

# The Lamp of Prophecy

or

Signs of the Times

by

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### WAS THE KINGDOM OFFERED TO ISRAEL AND REJECTED?

ACCORDING TO THE teaching many of us are familiar with, John the Baptist came preaching the nearness of the kingdom of Heaven, that is, proclaiming that the time had drawn nigh when the rule of Heaven was to be set up over this world; when Heaven was to take manifest control over human affairs. He predicted the coming of the King to set up this kingdom. When our Lord came, He himself proclaimed the same message as John, "**Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"

We have taught that during JESUS' ministry here on earth, He and His disciples went everywhere proclaiming the kingdom and declaring that the door into the Kingdom now was open but the people must be regenerated to enter into it. The day had come when the kingdom of Heaven was to be set up on earth, provided the people were ready to receive it.

This is the message of the Gospel of Matthew.

The offer of the kingdom met with ever-increasing rejection until finally it was completely set to one side, when our Lord JESUS said, "**The kingdom of God is taken from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.**" That nation is not the Gentiles as such, but that nation refers to regenerated Israel in a coming day, and, in the meantime, the kingdom has been, as it were, deferred, and the Gospel of the grace of GOD is going out to all the world. GOD has not changed His purpose, but He is not now setting up His kingdom in this world. That kingdom awaits the coming again of our Lord JESUS CHRIST.

Recently these views have been challenged by some very respected people, and I want to examine a few Scriptures to see whether they hold or not. Turn to the second Psalm. This is the great dispensational Psalm. It is referred to again and again in the New Testament. After our blessed Lord ascended to Heaven, it seems that the Spirit of GOD directed the attention of the apostolic company to this second Psalm in a very special way. It revealed to them what GOD was doing.

In the second Psalm we have twelve verses divided into four sections, of three verses each. We have four different speakers.

- in the first section (verses 1-3) we hear the voice of the world.
- in the second (4-6) we listen to the voice of the Father.
- in the third (7-9) we hear the voice of the Son, and
- in the fourth (10-12) it is the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Notice the attitude of the world. "**Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?**" You remember that the Apostle Peter applied this to what took place when our Lord JESUS CHRIST was rejected. He showed that both the Jew and Gentile were linked together in this rejection.

"**The kings of the earth** [represented by Caesar and his minions] **set themselves, and the rulers** [i.e., of the Jews] **take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us,**" i.e., they deliberately refused to acknowledge the kingly authority of JESUS CHRIST.

He was presented to them as the King promised through the Old Testament period, and when He came He offered Himself to the people in that character. It was in that character that He was rejected. Therefore, to say that the kingdom was not offered to Israel is nonsensical. They could only have received the kingdom by receiving the King. The King presented Himself, and in presenting Himself, He offered them the kingdom.

He said, "**The kingdom of God is within** [among] **you.**"

The Lord said, "You don't need to look for the kingdom of GOD. Here is the kingdom. While you are looking for it, here it is. Now the question is, Will you receive it or reject it?" They rejected it. It was set to one side.

"**Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.**"

What about the kingdom? Has GOD changed His plans or has He set up the kingdom among the Gentiles? Not at all. Hear the voice of the Father (verses 4-6):

"**He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.**"

It is as though He said, "I haven't changed my plans. My kingdom shall be established on Mount Zion." Mount Zion means Mount Zion. All the Old Testament prophets declared that the King's throne should be established there. Although the people of Israel have refused Him, His plans are unchanged, and the day is coming when the kingdom will be actually set up on Mount Zion, and regenerated Israel will accept the kingdom and bow the knee to the King.

Now, in the meantime, hear the voice of the Son:

**"I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, 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."**

That is, although He has been rejected by His own nation, the Son now announces the fact that GOD the Father has not changed His plans. GOD owns Him as His Son, and though He is rejected of man, the day is coming when not only the people of Israel but all the Gentiles everywhere will be brought into subjection to His benevolent, yet righteous sway, when He will rule the nations with a rod of iron. When will that be? A multitude of Scriptures show that this will be at His second coming. He is not ruling the nations with a rod of iron now. Even where the Gospel is believed, He is not ruling the nations. That awaits the day of the establishment of His kingdom in Millennial glory.

In the meantime, while He sits exalted on the throne of the Lord (110th Psalm) the voice of the Holy Spirit is heard, **"Be wise now therefore, a ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."**

When we come to the New Testament, as in the nineteenth chapter of Luke, we find our blessed Lord indicating the course of things in regard to the kingdom.

Verse 11: **"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."**

Now, the writer of the book I referred to not only wrote that the kingdom of GOD should immediately appear, but he thinks that the kingdom did appear.

**"Because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear,"** JESUS related a parable to show them it would not!

