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PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

– *MARCH 22.* – *LUKE 13:18-30.* –

"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven." – MATTHEW 7:21.

FEW apparently have noticed that nearly all of Jesus' teachings related to the Kingdom of God. This was because the Kingdom of God is the great Divine remedy promised for the release of mankind from the curse, and the blessing of the willing and obedient with an uplift out of sin and death conditions, a return to harmony with God and the everlasting life which He is pleased to give to all who love Him. All that took place in the world prior to the coming of Jesus was merely preparatory. Life and immortality had not even been brought to light before the First Advent. Thus we read, "Christ hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." There were hints, suggestions and promises of coming blessings; but the method of procedure, etc., was not brought to light.

The typical sacrifices of Israel taught a great lesson; viz., that better sacrifices must be offered before the blessings could be received. The typical kingdom of Israel taught that Messiah would be a great King, and rule with great power. But when the last of the kings of David's line, Zedekiah, was dethroned, the Lord through the Prophet declared, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: until He come whose right it is; and I will give it unto Him." – Ezekiel 21:25-27. [R5406 : page 58]

The work of Jesus at His First Advent, His sacrificial death as an Atonement for man's sin, was necessary as the foundation or preliminary to the setting up of God's Kingdom for man's deliverance from the power of sin and death. But, although the Redeemer died eighteen centuries ago, the Kingdom is not yet set

up. We are still praying, "Thy Kingdom come." Nevertheless, when enlightened by the words of our Lord and the Apostles, we see that the Divine program has not stopped. An elect Church is being sought, which is to be the Bride of Christ and His Joint-heir in His Kingdom, and not until this great work shall have been accomplished can the Kingdom come. After the full number of His elect Church shall have been perfected in the First Resurrection, they shall reign with Him, as He promised – "a Royal Priesthood"; "kings and priests unto God."

There should be no doubt that these features of the Plan of God constitute quite sufficient reasons why the Savior should preach and teach so much respecting the Kingdom. The different parables illustrative of the Kingdom treat it from different standpoints, just as we might take different photographs of persons or of a building, or of the same person or thing at different ages or stages of development or from different angles. So some of the parables of the Kingdom tell about the persecutions which would come upon those who would be the heirs of the Kingdom. Others tell that there would be a great outward appearance of prosperity, while the true Kingdom class would be still a Little Flock.

One parable at least tells about the future work of the Kingdom, after the Church is completed and sits with Christ in His Throne. This is the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, which has its fulfilment positively dated by the expression, "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the Throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations; and He shall separate them the one from the other, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." – Matthew 25:31,32.

This dividing of the world, the Gentiles, will progress for a thousand years, and eventually will make a most complete separation, identifying the sheep of the Lord's favor and introducing

them to the blessings intended for them, and destroying the goat class as being really servants of sin and of Satan. These will go away into everlasting punishment, symbolized by fire. The punishment will be everlasting, even though they will be unconscious; for "the wages of sin is death," not torment. Therefore the everlasting punishment will be an everlasting death, from which there will be no redemption, no future recovery.

A GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED

Two illustrations of the Kingdom occur in this lesson. In the one the Lord likens the Kingdom to a grain of mustard seed, which from a small beginning would become quite a large bush, and the birds of the air would lodge in its branches. This evidently was intended as a picture of the outward appearance of the Church – very prosperous, so prosperous as to invite the birds. Elsewhere Jesus declared that the birds represented the Wicked One and his agents, ever ready to take away the seed of Truth and to work adversely as respects the Gospel program. (Matthew 13:4,19.) In Revelation also the great Teacher speaks of the Church as becoming Babylon, confusion, and as being "a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." (Revelation 18:2.) The picture fits.

Again the Master illustrated the experiences of His Church as an embryotic Kingdom. His second parable tells of a woman who hid some leaven in three measures of meal until the whole batch was leavened. This, Bible students are coming to understand, signifies a corrupting of the Divine Message – the spiritual Food which God had prepared for the Church. A woman in symbolic language represents a church system; and the Master tells us that such a church system will mix leaven, or ferment, in the food of the family of God until the whole mass will be corrupted. For be it noted that leaven in the Bible is always used as a symbol of corruption, of sin. This parable shows that the faith once delivered to the saints would be lost, vitiated, mixed with error, until it would no longer be

nourishing to the family. St. Paul pictures the same matter, saying that in the latter days "some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons." – 1 Timothy 4:1.

