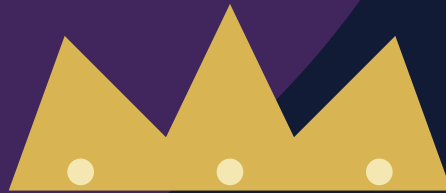
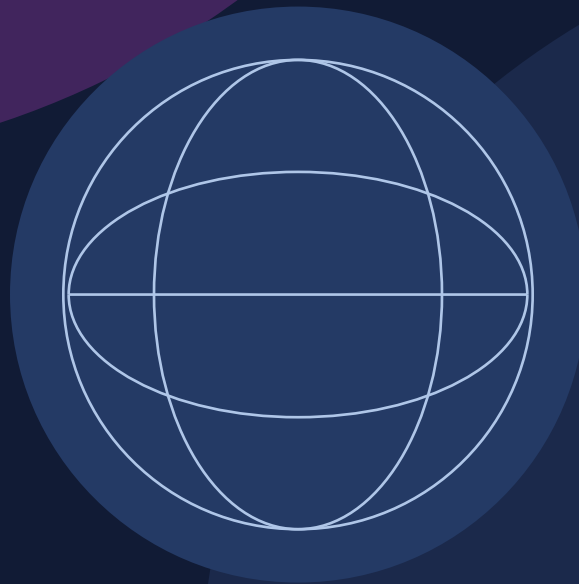


A SERIES OF SEVEN LECTURES

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Its Promise, Present Reality, and Future Fullness



**FRED G. STEVENSON**

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# **THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

**BY FRED G. STEVENSON**

**THE KINGDOM OF GOD**  
**A SERIES OF SEVEN LECTURES**

**COMPILED AND PROVIDED BY HIS SON**  
**FRED S. STEVENSON**

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## **PREFACE**

The man who gave these lectures was well known to me. I am the oldest of his five children. It was not my purpose when I was given these transcripts to provide them to others. However, some of my brethren began asking for copies and the result is this work.

I would be dishonest to take any credit for the work herein. I did type the pages from work already transcribed for Bro. Clayton Shook while he was an instructor at the school in Minden, La. I express my appreciation to Bro. Shook for his efforts.

It is my understanding that this transcript was taken directly from tapes of the lectures. There was little editing done when I started to work on them. I have taken the liberty to change many of the contractions Dad was prone to use. Hopefully, this will make the material easier to read. Paragraphs, some sentences and such grammatical changes are mine. The sole purpose for these changes is to make the material easier to read.

It may be noted that if you are reading any of the Scriptures in the King James Version, or for that matter any other version, you will note a difference in the wording quite often. He was quite literate in the Hebrew and the Koine Greek and many times he preached from either or both texts without any other Bible with him as he preached.

He made some doctrinal stands on which I can't completely agree. This is a failing on my part and in no way do I mean to indicate he was wrong. If he were alive and aware of this effort, he would strongly encourage the reader to carefully study this and use whatever you can. Don't just accept this as fact. Don't try to make it work for you just because Fred G. Stevenson said it. He spent a substantial portion of his life in the classroom of the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock, Ark. I believe one of his greatest pleasures in life was to see the God-called preachers leave there knowing how to better study the Bible. He did not attempt to make disciples of Fred Stevenson, but disciples of Jesus Christ.

# **THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

## **LECTURE #1**

The Kingdom of God was introduced by John the Baptist as something new when he came preaching in the wilderness of Judea as the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought to remember that the Kingdom of God does not go back to Adam or Abraham, nor any of the other Old Testament characters in actuality, however, we are going to start with Adam in our Kingdom study.

I am going to try to outline teachings as brought out in the Old Testament Scriptures. As we mentioned a moment ago, the Kingdom of God was introduced by John the Baptist as something that was at hand. Jesus came upon the scene and I think there is abundant evidence as we will try to bring out later that this Kingdom was actually established during the ministry of Jesus in the world, and it exists tonight and has throughout this, the Christian, or church dispensation.

There has been a lot of discussion and speculation about the Kingdom of God. C. I. Scofield, for instance, who published a reference Bible, makes a distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, and many Baptist preachers who followed his suggestions on the subject, instead of clarifying the issue, have rather confused it in my estimation. So, what we have in mind tonight is to try and introduce the subject and outline the Old Testament teachings on it next. If the Lord wills, we will go into the Kingdom as it is taught and brought out in the New Testament Scriptures.

Of course, the first thing we need to do is define this expression, “the Kingdom of God,” or “the Kingdom of Heaven,” whichever you prefer to call it. In my estimation, here is as good a definition as any as to what the Kingdom is: The Kingdom of God is righteous men under Christ, ruling the earth in righteousness.”

That goal has not been attained as yet, but we are going to see it in its full manifestation and working order in the millennium, that thousand years period that lies out ahead of us in the next age. Because the Kingdom is to

receive its full manifestation in that righteous reign of Christ and His saints on the earth for a thousand years, a number of Bible students of considerable ability have taken the position that there is not any such thing as the Kingdom now, and will not be until the millennium comes.

I think they are entirely wrong on that. When we get that far along in the development of the theme I mean to try to present Scriptures that to me abundantly teach the existence of the Kingdom now in what we might call its spiritual phase as it is manifested in the workings of the church of Jesus Christ.

Now, having defined this Kingdom as righteous men under Christ, ruling the earth in righteousness, we pass on to the next proposition that we would like to try to set forth. That has to do with the principle of the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth and among mankind.

Now, here is the theory on which I work in my Bible study in general: God responds to man as man responds to God. God reacts to mankind in ways that are in harmony with the way that man responds or reacts to God in the various situations that come up in life in the dealings between God and mankind.

If that statement seems a little remote and unclear to you, I will try to illustrate it by a passage of Scripture. In Genesis 6:6, we have a situation that is in the days before the flood. The Lord came down from heaven and looked upon the scene of abomination that existed among mankind as a result of mixing of the wicked race of Cain with the righteous race of Seth. That was an unseemly thing, a thing that was displeasing to God. It was a thing that God has never endured for any length of time. It seems that as long as righteous people maintain their separation from the world, and especially from the false religious world, God will endure a lot in the way of sin from mankind in general. But, any time that God's own people begin to depart from their own separated walk and position, then you may confidently look for judgment to soon come.

Back to our passage of Scripture – When the Lord looked down on that condition that existed among mankind, the Scriptures tell us that the Lord

repented that He had made mankind. He was grieved at His heart. He resolved that He would destroy the race of men that He had created upon the earth. The indications in that passage and situation are simply this: that it was a result of what the Lord saw actually existing and going on among mankind that He repented. He actually changed His mind, He changed His attitude, He changed His intent and purpose concerning that order of things. He resolved as a result of the wickedness of mankind to bring a flood of waters upon the earth and destroy that ungodly generation.

That is one illustration of the many that could be brought forth how that God responds or reacts to mankind. He responds in harmony with the way that man responds or reacts toward God and His rules for dealing with His special people in the world.

Related to that principle I have tried to set forth another illustration of this principle also. This is that from the endless reaches of eternity, Christ, as the eternal Son of God has been present, and has been upon the scenes as they arise, to furnish whatever in the way of virtue and power that the rising or existing situation demands.

We can find abundant Scripture proof to satisfy my mind on that point. You take, for example, the statement of Scripture that it pleased the Father that in Christ all fullness should dwell. When did it please the Father that in Christ all fullness of the creation of this universe should dwell in His Son? It is one of these timeless, eternal things. You can't go back to remote reaches of the past and set down a stake for a milepost wherein God originally devised this plan of causing all the fullness to dwell in His Son.

The way things have worked out God has made this creation, and He made it through the agency of this eternal Son of God. And, to the best of my ability to determine from the teachings of the Scriptures it has always been God's purpose to bring this creation into an eternal state of permanence in glory. He will bring this into the state that will continue in an unchanging and undecaying manner forever. It will also be sealed in Glory forever through the works and virtues of His eternal Son.

Maybe that is a pretty weighty proposition. Maybe it needs some illustrating and setting forth in clearer terms. **I trust the proposition will come out as we advance in our further discussion that from the endless reaches of eternity past, Christ is the eternal Son of God and has been present.** He has been upon the rising and existing scene to furnish those things and situations with the sealing virtue to bring them into eternal harmony with God. This is whether it is angels, whether it is mankind, or whether it is the material creation itself. Nothing, it seems to me was created in its final estate. That all things that were made have been made in a tentative state, or a state of expectation for the purpose. Also, that these various personalities and things of the creation should receive some work, or virtue at the hand of the eternal Son of God, and from Him to draw whatever virtue they need to bring them into eternal glory.

I would like for us not to dismiss that from our minds, but to use it as a foundation matter and go now to try to outline the Kingdom development as it is brought out on the Old Testament Scriptures. We stated in the beginning that the Kingdom did not actually come into existence until Jesus came into the world and began His public ministry. The Kingdom had been introduced ahead of Him by John the Baptist. Regardless of that fact, we can go back to the beginning of the creation of mankind upon the earth and see the shaping up of the Kingdom subject or doctrine even with Adam in Eden before the fall.

We read the story back there and in the first and second chapters of Genesis how that God created man in the image and likeness of God, setting apart from the rest of His creation infinitely above other living things upon the earth. Man was created in image and likeness of God, and got intelligence and spirit out of that likeness that the animal creation does not have.

I have heard the statement many times that in his created estate Adam was a perfect man. It all depends on what you call perfect that determines whether that idea is true or not. If Adam had been all that perfect, how was it he was tempted by the devil and not only went down in sin himself, but cast the entire race down as well? I have heard many a preacher state from the pulpit

that Adam was a perfect man, but have never heard one of them explain then how it was that this perfect man fell into sin.

Here is what seems to me what actually are the facts in the case: Adam was perfect insofar as he went, but he didn't go nearly far enough. He was perfect in the sense he was created in the image and likeness of God. He was perfect in the sense that he had not done any sin. He was perfect in the sense that he didn't know anything about sin at all. He didn't know the difference between good and evil. That teaches me that in his created estate, Adam was neither positively good nor positively evil for our present purpose.

The next question that comes up is why God would make a man in the condition in which He made Adam. It looks like He would either make him positively good, or positively evil. That situation throws us right back into the last proposition that we tried to lay down and that is that God made the creation including mankind with the goal and purpose that man should be brought into full and eternal harmony with God into eternal glory. This not from something that existed within himself, not from something that he might reach out and take from the creation that existed around him, but from something he should receive by his own will and choice from Christ, the eternal Son of God. He has been on the scene from eternity to furnish mankind and the rest of the creation with the sealing virtue that they needed to bring them into full and eternal harmony with God.

Now, back to our Kingdom theme and the covenant that God made with Adam there in the Garden of Eden, wherein we will try to illustrate what we have been talking about. In the creation of Adam, he was given the lordship over all the rest of the creation, over creeping things, fishes of the sea, and over the earth itself. There is the root idea for the Kingdom of God that was introduced "at hand" by John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this original creation, meaning the creation in which Adam was placed. He was placed in a Garden which seems to have been a specially prepared place in the earth in a land called Eden.

Now, I don't know whether Eden is in the earth, or whether Eden is just a part of it, but whichever way it is, that garden seems to have been a place in

Eden and it was in substance a testing ground for mankind. There were four manner of trees in the garden – the Scriptures tell us that there was every tree that was beautiful in sight. Also, in the midst of this garden was the “tree of Life,” and the “tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.”

There isn’t any doubt in my mind that though God gave His commandment to Adam not to eat of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that Adam had to exercise his own faculties in that matter. I think beyond a doubt that God gave him consent and permission to eat of the fruit of the tree of Life. He commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, told him in the day he should eat thereof, he would surely die.

The devil came on and appealed to Adam through Eve. Adam then made up his mind and made his own choice and partook of the fruit of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Now, I can’t help what you think folks, I think that the tree of Life was there in open view before him. I think there wasn’t any fence around it. I think that Adam could have had in his own choice and will and accord, have put forth his hand and taken of the fruit of the tree of Life and eaten it, and lived forever. Also, that the fruit of the tree of Life would have sealed him in eternal holiness. His will would have been merged completely in the will of God, as ours will be in the Resurrection Day. Adam would have come to eternal glorification through the eating of the fruit of the tree of Life.

You may say if such a thing be so, then where does Christ come in? My thought is that Christ is in that tree of Life, and if Adam had eaten of its fruit, he could have taken of the virtue of Christ that he then needed and that would have eternally sealed him unto God.

You say if such a thing had happened, then where would the slain Lamb have come in? My answer to that one is that I do not know. On the other hand, Adam, being the federal head of the human race, not only was he personally involved in his transgression and fall, but his decision as to moral and spiritual condition by nature was the decision for the whole race as well as for himself. Though the slain Lamb may have been, and probably was, in the mind of God from eternity, there was not a slain lamb presented to Adam

until he became a sinning soul. Immediately, from man's viewpoint, geared to time and space as our minds are, the slain Lamb was the only efficient thing to rescue man and redeem him and bring him into eternal glory. He was presented to Adam and Even in those animals that were slain and their skins were taken and coverings were made for this sinning pair. The blood of the slain animal was pointing forward to the slain Lamb, Christ on Calvary's cross, and the covering of the skins referring to the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ placed upon us whereby alone we are worthy to stand accepted and justified in the sight of God.

Now, in the Edenic Covenant, Adam was given lordship over the creation that then existed and he was told to have dominion over all of it. The peculiar thing, folks, is that even before his transgression and fall, before sin and death became the dominating principles in the creation, Adam was told to subdue the earth and creatures that then existed upon earth.

If it were a sinless creation, if the pain of sin was nowhere about it, if the author of sin, who is the devil? He was remotely removed from the earth, then what was there to subdue in this creation over which Adam was given lordship? I am not going further into that subject right now, other than to suggest that even back there that there was a controversy between God and the devil over the lordship and rulership of the earth. Instead of God arbitrarily denying the claim of the devil, banishing him from the earth, God determined, as He always does, deals fairly and justly with all parties concerned. He chose to defeat and prove illegitimate the claim of the devil through the works and virtues of Christ, the eternal Son of God.

Just remember this as we pass, that evidently the earth was not in full subjection at the time that Adam was given lordship over it. But in his being given lordship he was to bring it under his authority and under his subjection. Incidentally, from the creation of Adam he was made a brother to the earth itself in his body. From the creation of mankind, the destiny of the earth itself has been unalterably bound up in and with the destiny of mankind. That is why the curse came on the earth itself at the same time it came upon Adam.

Adam brought not only the curse upon himself, but he likewise brought the curse on the earth, which is his own kinfolk. He was brother to the dust of the earth, and so, the destiny of the earth are unalterably bound together.

I'll try to outline to you what I deem to be the import of what is commonly called the Edenic Covenant. Man was placed there, not a sinner, not positively righteous, but an intelligent being, and was given the choice between God and the devil. The choice was between accepting the virtue of Christ that he then needed, that would bring him eternal harmony with God, or of eating of the tree of the devil. He had the opportunity of hearing the devil's side of the thing. The great appeal in what the devil said to Eve was that if you eat of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, then you will know right and wrong, you will know what is good and what is evil.

The attraction was that if she knew what was good and what was evil, she could choose the good of her own intelligence and ability and be freed from the necessity of walking with God by faith. That is a great attraction even to God's most faithful people today, I think. We would just a lot rather walk by sight than by faith.

We are dealing with this Kingdom subject in the Old Testament outline. It is brought out most prominently in the various covenants that have been given to mankind under various situations.

The next covenant is the covenant that was made with Adam after his transgression of the commandment of God and the fall under the curse of sin. You remember how that God got around to man without the judgment upon the serpent, upon the woman, and upon the man. He said to Adam that in the sweat of his face, he would eat bread in sorrow all the days of his life. The earth would bring forth thorns and thistles to him and the picture is one of service to a cursed creation. Man who was made the lord of the creation, placed in that position of servitude to a stubborn and unproductive earth. The order has been reversed – there is not any doubt in my mind and the original order of things that the earth, the whole creation as meant to serve mankind. Everything that exists was to have some direct or indirect office for the comfort, the well-being, and the happiness of mankind. That order was all

reversed in the transgression and fall of mankind from then until now in various degrees. Man has been the servant of the earth over which he was supposed to be the Lord.

The peculiar thing about this covenant with Adam after the fall is that it merely said to him that he will eat bread and toil and sorrow all the days of his life. Then, he will be overtaken by death and his body will go back to that earth from whence it came.

Did you ever stop to meditate on that thing – that the story ends right there? Adam's death and his return unto the earth – yes sir, that story ends right there. What in the world does that mean? Does that mean that the cause of mankind is utterly lost and there is not any hope for it whatsoever? Why bring up a thing like that? Simply to try to jolt the minds of people into an awareness of what these various covenants of God has made with mankind are all about. Now, I have indicated already that in my estimation God had a way of saving Adam before the fall. That was the eating of the fruit of the tree of Life, and getting whatever virtues he then needed to seal him in eternal holiness to God.

After the transgression, this was all changed. The slain lamb came upon the scene and the slain lamb has been on the scene every instant of time from then until now, and shall be so even to the end of the world. Folks, from the fall of Adam, there has not been but one plan of salvation.

John the Baptist came introducing something new – it was not a new plan of salvation. Jesus took up that new gospel when He began His public ministry, but He didn't start preaching and practicing a new plan of salvation. What He actually did was to preach and practice a new way of God's dealing with a special people that God had set apart to Himself in the world.

Getting back to where we were, we are not able to conclude from the fact that the final pronouncement upon Adam was that he should die and return to the earth from which he had come and not to conclude that Adam or his cause to the cause of humanity was eternally lost. The matter of Adam's salvation had been taken care of back there in the slaying of those animals

with whose skins he and his wife were covered. That issue had already been settled once and for all.

Let me tell you something in God's covenant of dealing with his people. In Adam's day, man was left in a rather hopeless condition as far as his welfare in this world is concerned. There is one other thing I must inject right here. That is when Cain came upon the scene he and Abel were tested out as to the manner of religion and religious walks that they would choose for themselves before God. You know that story, how Cain, in order to win a religious argument and silence the voice of truth on earth rose up and slew his brother, Abel. Then the Lord came upon the scene and pronounced the curse on Cain. Cain said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." I can't help whether we believe it or not, what we think of it, I don't know exactly what to make of it, but you look and see Cain's complaint on that issue. God rather repealed his harshness of that decree that he had pronounced upon Cain and said that the one who finds him better not kill him. We find then, Cain going out from the presence of the Lord, and instead of being the hunted one, wandering on the face of the earth, according to the curse that was placed upon him, he went over there and became a prosperous businessman, a great builder, a builder of a city and the founder of a mighty civilization from the material standpoint that existed down to the time of the flood.

Now, that is not the picture of this constant fugitive from justice who lived his whole lifetime at the point of starvation. Now, I didn't bring that subject up to tell you for certain what that is all about. The only suggestion that I have to offer at this point is this: That God is so just in His dealings with mankind that He allows even a murderer to have his own will and determination in the matter of religion and the manner of life that he chooses for himself.

Cain got some freedom that Adam did not get in the covenant that the Lord made with Adam. I have given you the only possible explanation I know for it. The point, as we pass, so far as Adam and the covenant with him is concerned, this Kingdom proposition is concerned, is a long, long way off.

The Lord of the earth has become its bondservant. He shall live in sorrow, and die as the bondservant of that earth, and that is all there is to it. There are a lot of things in there I would like to know, but that I do not know.

We must pass and get our next glimpse of the Kingdom development as it comes out in the covenant with Noah after the flood. A definite step forward was taken in the covenant with Noah, but a part of the race was placed in subjection. Noah was the man who walked with God, who was perfect in his generation, and came with his family through the destructive waters of the flood.

He came out on the other side and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord. The Lord smelled the sweet odor of burning flesh. There is nothing in the world that stinks any worse. It was sweet to God because it was His Son paying the ultimate price for the redemption of mankind from sin.

The result of that offering that Noah offered unto God, God made a new covenant with him and He set the rainbow in the heavens as a sign of the covenant. The rainbow in the heavens was a sign of the covenant. The rainbow puzzled me for a long, long time. Finally, I got that thing figured out to my satisfaction, whether it is to anybody else or not. The rainbow is produced by the conflict between the sunshine and the storm clouds. The rainbow appears right at that point where the sunshine is driving the storm clouds away. It is the picture of Christ as the Son of man winning the victory over the devil and gradually defeating every claim that the devil has to mankind and the creation.

God wouldn't forget about His covenant with Noah. That rainbow is set up there in the heavens to remind us of the glorious works of Christ, even though it does involve the ugliness and terror of the storm clouds. There is the basis of God's covenant with Noah after the flood. Human government was placed in Noah and said that *He who sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed*. There is the setting up of the course of judgment in the hands of mankind. That is a long step from where Adam was back there in bondage to the earth, no more, and no less.

