

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THE subject of the Kingdom of God is far from being an unimportant one. Some people may be disposed to regard it as one simply of speculative interest; something that may be interesting to be known and to be thought about, but nothing of any vital consequence. Now, if we allow ourselves to be guided by the Scriptures in the matter, we must come to the conclusion that it stands in a very different position from this; that it is one of the subjects that ought to have our very first attention; that it is a subject which stands in the very fore-front of New Testament subjects, and that it is impossible to be a Christian, in the New Testament sense, without understanding and believing it. I will illustrate this point, before enquiring what the Kingdom of God is: that is, I will call your attention to the fact that the subject is a New Testament subject, and involves the first principles of the gospel, as found in the writings of the apostles. The evidence of this would begin with a statement by Christ himself, which we find in Matt. 6. 33: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness."

JESUS PREACHED THE KINGDOM OF GOD

We find that Jesus, in addition to exhorting men, in these general terms, to seek the Kingdom of God, preached the Kingdom of God, whatever "the Kingdom of God" may mean, leaving that for the present as a matter to be afterwards considered. In Luke 8. 1

We find this testimony: "It came to pass afterwards, that he (Jesus) went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God." The disciples, whom he associated with himself in the work, he also sent to preach the same thing, as appears in Luke 9. 2. At the first verse, he says: "Then he called his twelve disciples together . . . and he sent them to preach the Kingdom of God." And on a certain occasion, when Jesus had withdrawn from the multitude, and had taken refuge in

The privacy of the wilderness, it is said that the people, when they knew it, went to find him: "And he received them, and spoke unto them of the Kingdom of God " (Luke 9. 11). Not only was this his practice, but he speaks of himself, as recorded in Luke 4. 43, "I must preach the Kingdom of God to other cities also; for therefore am I sent." The prominence of the Kingdom of God, as part of the gospel Christ preached, is abundantly evident in other

portions of the New Testament I might quote; but as there is a wide field to traverse, I must content myself with these few citations, as showing Christ's practice while in the flesh, that is, before his death was an accomplished fact.

THE DISCIPLES PREACHED THE KINGDOM OF GOD WHILE YET IGNORANT CONCERNING THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

And before leaving that part of the subject, I would just throw in this consideration as an important one, and as one that helps as a guide to the subject in some slight degree: namely, that the disciples also preached the Kingdom of God with him, and yet were ignorant of that which was afterwards accomplished, and which constitutes the sum total of the gospel as clerically preached now-a-days; viz., the death of Christ. There is no doubt that the death of Jesus is the most vital element in the system of New Testament truth, if you may make a distinction between the elements of the gospel; but, nevertheless, to have the gospel that was preached by Jesus and his apostles, we must have all of it; and the fact to which your attention is invited in this particular matter is, that the disciples preached the gospel before they were aware that Jesus was to die. I must prove this fact, so important is it in its bearing upon the question. First, let the fact be proved that they preached the gospel.

In Luke 9. 6, we read: 'And they (the disciples) departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel.' Now for the second fact, namely, that while so engaged, they were ignorant of the truth that Jesus was to die; this is irresistibly proved by a statement that we read in Luke 18. 31: "Then he (Jesus) took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." Now, if the question be asked. What was it they preached while so preaching the gospel, seeing they were ignorant of Christ's approaching death? it is answered in Luke 9. 2: "He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God," whatever that may mean.

APOSTOLIC PREACHING AFTER DEATH OF CHRIST.

So much for the life of Christ, or rather, for the practice of Christ and his disciples, while he was still a sojourner in flesh, and in weakness. Now for the practice of the apostles after Christ died and rose again, and ascended to heaven; because it might be urged that that, after all, is the guide for us, as there is a later dispensation in relation to us than that which obtained in the days when Christ was on earth: that in these days there was a sort of interim dispensation reaching from the ministry of John the Baptist to the ascension of Christ; that although the Kingdom of God was preached by Jesus and his apostles whilst Jesus was on earth, it is not necessary to preach it now; that Jesus is in heaven, and that it does not form part of the gospel which we have to believe. Doubtless, there is a great safety in relying upon the preaching of the apostles after Christ rose from the dead and ascended to heaven: but we shall not find that in this matter there was any difference between the preaching before and the preaching after the death of Christ. We shall find that the preaching after is exactly coincident with the preaching before the ascension, with this difference, that there was superadded to the pre-ascensional proclamation the things concerning his death and resurrection. There was no abolition, no abandonment, no dropping of the proclamation that was made whilst he was in the flesh, viz., the things concerning the Kingdom of God.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF APOSTOLIC PREACHING.