These false doctrines are what are troubling the people of God today. Our hearts are better than our heads; for the hearts of the consecrated are in tune with the Infinite One, while the creeds of the Dark Ages are quite out of tune. The blessings that are lately coming to Bible students are largely the result of breaking loose from the creeds formulated in the Dark Ages, and getting back to the teachings of Jesus, the Apostles and the Prophets – the only inspired authorities. Their words alone constitute the proper food whereby we are to be nourished. The Word of God is sufficient, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished. – 2 Timothy 3:16,17.

Some dear Christian people, looking at matters evidently from a wrong angle, are still deceived into thinking that it is possible for the Church, as the Kingdom of God in an embryotic condition, to do the work which God assigns to that Church in her future glorified, perfected condition. Such shut their eyes to the fact that the number of heathen in proportion to the number of Christians [R5407 : page 58] doubles every century. Such try to count up Christians by the hundreds of millions, entirely ignoring the fact that Jesus has declared that the Gospel Church, the Elect, who are walking in His steps, will be altogether but a Little Flock. – Luke 11:32.

THE CALLED SAVED

The blessing of the heathen is not merely for those now living, but for all who have ever lived. Messiah's Kingdom will triumph gloriously in the Lord's due time. The knowledge of the glory of God will fill the whole earth (Isaiah 11:9), until none shall need to say to his neighbor or to his brother, Know thou the Lord; for all shall know Him. (Jeremiah 31:33,34.) It is in order that all may come to a knowledge of the Truth that God has promised that "there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust"; that

"all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and shall come forth." A faithful few will come forth to glory, honor, immortality and a share in the Kingdom; and the unreconciled many will come forth later, that the Love of God may be testified to them, and that they may have the opportunity of the rewards and chastisements of the Kingdom, to help them back to all that was lost in Adam and redeemed at Calvary.

Some inquired of the Lord, Will there be but few saved? Jesus did not give a direct answer to the question, doubtless for two reasons: (1) The Holy Spirit had not yet come, and His followers could not then be prepared to understand the Plan of God thoroughly. (2) It was [R5407 : page 59] not due time to explain all the particulars of the spiritual salvation of the Church, to be like unto her Lord, and then later the human Restitution of the world to the image and likeness of the first Adam. Jesus applied the matter to His hearers personally, saying: "Strive ye to enter in [to the Kingdom] by the narrow door; for many, I say unto you will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the Master of the House is risen up and shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open unto us, He shall answer and say to you, I know you not whence ye are."

For a certain period of time the door to the High Calling of the Church stands ajar. Jesus opened up this new way of life through the veil; that is to say, His flesh – His sacrifice. (Hebrews 10:19,20.) The possibilities of entering into this way were first presented to the Jews; and after finding the suitable ones of that people, God has directed the Message hither and thither amongst the Gentiles for these more than eighteen centuries. Apparently the gathering of the Elect has been nearly completed. As soon as the last one completing the elect number shall have qualified for glory and shall have passed through the door, it will shut.

About that time, a great awakening of religious thought will come to the world, in the midst of a great Time of Trouble. Then many will begin to say that they have been neglecting the great Prize, that they

have failed to purchase the pearl of great price on the cheap terms on which it was offered to them – their little all. Then there will be great lamentation amongst this class, and a crying, Lord, Lord, are we not to be of the Bride class? But the Lord will disown them as respects the Bride company. Then they will be in great sorrow. Weeping and gnashing of teeth will prevail. This will not be in some far-off place of eternal torment, as once we supposed; but, as the narrative intimates, it will be right here on the earth, amongst a class who neglected the privileges of the High Calling when they knew of it.

Bringing the matter down to His hearers, but still leaving it applicable to all who have heard the Message throughout the Gospel Age, the Lord intimates that some of these will have been in close touch with Him and His followers. They had a form of godliness and claimed to have done many mighty works, yet the Lord will disown them as respects any privileges in the Kingdom. They will not even have a share in the *earthly* kingdom. It will be given to the Worthies of the past who lived and died before the High Calling was opened up.

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the Prophets and faithful ones of the past are to be Princes in all the earth, the visible representatives of the invisible Messiah and His Church in glory. The heirs of the Kingdom will not be entirely Jewish, because the Jews as a nation were not sufficiently holy and because the Lord could accept only the holy. When the call to joint-heirship in the Kingdom would go out to the Gentiles, some would come from the East, the West, the North and the South, and have a share in the Kingdom. The Jews were first in God's favor and the Gentiles last; yet some of the first with privilege and opportunity would fail.

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