God blessed the three sons of Noah, or at least made pronouncements upon them even for the remote future, and I don't know very much about all of that. That is to point out that Shem got the spiritual blessings, Japheth got the material blessings, Ham and his descendants were an inferior people and were to be in subjection to their brethren.

Well, I don't know what all that has to do with the Kingdom proposition. A part of the race makes a great step forward toward the Kingdom idea, and yet, a part of the race is to be in slavery, in subjection. We could spiritualize greatly on that.

We have come out with the proposition, I think, that Shem stands as a type of the church, and Ham, the type of Israel until the law of Moses. We had better forget that subject right there and go on to something else. We must pass next, and note the Kingdom development as it comes out in the Abrahamic Covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant definitely promised the Kingdom in the seed of Abraham. No doubt, there were times at least when Abraham thought, at least one time he thought Ishmael might be the promised seed. Certainly there was another time when he thought Isaac would be the one, the seed of promise. He was mistaken in both instances, of course, and the real, ultimate seed is Christ, who came into the world as the Son of Man.

Now, you will find this discussion with Abraham all the way from Genesis 12 through mainly Genesis 17. The Abrahamic Covenant is in a way the most complicated of them all. The reason is that the Abrahamic Covenant embraces all other covenants that come after it. This means the Law Covenant, the Kingly Covenant, the church Covenant, and the Millennium Covenant. They all have their foundation principles, their seed germ in the covenant with Abraham.

About all we are going to say about this Abrahamic covenant as we hurry to conclusion tonight is that the Kingdom was definitely promised, that in his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed and his seed should be as the stars of the heavens, sand upon the seashore for a multitude.

That could be taken both literally and spiritually, and a king should come forth out of his loins. The New Testament definitely teaches us that this seed out of whom all the blessings should come, through whom the Kingdom itself should finally be fully established, is Christ rather than either Ishmael or Isaac.

We pass that Abrahamic covenant with that brief notice and we notice next the development of the Kingdom idea as it comes out in the Law Covenant. It was given to the nation Israel after that nation had grown into a group of several million people when they came to Mt. Sinai after their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage.

The Law Covenant, beginning of the law of Moses to Israel and Mt. Sinai has some very puzzling and mysterious things about it. Why did God give the law in the first place when they were not going to keep it? I think that God gave them the law because they demanded it, and the upshot of the whole Law Dispensation was a vain attempt to attain to the Kingdom of God through the keeping of the law on the part of mankind through a system of fleshly righteousness, through a system of standing upon their own works and merits.

You know the Scriptures say that God said to Israel after the law had been given that if they would keep all the laws, commandments, and precepts He would lead them into the land. He would establish them there, and they should actually inhabit the good land flowing with milk and honey.

Here is the thing that has recently presented itself to my mind that makes sense. I think that in every generation while God was dealing with Israel under the law that, and I think I mentioned it a while ago, He gave them the law in the first place because they demanded it. Man has always liked better to stand on his own works and merits than to live and walk before God by faith. I think God worked with them and tried constantly to lead them from that law dominion and rulership, to give it up as a hopeless and impossible thing. He wanted them to fully embrace a walk by faith with Him. You read the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews and many characters who were mentioned under the Law of Moses, and not one of them won a victory by keeping the law.

Every one of them won their great victories by faith, and that while they were under this law dispensation. Let me state again, God's preference is a walk by faith, not by law.

When Israel came to Kadesh-Barnea God said, *Go in and possess the land*. If they had done so, they would have gone in by faith, not by law.

You take the period of the judges – it had lasted, I believe about 400 years – that has been mysterious and puzzling to me. But, in sum and substance, after Israel was in the land, God's dealing with them under the theocracy, or rule of the judges, from God's viewpoint, was not a thing in the world but repeated efforts to get Israel to forsake the walk by law of fleshly commandments, and embrace rather a walk before Him in faith.

The judges won their victories by works of faith, and never by works of law. Every time a judge would rise up on the scene, Israel was called upon, not to step out upon the precepts of the law, but by faith in the God of Israel. When they did so, they won great victories.

Then what? They would turn right around and embrace that Law Dispensation again and the upshot of it was that when Christ, their anointed one, came to Israel under the law, they rejected Him and crucified Him on the cross of Calvary. I think we are fully justified in the proposition that the Law Covenant was a vain attempt on the part of Israel to attain under the Kingdom of God by their own works and merits. This is exactly the way of a lot of people, well meaning at that, are trying to stand on exactly the same ground before God today.

The Kingdom Covenant was renewed to David. Of course, in the meantime Israel had fully rejected the theocracy and said, "We want a king like the other nations have." God gave them exactly what they asked for. Saul was as worldly-minded, fleshly a king as one could possibly be. His rule was an utter failure, both from the material and spiritual standpoint. After they had 40 years of Saul's rulership, then God raised up unto them David to be the king of His choice, using instead of a great giant of a man, a shepherd boy. Guiding David as David walked by faith, notably when he slew the Philistine giant Goliath and his obedience to spiritual principles. So, he was

established finally as king over all Israel, and it looks like the millennium would have come, but it didn't come. It came nearer coming when David was fully established as king over all Israel than it ever did in all their national history. But the thing that was still wrong was that Israel was still under that Mosaic code, the do's and don'ts, and the flesh just will not be subjected as long as it is in this world, and Satan is the god of this world.

The Davidic Kingdom was foredoomed to failure when it was confirmed to King Solomon. God said he would establish Solomon's seed permanently on the throne. Solomon had walked according to His laws and statutes.

Solomon didn't do that very long. He got off to a good religious start. We find him in his older days going to church with those idolatrous wives of his, burning incense to their idol gods and so the Kingdom was wrested out of the hands of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, and the spiritual Israelites, if there were any. I think there were, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc., began to look with a prophetic eye down to that other son of David, that seed of the woman that goes clear back to Eden. He was that anointed one whom God would not anoint with oil as He did David and Solomon, but whom God would fully anoint with His own Spirit, who was Christ, who was also Mary's son.

From then on, the Kingdom began to be centered fully in Him. No wonder that after the humanity had gone through so many trials and failures and the glorious day of David had come, and then had faded. Israel had sunk into a physical, spiritual and political night, such as they had not known in early centuries. No wonder it was a joyous surprise that John the Baptist, sent forth to the people sitting in darkness in the shadow of death, when he came with the announcement, *Repent ye, for the Kingdom of the heavens is at hand.*

Now, when you go into that New Testament study of the Kingdom, you take right up where I left off tonight. The Old Testament Scriptures serve as a necessary background and introduction to the Kingdom as it is presented in the New Testament. The Kingdom was new, and yet, it wasn't new when John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness. As the thing God was going to put over to humanity, that idea was already some 4,000 years old.

Let me repeat a thing I said in the beginning, that the Kingdom actually had its establishment when Jesus began His public ministry.

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD

## LECTURE #2

The first New Testament reference might be entitled, “The King Proclaimed,” Luke 1:32, 33. Speaking of Jesus, it says, *This one shall be great and He shall be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of His father, David, and He shall rule over the House of Jacob into the ages*, (the common version says, “forever” I believe) *and of His Kingdom there shall not be an end*. There is one thing that I wish we would take note of, and that is that Christ is to be King, and not only that, He is to rule over the house of Jacob forever.

Now, it would perhaps, be well if we would pause at this time to redefine what I think the Kingdom is. As stated last week, the Kingdom of God is righteous men, under Christ, ruling the earth in righteousness. That is the ultimate goal of the Kingdom of God, righteous men under Christ, ruling the earth in righteousness.

We do not have that condition prevailing now, though I shall offer proof, I think, that the Kingdom does exist at the present time. The millennium is the time when righteous men under Christ will rule the earth in righteousness. The church will have the ruling part of that fullness of the Kingdom in the millennium, but we note from the scripture just read that Israel, as a nation, also has a part in this Kingdom. That Christ shall rule over the house of Jacob forever, and so far as the millennium is concerned, Christ and His saints shall rule over the nation Israel and the other nations of the world in righteousness. It seems to me then, that as the thousand year reign comes to an end, and we enter into the Heaven Ages, that both the church and the nation Israel will maintain their identity forever. So, that is our first Kingdom reference, wherein the king is proclaimed, Jesus of Nazareth as the one who should be the king and reign over the house of Israel forever.

One thing we ought to remember is that thus far, we have only the king and Kingdom idea, and the house of Israel. The church, as such, has not come into the picture at all, though it does necessarily come up later. We pass then to our second New Testament reference, which is Matthew 2:1, 2, *Moreover*

*Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came into Jerusalem, saying, “Where is the One born King of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and came to worship Him.”*

Now, this is the account of these mysterious wise men who came from the east. You ask me where they came from, I will tell you I don’t know whether they came out of the Arabian Desert immediately to the east of the Bible land, or whether they came from China, or where they came from. I just don’t have the information on that subject, and don’t know how to get it. The significant thing about this passage is these men from the east, whoever they were, in some way by revelation from God, by some of the ancient writings had the idea that one was to be born to become a king of the Jewish people.

They had seen this guiding star in the east. They had followed its direction to Jerusalem, and were seeking Jesus of Nazareth who was to be king over the nation Israel Now, that is all the Kingdom references we have at the time of the birth into the world.

We next pass over that span of approximately thirty years from the birth of Jesus to the time He left his private manner of life and launched out on His public career in the world to fulfill His public ministry.

We begin with Matthew 3:1, 2, *In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea saying, repent ye, for the Kingdom of the Heavens has drawn near.* I suppose I mentioned in the beginning that these scripture readings are my own translation of the Greek New Testament. I would give them just a little bit differently if it were to do over, however, I think we have approximately what the original scriptures state here, anyway.

Now, noting again our significant statement in that passage. The ministry of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus has begun and we are told the burden of his message is, *Repent ye, for the Kingdom of the Heavens has drawn near.* Matthew is the only gospel writer who mentions the Kingdom of the Heavens, which we commonly call the Kingdom of Heaven. Some

make a distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of heaven, which I have never been able to see. So, when the Kingdom comes up, it is just the Kingdom as far as I am concerned, all one and the same thing.

John does not say that the Kingdom is an accomplished fact. He doesn't say it is established. He doesn't even say He is going to establish it. In fact, He did not. He is paving the way for establishing of the Kingdom and the coming of the King, who is to establish the Kingdom, who is Jesus of Nazareth, both the Son of God and the Son of Man. The Kingdom is at hand, or the Kingdom has drawn near, that is as far as John the Baptist went with reference to the establishing of the Kingdom.

Going on now, the next Kingdom reference is John 1:48, 49, dealing with the interview between Jesus and Nathaniel. Nathaniel said to Him, *Whence knowest thou me?* Jesus answered and said unto him, *Before Philip called thee, being under the fig tree, I knew thee.* Nathaniel answered Him, *Thou art the King of Israel.* Now, that is a peculiar situation of the meeting between Jesus and Nathaniel.

Before the two of them ever got together Jesus said of Nathaniel, *Behold an Israelite, indeed in whom there is no guile.* Then after they entered into conversation, Jesus brought up a strange incident. He said, *Nathaniel, before Philip ever called you, while you were back yonder at home, underneath the fig tree, I saw you then, or I knew you. I knew what was going on in reference to you.*

My guess would be that back yonder under that fig tree a month ago, or maybe ten years ago, Nathaniel had been convicted of sin, had put his trust in Christ, and was saved; that he experienced the New Birth. If that is so, and it seems evident to me that it is, then the meeting between Jesus and Nathaniel does not indicate the personal salvation of Nathaniel, which he probably had for some time before. Significant rather is the calling of a saved man unto Jesus to become His disciple. For our present purposes the significant thing when Jesus told Nathaniel that He already knew things that Nathaniel knew that He didn't have any reason to know from the natural or

human standpoint. Nathaniel made a great confession. He said in substance, *It is just bound to be then, that you are the Son of God, and you are the king of Israel.* That is interesting. It reveals to us a great spiritual insight and understanding of the New Testament writings as to who and what nature of man that was to be who was to become the King of Israel.

Now, Israel chose Saul as their first king. They accepted David as their second one, Solomon as the third one. No doubt many of them thought that each of these three men was the prophesied king of the Old Testament scriptures. But all along there seemed to have been those who had a deeper insight in things and understood in a more or less clear manner that it must be through the God of Heaven. He must come down to earth that the Kingdom would be established. Thus, Israel would be lifted out of that bondage in which they were held from the political, economic and religious standpoints. No further comment, we pass from that passage, and incidentally, this completes the Kingdom references that have to do with the first year of the public ministry of Jesus.

We will have to turn aside just for a moment here to explain the phases of His ministry. The ministry of Jesus was divided into one year periods, marked by the yearly Passover Feast that was held in Jerusalem. The reason for that was that Jesus went yearly to Jerusalem to the Passover. There He met the religious leaders and authorities of the Jews. From the very beginning of His ministry almost, there was conflict between Him and them.

Apparently, the cause of that fact was when the Passover Feast was finished, Jesus would leave Jerusalem and Judea and go back to the northern region of Galilee where he got a more favorable reception generally among the people. So, in a manner of speaking, it was one of the high points of His life from year to year as He went to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast.

So, what happened was that sometime during the year between the two Passover Feasts, Jesus went to John at the Jordan River and was baptized and continued His ministry. Then, until the next Passover Feast came up and thus far, the Scripture readings that we have given, that is that have to do

with the time after Jesus began His public ministry happened between His baptism and the next Passover Feast that came up.

Then, He went to that first Passover Feast after His baptism. It was while He was still in Jerusalem at that period of year that Nicodemus came to Him as recorded in the third chapter of John. So, our next Kingdom reference is given from John 3:1-5. *There was a man of the Pharisees whose name was Nicodemus, a chief one of the Jews. He came to Him at night and said to Him, "Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no one is able to do these signs or miracles which thou doest, except God be with Him." Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly I say to thee, except anyone be born from above, he is not able to comprehend the Kingdom of God.*

Now, may Baptists have taken the position that the church is the Kingdom. I think rather that the Kingdom is composed of all the saved in the world at a given time. That the church is the executive body of that Kingdom, meaning by executive body that group to whom Jesus has given the Great Commission.

The Great Commission is not given to the saved, it is given to the church. So, the group composing the churches who have the Great Commission are given authority to carry out, or execute the laws of Christ in the world. That is what we mean by saying the church is the executive body of the Kingdom.

We don't mean to remotely imply that the church makes any spiritual laws whatsoever. It does execute the laws that Christ and the apostles have given in the New Testament scriptures. So, it seems to me that the new birth is the way of entrance into the reality of the Kingdom. But, we read a little further, *Nicodemus says to Him, "How is a man able to be born, being an old man? Is he able a second time to enter his mother's womb and be born?"* He, of course, thought that Jesus was talking about the natural birth. Evidently, that is the only birth that Nicodemus knew, though he was a great religious leader and teacher. Jesus answered, *Truly, truly, I say to thee, except anyone be born of water and spirit, he is not able to enter into the Kingdom of God.*

Now, that *being born of water and spirit* is a passage that has puzzled people much. I do not claim to be any authority on it. I am inclined to the position that the water and spirit mean the same thing there. The sense of it is, except one be born of water, even the Spirit of God, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. Now, I take that position because constantly throughout the scriptures, water is used as a type of figure of the Holy Spirit. As we pass from that passage, I remind you again, it seems to me that the fundamental teaching is that the New Birth is the way of entrance into the Kingdom of God.

We pass next to Matthew 4:12, 17. Speaking of Jesus, it says, *But having heard that John was delivered over* (that is into prison,) *He went over into Galilee. From that time Jesus began to say, Repent ye, for the Kingdom of the Heavens has drawn near, or is at hand.* And the thing that puzzles me is that He took up this message, seemingly only after John had finished his ministry and had been cast into prison. So, it is still an announcement that the Kingdom is right at the door, not an established fact as yet, but is near.

We pass then to Luke 4:43, *He said to them also to the other towns, it is necessary for me to preach the Kingdom of God, for this I was sent forth.* Now, the idea there is simply this, that His disciples wanted to claim His full attention and direct all of His attention and energies to one particular place. He reveals in this statement that it was His duty, it was His goal to go throughout the land and proclaim the Kingdom message to all of the Jews. Incidentally, the Kingdom message was only to the Jews at this time.

I would like to digress for just a moment and insist once again that I don't believe that there was ever a time from the fall of Adam onward when any penitent sinner, or whatever nation, could not be saved. That is not the significance of this situation. When Jesus directed His disciples not to go to the Gentiles, to rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the goal of Jesus was to form this Kingdom and center it in and around the Jewish people. This was because that every Jew was to repent and enter the Kingdom.

Then, those of other nations were to be brought into that Kingdom economy that was to be centered around the Jewish people. Well, we pass from Luke 4:43 with the observation that the mission of Jesus was to go throughout the land and enlist people in the Kingdom of God.

Now, that is a mysterious thought to some people and one that many reject. Friends, it is not a bit more strange, or out of harmony at all than the fact you admit that not all the saved people in this town are not here in this church. I believe that every one of you will admit that there are some saved people in the other religious bodies in this town, some of which, at least, you do not even recognize as churches. I believe you will admit that there are probably saved people in this town who are not affiliated with any religious group as far as that is concerned.

They are just standing alone and isolated out yonder as the children of God. If we will admit that much with reference to the situation that we all know exists among us today. I don't see why in the world we won't admit that the mission of John the Baptist and Jesus was two-fold.

In the first place, it was to call together people who were already saved, and get them enlisted in this new group and movement that was proclaimed as the Kingdom of God. Then, on the other hand, they did exactly the same thing we would do in our evangelistic endeavors. They went out and called on the lost, they got them saved first. But, they didn't stop there by any means as modern evangelists are prone to do.

They went on and scripturally baptized those new converts and brought them and enlisted them in this group, everywhere heralding the gospel of the Kingdom, healing every sickness and infirmity among the people. Now, there is an interesting connection there, that He went about all the land of Galilee teaching in their synagogues. I supposed there is where the congregations came together to worship. But Jesus, being a Jew and being under the law, had been accustomed to going to the synagogues all His life, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. Here is the striking thing: As He preached this gospel of the Kingdom, He healed every sickness and every infirmity among the people.

Now, those two things are coupled together so frequently that it becomes striking to me. I have already pointed out that the fullness of the Kingdom is the millennial reign. When Christ shall be the God and King of the whole world, when righteousness shall be the governing principle, and peace shall cover the whole earth. There shall not be sickness then, there will not be crippling infirmities, sorrows and disappointments among people in general.

Here to me is a logical case: Jesus said, *Repent ye for the Kingdom is at hand*. Or, maybe by this time, the Kingdom has already become an established fact. Well, the Jews said, “This is something new.” Well, in a way it was. “We would like to know about it, we would just like to know just what this Kingdom amounts to.” I am as certain as anything in the world that Jesus did those works of healing partly to demonstrate and to show those Jews what the Kingdom of God would be when it came in its fullness. And, I am inclined to think that Jesus offered that Kingdom almost, if not entirely in its fullness to the Jews at that time.

What if they had accepted it? I don’t know, they didn’t. They crucified the Messiah instead, and the things He demonstrated were not established as a permanent and universal principle. Therefore, people still have the ailments and get sick and die today as they have done since the fall of man.

But, as we pass, I wish you would look to that passage of scripture that there are two companion statements that are repeated a number of times. He preached the gospel of the Kingdom, He healed sicknesses and diseases among the people.

Now, that brings us through the second year of the public ministry of Jesus in the world. That brings us through approximately a year and a half of His public ministry, and there are only about two years of His public ministry left. But, as we draw nearer and nearer to the cross, the Kingdom references increase in number. Incidentally, the nature of the Kingdom teachings change, and that is what is really interesting about the whole matter.

As we enter into this period following the second Passover which Jesus engaged in after beginning His public ministry, the first situation that comes up is the Sermon on the Mount. Maybe you thought that the Sermon on the

Mount was preached early in the public ministry of Jesus. If so, those who have labored hard to establish a time element in these things are entirely wrong. It was a year and a half or two years after Jesus began His public ministry and had disciples about Him that He preached the Sermon on the Mount. It was addressed specifically to His church and deals largely with the contrast between the old working rules of the law of Moses and the new working rules that are to prevail in the Kingdom in this the church dispensation of the world.

So, in Matthew 5:3 Jesus says, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, because theirs is the Kingdom of the Heavens*. Now, there are some competent Bible students who have taken the position that the Kingdom does not actually exist now, will not exist until the millennium. This promise is in the present tense, that blessed are those who are poor, meaning humble, as opposed to proud and haughty, in their spirit beings and in their spiritual dealings, because theirs is the Kingdom of the Heavens.

That is closely allied to what Jesus taught Nicodemus in the third chapter of John that it is those whose hearts have been made right by the New Birth who have a right to citizenship in the Kingdom of God. The tenth verse of that same chapter reads, *Blessed are those who are persecuted on the account of righteousness, because theirs is the Kingdom of the heavens*. Essentially the same idea that it is those who have humbled themselves in the sight of God, have received salvation and received the spirit of walking in repentance and faith before God who are worthy of citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven, or the kingdom of God.