**"He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return."**

There is our blessed Lord. He has gone into a far country. He is seated on the Father's throne waiting to receive the kingdom and then to return. This is in exact accord with the 110th Psalm. The Father says to the Son, **"Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."** Then comes the second time, when He is to establish His kingdom. While He is in the far country, the servants act for Him in His absence, as recognizing His rightful authority.

**"And he called his ten servants and delivered them ten pounds and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom**

he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man . . . But the nobleman replied, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee. Thou knowest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto everyone which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

The rule of the iron rod begins. The Lord said, "**I am the way, the truth, and the life.**" The Lord was not only the truth in all the actions of His life, but He was the truth in everything He said. Our Saviour never said anything that was false. He didn't make up little fancy stories. These parables were actual facts. For instance, "**A certain man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father,**" etc. What were the names of those two sons? He could have told you. He didn't make that story up. "**A certain rich man was clothed in purple and fine linens.**" He names the beggar because He calls His own people by name, but He leaves the rich man unnamed.

And so here, this story is one of fact. Everyone listening to Him knew exactly to what He was referring. Just about the time that the Lord was born, Herod the Great had died. In his will he selected Archelaus, his son, to be king. The people didn't want Archelaus. They had suffered under the father and thought his son would be even worse. Archelaus attempted to take the throne, but finding the Jews so hostile, he determined to go to Caesar and put the case before him and have the title to his throne confirmed. Before leaving he distributed a sum of money to certain of his servants, and they were to work in his absence to make friends for him. Soon after the Jews heard that he had gone to Caesar to put the case before him, they sent messengers after him to say, "We don't want this man." But when Augustus heard the case he confirmed Archelaus in the title to the throne. He returned with a Roman legion to back him in taking his position. The servants who had acted in his absence were rewarded and given various places in the kingdom, while, on the other hand, he turned upon those who were out and out enemies and destroyed them. The Lord is not endorsing everything he did, but He uses this story to illustrate the present condition. He was the rightful King, but they didn't want Him.

They were not willing to submit to Him. So He says, "It is like the nobleman who went into a far country. I am going to leave the world, as the rejected one going back to the Father's throne." He is going to put the case in His hands. In the meantime He has servants in the world. "Now you take what I have committed to you and use it in my interest. Use it to make friends for me. Use it to prepare men and women to acknowledge my authority. When I come back, I am coming to reign."

He had scarcely gone to the Father when they sent messengers to say, "We don't want Him." We see these messengers in the stoning of Stephen. Stephen went into the very presence of GOD to say in behalf of the people, "They don't want Thy Son. I preached the Gospel to them and gave them opportunity to repent, but they don't want Thy Son. See the treatment they gave me; they put me to death."

All through the centuries since, the servants of CHRIST have been working in His absence. We recognize Him as King. Does that not mean then that the kingdom is already set up? Not at all. It implies this: We believe that a usurper is dominating this world, that the rightful King is rejected.

We acknowledge the authority of the rightful King. We own His authority, but that kingdom is not being displayed in any sense. When Christians try to exert the authority of the King over the world they always make a mistake. The kingdom is not set up yet. But those who are saved are translated into the kingdom of GOD in the sense that they own the authority of CHRIST.

John writes, "**I, John, your brother and companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.**" We are waiting for the One whom we recognize to come back. He is not called our King. CHRIST is our Lord. He is our Lord. He is our Head. But no where in Scripture is JESUS CHRIST said to be King of the church. He is the Head of the church and Lord of the individual believer. Our relationship to Him is that of His Body and His Bride, and therefore, you can see how incongruous it would be to speak of Him as King of the church.

Take the queen of England. She doesn't speak of George VI as her King, but as her husband or her head. She recognizes him as the king of the realm of England. His word has all the force of law to her because she is his wife, and so the church sustains intimate relationship to CHRIST. She recognizes Him as the rightful but rejected King. When He comes back again the kingdom will be displayed. In the meantime, we are to work in His interest, to bring men everywhere to recognize Him as the rightful King. He wants men to submit to Him as Saviour and as Lord. **"Therefore, if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."** We are to preach the Gospel of the grace of GOD.

In the Gospels, the Lord proclaims the Gospel of the Kingdom. After the church is taken out, the Gospel of the Kingdom will again be proclaimed, i.e., the Gospel that the King is coming to reign. Now, the good news is that GOD is offering remission of sins. When the people accept that message, they are linked up by the Holy Spirit with the risen CHRIST, and when He comes as King, they will come with Him to reign over a regenerated universe.

Right here comes the question of the place of the Gospels in connection with our present message. We sometimes say that Matthew is decidedly a Jewish Gospel. When I say that, I am apt to be misunderstood on one side or on the other. Some people may think that I mean that Matthew has no interest for me because I am not a Jew and other people may go to the other extreme, namely, that all Christians are now spiritual Israel and, in that sense, the Gospel is for them.