Let this fact be proved. It is proved, amongst other testimonies, by Acts 8. 12. At the 5th verse, it says, "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them"; and if we ask what he preached in preaching Christ, the question is answered in verse 12; "When they (the people to whom Philip 'preached Christ') believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised both men and women." It follows that Philip preached the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and if Philip did so, so must the others have done. Reasonable people will admit that the practice of one apostolic preacher would be the practice of all; but, that no room may be left for suggesting that this was a preaching peculiar to Philip's individual case, and

does not apply to us, we have simply to take the example of Paul, and his case is especially binding on us, because he was the apostle of the Gentiles.

He was specially commissioned to go to the nations of the Roman Habitable and what he preached is what we Gentiles must believe if we would be saved. Here is the proof that Paul preached the Kingdom of God. The testimony is from his own mouth (Acts 20. 25), "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my face no more." This (Paul's) testimony of himself is confirmed by Luke's testimony as to Paul's practice, as found in the Acts of the Apostles 19. 8: "He (Paul) went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the Kingdom of God."

We find the same thing testified of him in the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and the 23rd verse: "When they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodgings, to whom he expounded and testified the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening." Then it is stated with regard to the Gentiles, "Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 28. 30, 31). If, therefore, we are to be guided by the New Testament in our practices and in our doctrines, we are bound, if we have the truth, to find some equivalent in our systems of preaching that will answer to this oft-repeated phrase—"The Kingdom of God."

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

So much by way of preliminary, and now comes the question, What is meant by "The Kingdom of God"? This is a most important question, because it cannot be that this is an idle phrase, a merely ambiguous flourish of words by which to designate in some general and indefinite manner the doctrines that were preached. It is too frequent in its occurrence, and too specific in its connections, to admit of such a suggestion as that. It must mean something in particular, something definite, something separate from the death of Christ, because it was preached by the apostles before they knew anything

about the death of Christ, because it is associated with the death of Christ afterwards by the conjunction "and"—"the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ." Therefore, it is most important to know what it was in their preaching that is thus designated.

FLESH AND BLOOD CANNOT INHERIT IT.

Now, without going to the Old Testament (which contains elaborate information on the subject), we shall find considerable light in the New Testament. We find, to begin with, that it is something prospectively related to those who believe the gospel, something not in their actual experience. This appears from a variety of statements. In 1 Cor. 15. 50, we read, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." If flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God it follows that the Kingdom of God is something mortal men have never seen, past or present. That Paul means flesh and blood in a bodily sense is evident from the context.

It is important to fence the passage against the suggestion that it means it in other than the bodily sense. Some might say that it means the fleshly mind, the disposition of the carnal mind, and that the meaning of the statement is that carnally-minded people will not enter the kingdom: but this is precluded by the context; for what is Paul speaking about? He is speaking about the resurrection from the dead. He is speaking about two bodily natures. He says at verse 44, "There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.

And so it is written. The first man, Adam, was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth—earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthly, we also shall bear the image of the heavenly. Now, this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed." And when he defines the change he is referring to, he says.

This corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality" (verse 53). So that it is plain to be seen that the sense in which he says, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" is, that we must undergo a change of bodily nature before we can enter into it.

A CHANGE OF BODY PROMISED.

