). Hence it is a fact that while both the literal and the spiritual church has a membership of **“flesh and blood,”** these **“cannot inherit the Kingdom of God”** (I Corinthians 15: 50).

The Church disappears on the arrival of the Kingdom.

By the apostolic writers the Church is always spoken of as a present thing, a something already “founded”; and the Kingdom commonly as something “yet to become” or “to be set up.”

Prof. H. Lummis, whose ability as a Greek scholar was not disputed, said, “In the gospels ‘**entered into the Kingdom**’ is found ten times, half of them future, as shown by the tense of the verb, and the rest indefinite; not one case occurring in which any one is mentioned as having entered into the Kingdom of God.”

Does anyone maintain that he can produce a passage which indicates that the Church will continue to exist and accomplish its work after the Kingdom of God has been “set up” in the earth?

When one thinks of the mixed moral conditions that obtain now, and must forever remain regnant in the world so long as the Church (a small fraction of the race, much of it apostate, and according to prophecy, more of it to become so) is God’s only institution in the world, he ought to be incited to pray devoutly, “**Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.**”

When postmillennialists have paid their last tribute to the march of the Church toward the millennium, they are compelled by sober second thought to admit that the music of that march has in it a minor key; it sounds more like a funeral dirge than a victorious blast.

Even R. F. Horton writes, “The sorrow of history is the comparative rareness of humanity in it. It is as if humanity were only born by degrees. Those repulsive brute empires, Babylon, Macedon, though they relate to men, are they not intrinsically inhuman? Were they not secular illustrations of ‘man’s inhumanity to man’? Nay, even now, with the world before our eyes, can we pretend that any governments, outside the borders of Christianity, are really human? Is the Turk human? Is the Chinese Mandarin human? Was Lobengula human?”

Now he would add “Are the Bolsheviki human?”

“These are men, but they are not human. The ape and the tiger are stronger in them than the man. Our own government is partially human, because it is partially Christian. Some faint aroma (mark the words, “Some faint aroma”) of mercy and justice and truth is in our throne rooms and state departments, because the Son of Man has passed through them.”

Who should grieve to let such an age pass?

Who is there—himself at once humane and Christian—compelled to believe that, improved as the present is over the older order of things, it may yet give place to what Horton himself describes as “the blessed actual reign of the Son of Man . . . where willing subjects love Him and express His will,” and does not ardently long for the coming of that Kingdom!

The thirteen colonies for a time attempted a government, and inasmuch as it was a step toward their utter independence of the Old World, it involved a decided progress; but Ridpath, in his "History," declares that "for three years after the treaty of peace, affairs were in a condition bordering on chaos. It was seen, unless the articles of federation could be replaced with a better system, the nation would go to ruin" (ch. 45, p. 358).

But as God saw to it that better system came, the nation was saved, so God proposes to supplant the partially successful Church with a perfectly conquering Kingdom! As He succeeded in the wilderness experience, wherein His tried, tempted and perishing people were led by the pillar of cloud and of fire—the symbol of the Spirit, by a complete conquering of Canaan, under Joshua, the type of our conquering Jesus, so shall the partially successful Church—the Spirit's work—be succeeded by the conquering Kingdom under the Son—the Lord's Joshua!

IN BEAUTY OVER THE WHOLE EARTH

The Savior is to reign over the whole earth.

The apocalypse of the Old Testament is Zechariah. The plan of the ages is there as certainly as in Revelation.

Take each book at what it says, and again we have a fresh illustration of Gordon's fine phrase, "Prophecy is the mold of history."

It was Zechariah:

- That foresaw the Rider of the red horse;
- That foretold the success of Zion;
- That prophesied the chariots of the coming King;
- That pictured fasting captives turned into feasting conquerors;
- That delineated the last things or events incident to the end of this age;
- That told of how the Shepherd should be smitten and the sheep scattered;
- That predicted the day of the Lord when the feet of the Lord should stand upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east;
- That earthquakes and battles should precede the setting up of the Kingdom, "**and the Lord should be King over all the earth**" (14: 9).