Then we pass from those statements from the Sermon on the Mount to Luke 6:20. *And He, lifting up His eyes upon His disciples said, Blessed are the poor because yours is the Kingdom of God*. Now, that is parallel to the statement just read from Matthew, and I hadn't observed that. I wish you would notice here that Matthew calls this thing the "Kingdom of Heaven," and Luke calls exactly the same thing the "Kingdom of God." How does Mr. Scofield and Baptist preachers then make a distinction between the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of Heaven and make it stand up is beyond me.

We pass next to Matthew 5:19, 20, which is still the Sermon on the Mount. *Whosoever may destroy one of the least of these commandments and teach men to do so shall be called least in the Kingdom of the Heavens. For I say to you, except your righteousness should abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not by any means enter into the Kingdom of the Heavens.* What do we have? We have the law of Moses under consideration, including the Ten Commandments. The new dispensation and the old overlap from the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist until the crucifixion of Jesus on the cross. So, if you please you have a church operation under the law of Moses for a period of about three years, at least.

And thus, Jesus tells them they were still under the law, not that they would lose citizenship in the Kingdom for breaking the law, but that they would be called least in the Kingdom if they didn't keep those Mosaic precepts. The ones who did keep them would be called great.

However, I'm not certain but what there is far more involved in it than that. I know it is a controversial question. It takes a lot of explaining to get people to fairly consider it. I am going to suggest to you that I would not be a bit surprised if the nation Israel keeps the law of Moses for its essential parts, at least, in the millennium. One might say, "How in the world can such a thing be possible?"

Man, when he is in the flesh, cannot please God. The law contains fleshly ordinances. That is true in our day and age of the world, but how do you know whether that will be true when the devil is chained in the bottomless pit, and Christ becomes the God of this world?

If the Israelites are born again, they are saved by the grace of God. Christ will be the God of the material world, as the devil now is. I raise the question, where is the motive coming from to cause those Israelites to sin in the millennium. What is the hindrance to keep them from observing those fleshly ordinances given through Moses in that age when Christ dominates the world in righteousness? Maybe I ought not to have brought that in. I just drop that thought in passing.

We read in Matthew 5:20, *For I say to you, except your righteousness should abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not by any means enter into the Kingdom of the Heavens.* I am not certain whether that has a twofold meaning, or whether it has just one. If so, just exactly what is it? It can mean that except you have that imputed righteousness of Christ, you are just not going to be saved, and thus enter into the realm of the Kingdom.

Again, it might have reference to that future phase of the Kingdom which we have called the millennium. Unless you are saved you are not going to come into that glorious millennial reign.

We pass once again, note Matthew 6:9, 10. *Thus then pray ye, Our Father which art in Heaven, let thy name be holy, let thy Kingdom come, let thy will come to pass as in Heaven, so on earth.* The Kingdom view there is future. The disciples are to pray to God to let His Kingdom come. Not a present thing, but a thing to desire in the future.

Many, probably a large majority of the New Testament Kingdom references are future. And, refer to that future manifestation of the Kingdom in that period we call the Millennium. So, the disciples were to pray to God, let this Kingdom come. There is not a reason in the world that I can see why we should not pray the same prayer today. The Kingdom exists in its spiritual phase and aspect. It does not exist in the material sense. It is a thing to be ardently longed for by us, that the Kingdom should come in the sense that God should rule over this material creation.

Matthew 7:21-23, *Not everyone saying unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, the one doing the will of my Father which is in the Heavens. Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, is it not in thy name we prophesied, and in thy name we cast out demons, and in thy name we did mighty works. Then shall I confess to them, I never knew you. Go ye away from me ye workers of iniquity.* There are two ways to look at this passage of scripture. I will point out incidentally that there are many of these Kingdom references that I am not certain what the specific teaching and application is. The handiest and most convenient one to me is with reference to this

particular passage. *The Lord never knew certain people* would simply mean that though they were religious, though they had professed some kind of a hope, that they were not saved. Therefore, Christ denies them in the day of the coming of that millennial Kingdom simply because they are not saved.

However, I can see a strong possibility, if not a probability that something else is meant. In kingdom activity the great unit of work is not individuals, but a church of Jesus Christ. Now, we will all have to admit that the Commission is given to the church, as such. Then, why not go on and admit the thing I have just stated, that the outstanding unit under consideration in the New Testament scriptures in general is the church?

There is the personality of this church, as such. There is the doctrinal stand of this church, as such. There are the practices of this church, as such. If you, as an individual agree to all of those things, your destiny will be the same as that of the church. Individually, if you do not agree with the voice and stand of the church, your destiny will be just as different from that of the church, and that is all there is to it.

I would not be a bit surprised if He is talking here about folks who make claims from the religious or denominational standpoint. What have we done as a religious group? We have prophesied in thy name, we have cast out many demons, we have sprinkled many babies, we have preached falling from grace, we preached baptismal regeneration, and Jesus will profess to that church or religious group, *I never did know you because I never taught anything like that*. When it comes to individual judgment, the same decree will go forth to those who have practiced those things concerning their works, even though they might be saved.

I am going to get down to brass tacks. If you are going to make an individual application of this thing, there will be a saved Methodist preacher who will stand before Christ in judgment and begin to talk about how many babies he has sprinkled, how hard he taught that nonexistent universal, invisible church. Jesus will say, "Shut your mouth, I don't know anything about such deals as that. I don't know you concerning such works as that." Though the

man himself might be saved, and according to I Corinthians 3, having all his works burned up. Saved, so as by fire.

Well, those things are rather complicated, but I suggest that as a possible explanation of those folks that Jesus says He never knew them. You may have it that it is just unsaved religious people if you want to, but do you think for one moment that the Catholic church as such is going to stand in judgment before Christ and be accepted of Him? No, we don't believe anything like that at all. I am suggesting that as the possible application of the scripture just read.

I would like to read just one more passage. Matthew 8:11, 12, *Moreover I say to you, many shall come from the east and the west to realign with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of the Heavens, but some of the sons of the Kingdom shall be cast out into the darkness outside. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Here many are coming and taking their places in the Kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who have already been dead a long time. It has got to be the millennium then, hasn't it? After Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the other saints are resurrected from the dead. But the peculiar thing is that men come from all nations and take their places in the Kingdom with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the sons of the Kingdom are cast into the outside darkness. The only thing in the world I can see to that is it speaks of a resurrection, the rapture of the saints, their meeting the Lord in the air at the same time – the beginning of the millennial Kingdom, so you don't make anything in the world out of it other than that.

As a nation, they are yet unsaved. As a religious group, they are wrong and in deception. They don't leave the world to meet the Lord in the air. They are left in the world when it becomes a victim of Antichrist, and that, in my estimation, is the outside darkness. The children of the Kingdom cast into the outer darkness is not a thing in the world but the Jews left in the world to go through the Great Tribulation.

Now, frankly folks, here is the root and ground, and the foundation of the situation, in my estimation. That has led many of our brethren to believe in

what is called the partial, or “Split Rapture.” It is the Jewish people, a people of God, all right, under the Abrahamic Covenant, but off cast because they reject the counsel of God. Left out of the resurrection, not because they have been unfaithful, but because they are unsaved. In such situations as this is where, in my estimation, the root and foundation of material for a partial rapture comes in.

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD

## LECTURE #3

As we continue our study of the subject of the Kingdom of God we find ourselves confronted with some quite weighty problems so far as that is concerned. We have undertaken to sketch over the New Testament Scriptures where the Kingdom is mentioned. Not only do we have the problem of trying to note from time to time what bearing various passages have on the Kingdom subject: we are also quite often presented with the matter of interpreting the general meaning of those passages of Scripture. That is, perhaps, more than the average tonight because we will probably get to the mystery parables of the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew.

We also have those strange sayings concerning John the Baptist which mystifies many people. It is not any mystery to me at all, if I rightly understand them. So, the only thing I know to do tonight is to try to redefine what I think the Kingdom is, make a few general observations as to what I think the Kingdom is. Then we will take up this Scripture reading where we left off last week.

I think the Kingdom of God is righteous men under Christ ruling the earth in righteousness. When you try to apply that definition you will come up with the conclusion that the Kingdom is the millennial reign of Christ and His saints on the earth. That is exactly what I think it is ultimately and when it comes to its fullness. But, to say that is all the Kingdom is would put us in the position of explaining away a lot of passages of Scripture which refer to the Kingdom as a present thing. I would say that there is a present phase of the Kingdom in operation and during this, the church age, the saved compose the membership of the Kingdom.

Jesus says from the third chapter of John that, *One must be born again to see, or to enter the Kingdom of God.* Then, in another Scripture that I don't think we have come to yet, *Fear not little flock, (referring to the church) It is the Father's good pleasure to give unto you the Kingdom.* So, I think the saved compose the Kingdom. In other words, the church is that body that has

the Great Commission, to uphold the Scripture and the Scripture truths, and preach the gospel unto the ends of the earth.

That is what we mean by the church being the executive body of the Kingdom, and of course, we could go on and on, making general observations about the Kingdom, but I just want to try to keep before you what I think the great fundamental truths are with reference to this matter. Also, to notice details as we come to them in the various Scripture situations. The time element is very important indeed, in dealing with the Kingdom subject, or nearly any other subject that is discussed in the four Gospels. This is because with the passing of time and development of situations, things change, and Jesus taught His disciples things in the latter part of His ministry that he did not teach them at all in the early part.

He did not tell them anything about His crucifixion and resurrection from the dead until a long time after His public ministry had begun. There is a turning of events notable in the development of the Kingdom idea that we ought to try to keep in mind and observe.

We will begin tonight in Matthew 11:11-14, dealing with the words of Jesus concerning John the Baptist. *Truly I say to you, there has not arisen among those born of women a greater one than John the Baptist, but the one littler in the Kingdom of the heavens is greater than he. Moreover, from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of the Heavens suffers fleshly assaults.* You know this is not the way the King James version reads, and fleshly ones seize upon it, for all the prophets in the law prophesied until John, and if you will receive, this is Elijah, who is to come.

There are several things in there we would like to know more about. We will go back and sketch over the passage again. Note the first statement that is in the words of Jesus, *Among those born of women there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist.* Then he turns right around and says that the one who is littler, or least in the Kingdom of the Heavens is greater than John the Baptist.

We have an apparent contradiction in that statement that is evident on the very surface of things. There is none greater than John, and yet, the ones

who are very small, even down to the least in the Kingdom are greater than John. Dr. J. R. Graves who lived in the last century was a great Bible scholar, and went great length, and in my mind great extremes to prove it doesn't mean what it says in the common version at all. His idea, if I remember correctly, was to place John the Baptist in the Kingdom, and to make that later one in the Kingdom Jesus. That is the idea he tried to establish and he made it to read that John was the greatest of all humanity. Jesus, who later in the Kingdom economy was greater than John. I don't think that is what Jesus meant at all.

Beyond a doubt, from the moral and spiritual standpoint, there has never come a man on this earth greater than John the Baptist. We could go on and expand on that subject, how that John the Baptist, filled with the Holy Spirit from the time of his birth, lived a life of the Old Testament Nazarite. This type of life could not be excelled by mortal men. We will now go spiritually, Jesus, of course excepted, there has not arisen a greater than those who are little, those who hold only small positions in the Kingdom of the Heavens, are greater positionally than John the Baptist, who was not in the Kingdom in the first place.

John was a man sent from God. He was a forerunner of Jesus Christ. He introduced Christ and the Kingdom message. He only said the Kingdom was "at hand." It is notable that Jesus took up that same message after John the Baptist had been cast into prison. He preached it exactly the same that John did, that the Kingdom was still at hand. This New Testament economy of things is so far superior to anything that prevailed in the Old Testament times that Jesus says that the small ones in the Kingdom have a position that is far superior to that of John the Baptist. That is the only way I have been able to get that passage to harmonize, and it does harmonize that way perfectly to my mind.

We go on to the next verse, and we have this other statement that has greatly puzzled most Bible students. *Moreover, from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of the heavens suffers,* (the common version says violence, I say fleshly assaults, and fleshly ones seize upon it). There is not

any use in my going into technicalities right at this point, but here is exactly what I think that passage teaches:

When John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness country of Judea, the Scriptures tell us that many of the Scribes and Pharisees of that Pharisaical religious sect who were congregated in Jerusalem came out to where he was preaching. They evidently signified that they wanted to unite with him and become part of the body of people he was preparing.

John, however, said, *Everyone of you repent*. These people came right back on the claim, *We are the children of Abraham, we don't need to repent, we are under the law of Moses, and our lives are so excellent that we are alright the way we are, and do not need any repentance*. John's answer to them was, *You generation of poisonous snakes, flee from the wrath to come*.

To this Kingdom of the Heavens suffering violence, which I call suffering fleshly assaults. I don't think that is anything in the world but these Pharisaical Jews attempting to come and claim the Kingdom position and the Kingdom blessings on the basis of their own self-righteousness. I hope that is plain. I can defend this position to my satisfaction, but it is not practical that we should go into a thing like that further at this present time.

I have given you one illustration, I will give another to try to make this point plain and clear. There came a young man to Jesus and said, *What must I do to inherit eternal life?* He said, *Keep the commandments*. The young man said, *I have kept the commandments*. Jesus said, *That is fine, go and sell all that you have and give it to the poor, then come and follow me*. *The young man went away sorrowful*. This teaches us that he had not kept the commandments as he said he had, and teaching us once again that he stood on the basis of self-righteousness, and these Jews tried constantly to get recognition from Jesus of their own self-righteousness, but always without success.

This suffering violence and the fleshly assaults that were made on the Kingdom were not a thing in the world but the Jews trying to come into this new order of things without repentance and faith, upon the basis of hypocritical self-righteousness upon which they stood. He goes on in that

hypocritical self-righteousness upon which they stood. He goes on in that same passage to say, *For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.* That means that the Old Testament Dispensation actually continued up until the crucifixion of Jesus. In the meantime, the church had come into existence and had operated for about three years. We thus have the law dispensation overlapping there for about three years. I just throw that in for good measure in view of this statement. The prophets and the law prophesied until John.

The next statement in which we are vitally interested is, *And if ye will receive it, this is Elijah who is about to come.* Almost from the beginning we have argued about whether John the Baptist was Elijah or not, and things related to that proposition.

I had an idea on that myself just recently that I had never had before. I will tell you frankly that I think John the Baptist did come to fulfill that ministry of Elijah that the Old Testament prophets tell us about. Jesus here says that if ye will receive this, that is, John the Baptist is Elijah who is to come. It is true that the Pharisees asked John, *“Are you Elijah?”* There is yet another passage where Jesus said, *I tell you that Elijah has come already. They did unto Him whatsoever they would.* I am just going to cut corners and tell you what I believe about that thing, we can argue about it some other day.

I believe that John the Baptist was the Elijah of prophecy and have come lately to believe that John the Baptist gave the only fulfillment of that prophecy that we are going to have. I always thought that either Elijah, or someone in his guise were coming in the last days, but I believe that the ministry was fulfilled in John the Baptist, and so am not looking for Elijah any more in the future myself.

We pass on from that passage and take up next Luke 16:15, 16, *Ye are the ones showing yourselves righteous in the presence of men, but God knows your hearts, because the thing that is high among men in abomination in the presence of God. The law and the prophets were until John, then the Kingdom of God is preached and everyone includes the flesh into it.* That is

the same proposition we were talking about a while ago, trying to come in the new order of things on a basis of fleshly self-righteousness.

On to Luke 7:28, *I say to you, there is not a greater among the ones born of women than John, one littler in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.* I have already commented on that from the parallel reading from Matthew.

Luke 8:1, *It came about that he went consecutively through town and villages heralding and preaching the Kingdom of God, and the twelve were with Him.* That is introductory to these mystery parables, so we are just going to pass up that verse without any comments.

Matthew 12:28, *But if in the Spirit of God I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has approached unto you.* Now, that is a notable passage of Scripture. Jesus had cast out a demon, and the Jews were faced with evidence that they could not deny, that the mighty works had been done. They then said that Jesus had done it by the power of the devil. His answer was that if it was in the Spirit of God that He had cast out this demon, or these demons, then the Kingdom of God had approached, or come right up to where they were. That is another one of the passages that teaches me that the Kingdom in its ultimate expression must be that time when the Devil is dethroned as the god of this world, Christ is enthroned as the God and King of this world and He takes authority over the material creation, and makes righteousness the ruling principle in the material realm.

That is the condition that certainly does not prevail now. I understand it is to prevail in the millennium. Jesus says as He gives them samples in the miracles of healing, and so on, that if this work is done by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom is come up mighty close to where they are.

Parallel to that is Luke 11:20, *But if with the finger of God I cast out the demons, indeed the Kingdom of God has approached unto you.* The Kingdom is right up in your presence, if the power of God has taken over in the material realm.

Then, we pass to Matthew 13, and what are called the “Mystery Parables.” I am reminded for the first time of a thing which I meant to bring out at the

beginning tonight. I have touched on it, but I mention it again, that the time element here is that we are about the middle of the public ministry of Jesus in the world. His ministry had already gone on about two years. There was about a year and a half or two years yet before His final rejection and crucifixion by the Jews. Remember that He offered the Kingdom first to the Jews, exclusive of other nations. In my estimation, along here is the gradual turning point. Jesus is gradually beginning to reveal that He is going to be rejected by the Jews, and they are going to turn down the offer of the Kingdom. The result is going to be that the Jews are going to be rejected, cast out of the center of the Kingdom economy. Then the other nations are coming in, and this the age which we call the church dispensation is going to ensue, the Jews are going to be offcast and chastised in order to finally bring them around to acceptance of Christ. So, the mystery parables have to do with the church and its operation in the Kingdom economy that has prevailed and does prevail through this age in which we live. From that standpoint a long step has been taken in the Kingdom teaching. This thing we call the Gentile church had not been clearly revealed in my estimation up to this time at all.

Matthew 13:10, 11, *And the disciples coming forward said to Him “Why doest thou speak to them in parables?”* (Referring to the unbelieving group of Jews.) *He answering said, To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to those it is not given.*

Now, that is a strange and perhaps difficult situation. A parable is usually a physical illustration of a spiritual principle. The Kingdom is like such and such a material thing and situation. From that standpoint parables are given to aid the understanding of spiritual principles by illustrating them by common, ordinary, everyday things.

But, if people are not skilled and do not have understanding in spiritual matters, instead of the parable clarifying the situation, it only makes it more mysterious, and so here is the practical result of the parables – that they brought the disciples of Jesus to a clearer and better understanding of spiritual principles. They threw the unbelieving Jews into greater doubt and confusion concerning these things, spiritual matters.

That certainly ought to teach us this practical lesson of dealing honestly and in full integrity with the Word of God. We should be trying to learn what it would teach us instead of trying to fix the Bible or Scriptures to make them say what we already believe and want to establish as a Bible fact. Twisting of Scriptures, dishonest dealings with the Word of God is the best way I know to be utterly mystified by the Bible as a whole, and bring us to the same condition in which the Jews were brought by these parables they did not understand. Let's keep in mind that the principle reason that He spoke in parables to enlighten His disciples, but to mystify and confuse those who rejected Him.

Luke 8:9, 10, His disciples asked Him what might the parable be, and He said, *To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to the others in parables in order that seeing they may not see, and hearing, they may not understand.* That is just a verifying of the principles I have already pointed out.

Mark 4:10-12, *And when they were alone, the ones about Him with the twelve asked Him the parables, He said to them, to you it is given the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to those outside all things come about in parables in order that they may see and not understand, hearing they may hear and not comprehend, lest they should turn about and it should be forgiven them.* That is a rather mysterious thing, "lest they should turn about and it be forgiven them" seems to me to indicate that the Jews had already offended in a religious way to the extent that it was not going to be forgiven them. They were already marked for judgment as a religious group and a nation.

We have already touched on that principle, but I would like to make this observation as we pass. You have perhaps noted that I am rather narrow minded and emphatic in my viewpoint of not only who has the authority to handle and preach the Word of God, but also with reference to who has the right understanding to these things.

Look again at this thing in a plain, common sense viewpoint – it was the disciples of Jesus who were given understanding. The disciples of Jesus

were those saved people, those believers who were scripturally baptized and who had followed Him. They literally followed Him as he went about the country, but also followed Him embracing the things he taught. I claim the same thing is true exactly, today. Those who follow Him in believing and practicing what he teaches are the ones who have an understanding of the Word of God. Just like those Pharisees of the ancient times, the ones who reject, the ones who walk in their own paths, have little more understanding of the deeper things of God than the beasts of the field.