This view is confirmed by Phil. 3. 20. "Our conversation" (or citizenship) "is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it might be fashioned like unto his glorious body." So that no one can get away from the conclusion that Paul is speaking of the bodily nature, when he says, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." Therefore, it follows that the Kingdom of God is something to which flesh and blood is not related in actual experience, and therefore, something not yet possessed by those who believe the gospel: that is, it is something yet future. This is borne out by the words of Jesus (John 3. 5): "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." We are all born of the flesh, and are, therefore, all flesh and blood, and until we are changed from flesh and blood bodies into spiritual bodies by the process of Spirit-quickenings, which Jesus calls "being born of the Spirit," we cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. That that process is to have effect on the mortal body is evident from Rom. 8. 11: "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you: He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." And at verse 23: "We ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

A FUTURE DOMINION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LIFE.

Now the conclusion arising from these scattered premises is, that the Kingdom of God, whatever it may be, is something in prospect—something that the righteous will possess, and the wicked will not enter. We find this conclusion confirmed by a variety of things. We find it for instance in a statement like this (1 Cor. 6. 9): "The unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God." This shows it is nothing that now exists among men. In this

flesh and blood state, there are many unrighteous people; and if the Church were the Kingdom of God, as some people say it is, then we have Christ's and Paul's words stultified. If the Church is the Kingdom of God, flesh and blood are inheriting it, and unrighteous people are inheriting it. But we shall see that it is something not concurrent with our present experience, but something to be revealed at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We begin to see this in the light of 2 Tim. iv. 1: "The Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom." Here Paul associates two things together—his appearing and his kingdom. Are the two coincident? We find it so from what Peter says in 2 Peter 1. 10, 11: "If ye do these things ye shall never fall, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." If we ask "when?" Peter answers— "At the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1. 7); he describes it as "the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1. 13).

TO BE SET UP AT THE APPEARING OF CHRIST

From these words it is evident that the believers to whom Peter wrote were in a state of probation, having reference to the Kingdom of God to be entered into at another time. This is more apparent on a reading of the passage I have referred to in full. "That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

And at verse 13—"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The same thing is apparent in Peter's exhortation to the elders, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" (1 Pet. 5. 1). And then he says, after exhorting them how to act, "and when the chief shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (verse 4). The Kingdom of God is to be manifested at

the appearing of the Chief Shepherd, and those whom he approves will be welcomed into it, and caused to inherit it.

With this view of the case, James' words are in harmony (James 2. 5).

"Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" Upon this passage two reflections suggest themselves: an heir is one that is going to have, not one that is in possession; a promise is a guarantee of something that is to be, and not the bestowal of a present possession. The Kingdom of God is a subject of promise; according to James, therefore, it is something future. But what is it?

THE KINGDOM IN RELATION TO JERUSALEM.

We begin to enter upon an apprehension of it in Luke 19. 11. This reads as follows: "And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh unto Jerusalem, and because they thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear." Now please note the import of these words. Mark you, this is a testimony with regard to those apostles who had been preaching the Kingdom of God; they thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear.

They must, therefore, have had tolerably definite conceptions of the subject. Their conception was wrong as to time; therefore, he spake a parable to them. There was another reason why he spake it: "because he was nigh to Jerusalem. "Why should that be a reason? From the "orthodox" point of view, there would be no reason in the fact of his proximity to Jerusalem, because popular feeling does not recognise the Kingdom of God in connection with Jerusalem at all, though Jesus did say, "Swear not by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King" (Matt. 5. 34, 35). I will give you a prophetic reason why it is natural and reasonable that the proximity of Jerusalem should lead Jesus to warn his disciples against expecting the Kingdom of God at that time. You will find what I refer to in Micah 6. 8: "And thou, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem."

PROPHECIES CONCERNING JERUSALEM.

Here is a prediction that the kingdom which the apostles were preaching, should come to Jerusalem—should be manifested there—should lay hold of it as on a capital city. It is fashionable to doubt whether this prophecy refers to the city of Jerusalem—whether it is not a prediction that the church should come into power; but a moment's attention to the matter will effectually dissipate this idea. The prophetic meaning of "the daughter of Jerusalem" is placed beyond a doubt by this prophecy: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly/and riding upon an ass" (Zech. 9. 9).