I cannot quite believe that he, to whom so minute a vision was granted, that he who beheld our Lord riding into Jerusalem upon a colt—the foal of an ass—seven hundred years before the event transpired, was mistaken when he saw Him ascending the throne of the entire earth in the end of the ages. What a blessed hour it will be! How devoutly to be desired!

Can we easily imagine what it would mean for all the nations of the earth to be under one sovereign;

- For petty jealousies between people to come to an end;

- For boundary disputes to be settled forever;
- For unjust restrictions in trade to be lifted;
- For oppression to pass;
- For wars to cease;
- For the Biblical doctrine, we are “**all one blood**” to be accepted, and brotherhood asserted?

History tells how England was torn in the days of the barons, when castles sprang up everywhere, filled with armed men, each of them a robber bold, presided over by a petty tyrant. Green says, “They fought among themselves with deadly hatred; they spoiled the fairest land with fire and rapine; in what had been a most fertile country they destroyed almost all the provision of bread.” Then he proceeds with a description of the tortuous methods, the mere reading of which makes one heartsick.

What an improvement when that gave place to the government of a solitary sovereign, and yet how faint a suggestion of that great transformation this world shall see, when “**in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it**” (Micah 4:1-4).

If one object, that we have no right to insist upon a literal acceptance of a part of the minor prophets without receiving all he says after the same manner, we consent, and ask, “What then?”

If he answer, “Then, the same Zechariah will compel you to believe that after Christ has come and established His throne at Jerusalem, the Feast of the Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16), and other kindred material ordinances will be re-established, presenting the strange and incongruous circumstance “that the highest religious service and worship in the glorious and spiritual gospel era, should be in terms of the priesthood, sacrifices and feasts” (Goodspeed, p. 127), “a reversal of the progress of the ages from the material and sensuous into the more spiritual” (Goodspeed, p. “).

The reply is at hand! Does the maintenance of the ordinance of baptism detract from the spiritual truth symbolized thereby? “Buried **with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life**” (Romans 6: 4). Does the maintenance of the physical ordinance of the Lord’s Supper detract from the spiritual truth that His body was broken for us, and His blood poured out unto remission of sins? (Matthew 26:26-28). Might it not be, that with the symbolical ordinances of the Old Testament, reinstated in the millennium, the Jews themselves would be put in a place of peculiar power, as evangelists, in presenting the perfect fulfillment of the Old Testament to be found in the Christ of the New? Is truth any the less spiritual when it becomes incarnate?

Again, premillennialists are as ready to have the inspired writers spiritualize Scripture as they are unwilling to have the uninspired attempt the same. Peter, as Goodspeed himself says, “Writing to the elect of the dispensation, **‘in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,’** declares (I Peter 2: 5), **‘Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.’** He continues in verse 9, **‘But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation’**, a people for God’s own possession?

“Whether Peter is writing to Jewish or Gentile converts, the teaching is the same. Gathering up all that the Israelites had been, and still claimed to be, to God, Peter turns away from natural Israel to these scattered believers and declares them to be the type of God’s ancient people: **‘But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation?’** Ye do not possess a material temple, as did Israel, but ye constitute a temple, as ye **‘as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.’** Yea, as a holy priesthood, offer up spiritual sacrifices, of which the old offerings will be but the material type. For Peter, the Jewish ‘race,’ ‘nation,’ ‘priesthood,’ ‘people,’ ‘sacrifices,’ ‘temple,’ had their higher and antitypical realization in believers,” as Goodspeed confesses.

To be sure, the whole question is hereby begged in the obliteration of the Biblical distinction between Jew and Gentile, everywhere evident in the Word.