Matthew 13:3-9, which is the first of the mystery parables, the Parable of the Sower, *A sower went forth to sow, and when he sowed, some indeed fell by the roadside, and fowls coming devoured them. Some fell upon the rocks, where they did not have much earth, immediately sprang up. Because they did not have depth of earth, and it was withered. Some fell among the thorns, that the thorns came up and choked them out. Some fell upon the good earth and bore fruit, some an hundred, some sixty, and some thirty-fold, one having ears to hear, let him hear.*

Then, we have the interpretation given by Jesus of that parable in verses 18-23. We go on and read, *You therefore hear ye the parable of the sower. Everyone hearing the word of the Kingdom and not understanding it, the evil one comes and sees the things that are sown in his heart, this is the one sown by the roadside. This one sown upon the rocks, this is the one hearing the word, immediately with joy receiving it, but he does not have root in himself, but is for a season affliction or persecution coming about on account of the word, immediately is he made to stumble. The one sown among the thorns, this is the one hearing the word and the worries of the age and the deception of riches chokes out the word and it becomes unfruitful. The one sown on good ground, this is the one hearing the word and understanding it, who indeed bears fruit and makes some an hundred, some sixty and some thirty-fold.*

I have preached that passage a good many times in this way: That we have in these four classes of people represented. I have made the first one, the one sown by the roadside or wayside, unsaved people who hear the Gospel message. They are so involved in the things of the world that they just throw

it off and it never makes a dent or impression on them. Then, the second group is the seed sown on stony ground. I made those likewise unsaved people whose influence is swept along with every new movement that comes along. So as unsaved people, these folks profess religion and join the church, and go on and when the going gets a little rough they just abandon the whole thing.

Then, we go to the third group, the seed thrown among thorns. I made those saved people who go so involved in the things of the world that the spiritual angle of their life was kept choked down to where they didn't bear fruit to God. Last, we have the fourth group, of course, the seed sown in good ground. These are saved people who walk uprightly according to the Word of God, and bear much fruit. As the preacher boys say, that makes mighty good preaching that way. It may be the primary interpretation, but I have come to doubt it. I have come to rather strongly believe that personal salvation is not the vital and primary matter under consideration in this parable. We will just presume that all these four groups are saved people.

To the first group, the appeal is made to come into a real church of Jesus Christ, and serve God in the only way and place that is acceptable. Oh, our church is just as good as that one, I can live just as good a Christian life out of the church as I can in it. There are people like that and you know it just as well as I do, and saved people at that. That would be the first group, the seed sown by the wayside.

Then, the second group, sown upon the stony ground. Jesus said of the Jews, *John the Baptist came as a bright and shining light and some of you rejoiced for a season in his light. Then persecution came and they departed.* Well I think there is such a thing as people getting saved, hearing the church truths and the church doctrine, joining the church and starting out with enthusiasm and good intentions. Then, there comes about some unpleasant things. There comes a matter of going to church when the weather is not so good. There comes the matter of being ridiculed for the doctrinal stands we take, and many other things. These folks have just not enough resolution to go through with a thing like that. That is, those who were actually saved. They join the

church, come to church a few times, and you never do hear from them, or of them any more.

The third group, the seed sown among the thorns has a distinction from the seed sown on stony ground that has given me more trouble than any other thing in this particular passage. The only distinction I can make clearly between the two is this: that the seed sown on stony grounds indicates those who depart from the faith for religious reasons. The seed sown among the thorns indicates those who depart from the true faith for a worldly reason, making money, keeping up in society and that kind of thing. I repeat as we leave this parable of the sower that I am inclined to think that is the real interpretation of it. It is how various groups of people respond when that appeal comes to actually take up the Cross and walk in the footsteps outline for us by the Lord Jesus Christ.

I would like for us to sketch over all this groups of parables if we possibly can do so. We will go ahead and try to deal with them briefly. Matthew 12:24-30, *Another parable he set forth to them, saying, the Kingdom of Heaven is like to a man sowing good seed in his field. While the man slept, his enemy came and sowed imitation wheat in the midst of the wheat and went away. When the grass grew and made fruit, then the imitation wheat was manifest. The servants of the household are coming forward said to him, Lord, is it not that thou sowed good seed in the field? Whence then does it have imitation wheat? The servants said to him doest thou wish going forth that we gather them out? He said, No, that lest gathering out the imitation wheat, you allow to gather with it the wheat. Permit them both to grow together until the harvest and the season shall we say to the reapers, gather ye first the imitation wheat and bind it into bundles that it may be burned, and the wheat gather ye into my storehouse.*

As long as I saw that the wheat are the saved and the tares, or imitation wheat are the unsaved, I had trouble with the proposition that the tares are gathered together into bundles before the wheat is harvested. The way I would read my Bible, the wheat is supposed to be taken out of the world first, and then the tares judged and burned later at the White Throne judgment, so I always had a lot of trouble with it when I tried to deal with it

like that. We have the interpretation of that, *Now, dismissing the crowds, He came into the house, His disciples came to Him saying, Recount to us the parable of the imitation wheat of the field. He answered and said, the one sowing the good wheat is the Son of man, the field is the world, the good seeds, these are the sons of the Kingdom, and the imitation wheat are the sons of the evil one. An enemy sowing them is the devil, and the harvest is the consummation of the age. The Son of Man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all the things that causes ones to stumble, and ones doing lawlessness, they shall hurl them into the furnace of fire, and there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then, the righteousness ones shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father, ones having ears, let them hear.*

The one sowing the good seed is Christ, or the Son of Man, and the good seed shall be the heirs, or the mature sons of this Kingdom. The tares are the heirs, or mature sons of the devil. The ordinary sinner out here on the street is not the son of the devil, in my estimation. It is folks who have ultimately committed themselves to falsehood and error in religion, who are recognized by the Bible as the mature sons of the devil.

Here is what I believe about this parable of the tares in the wheat field. I believe that Jesus came and established His church in the world on New Testament principles. The devil then came and sowed false churches all over the Christian realm in the world. These false churches look more or less like the truth and the ultimate of these religious bodies that are called churches. Of course, there are ways that we identify most of them now as likely being true or false. But the ultimate test in my estimation is that in the last days all of the false churches are going to proclaim and accept the Antichrist as Christ, and I am afraid that there are a lot of churches that wear the name "Baptist" are going to do just exactly that, too.

The true churches are going to be somewhat skilled in Bible study and understanding. They are going to recognize Antichrist, not as Christ, but as the son of the devil, which he is. They thus reject him and the gathering of these tares into bundles, I think it is when the religious world, in general

goes headlong after Antichrist. I think that it is the gathering of the tares out of the wheat fields.

Then, sometime later, the saints are going to be taken out of the world, the church is going to be raptured in that group. Then the real sons of the Kingdom will shine in the Kingdom of the Father. That is, briefly, my idea of what this parable of the tares in the wheat field indicates.

Mark 4:26-29, *Thus is the Kingdom of God as if a man should cast seed upon the earth, should sleep and rise up, night and day and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. Which sayeth the earth bears fruit; first the grass, afterwards the ear, after the full grown wheat is in the ear. However, when the fruit is made, he puts forth the reaping hook because the harvest is come.* Well, that is a general teaching to me that comes from Mark. It is not in the seven parables given in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. It teaches us that God has a hand in Kingdom affairs. He directs the great overall movements. The Kingdom runs the course that God has foreseen and comes to its ultimate conclusion. When this movement as run its course and comes to its ultimate conclusion, then it the time of the harvest. I simply mean when mankind in general has made his final decision that he wants the devil for the god of this world, he wants Antichrist for his Christ, and the few of us have rid ourselves of a lot of broad minded, liberal ideas and decide once again as Baptists that we don't want the devil for the god of the world, and that we want Christ, then I think the harvest is going to come.

We go back to Matthew 13:31, *Another parable He put forth to them saying, The Kingdom of the Heavens is like to a grain of mustard, which a man taking sowed in his field, which is indeed littler than all the seed, but, when it grows it is larger than the herbs and becomes a tree so the fowls of the heavens come and dwell among its branches.* Here is what we have there. We have a plant which is by nature an herb, coming from a very small seed. This particular mustard didn't stop at being an herb, but it grew up to a mighty tree, and overgrown thing, a monstrosity.

Here is what that teaches: Jesus established the Kingdom of saved people who hold to and carry out His Word in the world. As already indicated the

devil got into this Kingdom business. He created all these false and counterfeit churches and they said, “We are the Church of Christ. We speak the word of God, and we speak with God’s authority in the world.” The trouble is, from man’s point of view, and that is the viewpoint we have here, the viewpoint of mankind. We don’t know who is saved and who is not. We may have a pretty good idea about who is teaching Bible truths, but the religious world in general does not know who is and who is not telling religious truths. Therefore, the Kingdom, the religious world can’t distinguish between the true and the counterfeit. Thus, the Kingdom of God is a monstrosity, composed of what is commonly called the Christian world. Only a fraction of it is legitimate, and that is the departure from our original definition that the Kingdom is probably composed only of the saved. That is true from God’s viewpoint. However, man’s viewpoint is that the Kingdom is probably composed of all those who say they are saved. There are a lot of folks in that group who are not really saved, therefore the Kingdom is a lot larger from man’s viewpoint than it is from God’s viewpoint.

Next we have a repetition of the parable in Luke 13:18, *He said, therefore to what is the Kingdom like, or what shall I liken unto it? It is like a grain of mustard, which a man takes and casts into his garden. It grew and became a tree and the fowls of the heavens dwelt among its branches.*

Mark 4:30 says the same thing, *He said, How shall we liken the Kingdom of God, or in what parable shall we set it. It is a grain of mustard, which, when it is sown upon the earth, being littler than all the seed upon the earth, when it is sown it becomes larger than all the seed upon the earth, when it is sown, it comes up larger than all the herbs, makes great branches so that the fowls of the heavens are able to dwell under its shadows.*

That reminds me of another thing I meant to point out about this particular parable. Not only does this mustard plant grow into a monstrosity, but the buzzards come and roost in it. This is exactly what happens. Buzzards are false leaders in the religious world. They wear their collars hind part before, either literally or figuratively, usurp the place of Christ, and the New Testament in speaking and acting in authority.

We have next the parable of the leaven, *And he said, To what shall I liken the Kingdom of God? It is like to leaven which a woman takes and adds three measures of meal until all is leavened.* That is one of the most difficult of these parables to my mind, for the same simple reason that Jesus said the church should continue until the end of the age, but the church has become badly polluted down through the age. I am afraid that today we are not standing just foursquare upon the Scripture teachings as did the church in earlier centuries of this age. I am afraid that we are leavened with doing things because the Protestant world is doing so and so. I don't believe the church is going to apostatize, so far as that is concerned. But, I do believe that we, as Baptists, in this modern day have picked up a lot of things that are a great hindrance to us rather than a help.

That parable is also given in Matthew 13:33, but let us go on to Matthew 13:36, *Then, dismissing the crowds, He came into the house, the disciples came unto Him saying, Recount to us the parable of the imitation wheat of the field.* Well, we have already gone over that, so we skip that and come next to the hidden treasure.

*The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a treasure hid in the field, which a man finding, hidden from his joy, goes and sells all things which he has and buys the field.* He buys this field in order to get the treasure. Christ gave Himself up for the whole world, but Ephesians 5:25 tells us that Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for it. Time is running out, we are not going to have time to discuss these things in detail, but that is, to my notion, that the hidden treasure is the church that was an extra attraction under Christ, that He paid the price for the sins of the world.

*Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man, a merchant man seeking good pearls and finding one highly valued pearl. Going away, he sold all things whatsoever he had and bought it.* The difference between the hidden treasure and the pearl is that he bought the field to get the hidden treasure. In this instance he bought only the pearl, teaching us that Christ paid the price both for the whole world, and this special treasure, which I take to be the church.

We have only one more of this group, the parable of the net. It says, *The Kingdom is like a net which is cast into the sea and gathers all kinds of goods, both good and bad, and when it is filled they draw the net upon the shore; they sit down and gather the goods into vessels and they cast away the bad.* The application is, in the end of the age the angels will come and separate the righteous men from among the just, and to my mind, that parable is practically identical in its application to the parable of the tares and the wheat field that we noted a while ago. It is simply the separating of that which is true and legitimate. That practically completes the sketching over of these parables in the 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Matthew.

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD

## LECTURE #4

There are several different aspects from which we should view the introduction of the Kingdom and the Kingdom appeal to the Jews. There is a personal appeal in the Kingdom message that we ought never to overlook.

As John the Baptist came preaching to the people, he said, *Repent ye for the Kingdom is at hand*. That was a personal appeal. Another place it says, *Every one of you repent*. It was an individual matter. It was a personal matter that the people were to repent and accept the terms of the Kingdom, but the Kingdom appeal was also a national appeal. I suppose that is the right way to say it.

It was an appeal to the Jews as a religious body. Here is the way it occurs to me to illustrate it. Way down in the ministry of Jesus we read this: *From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the chief priests, the Scribes and the elders and be killed and rise again the third day*.

The group mentioned, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, constituted the religious authorities of the Jewish nation. They were the body who spoke and acted officially in matters of religion for the Jewish people. Incidentally, if I have read the Scriptures right, it was that group as such, who actually crucified Jesus, the Messiah of Israel.

That crime, that great sin, was not reckoned so much against the individuals who participated in it, as it was reckoned against that system. What I tried to point out to you is that John the Baptist and Jesus did not only make the Kingdom appeals to the individuals of the nation as such. Jesus made also this official appeal to the Jewish religious authorities in Jerusalem. There is one other appeal which I believe will come out in our scanning of the Scriptures tonight. After it has become evident that the official religious group in Jerusalem were going to ultimately reject Christ as the Messiah, then Jesus, especially through His apostles in His sending them out in twos

and threes, made an appeal to the various cities, social and political groups around the country.

The people were to accept or reject Christ as the Messiah by household, by cities, and perhaps by other political groups. In a broad, general way, I think that is the official appeal to the message of the people as opposed to the appeal to that group of religious leaders down at Jerusalem. I wanted to try to set that forth – the various angles from which Jesus made the Kingdom appeal.

I believe we have already indicated the manner of Jesus' approach to the people. The manner of His appeal of His appeal depended largely on what had gone on before.

We left off the last time with scanning over the "Mystery Parables" which, in my estimation, teach the details of the Kingdom in and through the church throughout the church age. The revelation of the church was a very gradual thing that came out more and more clearly as Jesus advanced His ministry. We are now at about the middle of His public ministry in time. There is a gradual departure from that appeal to the religious leaders in Jerusalem, and more and more of an approach to the masses of the people and a gradual revelation of the fact that those of other nations were to be brought into this Kingdom economy.

Somewhere down the line Jesus visited the city of Samaria and preached the Kingdom to them. They confessed Him as the Savior of this world. I think perhaps we did not quite finish with Matthew 13:51, 52. After Jesus had finished speaking those seven parables to His disciples, he then said, *Do you understand all these things*. They said to Him, *Yes*. He said to them, *On account of this, every scribe instructed in the Kingdom heavens is like a man, a householder, who draws out of his treasury new and old things*. I suppose that He is there telling them (the Jews), that the law dispensation is about to come to an end.

There are some good things in connection with that law dispensation which they are to hold to, but there is a new store house of treasure being opened unto them. They are to draw mainly from this.

We go next to Matthew 9:35-38, *And Jesus went about all the towns and villages teaching in their synagogues and heralding the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and infirmity. And beholding the crowds He was moved to compassion toward them because they were torn and made desolate, just as sheep not having a shepherd.* Then He said to His disciples, *Indeed, the harvest is much, but the workers are few. Intercede ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest that He may cast forth workers into His harvest.*

There are several things of interest in that passage that we want to note briefly. First, a thing I have already pointed out, that Jesus went preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. He healed every sickness and disease among the people. He fed the people when they were hungry. He ministered to their material needs. Why? In order to demonstrate what the Kingdom would be like when it should be established in its fullness. The Kingdom is not established in its fullness today because the Christian people and even the most faithful have a pretty much common lot in life in material things right along with the unsaved and unfaithful world. That would not be true if Christ were the God of the world, and His faithful people had come into the fullness of the Kingdom. Then, all our material needs and desires would be ministered to as our spiritual needs are ministered to. I don't see how in the world a person can take the position that Christ is now enthroned over the earth and that the Kingdom belongs to the people of God from the material standpoint. That will not come to pass until the period that we call the millennium.

Going from that thought, beholding the crowds, the masses of the people, He was moved with compassion toward them because they were torn and made desolate, just as sheep not having a shepherd. The picture there is of sheep out yonder in the fields and the woods wandering about, no shepherd to guide them, no shepherd to lead them to green pastures, nor to protect them from the beasts of the forest. They are helpless victims of the situation in which they live. It is truly a pitiful and terrible condition when we see the spiritual import of it.

The oracles of God in the Old Testament Scriptures had been given to this nation. The leaders had not been faithful to trust that which was committed to them. They had perverted the law of Moses and were offering to the people a religion that did not meet the needs of the people. Thus, the masses of the people were largely victims of religious circumstances over which they did not have much decision or control.

You can look at the world today and see exactly the same conditions prevailing. You can see the great masses of the people depending on human leaders and trusting humanly devised religious systems, not having the capabilities and the care to look in and try to search out matters for themselves. They believe whatever the preacher, the religious leaders tell them, being content with as best they may. These religious leaders, the humanly devised religious creeds and systems often not only failing to minister to their real spiritual needs as they go down the way of life, but point them down to a devil's hell in the matter of salvation itself. That is the issue as we see it existing in Arkansas tonight.

Essentially, that is exactly, I think, what Jesus looked upon and saw that the harvest was great, the workers were few, and that the disciples pray, or intercede with the Lord that He might send forth laborers into the harvest.

For our overall picture I pointed out a few moments ago how that the Kingdom appeal was directed by Jesus to different groups and to the individual, also. Here, we have Jesus turning His attention away from that official religious group, which seems to ultimately have decided the religious fate of the nation as such. He began turning His attention away from them and turning it to the masses of the people. The appeal was to that official group first, then the appeal to the masses of the people after that. That is about the point in the development of the things where we are now.

We now logically go to Matthew 10:1, 5-16. This is so lengthy that I don't think I will read all of it, just enough to sort of get the gist of things. *And calling forward His twelve disciples, He gave them the authority over unclean spirits.* There is a part of this Kingdom activity now, power, or authority to cast out demon spirits so that they might cast them out, heal

every sickness and infirmity. These twelve Jesus sent forth commanding them saying, *Into the way of the nations do not go ye, into a town of the Samaritans do not enter ye, but go ye rather to the perishing sheep of the house of Israel. And, as ye go, preach ye, saying the Kingdom of the Heavens has drawn near. Heal ye the sick, raise ye up the dead, cleanse ye the lepers, cast ye out the demon, freely ye receive, freely give ye.*

Then, the passage goes on to tell how they are to go out in haste, not making elaborate preparations. They are to make an appeal to the households and to the cities, and those who accept are to have the peace of these disciples, or of this church to come on them. Those who are to reject, they are to shake the dust off their feet against them as a testimony. It shall be more endurable for such places as Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for those cities.

Backing up just a little bit, we notice first that these twelve are sent forth and they are strictly cautioned not to go to the nations at large, not to go to the Samaritans. Instead, they are to go to the lost or perishing sheep of the house of Israel. My personal belief that I can prove to my satisfaction is there has never been a day since the fall of man that any responsible individual of nay that could not be saved exactly on the same terms.

Perhaps personal salvation is vitally involved in this mission that the twelve apostles went forth to carry out, but certainly that is not all that is involved. When Jesus said to the Israelites, *But don't go to the nations*, He was not saying to save Israel and let the nations go to hell.

The same thing exactly is true of the Samaritans. He was saying rather, Israel is a special people unto me, chosen unto God in the Abrahamic Covenant. The inside recesses of the Kingdom economy of things is to belong to this nation, Israel, if they will have it. When we have given Israel the best of this thing, if they will take it, then those of the other nations who will come. They will be brought in and accepted and blessed along with them. But, if not, since they have had the greater instructions that those of the other nations, they will bear a greater weight of judgment on the day of Judgment. That passage closes with, *Behold, I send you forth as a sheep in*

*the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as the serpent and guileless as the dove.* These more or less ignorant and inexperienced apostles in matters of religion had to combat the religious authorities in Jerusalem and traditions of the fathers all their lives. Then, they must get up against the various heresies that were among the people. They had to cope with various political setups, and this, that and the other thing. Viewed from that standpoint, it was truly a hard and discouraging task that was set before them.

It has ever been so with the true people of God. By way of illustration we seem to have quite a proposition in the matter of keeping our local missionary on the field just at this time. We all know we can do that, and if we really want to as far as that is concerned. We look about us, we say that the other folks have the wealth. They could do this thing and never hurt them. It hurts us to bear the burdens of this thing. I insist again that it is the way it has always been with the true and faithful of God. There is a definite goal and purpose in it, in that the faithful people of God are not to trust in the world and its resources, including our own strength and financial resources, education, etc. We are to look ultimately to God for all things.

Next, Luke 9:1, 2, which gives Luke's parallel account of the things we have just been talking about. *Calling together the twelve, He gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal infirmities.* This says He gave them two things – power, the actual ability, and authority, the lawful right to do things.