This prophecy has been fulfilled, and its fulfilment is recorded in the New Testament. Matthew xxi: Jesus went to the real Jerusalem and rode upon an ass to the real city. Now, supposing "the daughter of Jerusalem" in Micah iv4 8 means the same as "the daughter of Jerusalem" in Zech. 9. 9—and who shall say they mean different things?—then there was a very good reason why Christ's being near Jerusalem at this time should suggest the propriety of his speaking a parable to guard the disciples against expecting the immediate appearance of the kingdom. "They thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear."

CONSEQUENT ANTICIPATIONS OF THE DISCIPLES

It is admitted on all hands that the disciples expected Jesus to re-establish the kingdom of Israel in the Holy Land; but while the fact is admitted, it is common to maintain that the disciples were mistaken in their views of the matter, and that Christ's death and resurrection dissipated all their hopes, and showed them that Christ's kingdom had reference to the sky. How impossible it is to hold this view must appear, in view of the fact that they obeyed Christ's command, and went and preached the Kingdom of God.

Did they preach a thing they did not understand? It is impossible to entertain the idea for a moment. They were not wrong about the Kingdom of God; they were wrong about the time. They expected it was to be then; they were going to Jerusalem for the last time: and they thought that then had come the time. Two of them afterwards going with the resurrected Jesus to

Emmaus, said, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24. 21).

This was a good reason why his nearness to Jerusalem, on the occasion mentioned in Luke 19., should suggest the necessity of explaining to them that the time was not come. You will observe that this parable goes to correct this idea. It is framed to prove that the time was not come; it does not go on to say that there was to be no kingdom. The very reverse: it confirms the expectation of the disciples that Jesus should reign over the kingdom of Israel at an appointed time, but he tells them that the time was a great way off; and now let us read the parable.

THE PARABLE OF THE NOBLEMAN.

"He said, therefore, a certain nobleman went into a far-off country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them. Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying. We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, that he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man gained by trading."

Does not this parable throughout look very much like Paul's statement that Jesus Christ should judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom. It will greatly assist us in the comprehension of it if we look at the circumstances upon which it is founded. It was a practice of Imperial Rome to require the attendance at Rome of any newly-appointed Governor to receive authority at the hands of Caesar, before entering upon the direction of any Roman province. The man, in the first instance, might be a nobleman, and, it might be, elected by the unanimous acclamation of the people of the province, but still he would have to go to Rome to be invested with authority before he could assume the authority.

CHRIST THE "NOBLEMAN."

Now, as Christ makes use of the custom to illustrate an aspect of the truth with regard to himself, we are bound to find, in his own case, some facts

corresponding with it. We have not to look far to find them. In the first place Jesus was on the spot; he was personally present in the geographical area of the kingdom of Israel. This gives us a safe and certain beginning. It is, in fact, the basis of the scene as relating to Jesus. The future bearing of the parable might be debatable if we had not so solid a beginning, if we did not know that the country from which he started on his journey to the imperial centre of the universe was the country of Judea, the land promised to Abraham, the seat of the kingdom of David.

The next fact is, that besides being personally present in the country of the Jews, Jesus was the heir prospective to the throne of David, the anointed king of the Jews. Let me show that fact. The evidence begins by something in Matt. 2. 1: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him.

When Herod, the king, had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him, and when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born; and they said unto him. In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet. And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel."

Now people are bound to admit the literality of the first part of this prophecy, because the literal Jesus came out of the literal Bethlehem. On what principle, then, shall they deny that the literal man who came out of the literal Bethlehem is to be the real governor of the real Israel, seeing that the fact is proclaimed in a prophecy which, so far, has been literally fulfilled? The same fact is proclaimed in all the prophets, and not only in the prophets, but in the New Testament; see the message of the angel to Mary when the angel came to announce the birth of Jesus (Luke 1. 31): "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and call his name Jesus . . . And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

JESUS AS AGAINST CAESAR.

Now, what is the meaning of this? Can it mean other than the fact that Jesus is the King of the Jews, and that the superscription on the cross was true—"This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"? It was upon this very point that the chief priests and the scribes succeeded in compassing his destruction. Pilate was willing to let Jesus go, and strove to release him, and was of that purpose until the political bearings of the case were pressed upon him. The Jews said—"If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend; whosoever maketh himself A king speaketh against Caesar." Pilate could not stand this home thrust. He delivered the accused to be crucified, and wrote his accusation at the head of the cross. "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews." Mark the incident which followed: "This title then read many of the Jews, for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city, and it was written in Hebrew and Greek and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews unto Pilate, Write not the King of the Jews, but that he said I am king of the Jews" (John 19. 20, 21).

