

The Coming of the Kingdom

2 Peter 1: 1-11, 16-19.

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The following Address was given in Edinburgh during the last week of April, 1921:-
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First of all as indicating my subject I want to call your attention to the latter half of the 11th verse, where we read of "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Having mentioned it, the apostle Peter proceeds to assure us that in writing to us concerning that kingdom he is not leading us upon a wild goose chase. We are not following cunningly devised fables. We have that which is absolutely sure and certain; not a poetic dream, but something that is to be established in actual visible fact here in this world. A moment is coming, and coming soon, when the Lord Jesus Christ will rise up, assert His power, put God's rights into visible enforcement in this world, and upon the ruins of all human administration, establish an actual dominion to the glory of God.

I do not know, beloved friends, how you feel as you look abroad over the earth, so far as you are able. I know what I feel — my heart calls out for the coming of the kingdom; and I can indeed say, I have not any hope of peace and blessing for men except in its establishment. The sooner He comes, the sooner He ends man's authority and man's dominion, and extends over the earth God's dominion, the better.

Now the latter part of this chapter presents very clearly before us two things that assure us that the kingdom is to be an actual fact, and the first is the word of prophecy. The Old Testament from cover to cover predicts this glorious moment; the grand terminus of all God's governmental ways with this world, the moment when we shall see the perfection of earthly administration; just as at the present moment, in the going forth of the gospel, we see the perfection of God's work of grace. As a matter of fact we see that the apostles, as they followed our Lord Jesus Christ here, had their minds full of that kingdom; indeed, it obsessed them, so much so that, not paying attention to *all* the prophets and *all* the Scriptures, they overlooked the fact that the only possible foundation upon which could be reared the glories of the coming kingdom was that of the sufferings of Christ. They overlooked the fact that when the Messiah came, He must be the suffering Messiah first in order that the kingdom might be righteously established. Our inclination to-day is to run to the opposite extreme, because we do know by the grace of God what has been done when Jesus came here in humiliation and suffered; and hence we are apt to spiritualize away this wonderful prediction of His coming earthly glory, treating it perhaps as something which may be merged into His ascension to the right hand of the Majesty on High, and thus we forget that the great mass of Old Testament prophecy waits its glorious fulfilment.

We have, says the apostle, the word of prophecy, and that word of prophecy he likens to a lamp that is shining in a dark place. I picked up sometime since an excellent volume by a first-rate Greek scholar who was greatly used years ago in the unfolding of the Word, and, opening at a page where he spoke of this Scripture, I found he took the liberty of substituting another word as giving us the sense of the original. He translated it like this: "a lamp that shineth in a SQUALID place." That is just what this world is. Am I talking to Christians who are enamoured of the present age? You look at all the discoveries of science and men's clever inventions; man is a very active and ingenious creature, especially when it comes to producing engines of destruction — and it all strikes you as wonderful and

very imposing; yet the world, my friends, is a squalid place. Men and women are actuated by selfishness; self is the great master-thought by nature of every man, woman, and child; and the filth and degradation of sin is everywhere. When holy angels visit this world they must have the kind of feeling that you and I would have if, having been brought up in fairly decent surroundings, we went down to the dirtiest and lowest slum. This world of ours, in spite of all we have done with our gorgeous buildings, and our wonderful inventions, is the squalid slum of God's wide creation.

I am not surprised that men and women of this world are feeling hopeless; I wish they were more hopeless than they are. Why, man has been experimenting in the art of government for the last 6000 years. We have run through practically every form of government, until we have reached that particularly squalid form of it known as Bolshevism; and it seems as if there is nothing beyond it to be suggested. But just here the light of the coming kingdom shines. He reminds us of an hour when God shall be supreme; a day when government shall rest in the pierced hands of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when He shall have dominion, and when He will be brought forth as was Joash after the wicked Athaliah had done her worst, and we all shall shout then "God save the King."

The assurance that the Apostle gives at the end of this chapter is that we have the word of prophecy made more sure, or confirmed, by that wonderful private view of the coming Kingdom that he, with James and John, was permitted to have when the Lord called them apart up to the Holy Mount of Transfiguration. They there saw the kingdom, as we might say, in sample. Those who are Bible students will find it helpful to study the accounts in the Gospels; if you do so you will notice that the Transfiguration came in just when the Lord Jesus had been breaking to His disciples the news of His approaching death. He knew all their expectations, and the effect such tidings would have upon them. He knew it would blight their hopes. He knew it would cast them down into depths of despair and gloom, so no sooner had He told them that what was immediately before Him was not the establishment of visible glory but His rejection and crucifixion between two thieves, outside the gate of the city, than it was just as if He said: "Now I am going to assure you that though you will shortly see me rejected and crucified, My kingdom is a great reality and shall yet be established." So He called three of His disciples as witnesses, the three chief, just as David had the three mightiest among his mighty men, and taking them up the mount He gave them a little private view of the glories of the coming kingdom.