The Sheriff has the lawful right to arrest and imprison a law breaker. He might get up against the proposition sometimes where he doesn't have the power to do it. You see, there is a difference between authority and power. He gave these disciples both the authority and power to cast out demons and heal infirmities.

He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal. There, you have it again, the Kingdom message and the healing of the ills of the people, teaching us once again that the fullness of the Kingdom will come only when Christ is enthroned as the God and King of this world in the millennium. Peace and righteousness shall be the working principle as

opposed to sin and death, which now reigns while the devil is the god of this world.

Our next Kingdom passage is Luke 9:10, 11, *And men, therefore, beholding what sign He did said, this is truly the prophet who is come into the world. Jesus, therefore knowing that they were about to come in and seize Him in order that they might make Him a King, flees into the mountain, Himself alone.* There is a peculiar situation. He had come to claim Him a Kingdom, and Himself as the King.

On a number of occasions it seems that a great enthusiasm, or perhaps a mob spirit seized on the masses of the people. It was usually in connection with some physical demonstration of healing or something like that. The masses of people sought to seize on Him and crown Him as the King of the Jews. Since that was what He had come for, why did He always elude them, and refuse to be crowned as their King? Simply because they were not accepting Him in the right spirit.

What the Jews actually wanted was such a King as David had been, a great warrior who would defeat all his enemies in battle. A great statesman and economic authority would give to them wealth and a great material prosperity. There is one thing for sure and certain, that God cannot loose the reigns and give out blessings bountifully on people unless those people have been made right spiritually. I think beyond a doubt that one reason why the true people of God do not have more of the material wealth of the world than we have is that God allows us to have what we can stand without hindering our looking unto God. We are dependent on Him for all the things that we require in life. We might remark, incidentally, that once again in this situation right here, the Jews were trying to seize Jesus and make Him a great and glorious worldly King. What they were wanting was Antichrist instead of Christ. The appeal came to Jesus to do what Antichrist will do in the last days.

If He had only come and reacted as Antichrist, the Jews would have received Him with open arms. That is one of the facts that makes me believe so strongly that the Jewish nation as a group, probably a political group also,

will receive Antichrist, the imitation of Christ when he makes his appearance on the world scene. He will appeal to humanity, and especially to the Jewish people.

Jesus fled away from them and would not be crowned as King because the hearts of the people have to be made right first by the new birth. Made right secondly in committing our lives to walk by faith in God before we are capable of having much wealth and/or authority committed into our hands. You say, “If that is so, why is it that an atheist often becomes a millionaire?” My way of seeing that is he is on the outside claiming whatever blessing the world has to offer, more or less at random. God is not particularly dealing with him, either for or against. That being true, he can get away with a lot of things a child of God cannot get away with. Passing on from this we have now come to the fourth year of the public ministry of Christ.

Here is the way that things sum up: The years are counted from one Passover to another. Somewhere in between two Passovers Jesus began His public ministry. Whether six months before the Passover, three months, or what, I don’t know, I haven’t the least idea. After His baptism there came up a Passover and up to there we count the first year of His ministry, even though it was only a fraction of a year. From that Passover to the next Passover is the second year of His public ministry. Then, of course, up to the next Passover was the third year of His ministry. The final year was thus the fourth year at least by Hebrew time reckoning.

We only have one year of the ministry of Jesus left. Many Bible students believe that this Passover we are passing over right now that Jesus didn’t even go to Jerusalem to the Passover that year. We can’t positively prove it one way or the other. Evidence seems to indicate He didn’t even go to Jerusalem that year. Why? Evidently because the religious opposition down there in Jerusalem had become so strong and violent against Him that He would stand in terror of His life. His works were not yet finished, therefore He just used that practical device and stayed away and remained up in the land of Galilee.

To me it is very significant what comes up next. Matthew 16:13-19, *Jesus, coming into parts of Caesarea Philippi asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that the Son of Man be? They said, some say John the Baptist, some Elias, and other Jeremias, one of the prophets. He says to them, whom do ye say me to be. And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the anointed one, the Son of the Living God. And Jesus answered and said, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father in heaven. Moreover, I say to thee, thou art a pebble, but upon this cleft rock I will build up my church and the gates of hell shall not overcome it. I will give unto thee the Kingdom of the Heavens. Whatever thou mayest bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatsoever thou mayest loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* Then, He carefully charged His disciples that they should not tell anyone that He is the Christ, or the anointed one.

What do we have there, anyway? I have just suggested that likely the opposition of the people who had the religious fate of that nation in their hands in Jerusalem, their opposition was so violent against Him that He dared not go to Jerusalem for fear of His life. With that situation existing down at Jerusalem, it being evident by now, that the official group is on going to accept Him as the Messiah of Israel, they are ultimately going to reject Him, church truth begins to come more prominently into the picture. We will say it this way – now it is not the chief priests, the scribes and the elders who have insight into the truth of God, it is the disciples of the Lord Jesus. *Whom do men say me to be?* Some folks have made some mistakes. Some say you are Elijah, they are wrong. Some say you are another of the ancient prophets, they are wrong, though they are religious authorities and leaders. *Whom say ye me to be? Ye are the Christ, you are the Messiah, you are the anointed one of Israel.* Jesus then said, *You are blessed in the fact of your having this knowledge. How did you ignorant and inexperienced men get this knowledge and information? Flesh and blood did not reveal it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven.*

I think I know this to be true, there are, sitting in this audience tonight, men and women who have not devoted your life to study and exercise religious scholarship. You have worked and you have worked like slaves to make a

living out yonder on the farm, but you have come to the house of the Lord on Sunday. You have read and studied the Bible.

On the other side of the ledger there are men who have begun in youth to study for a religious career for themselves. They have devoted their lives and their energies to religious matters. They have a Seminary education. There are among you the farmers here tonight a far greater insight into the unsearchable riches of Christ, and His works than these great theologians will ever see, or dream of. How did it get that way? How can an ignorant fellow learn more than a highly educated one? Well, He says here that the Father in heaven revealed it to them, maybe in a miraculous way, maybe not.

He has revealed it to you in this way – you have approached that Book we call the Bible, believing in the Word of God. You have said, “Now, it is my all-sufficient rule of faith and practice.” You have believed what it says, all of it you can understand, and you have come to a knowledge and understanding that many a great theologian hasn’t begun to glimpse, or dream of. He speaks to this group that He calls the church and He says then they are blessed because of this, and then He says, addressing Peter, *I will give thee the keys of the Kingdom.*

A little further over He says He gives the keys to the group. *Whatsoever ye bind and loose on earth shall be bound and loosed in heaven.* There is the church’s authority to act and administer the Kingdom law in my estimation.

Then He carefully charged His disciples that they should not tell anyone that He was the Christ, or the anointed one. The appeal had already been made to others, they had rejected it. What was the use in telling them again?

What is the use even now in a manner of speaking for us to tell the religious world that salvation is not because of works, but is by grace? What is the use for us to tell them that the universal, invisible church is not a Bible truth, but a figment of their own imagination? We are largely wasting our time if we do so. I am not suggesting that we not try to overcome and stamp out error, but I am suggesting what a task we are up against, and how little we are likely to accomplish as far as the overall picture is concerned.

*Matthew 16:27, 28, The Son of Man is about to come to glory His Father with His angels and then will He give according to everyone his practice. Truly, I say to you, there are certain ones of the ones standing here who shall not taste of death until they shall behold the Son of Man coming into His Kingdom.*

*We repeat that statement in Mark 9:1, He said to them, Truly, I say to you, there are certain ones of the ones standing here that will not taste of death until they shall behold the Kingdom of God.*

The thing that comes up next is a week later. He took Peter, James, and John up on a high mountain top, there was transfigured in their presence and Jesus was changed over to His glorified heavenly body and there came Moses and Elijah. Elijah had been changed over into a heavenly body and had gone to haven directly from the earth. Moses had died and sometime later Michael had come down to get his body. He had a big argument with the devil over it according to Jude. Michael won out and took Moses' body to haven, and so he had something to wear on the Mount of Transfiguration, too.

The disciples, like us, stood and looked on while these heavenly figures, Jesus, Moses, and Elijah talked among themselves about the suffering and death and the resurrection about to be accomplished in Jerusalem. That was the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to them that they should not taste of death until they should see the Kingdom coming in power.

The Kingdom is one thing, the Kingdom coming in dynamic power is quite another thing. The Kingdom came with the first coming of Jesus into the world. The Kingdom will come in that dynamic power when He comes back to set up His thousand year reign upon this earth.

*Matthew 18:1-5, That very hour the disciples came to Jesus saying, Who is now greater in the Kingdom of Heaven? Calling forth a little child who stood in the midst of them, He said, Truly, I say to you, except you should turn about and become as little children, ye shall not by any means enter into the Kingdom of the Heavens. Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name receives me.*

There is a thing right there that rang the bell for me for the first time in all the time I have studied the passage. There are two points here: In the first place, there is the question, of course, who is going to be the greatest, who is going to be the bell wager, enjoy the first seat. Adam is still in those disciples, just like us. Jesus said first, *Except ye be converted and become as a little child, you are not going to enter the Kingdom in the first place*. Then, He said the next step is after you have entered the Kingdom by the new birth, when you humble yourselves as a little child, then you are going to be greater in the Kingdom.

Here is the point that rang the bell with me: I have been driven to the proposition in my thinking that there is not any essential difference between the faith whereby we are saved in the first place, and the faith whereby we must walk after we are saved. Here is the way we would like to have that thing: we went through that ordeal, first of giving up everything on which we depended in this world, and trusting Christ to get saved. We would like to have that thing forever behind us, but is it so? I don't think so. I think that if we attempt to walk with Christ at all, time and time again, we come right to that point again where it is a matter of turning loose of everything in which we trust. We who trust in the things of the world, and are not looking unto Christ, we are not going to go that way He has marked out for us.

That is what I mean by saying that there is not any essential difference between that faith that brings us to salvation in the first place, and the faith whereby we walk from day to day and year to year. The more we cultivate that proposition of forsaking the world and standing and walking on faith, I believe the easier we will make it on ourselves as we go down the way of life. And we won't worry ourselves to death about all of those things that are going to happen, and never do.

# **THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

## **LECTURE #5**

We have come to the time of the crucifixion of Jesus. After that, through the rest of the New Testament. There isn't a great deal, to my mind, that we can learn definitely on the Kingdom subject from the standpoint of just what it is.

I would like for us to go back and review just a little again. My definition of the Kingdom is that it is righteous men under Christ ruling the earth in righteousness. I think I have not stated in just these terms is that the fullness of the Kingdom involves the three institutions that are necessary to the lives and welfare of the people.

The Kingdom of God in its fullness involves government, or the political realm. It involves the economic systems, or the every day dealings of man with man. It also involves the religious side of man's life. In the coming age we can only call the millennium, Christ is to be the King over the earth. He is the head of the political government, we might say. He is to dominate the economic world, or the physical phase of our lives, and, of course. He will dominate the religious, or spiritual life of the world, as well. The reason I mention this is to try to bring out how the Kingdom idea has developed. The Kingdom was offered first to the Jews with the promise that it should, in due time, come in its fullness.

One way of expressing the faults and failures of the Jews is to say that they wanted to grasp the material side of the Kingdom without first having grasped the spiritual side of it. They were not conforming themselves to the spiritual angle, and requirements of the Kingdom, and their rejection of the Kingdom. Then, it was given to the other nations of the world in the church of Jesus Christ. So, the Kingdom exists in a spiritual phase today. The material phase, or government and economic phase awaits the coming of that age we call the millennium.

In our scanning of the Scriptures dealing with the Kingdom, we are nearly up to the time of the crucifixion. I would like for us to go back and note

briefly a passage that we scanned over last week. I freely confess I have fallen into a trap that many a preacher has fallen into in dealing with that parable wherein the man at the wedding feast without the wedding garment was found. My fall came in trying to make that individual application of a number of these parables that have to do with institutions as such, rather than individuals.

We understand, of course, that all institutions are of a necessity composed of individuals, but in certain of these parables, it is institutions, as such, that are stressed, not individuals. If you don't get the point, let us try to illustrate it. When the Great Commission was given, it said to the church, *Go ye unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*. And, it was to continue this work until Jesus should come again.

Well, a period of over 1900 years has already elapsed. All of these individuals who composed the church when the Commission was given were dead long ago and they couldn't continue down through the age and preach the gospel to the ends of the earth. The church, institutionally, has done just that.

A like illustration comes out of the 24<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Matthew, where Jesus is telling a group of His disciples a sign of His second coming and of the end of the world. He said to these apostles, who died 1900 years ago, *When ye see the Abomination of Desolation standing in the Holy place...* - they didn't see that. They died 1900 years (at least) too soon to see anything like that. What did He mean then by telling them about things like that they did not see, and could not see as individuals? He was talking to the church. He was not talking to the individuals, He was speaking to the church. Trying to apply the same principle to that matter of the man who was found at the wedding feast without the garments – He was talking of the end of the age when He spoke this parable. We pointed out how they were His servants, how that some of His own servants were faithful, some of them were unfaithful.

In addition to those, there were His fellow townsmen who sent messengers after Him and said, *We won't have this man to rule over us*. I took the

application that His servants were the churches to whom the Great Commissions was given. His fellow townsmen were the Jews who had rejected Him as the Messiah of Israel, thus they were rejected from the chief place of the Kingdom.

Then comes this wedding feast. The Lord went in to see the guests who had assembled there. He found there a man who didn't have on the wedding garments, and this one was cast out into the outer darkness.

If you try to make an individual application of that, you have a dead saved person, raised from the dead, or a living saved person raptured (changed over into a glorified body, carried to heaven with all the rest of the saints). Then you come to the Judgment Seat of Christ, or the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and you find this glorified saved person without the wedding garment on. He is cast into outer darkness, which seems to me to be the Great Tribulation that takes place on earth. So, he has to come back to this earth, a glorified being, and go through the Great Tribulation. That just doesn't add up to me at all. But, if you view it this way, the man without the wedding garment represents religious bodies and institutions which have not taken the New Testament as their all-sufficient rule of faith and practice. They make claims to being the church that Jesus built. But, when the Judgment day and the reckoning day comes, that parable is simply the way of telling us that those who do claim to be the churches of Christ, and who rather usurp the field of religion today, they will not get recognition as such before the throne of Jesus Christ.

We pass from that particular situation to Matthew 15:1-13, the parable of the Ten Virgins. For lack of time, I am not going to read that passage. In fact, I am not going to read a number of them tonight. You are familiar with the parable of the Ten Virgins. I am going to tell you here and now that if you try to apply the ten virgins to individuals, even J.R. Graves, the great minded man that he was, failed to make it add up right. He had to ignore some of his types in order to make that thing come out right when he attempted to apply it to individuals.

The Ten Virgins, in my way of seeing it are ten churches and the virgins, to my mind, do apply to churches as opposed to Jews to whom the Kingdom of God was first preached and offered. This is just before the crucifixion. This is when it is already toward the church in form that it has taken down through this, the church age. So, the ten virgins are ten churches.

It says they went forth to meet the bridegroom. The church has been looking for the second coming of Christ since the very day He left the earth. The disciples said the day that He left, *Will thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?* He hasn't told them till yet whether He would or not. So, the church has been looking for the second coming of Christ.

All these are virgins, they went forth to look for the coming of the bridegroom. They all had lamps and certainly the implications are that, to begin with at least, they all had light. But, the bridegroom stayed away for a long time. In fact, He has been gone for 1900 years now. While He tarried, all ten of these virgins nodded, and they went sound asleep. At the midnight hour the cry came, *Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him.* They all wakened out of sleep, and began to set their flames in order. The five foolish virgins didn't have any oil in their lamps, and they said either, *Our lamps are going out, or they have gone out.*

I think probably their lamps had already gone out a long time before, while they slept and they asked the wise for oil. They said, *No, lest there be not enough for us and for you.* Making this interpretation or application as brief as we possibly can, the only distinction you can make between these two groups of five virgins is that it says one group was foolish and the other wise. Their folly and their wisdom was manifested in the fact that the foolish did not take oil in their vessels. The wise did take oil in their vessels.

Here is what that means to me: All ten of these were Scriptural and legitimate churches. The five foolish virgins departed from the faith, they rejected the New Testament as the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice somewhere down the line, and the candlestick was consequently removed from them, or the guiding Spirit was taken away from them. There is why they didn't have any oil in their lamps.

You might think, well, the wise virgins went just as sound asleep as the foolish ones did. That is true enough. That is a very peculiar fact, but brethren, isn't it a fact today and hasn't it been a fact in the recent past that we as Baptist people have been very much in many details like the Protestant world, or in the religious world in general? Brethren, right tonight, isn't it a fact that we as Baptist people, and I believe there is a select people of Jesus Christ here on earth. Isn't it a fact that we are spending more time, energy, thought and affection on advancing our material causes in the world than we are spending on the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in these last days of desperation that I think we have to labor on earth?

I think if we will look at that thing honestly, you will find you and I are very much asleep to the facts as they confront us today. I will tell you how the facts look to me today. They look to me like that all these things we are building in a material way, and to us who are giving the most of our energy and attention, we are going to lose the last vestiges of it in the next generation or so, to say the least.

There we are just as sound asleep, almost at least, as the rest of the world, and the rest of the religious world. But, Jesus said, *Lo, I am with you every day until the end, or the consummation of the age*. I thank the Lord for one thing – that we do, whenever we are pinned right down to things, we will stand on the New Testament Scriptures as our all-sufficient rule of faith and practice. That is the one thing in the world that causes us to have some oil in our lamps, and thus to give forth light to the world.

It says in the hour of awakening the five foolish virgins said to the wise, *Give us some of your oil*. They said, *We can't do that*. Let me tell you something. You can't give the power of the guiding and energizing of the Holy Spirit to people who sprinkle babies, preaching falling from grace, baptismal regeneration, the universal church and all that kind of thing.

So, the wise virgins couldn't give that oil to the foolish if they wanted to. Christ had taken that candlestick away because they had rejected the New Testament Scriptures somewhere down the line and they were just out, so far as having any light is concerned. That seems to me to be the essential facts

of that particular parable. It is that they are just ten churches, five of which apostatized, got their candlesticks removed. In the other case, the wise, they were greatly affected by this religious movement, which to me is in reality the Protestant Reformation. That is the thing that made us to sleep in a way that nothing else has ever done. Some have still clung to the fundamentals of the faith. I think, I hope, we are coming to an awakening today.

We move from that passage right into Matthew 25:31-46. *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 all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, there shall be assembled before Him all nations. He shall separate them from one another as the shepherd separates and divides the sheep from the goats, set the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left.* I will tell you frankly that this has been a hard parable for me to interpret with much enthusiasm. I am simply going to tell you as briefly as I can what my present thinking is on it when He says, *There assembled before Him all nations.* It means exactly what it says. America as a nation is to be assembled, or judged there. Whether it is literally assembled or not, so will Russia, England, and all the other nations of the world. The basis of that judgment, He says, is how they have dealt with His brethren. In the last year or two my viewpoint has changed as to who His brethren are. I always took it to be the Jews. Down to this late in the day, the Jews are not so much His brethren any more. They were about to crucify Him and He is now talking about brotherhood within the church. So, I am thinking that at the present time the brethren who are well treated by some nations, ill treated by others are the ones He is talking about. The treatment of the church of Jesus Christ is the basis on which these nations are to be judged.

You know what has happened. The Roman Empire sought to crush the church as long as it prevailed. The dictatorships of Europe under the power of the Pope all throughout the Middle Ages sought with bitter vehemence tried to destroy the church. Then, in relatively modern times, some way under the grace of God, the church gave to some of the nations the democratic principles, then democratic governments such as our own, have fostered the church and have given it liberty and opportunity that churches have never had before in the history of our existence.

In many ways America is a very wicked nation. I expect America to be one of the nations that is judged before the Judgment Seat of Christ. It will go into the millennium as a nation for the simple reason that, so far as I can understand, the churches of Jesus Christ have prospered in a way they have never prospered anywhere on the face of the earth. That is just about all I can get out of the Judgment of the Nations. I think definitely Russia will be destroyed, either in the battle of Armageddon, or in the judgment that He speaks of here. I think these other atheistic nations and Catholic nations as well will go down in this judgment that Christ holds over the nations of the earth.

These nations go away into everlasting destruction. Nations have a personality the same as individuals do. This church right here has just as much a personality as a church as you have as an individual. If you don't believe it, you get to be a preacher and you go off somewhere and come in here as a stranger and you will soon get acquainted with that church as a body just the same as you get acquainted with the individuals who compose the body. That is perhaps getting off into rather vague things, but that is my notion of the interpretation of the Judgment of Nations.

We then pick up some short passages spoken by Jesus from the time He ate His last Passover Supper until He went to the Cross, which was just a very short period of time. Luke 22:14-18, *And the hour came about He reclined, the apostles with Him, said to them with strong desire, the desire to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. I say unto you not any more by any means with I eat it until the Kingdom of God is fulfilled.* I think the Kingdom of God there is the millennium.