THE APOSTLES PREACH "ANOTHER KING, ONE JESUS."

The kingship of Christ was, therefore, a part of Christ's testimony concerning himself, and it constitutes a prominent feature of the testimony of his disciples afterwards: see the accusation against them at Thessalonica (Acts 17. 6, 7). "These that have turned the world upside down have come hither also . . . and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus." See also Peter's testimony on the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2. 30. He says, "David being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." To sit on David's throne is to be the king of the Jews. So that these scattered evidences, put together, enable us to see that Jesus, besides being personally present in the geographical area of the kingdom of David, was the appointed king of the realm.

FIRST THE CROSS, THEN THE CROWN.

But then all things had not been prepared. There was a most important work to be done before the kingdom of David could be established on the basis

designed by God, which is a basis of sinlessness and immortality. The sin of the world had to be taken away, and there had to be developed from the nations of the earth a people who should be Christ's associates and assistants in the work of governing the world when the time should come to make the kingdom of David the head of all the earth. That work required scope for its accomplishment, and therefore, the establishment of the kingdom in the days of Jesus was not possible. Jesus knew the time had not come for the kingdom to appear; but his disciples thought it "would immediately appear," and, therefore, he spoke this parable to them: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return."

THE "NOBLEMAN'S" RETURN.

The meaning of this "returning," as applied to Jesus, is placed beyond all doubt by the fact that he went away. To return is to turn again, to come back to the point of previous departure. This parable would, therefore, teach that at the time of the kingdom, Jesus will return from heaven as really as he went away. See how expressly this is confirmed by the message of the angels to his disciples—"This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1. 11). See also Peter's statement to the Jews: "He (God) shall send Jesus who before was preached unto you, whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3. 21).

So far, then, as we get light upon the subject from the New Testament, the matter would stand in this position, that the Kingdom of God, which the disciples thought would appear at that time, did not then appear, but it is to be established at the second advent of Christ on earth. To teach this was the object of the parable. He did not speak the parable to destroy the idea of the Kingdom of God, but simply to correct a wrong notion as to the time when it should be manifested. So far as the first question is concerned, the only effect of the parable would be to confirm them in their idea that for the Kingdom of God to appear was to be the kingdom of David built again by Jesus at his return.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE PAST.

What we have next to consider is, what will be the relation of this kingdom to the political affairs of men? Religious people in general shrug their shoulders at the suggestion that the religion of God has any relation to the political affairs of men. This is only for want of reading or want of thought. Impartial individuals, reasonable people, having senses exercised by reason of use, as Paul says, to discern, cannot fail to see, when their attention is directed to the prophets, that the workings of God have had reference, from the beginning, to the political affairs of men, and have now reference to the political affairs of men, but more particularly with regard to the future.

In the past, so far as God has had a kingdom, it has been a political institution. He founded a political institution by sending Moses to Egypt, and redeeming the descendants of Abraham from the bondage of the Egyptians, making use of them against Pharaoh, for the purpose of causing Himself to be known, and using them again as a military engine against the nations of Canaan, to destroy them for their wickedness. The nation of the Jews, thus founded, existed as a political institution for more than a thousand years, and was regulated by divine interposition through the prophets; so that so far as the past is concerned, there can be no mistake about God's dealings having regard to the political affairs of men; and so far as the future is concerned, it is equally manifest that the Kingdom of God is to be the ancient kingdom of Israel restored, under a new constitution of things.

In Matt. 21. 43, Jesus addresses these words to the Pharisees: "Therefore say I unto you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Now that could not be taken from them which they did not have in their possession. If the Kingdom of God was to be taken from them, it follows that they had it at that time. What was it that they had? Why, the kingdom of Israel.