And yet if the claim of Goodspeed be conceded, it in no wise disproves the fact affirmed by Zechariah that the Lord is to be King over all the earth, but only illustrates the claim of premillenarians that “the elect church—glorified with the Lord, and the elect nation—Israel restored and converted” will take up together the work of universal redemption, and gives point to Gordon’s question, “Have we pondered the deep suggestiveness of the apostle’s saying, **‘He hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus?’** “That God, in the future order of things, that is, in the Kingdom of God, which is the glory of the faithful, which is hidden here below, will be made visible to all—may manifest the overwhelming richness of His grace.”

The saints are to possess all continents and islands.

The seed of the righteous, not the proletariat, **“shall inherit the earth”** (Psalm 25:13). **“Blessed are the meek,”** not labor unions, **“for they shall inherit the earth”** (Matthew 5: 5).

The time of loyal subjection (every knee bowing in recognition of His authority, and every tongue confessing to His praise) will also be the period of righteous administration of government. The wise men wrote, **“When the righteous are in authority [are increased] the people rejoice.”** The authority of the future will be jointly exercised by Jesus Christ and his most faithful servants (Revelation 19:17). You will remember that John, in his apocalyptic vision, makes the new song heard in heaven to be one of joy over the fact that Christ’s death did **“redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings, and priests; and we shall reign on the earth”** (Revelation 5:9-10).

Dr. Chalmers tells us that in 1858 some people were digging in France and they found eight costly crowns, all lying close together, having been lost, or hidden away in the earth. Four of them were very costly and beautiful, while the others were smaller. The first four were for the king and queen, and the prince, and the second oldest child. The other four crowns were for the younger children of the king's household. And so, when Christ shall be crowned Lord of earth, even his little children shall share in the glory, for "**when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away!**"

The whole earth is to be renewed in righteousness.

One cannot read the Word through without feeling that in addition to the spiritual supremacy that is to be the glory of this personal reign, there is also a physical renewal for the face of the earth. This will go deeper than Kagawa's "co-operatives," deeper than Stanley Jones' "economic revolution." If, in consequence of sin, the ground was cursed with thorns and briars (Genesis 3:17-18), it is natural that when redemption is complete, "**instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree; and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree**" "**The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.**"

The scenes of carnage shall give place to the strange vision of the lion and the lamb lying peacefully together, for we, according to His promise, look for "**a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.**"

IN FULL BLESSING IN HEAVEN

There all rebellion will be at an end.

It is alike evident, from I Corinthians 15:25-28 and Revelation 20: 7-10, that the millennial period will know some rebels against the divine will; but that "**the Kingdom of heaven**" is to be freed from all such is equally clear from I Corinthians 15:28 and Revelation 21: 8 and 27. "**The Lord hath established His throne in the heavens, and His Kingdom ruleth over all**" (Psalm 103:19).

There all blessings will be experienced.

Men shall receive in heaven their "**great rewards**" (Matthew 5:12); men shall find in heaven their "**treasures**" (John 10:21), the most felicitous companionship is promised for heaven, "**Many shall come from the East and from the West and shall sit down with Abraham**" etc., "**in the Kingdom of heaven**" (Matthew 8:11).

"When shall I reach that happy place,
And be forever blest?
When shall I see my Father's face,
And in His bosom rest?"

There perfect joy will find expression.

One of the hallelujahs that John heard being rendered in heaven found voice in these words, “**Salvation unto God, who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb.**” It will be remembered that Handel, when he wrote the Hallelujah chorus, had a vision of all heaven before him, “**and of the great God himself.**” And one that reads the twenty-first chapter of Revelation must be impressed with the fact that from the time when Jesus delivers over the Kingdom to God, the Father (v. 3), sorrow is no more (v. 5), and joy is unconfined.

“We speak of the realms of the blest,
That country so bright and so fair;
And oft are its glories confessed;
But what must it be to be there?”

“We speak of its pathways of gold,
Its walls decked with jewels so rare,
Its wonders and pleasures untold;
But what must it be to be there?”

“We speak of its freedom from sin,
From sorrow, temptation and care,
From trials without and within;
But what must it be to be there?”

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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