But when I say that Matthew is the Jewish Gospel, it is practically the same thing in relation to the Gospels as when I say that Mark is the Roman Gospel, Luke, the Gentile, and John, the Christian Gospel.

Mark is the Roman Gospel. Of course, that doesn't apply as well today as the day it was written. When Mark was written, the Romans dominated the world. Mark had in view the instruction of the Romans. In those days, if you were to sit down with a busy Roman to prove to him that JESUS is the Son of GOD, you would turn to Mark's Gospel and meet him on familiar ground. But when he believed the Gospel and became a Christian, did that mean he no longer valued the Gospel of Mark? No. He found in that Gospel the expressed will of the Lord. He was thankful for it.

If you were to deal with a Greek, you would turn to Luke. Luke was written by a cultured, Greek-speaking physician. He may have been a Gentile, but I take it that he was probably a Jew. He was a cultured man of science. The Gospel was written in such a way as to meet the questionings of the cultured Greeks. But after this Greek believed the message, what did he become? A Christian. Did he discount Luke's Gospel? Not at all. He valued it to the end of his days, and would go over and over it. He would feed his soul on it. Therefore, I say, Matthew is the Jewish Gospel.

Some of my brethren who do not understand dispensational truth think that this is casting a slur on it, that it is undervaluing it; that I mean that the Gospel of Matthew is not for a Christian. But I do not say this. I am saying that if I wanted to prove to a Jew that JESUS CHRIST was the Messiah, I would take him to - not Mark, not Luke, and certainly not to John - I would take him to Matthew, and I would sit down with that Jew, and I would point out to him how every claim made by Matthew is backed by the Old Testament.

- I would show him that JESUS CHRIST is in the direct order of the direct genealogical line of Abraham and David; how, in accordance with the Old Testament, the Gentiles came to greet Him at the brightness of His rising; that He was born in Judea as the Old Testament said He would be.

- I would show him how John came, the forerunner promised in Isaiah 40.

- I would show him how the King came and was baptized of John, anointed by GOD, proclaimed to be the Son of GOD, the One sent to redeem Israel.

- I would go on chapter by chapter and show how He was tested and how He came at last to the mountain and proclaimed the principles of His kingdom.

- I would give him the Sermon on the Mount.

There is a great deal of mistaken teaching about the Sermon on the Mount. Some people say that the Sermon on the Mount is the sweetest gospel found in the Bible. If it is the gospel, then everyone of us is lost forever, for the Sermon on the Mount puts before us the highest possible standard of morals and spirituality, and we have never come up to it.

A young student from a Bible college who had held some meetings in Nova Scotia was telling how he visited a blacksmith shop.

The blacksmith said to him, "I believe that if a man keeps the Ten Commandments and lives up to the Sermon on the Mount, that is all that will be required of him."

The young man looked at him quietly for a few seconds, and then said, "How are you getting along with the commandments and the Sermon on the Mount?"

"Oh, well, of course we all come short."

"That puts you in a rather bad way, doesn't it?"

Have you ever kept them?"

"Well, no, nobody could ever reach to that standard."

"Don't you see where you are? That is the reason GOD gave them - to show men where they are, and their need of a Saviour."

The principles of the Sermon on the Mount will govern the entire world when the Kingdom is set up. In the days of the tribulation, when the people of Israel will be afflicted, they will have every occasion in the world to fall back on exactly what we have here in the Sermon on the Mount, but only as regenerated Israel will they have the grace to live up to its principles.

As Christians, do we set it aside? Not at all. We come to it again and again to see the principles that are to characterize the followers of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. So it is with everything in Matthew's Gospel. We dare not say that the instruction given there was given in behalf of the church.

In chapter 10:5, we read: **"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils."**

There are some people today who profess to do this. They are living in the days of the Gospel of Matthew. They say that they **"heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead."** I do not know that they have ever done that, but they profess to do something nearly as great. The funny thing about it is that they seldom, if ever, quote this, **"Freely ye have received, freely give."** It is very dishonest to take part of a passage and leave the other. **"Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat."** People are ready to deceive themselves and deceive others.

No, you cannot apply this today. The Gospel of Matthew gives us a definite message for a definite time. It is all linked with the presentation of the Kingdom, but when they refused the King, they refused the Kingdom. When the Christian is linked with CHRIST, he asks himself, "What are the principles that characterized my Lord's life? What would He like to reproduce in me?"

Turn to the New Testament Epistles, and you will be lifted far above what you get either in the Law of the Old Testament or in the Sermon on the Mount. May I put it this way? If you and I did not know one syllable about the law of the Old Testament, or one word of the teachings of the Lord on the earth, but had the Epistles of the New Testament, we would have everything we need to show us how to live lives of piety in this world.

So do not misunderstand when dispensational teachers say to you, "Don't go back to the Gospels to find your rule of life. Go to the Epistles because there you have life in the energy of the Holy Spirit." Do not ignore the expressed will of the Lord.