Jesus styles the kingdom of Israel the Kingdom of God. This is only in harmony with all the Scriptures; for in all the Scriptures the kingdom of Israel is called the Kingdom of God. I will give one or two illustrations of this fact. 2 Chron. 13. 8: "And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the Lord in the hand of the sons of David." Then we find it stated of Solomon, at the close of the first book of Chronicles 29. 23: "Then sat Solomon on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father." And then we read this statement in

the 114th Psalm, that "when Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion."

So that Jesus is only in harmony with the Old Testament (which please be it remembered, was written by holy men of old, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit), in styling the kingdom of Israel the Kingdom of God, and the position to which we shall find ourselves committed, will be that the kingdom is to be restored again by Jesus, and that its mission will be to subdue all the kingdoms of the earth, and to subject all the world to one central government, to be established at Jerusalem, and that the universal dominion of which Jesus will be the head, will be administered by an order of men now being prepared by the preaching of the gospel; men who will be made immortal at the coming of Christ, and otherwise qualified to assist him in the execution of this great work, which will consummate the redemption of the world.

THE PROPHET DANIEL: "WHOSO READETH, LET HIM UNDERSTAND."

Now let us look for prophetic light on the subject to the prophet Daniel, where we shall find the matter set out in lines and colours that cannot be mistaken. I know there are people who will have an aversion to go to the prophet Daniel. There are some (and they are a numerous class) whose sentiments are represented by a statement I recently saw in a newspaper, that for individuals to profess to be able to explain the prophet Daniel and the book of Revelation, was to be guilty of presumption, and to show insanity. In answer to this I will only point to the fact that Jesus recognizes the study and the comprehension of the Book of Daniel (Matt. 24. 15): "When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation spoken by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand)." These were Christ's words to his disciples with regard to the reading of Daniel; and, therefore, under Christ's guidance, we may readily go in the face of popular prejudice, and endeavour to grapple with the important matters that are made known to us here.

In Daniel 2. we have a vision that is very simple, striking, historically true, very intelligible, in the scheme and upshot of it. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. His

dream was prefaced by a little contemplation on his part, as he lay in bed before he went to sleep, with regard to the future. He at that time was head of the whole earth. He had established a universal empire, kings being subject to him, and he wondered what should be after. God revealed to him what should be after, and here is testified what was told him. He had a dream, but he could not recall the dream. He summoned the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and Chaldeans to be brought before him, to tell him his dream, and the interpretation of the dream, threatening that if they did not do so, they should be cut to pieces.

Daniel was among the wise men of the king, and also his three companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and they were included in the general edict that the wise men should be slain. Prompted by the natural desire for self-preservation, they that night assembled together in seclusion, and prayed to God that He would divulge this secret to them, that their lives might be saved. Their prayer was answered, and Daniel went next day before the king and said—"The secret which the king hath commanded, cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, show unto the king"; but says he, "There is a God in heaven, that revealeth secrets and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days" (verses 27, 28).

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

Then he tells his dream. He says the king saw a great image composed of divers metals; the head of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, the feet with ten toes, part iron and part clay; and while the king looked at the image, he saw a little stone, cut out of an adjacent mountain without hands, descend with violence upon the feet of the image, as the result of which, the image crumbled to pieces, was reduced to powder, the dust of which was carried away by the wind, and the little stone, gradually enlarging in size, became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

This was the dream, and he says, I will show the interpretation: "Thou, O king, art a King of Kings . . . Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another Kingdom," not a kingdom in the limited sense of a dominion

recognising the sovereignty of a king, but a kingdom in the sense in which the empire of Babylon was a kingdom, that is, an imperial power overshadowing all other nations; "after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee," and, therefore, represented by silver, which is inferior to gold; and after that a third kingdom of brass, represented by the belly and thighs of brass; and after that, there shall be another kingdom, strong as iron, which shall be greater than the others, inasmuch as he says the iron is stronger than the other metals; but he says, as saw clay mixed with the iron towards the feet, so as ye get toward that period of time, the kingdom will be broken up.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AND THE STONE

And then he says (verse 44), "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up A kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever; forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold"; as much as to say, "the meaning of the stone descending and destroying the image, is, that God will set up a kingdom that will supersede all the human empires that will appear on earth."