*And receiving the cup, having given thanks He said, Receive ye this and divide it out among yourselves, for I say unto you, not by any means will I drink from now from the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God will come.* I think He is saying that when the millennium comes He is going to eat and drink with His disciples again.

Luke 22:24-30, *There became a rivalry among them as to who of them should be greater and He said to them, The kings of nations exercise*

*lordship over them and the ones exercising authority over them are called great workers, but you, it shall not be so among you. The greater one among you, let him become as the younger and the chief one as the servant. Who is greater, the one reclining or the one standing? Is it not the one reclining? But I in your midst, as the one serving ye are the ones remaining in my testing or temptations and I deliver unto you a kingdom as my Father delivered to me a Kingdom. Ye may eat and drink on my table in y Kingdom, ye may sit upon the throne judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

I think the Kingdom viewpoint is double there. He now gives the Kingdom law and administration into the hands of those who continued and do continue with Him in His testings, or temptations. When that future full phase of the Kingdom comes, that these shall sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, exactly as He says.

*Matthew 26:29, I say to you, not by any means will I drink from now this fruit of the vine til the day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.*

*Mark 14:15, Truly I say unto you, no longer by any means will I drink from the fruit of the vine til that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.*

*Matthew 17:11, But Jesus stood in the presence of the chief, and the chief ask Him saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus said, Thou sayest it. In other words, He is confessing that He is the King of the Jews.*

*Luke 23:2-5, They began to accuse Him saying, We found this one turning away our nations, forbidding to give offerings to Caesar, saying Himself to be Christ, the King. Pilate asked Him saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And He answering him said, Thou sayest it.*

*In John 18:33-38, Pilate entered again the palace and called Jesus and said to Him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not of this world. If my Kingdom were of this world, my servants would strive that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. No, my Kingdom is not from thence. That is one of the fundamental reasons why the Jews rejected Him in the first place. They wanted Him to take over the headship of a literal, physical order of things and rebel against the Roman Empire, and to give to*

Israel great material prosperity. Israel will get great material prosperity only after that nation is spiritually prepared for it.

So, Israel will have to wait until the millennium to get their part of the Kingdom of God. Jesus teaches them the principle that, for the time being at least, His Kingdom is a spiritual Kingdom. He doesn't have any political conflict either with Pilate or Caesar. Pilate said unto Him, *Then art thou not a king?* Jesus answered, *Thou sayest that I am a king. I for this was born, thus I came into the world in order that I might bear witness to the truth. Everyone being of the truth hears my voice.* Pilate says to Him, *What is the truth?* Saying this again he went out to the Jews and said to them, *I do not find any fault against Him.* They made political charges against Him, but Pilate failed to find evidence to that fact, and so he testified to the crowd.

We pass on to Matthew 27:29, *Plaiting a crown of thorns, they set it upon His head, a reed in His right hand, falling on their knees before Him, they mocked Him saying, Hail, King of the Jews.* They despised Him once again, simply because His ministry was first spiritual, and the material side of the thing was to come and be taken up later. That was not to their liking.

Mark 15:18, *They began to salute Him, hail, King of the Jews.* John 19:3, *And they came unto Him and said, Hail King of the Jews, and they slapped Him.* Matthew 27:37, *And they set above His head His cause written, This one is Jesus, King of the Jews.* Mark 15:26, *And the superscription of His cause was written, the King of the Jews.* Luke 23:38, *Moreover even the superscription was above Him, This one is King of the Jews.* John 19:19-22, *Moreover, Pilate also wrote a title and set it upon the cross, written, Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews. This title then many of the Jews read, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city. It was written in Hebrew, Roman and Greek.* The chief priests then said to Pilate, *Do not write thou, The King of the Jews.* Pilate answered, *What I have written, I have written.*

Different gospel writers give different accounts of this title, or superscription that is written over His head on the cross. The reason for that is the gospel writers wrote about Christ from different angles or standpoints. Matthew

wrote about the King of Israel. Mark wrote about the Servant of Jehovah. Luke wrote about the Son of Man, and John wrote about the eternal word of God who became the Son of Man. So, whenever you add up what the four of them say, then you have the sum total of that superscription that was written over the head of Jesus on the cross.

We pass on to Matthew 27:41, 42, *Likewise, the chief priests mocking with the scribes to the elders said, Others He saved; Himself He is not able to save. He is the King of Israel, let Him come down from the cross now and we will believe on Him. If He can do mighty works form the physical standpoint, then we can believe in Him.* What is there to it? It is just as fleshly a viewpoint of religious things as we see prevailing in the religious world today, more prominent in the Catholic and various holiness sects than anywhere else.

Mark 15:31, 32, *Likewise also the chief priests mocking to one another with the scribes said, Others He saved; Himself He is not able to save. The Christ, the King of Israel, let Him come down from the cross in order that we may behold and believe Him. The ones crucified with Him reviled Him.* They told some half truths there when He said He could not save Himself. He couldn't save Himself from death, and yet, every purpose for which He had come into the world, which was to die for the world in order to save the world. This was not the viewpoint they had, of course.

Luke 23:36-43, (We'll not read all of that,) *The soldiers mocked Him, coming to Him, bringing Him sharp wine, or vinegar to Him saying, If thou art the King f the Jews, save thyself. Then those who were crucified with Him blasphemed Him also. Then, later, one of them repented and he said, Jesus, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom (which is the millennium, I suppose). He said to him, Verily, I say unto thee, this very day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.* We will not go into that further right now, but anyway, where Jesus went, the saved go also.

Mark 15:43, *Joseph, the noble chancellor from Arimathea coming, who also himself was expecting the Kingdom of God. He had a right viewpoint of the Old Testament Scriptures and that is why and how he was expecting the*

*Kingdom of God. Therein, he entered in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Luke 23:51, 52, He was not agreeing to their counsel and practice. That is the same Joseph from Arimathea, a town of the Jews who was expecting the Kingdom of God. He coming forward to Pilate asked the body of Jesus.*

We go now to the Acts of the Apostles and I think a lot of these passages we will just mention for the record and not attempt to read all of them. Acts 1:1-8, we will read just a few verses. *Indeed, the first recounting I made, O Theophilis concerning all things which Jesus began both to do and teach the very day when having commanded the apostles through the Holy Spirit, whom He had elected He was received up, and when He had exhibited Himself living after His suffering in many sure signs through forty days appearing to them and speaking the things concerning the Kingdom of God.*

He takes a future viewpoint there and then He goes on to speak the Great Commission in different terms and go on down near the closing of that passage, *The ones being therefore assembled together asked Him saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time reestablish the Kingdom to Israel? He said to them, It is not for you to know the time or the seasons, which the Father set in His own authority.* Then, He gives them the promise of the Holy Spirit and says to them, *Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,* and ends that speech right there. We are still presumably to go into all the world preaching the gospel and waiting for, looking for this same coming that these disciples were looking for.

*Acts 8:12, And when they believed Philip preaching concerning the Kingdom of God in the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.* That refers to the Samaritan converts. And the Kingdom references have become a little indefinite along here.

There was a present spiritual phase of the Kingdom manifested in the church. but, it always looked forward to the time when the Kingdom would be restored to Israel, when it would take over the material realm along with the spiritual, and the two viewpoints are hard to keep separated in these references through the various epistles.

Acts 4:21 just tells about Paul preaching the Kingdom of God and he says, *That it is necessary for us through great affliction to enter into the Kingdom of God.* Acts 17:7, where they said that the apostles preached that there was another King, a rival to Caesar, by the name of Jesus. Acts 19:8, Paul preached about the Kingdom of God over in Ephesus, I believe. Acts 20:25, 26, Paul speaks about how he came to this particular place, first heralding the Kingdom of God.

Acts 28:23, it is again Paul preaching about the Kingdom of God. Acts 28:30, 31, he remained in Rome two whole years preaching the Kingdom of God. Romans 14:17 to my mind is the great Scripture that defines the Kingdom in its present state. *For the Kingdom of God is not food and drink, but in righteousness and peace and joy and the Holy Spirit.* My contention is that when the millennium comes the Kingdom of God will be food and drink in addition to righteousness and peace and joy and the Holy Spirit, therefore, this is the definition of the Kingdom in its present phase of operation.

I Corinthians 4:19, 20, *I will come quickly to you if the Lord wills and I will take note of the words of the one being exalted, not of the words of ones being exalted, but of the dynamic power, for the Kingdom of God is not in word, but in dynamic power.* The Holy Spirit goes where the Word of God goes. If the word of God is resisted, the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit does not go there. Therefore, Paul said, *I am going to see what the results are. Then I will know who is legitimately preaching and operating the Kingdom of God.*

I Corinthians 6:9, 10 talks about all manners of sinners, drunkards, revilers, and so on, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Just what does he mean by that? Of course, folks say that those who do these things cannot be saved, and if they do them as saved people, they will lose their salvation. That is ridiculous.

Perhaps I am going to make a bold statement. Israel, operating under the law of Moses committed adultery, murder, lied, stole, worshipped idols and all the rest of it. Under the law of Moses, they did not inherit the Kingdom of God, neither will anyone else.

So, Christ comes along and gives us a rule of faith and practice that we can measure up to, and thus, embrace the spiritual side of the Kingdom of God. Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit – these are the things that we now reap, or inherit of the Kingdom of God. It is a thing that is apart from the sins of the flesh, the sins of the world. It is a thing we lay hold on and embrace in spite of the sins of the flesh and of the world.

I think that is about what he means by saying that those sinners do not inherit the Kingdom of God. Of course, if you look forward to the millennium, then the saved will have been completely cleansed from all such things as that.

I Corinthians 15:22-25 talks about the resurrection of the dead and speaks of the reign of Christ. Christ takes over the Kingdom in its fullness at the beginning of the millennium as the Son of Man. He reigns throughout that thousand years. During that thousand years He puts down all enemies that God has on earth. At the end of the millennium He delivers up to God a fully conquered Kingdom in every detail and then we go into the Heaven Ages.

The last enemy to be overcome, He says is death. I Corinthians 15:50, *But this I say, brethren, flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, nor shall corruption inherit incorruption.* If you started off to heaven tonight in your present condition you would explode as you got out of the atmosphere of the earth. You just wouldn't make the trip.

That is one detail involved in the proposition that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Galatians 5:21, *One practicing such things* (that is, these sins of the flesh) *shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* I don't care if you are saved, I don't care if you are a member of the Baptist church, you get out here and commit adultery, lie, and steal six days in the week, you are not going to come to the house of the Lord on Sunday and get the spiritual blessings that the church might have in store for those who are prepared to receive them.

Ephesians 5:5, *This know, that every fornicator, unclean one, covetous one which is in idolatry shall not have inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God.* Colossians 1:13, *Who snatched us out of the authority of darkness*

*and set us over into the Kingdom of His beloved Son* (that is the past tense, a thing already accomplished.) I don't remember any other passage that is of vital interest as we scan through the rest of the epistles. We have taken quite a bit of time already, so I believe we will just leave off here and if we want these references for the record later, we can take them from this manuscript that I have.

We might go over into Revelation and take note of the concluding passage in the New Testament. Revelation 10:1-6, *And I saw an angel coming down from God out of the heavens, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. He seized the dragon, the ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, he bound him a thousand years and cast him into the abyss, (commonly called the bottomless pit) He shut him up and set a seal upon him in order that he should not deceive the nations anymore until a thousand years should be ended. After this, it is necessary for him to be loosed for a little time. I saw thrones and they sat upon them; judgment was given to them. The souls of the ones beheaded on account of witnessing of Jesus and account of the Word of God, who did not worship the wild beast, nor his image. They did not receive his mark upon their forehead, or upon their hand, they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The others of the dead did not live again until the thousand years should be completed. This is the first resurrection. Upon those the second death does not have authority. They shall be priests of God, and of Christ, they shall reign as kings with Him a thousand years.*

We will repeat once again that in my estimation those who sit upon the throne, who reign as kings with Christ a thousand years, are the ones who have talked and acted like Christ in religious matters throughout this, the Church Age. In other words, the faithful of the church are the ones who are to reign with Him in a special position during this thousand years upon earth.

We are going to close this scanning of the Kingdom Scriptures now, stating again that in my estimation, the Kingdom was established in a spiritual phase during the personal ministry of Jesus in the world. It was offered first to the Jews; they having rejected, the physical side of that thing faded into

the background for the time being. The stress was laid on the church of Jesus Christ as it had been revealed down through this, the Church Age.

It was gradually revealed that after this present age there would come that other age that can only be called the millennium when Christ should sit as King in Jerusalem over the earth. There will be the nation Israel, regathered in the twelve tribes, living in the Land of Promise, in the land of Canaan in the flesh. They will be claiming all the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant.

There will be Jesus glorified. There will be nearest to Him His glorified church. There will also be all the glorified saints of the past ages holding their positions meted out to them at the Judgment Seat of Christ. So, we enter into that peculiar, but glorious age for a thousand years. Then, as stated a while ago, every enemy has been overcome by Christ as the Son of Man.

Every principality and power has been cast down. The victory of the Son of Man over the devil is completed as to every detail in the presence of all the intelligence of the universe. Then, the Son delivers His Kingdom to the Father and the Son does not go off yonder in a corner and take a back seat. The Son and the Father come together in unity of labor, as they have had unity of purpose all the way down through, even back in eternity.

But, all the redeemed enter into the eternal Heaven Ages and from there on, I think I am going to have to wait a while to know much about what it will be like. If the Bible tells us whole lot about these Heaven Ages, I don't have what it takes to understand it.

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD

## LECTURE #6

I think again tonight we ought to try to review a few of the higher points before we take up where we left off last time. John the Baptist came proclaiming the Kingdom was at hand. Jesus took up that same message when He began His public ministry. There is sufficient evidence in my mind that the Kingdom actually became an established fact during the personal ministry of Jesus.

That the Kingdom existed in the world today in the spiritual phase or aspect and the physical phase of it will come in the future age which we commonly call the millennium. The Kingdom appeal was made first to the Jewish people, the best I can tell from three different angles.

The Kingdom appeal seems to have been first and foremost to the official religious groups who were congregated in Jerusalem. These were the Chief Priests, the Scribes, the Elders, the Sanhedrin Court. In addition to this appeal to that religious group, later there was made an appeal to the various cities and villages round about the country. Besides these two appeals, from the very beginning there was a personal appeal made to all Jews. *Every one of you repent as an individual, every one of you believe the gospel.* Those who did repent and believe the gospel were baptized and prepared for church membership.

In the course of the ministry of Jesus there was a gradual turning of affairs. From the beginning there was an unfriendly attitude on the part of religious authorities in Jerusalem, and Jesus gradually turned from that group and made His appeal more to the masses of Jewish people.

As the time of the crucifixion and the completion of His personal ministry drew near, other things began to become more evident. One was that the Kingdom was not coming in its fullness at that time. Another was that the church began to come more and more into prominence. More and more began to be revealed about the church as she began to run her course through this Church Age.

I think I pointed out the last time that the Scripture evidence is to the effect that the Passover that was observed in Jerusalem a year before the crucifixion of Jesus. He did not attend. The religious opposition in Jerusalem was so strong and so bitter that it seems He avoided going to Jerusalem to the Passover at that time. Instead He went up to the north country, the very border land of Palestine and ministered unto some Gentiles, foretelling how that the gospel and the church should later go to the Gentiles, or the various nations of the world.

Then, in the fall of that last year of His public ministry, He did go to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Tabernacles. After the Feast of the Tabernacles was over, He did not return to Galilee as He had been accustomed to doing. He remained in Judea in and around Jerusalem for a period of six months. At the end of that time, He was crucified.

The Kingdom Scriptures with which we are dealing tonight were spoken during the last six-month period when Jesus was in and around Jerusalem. He was in almost constant conflict with the Jewish religious authorities there. Most of the Scriptures we have to deal with tonight are parables and the statement that most of them are rather lengthy will become evident. The only thing I know to do is to read these parables as hastily as we can and then point out some of the outstanding lessons that are brought out in them. So, from that standpoint we are not going to cover a great deal of ground, and if there are points that I overlook, I wish you would make a note of those and bring them up later. I will be glad to discuss them with you if I am able to do so.

We begin tonight with one of these parables recorded in Luke 19:11-26, *They having heard these things adding, He spoke in parables because he was near Jerusalem and they thought that immediately, the Kingdom of God was about to be manifested* (now that is the fullness of the Kingdom, the millennium in other words). *He said therefore, a certain nobleman went into a far off land to receive to himself a Kingdom and to return, calling his three bondservants. He gave them ten Minas* (I have forgotten what the common version calls this sum of money, but that's what it is anyway), *and said to them, Trade ye with them until I return. But, his townsmen hated him and*

*they sent an embassy after him saying, we do not wish this man to be king over us. It came about when he returned having received the Kingdom that he said to these servants to whom he had given the silver to be called of him in order that he might know how each one had traded. The first came into his presence, saying, Lord thy mina gained ten Minas. He said to him, Well done thou good and faithful servant, because in the least thing thou hast been faithful. Have authority over ten towns. The second one came saying, Thine mina, Lord gained five Minas, and he said to this one, Even thou shalt be over five towns. And the other came saying, Behold thy mina which I have laid up in a napkin, for I feared thee because thou art an hard man, taking up, reaping what thou did not sow. He said to him, Out of thy mouth I will judge thee, evil servant. Thou knewest I am an hard man, taking up what I did not lay down, reaping that what I did not sow. Why didst thou not give my silver to the money changer and I am coming, would receive it with interest. The one standing by, He said, Take ye away from him the mina and give it to the ten Minas. They said to him, Lord, he has ten Minas. I say to you that to everyone having, it is to be given. But, to the one not having, even what he has shall be taken away. Furthermore, these mine enemies who did not wish me to be king over them, leave them here, and slaughter them in my presence. Having said these things, He went before going up to Jerusalem.*

That is the time He went to Jerusalem and was crucified about a week later. There are two main points, I think, to be brought out in this parable about the nobleman, or the Lord who went on a journey to a far country.

It seems evident to me that the Lord of that nobleman who went on the journey is Christ leaving this world, going to heaven to remain there during this, the Church age. In His absence, He called Him His three servants. He delivered his money over to them, told them to trade with it, make more money. To me that is the Great Commission that is given to the church to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, etc.

In the course of affairs, one of these servants prospered. He worked hard at the business that his Lord had committed to him, gained double the resources he had to start with. When the Lord had reckoning with him, he

was given authority over ten cities. That had to do, in my mind with the rewards that the faithful servants of the Lord are to receive at the end of this age when we come before Jesus for judgment concerning our religious works in the world.

There is another who was also judged and found faithful. He was also rewarded. The third had hid his Lord's money, and had not gained anything by trading therewith, and the judgment on was that the money was taken away from him and given to the one who had prospered the most. To me, if we as churches, or individuals are not faithful and diligent in the trust of the gospel that is committed to us, that the Lord just abandons us to our own devices. He calls others to carry out the Great Commission and so, we are just forsaken of the Lord so far as those whom He especially calls and commissions to preach His gospel to the ends of the earth.

There is another element in this parable that seems to be separate and distinct from the dealings of this Lord and His servants. That is, when he was gone, his fellow townsmen sent the word and said, *We will not have this man to rule over us*. It seems to me like that is the Jewish people who rejected Christ as the head of their religious system and it tells how that when the Lord came back, they were likewise judged, and severely.

It says here that they were commanded to be slaughtered. Now, we are not to understand that the Jewish nation is to be destroyed in the end of the world, and so far as that is concerned. That is my notion about those fellow townsmen who refused the rule of the Lord, who is Christ, that are the Jewish people.

With that parable and our scanning of the Kingdom Scriptures, we come to the last week of the public ministry in the world. The beginning of that week is marked by one of the most peculiar situations to me in the New Testament Scriptures. That is the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

We will now read several Scriptures dealing with that subject. Matthew 21:7, *They brought the donkey and the colt, they put upon it their garments, and He sat upon them*. That refers to the garments of the people, but He rode this donkey colt. That is a peculiar thing intimated right there. During the

wilderness temptation of Jesus, when He was in the wilderness forty days and nights, one of the gospels states that He was with the wild beasts in that period of time. Evidently, He walked and lived among them on friendly terms. That intimates to us that there was not the enmity between Jesus and the beast world. I have often wondered what would have happened if a rattlesnake had bitten Jesus before the time of His death. It is quite possible that a rattlesnake would not have bitten Him in the first place.

The thing that brought all that up is the fact that Jesus rode an animal into Jerusalem that had never been ridden by man before. Such animals we usually have to break to ride. Evidently, He rode that donkey colt without any incident at all. I think the import is to teach us now there was not that enmity between Him and the animal creation that exists between mankind in general and the animal creation. That is sin in mankind that is the cause of that enmity, too.

We pass on to Matthew 21:4, 5 closely related to the verse we just read. This came about in order that there might be fulfilled the things spoken about through the prophets, saying, *Say to the daughter of Zion, behold thy king comes to thee meek, mounted upon a donkey and upon a colt, the son of the yoke animal.* That is another statement concerning the manner of His journeying, the triumphant entry.