I sometimes use this illustration in connection with the Christian's relation to the old question of law.

Here is a man who is a bachelor and keeps up a large establishment. He hires a housekeeper who is rather self-willed; he endures her for a while, but he finally lets her go. The next one he gets is too careless, so he lets her go, also. By this time he is desperate; but by and by he takes a pen and a piece of paper, sits down and writes ten rules, or ten commandments, and puts them on the wall in the kitchen. Then he advertises for a housekeeper. A woman comes in answer to the advertisement. He chats with her for a few minutes, and then says, "Come downstairs with me. Will you kindly read those rules? I want you to understand that you have come to work for me and you must do exactly as I tell you. Will you agree to run this house in accordance with these rules?" She reads them over.

"Now," he says, "do you thoroughly understand that? Will you agree?"

I can imagine her looking at him sweetly saying, "All that thou hast spoken will I do and be obedient."

She is now under the law. As long as she is obedient and satisfactory, she holds her position. But suppose she is exceptional. She keeps the regulations pretty well and he is quite delighted with the change. By and by the acquaintance ripens into respect, respect into affection, affection into love; finally he tells her how lonely he has been, how wonderfully she has come to fit into the order of things, how he dreads the time when she might terminate her engagement, and would she think of remaining with him permanently?

She exclaims, "Why, this is so sudden!" They are engaged. Then they are married. They are not master and servant anymore.

Does he take her down to the kitchen and say, "Now, look here, my dear, you remember that when you came to work for me, you promised faithfully to keep these rules and regulations. Now, although our relations are somewhat changed, you are still to keep these rules. Do you promise faithfully to obey these rules?"

I think I can see her laugh in his face. "Take them down, my dear. When I was your hired servant, I was under rules. Now that I am your wife, do you think that I will be less careful about running this house in a way that will please you?" You can depend upon it that she will be more concerned about running the house in a way that will please and gratify him because she loves him, than when she worked for wages.

Now, as Christians, as believers, when we say that we are not under law, but under grace; when we say that the Sermon on the Mount is not primarily Christian, but is instruction as to the Kingdom principles, we are not ignoring the will of the Lord, the desire of the Lord as to holiness and lowliness of spirit; but we find in the Epistles the obedience of those who love Him

because He first loved them. We delight to obey His commandments. We find the greatest joy in living according to His will, and we are enabled to do this in the power of the indwelling Spirit, who has come to control us for the glory of our Lord JESUS CHRIST. So here we are, seeking to glorify Him. We are to endeavor to make Him known by life and word to the world which is still rejecting Him.

By and by He will come back again. When He comes, we will come with Him, having been already caught up to meet Him in the air. We shall share in His joy when the entire world is brought into subjection to Him, when men and women everywhere will bow at His feet. He will rule the nations with the iron rod of righteousness. There is no setting aside of the principles of holiness and righteousness because we seek to give things a dispensational place.

I have often felt when I have read the criticisms of some of these writers that they simply build their arguments upon some strong man's statement, for instance, Dr. C. I. Scofield. I know that no man more faithfully taught devotedness to CHRIST, nor did any man more faithfully live it. They seem to feel that now we are no longer under Jewish regulations, and that Dr. Scofield left us free to do as we please. If this had been presented to Dr. Scofield, he might have said quietly, with a smile, "We are free to do as we please now that we please to live for GOD. The new nature pleases to live for GOD."

And if you understand what one means when he uses that expression, it is perfectly safe to use it. However, we all have the flesh within us. It is always ready to take advantage. But Paul said, "**Brethren, we are called unto liberty, only use not liberty as an occasion for the flesh.**" We haven't been called unto the liberty of doing as the natural heart desires. We have been called unto the liberty of serving JESUS CHRIST in the freedom and joy of the Spirit of GOD. While we are doing this we are glorifying the absent King and showing to the world the principles that will be manifest when the Kingdom is set up.

It will mean suffering for us, but if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him by and by. The kingdom has been offered, has been rejected, has been set to one side. GOD has not been taken by surprise. He saw from the beginning just what course things would take. It was His purpose to teach Israel in this way. He saw that men would crucify the Lord of glory, yet CHRIST was presented to them, and they were given the opportunity of accepting or rejecting Him.

In the second chapter of Daniel, we see that the stone will smite the image at the feet and toes. If this other theory is true, the stone would have to hit the image around the knees. Our Lord came in the days of the Roman Empire. His kingdom was not then set up. The stone falls not upon the knees, not on the ankles, but upon the feet and toes. In those days - the feet and toes - the GOD of Heaven will set up His kingdom. Whosoever falls upon that stone will be broken. Israel stumbled over the stone, but on whomsoever it will fall, it will grind him to powder. Then all the Kingdoms of this world will give way to the glorious kingdom of GOD.

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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