Now what do we find in regard to the history which this dream foreshadowed? We find that history has verified this vision up to the present moment. We find that the empire of Babylon was succeeded, before even Daniel had passed off the scene, by the empire of the Medes and Persians. We find that the empire of the Medes and Persians was succeeded by the brazen-coated Greek Empire, appropriately represented by the brass of the image. We find that after the lapse of nearly two centuries, the kingdom of the Greeks appeared on the scene under Alexander the Great, and abolished the empire of the Persians. The empire of the Greeks broke up into four parts after the death of Alexander, which is plainly foretold in Dan. 8. 22: also 11. 4.

This was succeeded by an empire as much stronger than the others, as iron is stronger than the other metals; an empire which superseded all the others in everything that can constitute a kingdom great, for it is proverbial in all

history and in all political lessons, that the Roman Empire was the most magnificent empire that ever the sun shone upon, having the whole civilised world under its heel, and working from Rome on the Tiber, in one vast system of universal dominion. But this empire waned in its greatness. It "declined and fell"; the vision foreshadowed this. There would come a time when the iron would be mixed up with other elements, and be divided into little bits, symbolised by the ten toes; and what we see now in Europe is an exemplification of this feature of the symbolism. But what of the future, and the stone becoming a great mountain and filling the whole earth?

HE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD BECOME CHRIST'S.

What event is this? The answer (already anticipated in the early part of the lecture) is, the setting up of the Kingdom of God, the transference of the power usurped by men to the king that God sends, and to the class that He has appointed as His associates, who are described as "the saints of the Most High," agreeably to the proclaimed results of the apocalyptic seventh trumpet— "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of Our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11. 15).

The reign of God in Christ will present us with the real features that are shammed and counterfeited by the pretender of Rome. He will be King of kings and Lord of lords He will be God's high priest—God's representative in all the earth, ruling all the earth through a royal priesthood that will cover the earth with a glorious network of unerring authority. Christ will be the infallible head of universal dominion, to whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess.

JERUSALEM THE TRUE ETERNAL CITY.

And where are we to look for the centre of this manifestation? Not to Rome; not to the pretended "Eternal City," but to that city which, in ancient times, was chosen by God to place His name there, of which Jesus said, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21. 24). These times of the Gentiles are nearly out. And what does that little word "until" tell us? It tells us that at the expiry of these times, Jerusalem will cease to be trodden down; and ceasing to be trodden down, she will become "the throne of the Lord" (Jer. 3. 17). She will become

the habitation of the King of Glory. "The Lord shall inherit Judah, His portion in the Holy Land, and shall choose Jerusalem again" (Zech. 2. 12).

"At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord to Jerusalem; neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil hearts" (Jer. 3. 17). And in Isaiah 24. 23, "The moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." And in Micah 4. 2, "Many nations shall come and say. Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the House of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2. 14).

REAL GLAD TIDINGS.

And does any man mean to say that this is not glad tidings? that this is not gospel?—this divine revelation that the evils under which the world is groaning will be cured—the division of power among many rival factions, resulting in the great stultification of human interests, the oppression of the great majority by a few monopolists, who take to themselves the riches of the earth—for what have we in this country but the glorification of a pampered few at the expense of toiling millions?

We have the perpetuation of ancient wrongs held up in gilded dress as the highest object of national veneration. Headstrong chiefs in barbarous times possessed themselves of the soil, and we have their system upheld amongst us as the highest ornament of civilisation. We have our dukes and our earls, our counts and our marquises, and a few families surfeiting in wealth, while the great mass of the population is driven in poverty into pens of cities, where, with incessant labour, in unhealthy circumstances, they can accomplish nothing beyond the mere business of providing food and clothing,

and scarcely that: the result of which we see in wan countenances, stunted physical frames, demoralised minds, and universal misery.

The Kingdom of God, revealed by the prophets of Israel, is the panacea for the world's evils, the very thing the world wants—the cure for the bleeding wounds and breaking hearts of afflicted mankind—a cure which men, in feverish agitation, seek in vain to provide for themselves; and yet, in the present day, with so much belief in the Bible, we hear nothing about the glorious provision God has made.