Matthew 11:8-10, *Many spread their garments in the road, and other cutting off their branches out of the field. The ones going before and the ones following cried, Hosanna, blessed is the one coming in the name of the Lord, blessed is the coming Kingdom of our father, David. Hosanna in the highest.*

On that same subject, John 12:15, *Hear thou not the daughter of Zion, behold, thy King cometh, sitting on the colt of a donkey.* John 12:13, *They cried out, Hosanna, blessed is the one coming in the name of the Lord and the King of Israel.* I think that is all the Scriptures then, dealing with the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. It is important to understand the fact that he had already had many experiences with these people before, and generally speaking, their reception had not been favorable.

Now, as His face is set to go to Jerusalem, and it was set to go there in order to accomplish His crucifixion a week later. It was seemingly without due cause for it, being in their own minds, this great multitude gathered and proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, the King of Israel, the Son of the great King David. They also sang *Hosanna unto God* because of the apparent coming of the Kingdom in its fullness at that time.

I don't pretend to have any sure explanation as to why things happened as they did. Here is one thing that I offer, tentatively on this subject. It has been pointed out that from the beginning the Kingdom appeal and the gospel appeal, in general, was made first to the official religious group in Jerusalem. They never did favorably receive Jesus. Their attitude was always one of animosity and opposition. I'm pretty well of the opinion that the Kingdom of God cannot come to Israel in its fullness until there is a wholesale and whole hearted turning of that nation unto Christ. So, my idea of what the situation actually was at this time is that the masses of the people, at least a great portion of them had turned to Jesus and accepted the message He had to offer them.

It was they, the common people, the masses of the people who here proclaimed Him the Son of David, the King who would bring the fullness of the Kingdom to Israel. Those were their sentiments. That was their desire, but without the consent and reception of that religious group in Jerusalem, that order of things could not come in. It makes sense as to why the masses of the people gave this great demonstration in favor of Jesus, and yet, only a week later, He was crucified.

He, Himself said that it was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the Chief Priest, and the scribes and elders. These were the ones whom He branded with His own mirth, to be killed and on the third day rise again. The thing I have just tried to outline to you makes sense to me as to why things happened the way they did. Otherwise, the situation is absolutely contradictory. So, on this occasion, there was a mighty demonstration as the people rejoiced and reclaimed Him as the King of Israel.

We will pass from that and note another parable of our Lord, spoken during that last week. Matthew 21:28-32, *How does it seem to you? A man had two children. Coming to the first, he said, Go thou this day and work in the vineyard. He answering said, I will not. Later, changing his mind, he went. Coming to the second, he said likewise, he answering said, I will, but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of the father? They say, The first. Jesus says to them, truly, I say unto you, the publicans and the harlots go before you into the Kingdom of God, for John came to you in the way of righteousness, ye did not believe Him. But, the publicans and the harlots believed him, but ye beholding did not change your minds that later ye might believe him.*

If you are following me in the common version that last verse I read might sound a good deal different in your version from the way I read it. We will try to get back to that in just a few minutes. The lesson in particular parable seems to be evident enough. When the gospel appeal was made to the people, the religious leaders and those, whose religion was accepted in the land, rejected Christ and His message. The publicans, who were nothing religiously, the harlots, who nothing religiously or morally, received this message which was rejected by those who would have presumably accepted it more readily. So, there is what He is driving at in the parable of the sons in the shaping up of things.

He said to those publicans and harlots, and the Gentile nations in general, *Come and work in my vineyard.* They said, *We won't do it.* He said to the Jews, *You come to work in my vineyard.* They had said, *We will,* but they hadn't done it. When this gospel appeal comes, these publicans and harlots meet the terms of the gospel right along with the Gentile nations. The Jews refuse and they are the ones who said they would work in the vineyards, abut did not do so.

The latter verse I read, I think, is one of the very fundamental New testament Scriptures teaching us the steps or the process whereby a lost soul, or a sinner comes to Christ for salvation.

Let's read it again with that idea in mind. *For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and ye did not believe him.* John came in a way after the manner of life of the Old Testament Nazarites and that couldn't be offensive to the Pharisees, or any other self-righteous group. He says, *Now, despite the testimony of the life of John the Baptist, you did not believe him, but the publicans and harlots believed him.*

This other now is the thing I wanted to point out especially, *But ye believing, did not change your minds.* I believe the common version says there, *But ye, believing did not repent that afterward ye might believe him.* I think I have given the exact import of it, that the Pharisees beheld the works and heard the words of both John the Baptist and Jesus. Instead of changing their minds, presenting a favorable attitude toward the common gospel appeal, they hardened their hearts against them. They shut up their minds against the truths that were preached to them, did not give favorable consideration to it.

I think right there is where the responsibility of lost souls comes in. A man can't repent of himself. A man cannot exercise faith of himself. Some people have recognized that fact and have taken a hardshell, or fatalistic position on the whole thing. They were utterly wrong because there is a point where the individual has the initiative and responsibility. When we hear the gospel in any senses as lost souls, then it becomes our responsibility, one way or the other. We must either give favorable consideration to it, or cast it out of our minds. My Bible teaches me that if lost souls give a far and favorable consideration to the gospel appeal, then what happens next? He says that later you might believe him.

From there on it becomes the responsibility of the Holy Spirit to convict that sinner of sin to at least help him to genuine repentance and exercising faith in Jesus Christ. But, absolutely now, before the Holy Spirit takes over and leads that sinner to full repentance and the exercising of faith, that sinner has got to make a decision and disposition in his own mind and heart, and give his consent before the Spirit does bring him to repentance and salvation. I think this is very forcefully fully brought out when we understand what Matthew 21:32 actually says.

We go on to Matthew 21:33-46, *Hear ye another parable. There was a man of household who planted a vineyard and he set a hedge about it and dug in a wine vat. He built a tower and let it out to a husbandman and went on a journey. The season of the fruit drew near and he sent his bondservants to receive his fruit. The husbandman, taking his servants, one indeed they beat. One they killed, and one they stoned. Again, he sent other bondservants, more than the first ones and they did likewise. Later, he sent to them his own son, saying, they will honor my son. The husbandmen, beholding the son said within themselves, this one is the heir, come yet, let us kill him, we shall have his inheritance. Taking him, they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the Lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do to those husbandmen? They said to him, Either he will destroy these evil men, the vineyard ye will let out to other husbandmen who will give him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus answered them, do you never read in the writings of stone which the ones building disapproved. This one became the head of the corner. This came about in the Lord and is marvelous in our eyes. On account of this, I say to you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and given to a nation bearing fruits of it. The chief priests and the Pharisees, hearing His parable knew that He spoke concerning them. Seeking to seize Him they feared the crowds since they held Him to be a prophet.*

That is the parable and it seems to me that the interpretation is evident on the surface of things. Because the coming of Jesus into the world. God sent many prophets unto them to try to draw them away from their evil ways to walk in paths of righteousness before God. They killed and stoned these prophets and rejected them.

Then, God sent His own Son, Jesus Christ to them and they killed him likewise. They said, *We are the inheritance ourselves.* They simply wanted salvation by works, and He goes on then and says the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation bringing forth fruits of it. That, to my mind, is not a thing in the world but the taking of the gospel and the church economy from the Jewish nation as such, and giving it to the other nations of the world. It is a prophecy, in other words, of the Gentile church. Then, there is in closing of that passage the idea these Pharisees

wanted to seize Jesus, but the crowds were favorable to Him and they feared the crowd.

We next pass to Matthew 22:1-4, *Jesus answering again spoked to them in parables saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a man, a king made a marriage feast for his son, sent his servants to call the ones who had been called to the marriage feast and they did not wish to come. Again, he sent other servants saying, say ye to the ones who have been called, Behold, I have prepared my meal. My ox and my stall fed animals have been slaughtered and all things are ready, come, eat of the marriage feast. They, being unconcerned, went away, one indeed to his field, on to his merchandise, the other seizing his servants mistreated and killed them. The King was wrathful and sending his soldiers, He destroyed these murderers and he burned their cities. Then, He says to his servants, Indeed the marriage feast is ready, but the ones who have been called are not worthy. Go ye therefore unto the crossings of the roads and whomsoever they found, both the evil and the good. The bride chamber was filled with those inclined. The King, entering in to behold the ones reclining, saw there a man not clothed in a wedding garment, and he says to him, Friend, how comest thou in here, not having a wedding garment? He was silent. The King said to His servants, bind him hand and feet, cast ye him into the outside darkness; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

That is another of those parables that deals with the turning of events and has to do evidently with the Jews and their rejection of Christ. They had been previously invited to this marriage feast and when the occasion arrived, all the servants did was not to go out and announce the marriage feast as a new thing, but just that thing you have been waiting for all the time. It is now ready and when the servants went, the Jews refused to come. The servants in the parable, it seems to me, would be such characters as John the Baptist, Jesus and perhaps, the apostles.

The Jews rejected Him, and so there was the turning to the other nations. They were gathered in to partake of the marriage supper. Again, it is the Gentile church in my way of seeing it. Now, this man who was found at this wedding feast is a hard character for me to identify definitely. Here is my

suggestion about it. It would refer to the saved person, or saved people whose religious works have not been Scriptural and legitimate when they lived their lives here in this world, and that He is rejecting them from this supper.

But, come to think of it, there is something else that enters in here because it says, *The king said to the servants, bind him hand and feet and cast him into the outside darkness and there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.* Then it says, *For many are called, few are chosen, or elected.* That makes this thing have somewhat the appearance of that this man just hadn't met the condition of salvation in the first place.

I offer still another possibility as we pass. We would regard this man from the institutional standpoint, rather than from the individual standpoint – that it represents not individuals at all, but the religious bodies or institutions that do not conform to the Scripture teachings. They do not take the Bible as the Word of God, and the New Testament as the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice. A full discussion of that takes more time, so we will pass for the time being.

Mark 12:28-34, Coming forward, one of the scribes having heard their questionings, beholding He answered them well, asked Him, *What is the first commandment of all? Jesus answered, The first is, Hear thou Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, thou shalt love the Lord thy God out of all thy heart, out of all thy soul, and out all thy understanding and all thy mind. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Greater than these, there is not another commandment. The scribes said to Him, well done, Teacher, and truth thou sayest. There is one God, there is not another beside Him. Love Him out of all thy heart, out of all thine understanding, and out of al thy might; love thy neighbor as thy self, more abundant is than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices. Jesus beholding him that he answered understandingly, said to him, Thou art not far off from the Kingdom of God, and no one any more dared to question Him.*

I would like mighty well to know myself what Jesus implied by telling the scribe that he is not far off from the Kingdom of God. I see this possibility –

This scribe was a saved man, a Pharisee religiously exactly the way we have people who are saved people. Religiously they are Catholics and they are all kinds of Protestants. Therefore, there are some saved, even though they are utterly wrong as to their general beliefs and practices. Jesus was telling him, *Now you are getting very near the fundamentals of the truth.* It doesn't make any particular difference with me whether that is the way it is or whether He is telling this man that as much understanding as you have of religious things, it would be mighty easy for you to go on from where you are and get saved. Regardless as to how that may be, Jesus does set forth here the principle of love as the great fundamental working of the Church Dispensation.

There is a lesson right there that our people ought to learn and never forget. Take the subject of church discipline, for instance. If the church acts in a true Christian love in calling her members to ask, then the thing can be done successfully and to the glory of God. Anytime a church enters into the matter of church discipline with any spirit of malice, or on the legalistic basis, I think you would just about as well to let the thing go entirely. If the church can't repent and grieve over the sin that the individual has committed, I believe you would be better off just to let the thing rest until you get to where the church can repent and grieve over that thing. That is because love is the principle that makes the church of Jesus Christ work.

*Matthew 24:11-14, Many false prophets shall rise up and they shall deceive many. On account of the multiplying of lawlessness, the love of many shall become cold; the one remaining patient to the end, this one shall be saved. This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached until all the world for a testimony to all nations, then the end shall come.*

The Kingdom reference there is in the statement, *This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached unto all the world for a testimony to all nations, and then the end shall come.* Some of the Kingdom references are indefinite to my mind. I don't know whether He is talking about the Kingdom as he speaks of the Kingdom Gospel here. To my mind, we have in this passage one of the most difficult Scriptures to deal with that we have in the New Testament, *But the one remaining patient to the end, this one shall be saved.*

To get this thing straight, what is He talking about? He is talking about the end of the age. He is talking about the Great Tribulation. He is talking about the exceeding trying times to come when Antichrist makes his appearance on the world scene. He is not saying that the one that remains patient to the end is going to be saved in the sense that he will escape hell, and be reckoned as one of the children of God. He is saying, rather, that he is going to be saved from the deception of Antichrist. That is in keeping with the context, and the background on the passage of Scripture.

You say, “Well, what application might it have to me if Antichrist doesn’t come in my time?” Here is what application it would have to you if Antichrist doesn’t come for two generations yet. If you remain patient, content with the New Testament as your all-sufficient rule of faith and practice, then you are going to be saved from going off into religious error and deception yourself. You will be saved in that way, but you will probably be saved in another way. That is this – that though you are a child of God yourself, if you depart from the New Testament faith, you will probably contribute to your grandchildren not being saved and becoming victims of the Antichrist.

How would you like that? Though you, yourself are saved, and in heaven with the glorified saints? How would you like to look down on earth and say that because of my unfaithfulness, because of my lack of integrity to the truth when I was in the world, there is my grandchild down there now in the Great Tribulation, unsaved and the victim of Antichrist? That is exactly the kind of salvation I think it is talking about here. So we pass that particular passage with those words.

Luke 21:29-33, *He spoke a parable to them, Behold ye the fig tree and all the trees, and already they have put forth. Look for yourselves, you know that already the end is near. Thus even you when ye beheld these things coming about know ye that the Kingdom of God is near. Truly, I say to you, this generation shall not pass away, but my words shall not pass away.* Here He is speaking of the last days, and the signs that are to keep the generation in the last days. The time for the Second Coming of Christ is at hand.

I think the saints have looked for Christ in every generation since He left the world. I think, on the other hand, that the generation living when He comes is going to have more sure signs than those who have gone on before have had. One of these sure signs is the regathering of the Jewish nation in the land of Palestine and the formation, the movement toward the formation of a world government and the world religious system. There are some more sure signs, I think, that we are to have to go on in the latter days. The amazing thing is that whenever you see these sure signs like the fig tree doesn't bud sprouts in the spring, it comes out late, and you know when the fig tree begins to put out leaves, cold weather is behind and hot weather is coming.

He said likewise, when you see these certain signs coming, well, you know this thing is right at hand. He goes on to say that this generation shall not pass away until all these things are fulfilled.

That would be a good place to do some hair-raising preaching as far as that is concerned. That would be to the effect that unless we are terribly deceived, the young folks who are here tonight may rather confidently expect to see the days when Antichrist appears on the scene. Even middle-age folks may rather confidently expect to still be living when Christ comes for His saints. That is exactly what it adds up to. You may say, "If that is so, or even if that is even a probability, why don't we start getting excited over this thing?" Well, it is about time to, I believe. I believe that it is, as far as that is concerned.

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD

## LECTURE #7

God originally devised man to be a king and to rule the earth in righteousness. There is the fundamental idea of the Kingdom. Throughout the Old Testament dispensation there were various moves and efforts made toward establishing this goal in the world. However, it was never accomplished. Then when the New Testament dispensation began to come in, the first move that was made in that time was the ministry of John the Baptist. He came preaching to the Jews, *Repent ye, for the Kingdom of God (or the Kingdom of the Heavens) is at hand.*

John announced or introduced the Kingdom, he did not establish it. He made no claim in that direction at all. Jesus soon followed him as the Messiah, or the Anointed one who had been promised to Israel and who came first to Israel. I think beyond a doubt Jesus actually established the Kingdom and that the Kingdom has been in operation in the world since early in the ministry of Jesus.

The Kingdom, to my mind, is defined as righteous men under Christ ruling the earth in righteousness. As we pointed out earlier, the Kingdom of God is not in operation in a physical phase today. It has its manifestation in the working of the churches of Jesus Christ.

Before we take up Scripture scanning tonight, we need to notice some definite moves that have gone on before. In the first place, when a Kingdom was established in Israel under David, automatically all Israelites came into that Kingdom and became citizens of it. This was true whether they were saved or not, regardless to whether they were capable of being saved, they became citizens of that Kingdom.

That Kingdom embraced a nation as such. When John the Baptist came with his ministry, he insisted on the proposition that every individual, every responsible individual in the nation repent as a personal matter and personal responsibility. This teaches us that this Kingdom that Jesus had come to establish was different from that of David. This Kingdom is to be composed

only of saved people, and then, incidentally, people who submit themselves to the spiritual rule of Jesus Christ.

Some other things we ought to notice are that when Jesus began to preach the Kingdom message. He preached only to the Jews. The purpose and intent of God seem to have been that the Jews should have the inside position in the Kingdom affairs. Then, it was to be built around them. I don't think there is any doubt that God meant go bring those other nations into this new economy of things, but it was not done until the Jews made their decision either for or against it.

Jesus continued making this Kingdom appeal to the Jews for about three years, or more. During that period of time, the religious authorities in Jerusalem manifested themselves evermore unfriendly toward Jesus and His cause. He went to the Passover Feast in Jerusalem each year, but in between the Passovers He would spend a large majority of His time up in Galilee where the common people lived. They received Him more favorably than the Jewish religious leaders did in Jerusalem. We come to John 17:1, *Then Jesus walked no more in Judea, but He walked rather in Galilee, because the Jews sought to kill Him.*

There isn't any positive proof one way or another that I know of, but the evidence seems to be in favor of that proposition that Jesus did not attend the Passover Feast that took place one year before His crucifixion. The Scriptures rather give us this impression that while the other Jews were at Jerusalem observing the Passover Feast, Jesus went away off yonder to the very border land of Israel. He taught His disciples in the region of Caesarea Philippi. He spoke the parable of the Bread of Life to His disciples. Some think this was at the same time the Passover Feast was under way yonder in Jerusalem.

There is a foreboding of what was to come later, that He didn't go to Jerusalem because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. He went to the extremes of the land, and there, in a way at least, He made an appeal to the Gentiles as we commonly call them.

Shortly after this Passover that we think Jesus did not attend, He was back in Galilee. Instead of staying down in Jerusalem minding their own business, these Jewish religious authorities sent priests and Levites up there to question Him. Their hope was to entrap Him and to make trouble for Him even up in the land of Galilee. That is just about where matters stand when we take up tonight.

We have set forth a few of the Scriptures that deal with the time of the last year of the public ministry of Jesus. His last year is divided into two definite periods. In the fall of that year Jesus did go to Jerusalem to the Feast of Tabernacles. When it was over, he did not go back to Galilee as had been His custom. He stayed there in Jerusalem and in the land of Judea. In a manner of speaking, He had it out constantly with those Jews on religious things.

For the present time we are dealing with those Scriptures that tell about the first half of that last year of the public ministry of Jesus. He was up in the region of Galilee; the Jews have pretty well expressed their decision and position. The result is that Jesus began to deal with His teachings less and less with the Jewish nation as such, and more and more addressed the church and what it is to become in this the Church Age.

There is also that matter of Jesus preaching that gospel of the Kingdom. In connection with that, He commanded the healing all the sicknesses and diseases among the people. The only thing I can make out of that is that He was demonstrating and exhibiting to the Jews what the fullness of the Kingdom would be like, and if and when it should come. In other words, Jesus demonstrated the millennium when He preached the Kingdom gospel to the Jewish people. It became more evident that the Jews were not going to accept Him as the Messiah and the message of personal repentance that He had for the Jews. More and more He began to reveal to His disciples what the working of the church is to be in this, the Church Age. It is in the midst of teachings of that nature a revelation of what the church is to be like, how many church members are to conduct ourselves.

It is in the midst of teachings like that where we take up tonight and we are going to notice Mark 9:42-50, and perhaps just read two or three of them. *And whosoever may ensnare one of two of these little ones believing, it would be better for him if a millstone was suspended from his neck, and he were cast into the sea.* Then He goes on to talk about, *If thy hand offend or ensnare thee, cut it off, and thy foot, etc.* And He concludes that saying with this statement, *It is better for thee one-eyed to enter into the Kingdom of God, than having two eyes to be cast into Gehenna where their worm does not come to an end and the fire is not quenched, for everyone shall be salted with fire, the salt is good, but if the salt should become unsalt, with what will ye season it?*

Frankly, such passages of Scriptures as this are as hard for me to interpret to my full satisfaction as any I know of in the New Testament. Here are some things that happened – the disciples were asking Jesus some of the details of the Kingdom. He said first, *Except ye come as a little child, ye shall not by any means enter into the Kingdom.* That teaches us that humility and simple faith are the prerequisites, or way of entering into the Kingdom.

In other words, repentance and faith in Jesus Christ is the way we are saved, or enter into the Kingdom. Using the figure of that little child, He referred to His own disciples as the little ones, or the little children. These were not little children. They were grown men and women. They are little children in the fact that they were saved on the simple faith of the little child. After they were saved they walked in the simple faith of the little child and on the basis of New Testament Scriptures.

That is evidence enough for these parables about the little children. It is grown folks who walk in faith in the manner of little children. However, then we come to the rest of that proposition where it says, *If thy hand offend thee, cut it off, and thy eye offend thee, pluck it out. It is better to enter into the Kingdom with one eye, one hand, etc., than with both hands and both eyes to be cast into the Gehenna of fire,* which I take it the same eternal lake of fire in the book of Revelation.

Just what does that mean? Does it mean that we, when we are saved, do not obey God, if we do not walk according to His commandments that we will lose our salvation? We cannot stand on the proposition like that because the other teachings of the Scripture absolutely deny any such position as that. One of the dangerous things in the world is to try to establish an important or fundamental religious doctrine on an obscure or uncertain passage of Scripture. This does not teaching falling from grace.

But what is it if your hand offend you and your eye, and you cut it off or pluck it out. Here is what I think it is – with reference to the Jews. They had the traditions of the fathers and they had the law of Moses, from which they had departed, as far as that is concerned. They said, *Now this is right, and anything that comes up to the contrary is just wrong and that is all there is to it.* In that, they allowed their hand and their foot to offend them. They refused to cut off those offending hands, those offending eyes, and feet, etc.

What is the result? If a person is already saved when he does a thing like that, he does not lose his salvation over. He does lose his Christian influence. He, himself will not be cast into the Gehenna of fire but his false religious position will more than likely point his children, his friends, and other people over whom he has some influence away from the right way of salvation and direct their steps down toward that devil's hell. That is the only way in the world that I know to deal with this proposition of cutting off the hand and foot, etc., lest that some should land in the Gehenna of Fire as the result thereof.

Now, you look here! Let us look matters squarely in the face for once. Some religious folks teach salvation by grace. We as Baptists do. We are the only people that I know of who do stand strictly on the ground of salvation by grace. We say that is the only way it is, and the Bible says that also. Other religious folks teach that salvation is either entirely, or in part by works. All right, if that is so, then they are teaching a false gospel and a false doctrine and people are not saved on the basis of a false doctrine or false gospel.

I think a lot of people are saved in those bodies, as far as that is concerned. However, they are saved in spite of what they are taught in the church,

instead of being saved by what is taught in their church. That is hard doctrine, but we came up with this conclusion that if a religious body is teaching salvation either in part or entirely by works, it is pointing everyone who comes under their influence toward hell instead of heaven. You think it out and see if that is not so. I think that is the thing that Jesus is really driving at here. Both as individuals and as churches, or religious bodies, if you have anything anywhere to keep you from coming to the full knowledge of the truth, and then standing on it, you had better get rid of that thing. Souls of men are the things that are held in the balance. If they go down to hell as a result of false and erroneous instructions, regardless of how dear that falsehood might be to the hearts of those who hold on to it.

Then, He goes on with a peculiar turn of His statement, *Everyone shall be salted with fire. The salt is good, if the salt shall become unsalt, with what shall he season it?* Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that the church is the salt of the earth. Salt does two things – it gives good flavor and it preserves. That is the office that the church of Jesus Christ is to carry out in the world. It is to season the world with the truth that it upholds and proclaims the world may be saved. That is, those of the world that will accept the salvation in Jesus Christ.

Then, if the salt loses its savor, or its quality of salt, well, it just loses it. It loses its power and quality to do what is supposed to do in the world. Bring the thing right down to earth. Suppose this church embraces false religious doctrines and practices. Right then and there, you chose to perform the office that Jesus has commissioned you to perform in the world. You lose your seasoning quality and your quality of preservation and its warning to churches allowing doctrinal and practice errors to creep into the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. I think that is the climax and the goal to which He has been driving throughout this parable.

We, of course, run into these complicated situations and it takes a good deal of time to deal with them, even briefly. We pass next, calling attention to the fact as we pass that Jesus is no longer talking to the Jews, as such. He is talking now in terms of the church of Jesus Christ. He is instructing the

church members how we are to stand and conduct ourselves when matters of doctrine and New Testament practices come up.

Matthew 18:21-35, *Then Peter, coming forward said to Him, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I shall forgive him, until seven times?* That seems to ring a familiar bell. Brother Peter was wanting a legal basis upon which to stand. He was wanting to know just how far he was to go in wanting to stand on legal grounds before God, that is exactly what he wanted to do. Jesus says to him, *I do not say unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven times. On account of all this, the Kingdom of Heavens is like to a man, a king who wished to have a reckoning with his servants. He, beginning to have the reckoning, there was brought to him one, a debtor of a thousand talents and he was not having wherewith to pay, the Lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, all things whatsoever he had and the debt to be paid.* Then, it goes on to tell how this servant who could not pay fell down on his knees and begged his Lord for mercy, and the Lord gave him the entirety of the debt. He went on his way and soon met a fellow servant who owed him a small debt. He demanded payment and the debtor had not wherewith to pay and begged for mercy and longsuffering. He refused to grant it, seizing this fellow servant, he began to exact from him the fullness of the payment.

Other servants went and told the Lord what had happened. The Lord was very wrathful because this servant would not deal with somebody else the way the Lord had dealt with him. So, the Lord came and demanded the fullness of the payment from the unforgiving servant.

What does that teach? It seems to me that the primary application is to the Jewish people. Insofar as humanity is concerned the Jews are not any more than any other people. Their precedence lay strictly in the fact that God had chosen them under the terms of the Abrahamic Covenant. Yet, they came to the position that they were not willing to deal with the rest of humanity by any means as God had dealt with them. Jesus, I think beyond a doubt, is attempting to point out to these Jews the reality of the selfish and haughty attitude that they had assumed. That made them not only to despise those of other nations, but made them reject Christ as Messiah. This forewarned them

of the severity of the judgment that was to fall upon them as the result of the haughty attitude they had taken.

We pass on, *But he said, first permit me to go and bury my father. He said to him, let the dead bury their dead, thou go forth and announce the Kingdom of God. Another said, I will follow thee, Lord, but first permit me to give orders to the ones in my house. Jesus said to him, No one putting his hand to the plow, and looking to the things behind it is not fit for the Kingdom of God.* That seems to me to be teaching to the church that those who commit themselves to this Kingdom economy are to put the things of God first and set out in the forefront, and the things of the world into the secondary position.

*Luke 10:1-11, After these things the Lord received seventy others and sent them in twos before His face and every town and place where He, Himself was about to come. He said to them, indeed the harvest is great, but the workers are few. Intercede ye with the Lord of the harvest then that he may cast forth workers into the harvest. Go ye, behold I send you forth workers into the midst of wolves. Then, don't carry a purse and extra provisions. Whatever house ye enter, first say ye, Peace to this house, and if the son of peace be there let your peace rest upon it. But, if not, let it return unto you.*

That is a peculiar situation. If these seventy are sent forth to cause sinners to repentance and salvation, then how could the Son of peace already be in this house into which they went? Here is exactly what I think the facts of this case are: A lot of these Jews scattered about over the country were already saved. These seventy were not sent out primarily or exclusively to preach the gospel of salvation. They were sent out to make the appeal to these Jews to make their final choice and decision as to whether they were going to accept Jesus of Nazareth as that Messiah, or not. It will add up that way, and that is the only way I know of that will add up.

He goes on and says, *Heal the sick and say to them, The Kingdom of God is drawn near unto you. Whatever town ye enter and they do not receive you, coming out in the streets midst, say ye, Even the dust clinging to our feet of your town, we wipe it off against you. But, assuredly know ye this, the*

*Kingdom of God has drawn near.* That is essentially, to my mind, the same thing in another place where He says, *It will be more tolerable to Sodom and Gomorrah than these places where this appeal was made and rejected in the day of judgment.*

In the day of judgment the descendants of these same Pharisees and Sadducees – well, they are identified with the Jewish religious groups today. They are going to accept Antichrist as Christ, and they are going to suffer terribly as the result thereof. There is the less tolerable condition, that some people enter into even such cities as Sodom and Gomorrah.

We come now to the last half of the ministry of Jesus, the last half year of the ministry of Jesus. As pointed out earlier in the fall of that year Jesus went to Jerusalem and observed the yearly Feast of Tabernacles. Instead of returning to Galilee when the feast was over, as He had been accustomed to doing, the Scriptures represent that He remained in Judea and in and around Jerusalem. He taught His own disciples many things on the one hand. He was in almost constant conflict with the Jews on the other.

In Luke 11:2 we have a Kingdom reference when He said, *When ye pray, say ye rather, let thy name be holy, let thy Kingdom come.* Now, that is the fullness of the Kingdom, or the millennium. The fact that we today are to pray for the coming of that Kingdom does not deny the fact that the Kingdom already exists in the world in the spiritual phase.

We go next to Matthew 23:15, *Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because ye shut up the kingdom of the Heavens against men.* They didn't want any Gentiles in. They didn't want people they called publicans and harlots and sinners. That is shutting up the Kingdom against men, I think.

*For ye do not enter in, nor the ones entering in, do you permit them.* Not only were they not conforming to the terms of the gospel of Jesus Christ themselves, but they were doing everything in the world they could to keep other people from coming to a knowledge of the truth. There is not any middle ground on this religious proposition, on the way we would like for it to be. As a religious people, we are either for Christ, or hindering that cause

and contributing to the cause of the devil and Antichrist. Thus, the same thing might be said of the religious world today, that instead of bringing people into the Kingdom, they are shutting the Kingdom and keeping people out by offering religious error in the place of religious truth, turning people to that religious error.

We note next Matthew 6:31-34, *Do not worry ye therefore, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or with what shall we be clothed? All these things do the nations seek after. Your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things. Look ye first to the Kingdom and righteousness and all these things shall be added to you. Do not worry ye about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself, sufficient to the day is the evil of it.*

This, of course, is taken from the Sermon on the Mount and it is a thing we ought to look after carefully. There are some religious fanatics, which is just a fancy word for fool as far as that is concerned, who get into a religious frenzy and refuse to take a practical viewpoint of life. They expect the Lord to feed them the way He fed Elijah at the brook in his flight from Jezebel. They come to starvation, and then, they have either got to steal or starve. That is not the thing that Jesus is setting forth here, at all. The opposite is pictured in the Scripture, where the rich man said, *I'll gather in my bountiful harvest, and then I will say to my soul, take thine ease and be merry, all thine needs are supplied, I am secure.*

But, the Lord said, *This night thy soul is required of thee.* The middle ground between these two is the ground on which the Scriptures and common sense should teach us to stand. The things of God and Kingdom affairs should come first, and will come first if our hearts are right before God. That does not teach us to ignore and neglect the practical side of life. You put the Kingdom first, but you do put making an honest living in the second position. You go about to make that honest living too, if you honor God in the way you ought to as you go down the way of life.

The only thing He is driving at here is that we not put material affairs ahead of spiritual affairs. If we would only get that, folks, we would make it a lot lighter on ourselves and we would not be such a hindrance to the Kingdom

progress. It is one of the hardest things in the world to get ourselves, as Baptist people, out of the habit of providing for our material needs and then, if there is anything else, we will give that, or some of it, to the cause of the Kingdom work of Jesus Christ. There are entirely too many of us that operate on that principle. The Kingdom things come first and material needs come in the secondary position.

Then, we read Luke 13:31, *Rather, seek ye His Kingdom and these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock, because the Father is pleased to give to you the Kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms. Make yourselves deposits not growing old, a treasure laid up in heaven; where a thief does not draw near, and rust does not destroy.* That teaches, to my mind, essentially the same thing as the other passages we read, except that He says that it is to this little flock He is going to give the Kingdom. I think this is people who are born into the Kingdom when they are saved. However, the Kingdom authority and administration are in the hands of the church of Jesus Christ and that is who this little flock is.

Luke 13:29-30, *There shall be crying out and gnashing of teeth when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, and the Kingdom of God, and ye, yourselves cast outside.* That Kingdom, of course, is the millennium after the resurrection has come and those are the Jews who are addressed here. Here is what I think is going to happen – that some time during the Great Tribulation there is going to be the first resurrection, the rapture of the living saints, and all the glorified saints are going into this Kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, the Israelite people, the literal seed of Abraham, have rejected Christ and the Kingdom economy. They are cast out in that group left in the world and partly under the ravages and results of Antichrist. *They shall come from the east and the west and the north and the south and shall refine the Kingdom of God. Behold, their last shall be first and the first shall be last.*

We are Gentiles, so far as I know. When we come to the end of this world, the resurrection, the Great Tribulation, etc., we will be important in the Kingdom. Certainly we shall take great precedence over the Jewish people, speaking, of course, of saved people and faithful people.

Luke 14:15-20, *And a certain man made a great supper and called many. He sent his servant at the hour of the supper to say to the ones who had been called, Come ye, because all things are ready.* There is where these three began to make excuses. One said, *I have bought some land, and I can't come.* Another had bought some oxen and he couldn't come. The other had married a wife and he couldn't come. We notice this as we go along, that these people had been previously called before this invitation was given, or this call was made at the time the feast was ready.

This clearly identifies these servants as the Jews who had been called ever since they had possessed the oracles of God way back yonder in ancient times. Jesus had come into the world as the Messiah, and John, Jesus, and others go forth with the message the supper is ready, the Messiah is here now, and they refuse to come, it seems here, because they are too much involved in material things. It may imply that they are too much involved in an utterly fleshly religious system.

Then, the servants went out into the crossings of the road and the streets and gathered in whomsoever he might find there. To my mind, this simply is the bringing the Gentiles into the church and Kingdom economy.

Luke 17:20, 21, *Being asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God comes. He answering said, The Kingdom of God does not come with careful watching. For shall they say, Behold here or there, behold the Kingdom of God is in your heart.* There has been a great deal of argument and speculation about what that particular Scripture teaches.

Here is what I think there is to it. These Pharisees were looking for a Kingdom like that of David, and somewhat like the Kingdom will be in the millennium. Jesus told them in substance that at this particular time, the Kingdom was not coming in that guise, but the way it was at that time and the way it is today. That is not a thing that is seen with the natural eye. It is not a thing that is measured by material standard. The Kingdom is a spiritual thing, either within you, or in your midst, seen or comprehended by those who do not have the spiritual insight. I think the fact in the case is that the Kingdom was within the hearts of the disciples of Jesus who were right in

the midst of those Pharisees. The Pharisees could not sense or perceive its presence.

Matthew 19:12, *For their eunuchs who became thus from the womb of their mother, and their eunuchs who were made eunuchs of men, and their eunuchs who made themselves on account of the Kingdom of the Heavens, the one having power to contain, let him contain.*

The eunuch on account of the Kingdom of the Heavens there, to my mind, is about the same thing that Paul discusses in I Corinthians 7. Here he says that if a man or woman can live happily and satisfactorily without the marriage and family relationship that he or she can devote more time and energy to the Kingdom work of Jesus Christ. That is not a requirement and folks who are not so constituted by nature, are not advised or commanded by the Scriptures to attempt this manner of life.

Matthew 19:13, 14, *There were brought to Him little children in order that He might lay His hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked them. Jesus said to them, Permit the little children to come to me and forbid them not, for of such ones is the Kingdom of the heavens.* He reverts to the same manner of teachings that He had taught up in Galilee some months before. That is that people must come with the attitude of little children in order to be saved. If we would accept the Scriptures for what they are, and walk by them in the ways that are acceptable to the Lord.

Mark 10:13-16 is about the same thing, and I think we will not read that passage. We will look next to Luke 18:15. That is still the same thing and we will skip that, also.

Matthew 19:21-26, *Jesus said to His disciples, Truly, I say to you, that a rich man with much difficulty shall enter into the Kingdom of the Heavens. Moreover, again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go in through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of the Heavens. The disciples, having heard were greatly astonished, saying, Who therefore is able to be saved. Jesus, looking upon them said, With men, this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.* Now I think just before this rich man had turned back because he was not willing to sell all his

possessions and distribute them to the poor and go and follow Jesus as a pauper. Then, Jesus comments on this proposition. A man that is wealthy, a man who had put his trust in the things of the world, it is almost impossible, very hard, for him to surrender these things and come to the terms that Jesus demands.

*Well now, who can be saved? they said, Who can meet these qualifications? A man within himself cannot do it. With the help of God, any man who wants to can do so. It is only with the help of God in our salvation that we were enabled to forsake, surrender, and give up all the things of the world and trust in a God whom we have never seen. We were not able to do that of ourselves.*

*Luke 18:18-29, A certain chief one asked Him, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? There is no one good except one, and that is God. Thou knowest the commandments, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, and thou shalt not steal etc. He said, All these things I have kept from my youth. Jesus, hearing, said again, Yet one thing is lacking to thee. All things which thou hast, sell thou and distribute to the poor, and thou shall have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me. He heard this and he went away sorrowful because he had great possessions.*

Then, he again speaks about how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. Then, He said to His disciples, *Truly, I say unto you, there is no one who has left house or wife, or brother, or parents on account of the Kingdom of God who not by all means shall receive many fold in the present season and the coming age eternal life.*

For a long time, I regarded that as unerringly promising material prosperity to those who are faithful in service to Jesus Christ. It doesn't say so. It says he is going to get many-fold more in this present life. If we follow philosophy like that, we will come up to the conclusion that Stephen died because he was not faithful. We will come up with the conclusion that Paul's many sessions in jail, shipwreck, and all those other misfortunes he suffered came on him because he was not faithful to God. I can't get very

enthusiastic about that proposition – God is going to make rich men out of us if we are faithful in service to Him.

I think the thing He surely promises here is the satisfaction in life that comes from our spiritual experiences, regardless whether we are rich or poor in the material things of life. I know that not so many people are with me on that, but I just point out here that it says he shall receive many-fold in the present time. He doesn't say that this is many-fold is necessarily material wealth.

Matthew 21:16, *The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man, a householder, who went out at dawn to hire workers in the vineyard. He agreed with them for a price, and they went out and worked all day. Later in the day, he went to the marketplace and he found some more standing idle. He hired them and sent them to his field. At the eleventh hour, he went back to the market and found yet some and he hired them and they went and worked one hour. Evening came and the time to settle up. He paid those who had worked one hour the same that he did those who had worked twelve hours. Those who had worked twelve hours grumbled about this thing, said they ought to get more. Well, the Lord said, I gave you just exactly what I had promised and it is not any of your business if I go and give these others the same as I did to you.*

At a business decision, that doesn't look just on the square. The spiritual import of it evidently is that the Jews are the ones who had worked all the twelve hours of the day, and no, when Jesus comes to establish His Kingdom economy, He invites the Gentiles to come in on absolutely equal terms with the Jews. They didn't like that, of course. And that is my notion of the meaning of that particular Kingdom parable.

Matthew 20:23, the mother of the sons of Zebedee, with her sons came to Him, bowing and asking a certain thing of Him. She wanted her boys to sit on the right hand and the left hand of the Son of Man when He should come into His Kingdom, which is the millennial Kingdom. He said, *Were you able to drink of the cup that I drank of?* They said, *Yes, we can drink of that cup.* They didn't know what they were talking about, of course. And He said, *You are going to get a drink of that cup,* referring to the hardships and

persecution of the church. The He said, *Now who is going to sit on my right hand and my left hand? That is the Father's to give to whomsoever He will.*

What are we going to make of that? What is it to you that were born in this age when there is a church? What did you have to do with the fact that you were not born back yonder when Israel was under the law and you had a chance to enter into that Kingdom? What did you have to do with the fact that you were not born an American Indian back yonder when the gospel was not preached to them at all in the accepted sense of the term? You didn't have a thing in the world to do with it. So now, when you look at it from that standpoint, just how much have you got to brag about, anyway? In that, you flatter yourself that you are a faithful member of the church of Jesus Christ and therefore are worthy of a far greater reward than anybody else?

As I have said so many times, when the judgment day comes, I am mighty glad that the Lord is the one that is going to do the judging, meting out rewards, and not certain Baptist preachers that I know of. I believe He is just capable of doing a lot better job than these preachers I have heard render judgment on people for their religious works. Something like that is probably intimated when He says it is His Father's business to say who is to have such and such a position.

I say again in closing that I believe the Kingdom to be righteous men ruling in peace and righteousness under Christ.

# ABOUT THIS BOOK

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What is the Kingdom of God, when was it established, and how does its present spiritual work relate to its future manifestation under the reign of Christ? In seven lectures, Fred G. Stevenson traces the Kingdom theme through Scripture and examines its meaning for Christ, His church, and His people.

The studies move from Old Testament foundations to the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, the present work of the Kingdom, the responsibility of believers, and the promised millennial reign. Throughout, Stevenson urges readers to examine every conclusion carefully in the light of Scripture.

Originally transcribed from recorded lectures, this volume was compiled and provided by the author's son, Fred S. Stevenson.

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