What did they see? Oh, they saw Himself transfigured before them; His very face shining like the sun, supreme in authority and power; and His very raiment white as the light; and they saw two glorified saints; they saw Moses and they saw Elias. Moses was a man who died under the hand of God, and his funeral was conducted by the same Almighty hand; and Elias was a man that never tasted death, but was raptured to heaven in a chariot of fire. These two saints, two representative saints, were seen one on the right hand and one on the left hand of Christ in glory. They represented the heavenly saints who will be glorified when Jesus comes for His people, according to the 4th chapter of 1st Thessalonians, and who will be composed of two classes: namely, those who have died and are raised in bodies of glory, represented by Moses; and those living, who are changed without dying at all into the same glorified condition in the twinkling of an eye, represented by Elias.

Then, again, on the mountain were the three disciples, just men in flesh and blood, living under the ordinary conditions of human life in this world, as we are. So when — the kingdom comes there will be supreme authority vested in the Lord Jesus, and saints enjoying a heavenly portion with Himself, and saints upon earth, basking in the sunlight of that heavenly scene. Heaven and earth will be brought into sweet harmony, all having its centre in the Son of God Himself, the glorified Lord Jesus. Thank God, dear friends, that we have not only the word of prophecy, but we have it confirmed by the

fact that the thing has been seen in sample, and we are going to see it in bulk when the grand day of God's kingdom comes.

Now I want to call your attention to the early part of the 11th verse. It says: "*For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly* into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." In the light of this word evidently there is such a thing as an abundant entrance into that kingdom, and also such a thing as having an entrance which is not abundant; in other words, the character of our entrance into that kingdom depends upon certain conditions. Here I must draw a little further distinction. Do not confound the everlasting kingdom with heaven. Keep distinct that which might be represented, by way of illustration, as the business sphere, from the home sphere.

There is, let us suppose, a wealthy man, and he is thinking of retiring from business, and making his very flourishing concern into a company. He has three sons, and all of them are in the business; and the question now is, what place respectively shall his sons occupy, the father becoming the chairman of the company, and largely a figurehead? What does he say? Well, there is my boy George, a brilliant lad, with a really good head on his shoulders. Yes, he is the man to be at the top and hold the reins, George must be managing director. Now, there is Harry, a good lad with no end of go, and sufficient push to carry him anywhere, but he has not much judgment. Harry shall be the chief of the sales' department, and have the travellers under him. And then there is our dear boy Frank — very charming, quite reliable, but a dreadful duffer in business matters. Well, what shall we do with Frank? Oh, let us make for him a snug corner in the counting-house and there he must stop. But when they get home in the evening, does he say to George — you are the managing director, you sit on this chair, and have the best of everything on the table? and you, Frank, you shall have the leavings? Never! As a wise man he will not bring these distinctions into the home circle. Here all are on the same footing of relationship, and all are loved equally. That is the difference between the home circle and the business circle, illustrating the differences between the Father's house, where we shall be in the blessed relationship of children, and the kingdom, with its rewards according to our faithfulness and character.

The place we shall have in heaven will not be based upon our qualities or our endeavours; we are accepted in the Beloved if we are accepted at all. If by God's grace you are believers you stand in Christ's acceptance; you have the children's place, and upon you there beams forth the love of the Father's heart without any variation or diminution. No differences are recognized; it is all yours as much as it was the Apostle Paul's if you are a child of God. But there is the kingdom represented in my illustration as the business sphere. The Lord Jesus in that day is going to use His saints in the administration of His kingdom. He is going to give ten cities to one, five cities to another, as stated in that well-known parable in Luke's Gospel. Here there is going to be a difference, and I would earnestly exhort all Christians, especially young believers, who, if the Lord comes not for a few years, have life before them, that they make good use of what is entrusted to them; for depend upon it there are many of us who, though we shall be in heaven in the full blessing of the relationship which is ours in Christ, will have but a small place when the day of the kingdom comes.

Now let me ask this question: What is going to determine the place which we may have in the coming kingdom? That is the point of the earlier verses of this chapter. If you glance at verses 1 to 4, you will see they emphasize the things that are given to us. Verse 1 speaks of what we *have obtained!* Verse 3 speaks of all that pertains to life and godliness, *having been given* to us by God's divine power. Verse 4 speaks of *our having received* great and precious promises. These things *are given* to us, *they are ours*. But now, from verse 5, there is a change. He says, "Besides this" — besides all these great and blessed realities that are given to us through the grace of God — "add to your faith virtue [or courage]." Faith obviously is that with which we begin; you cannot be a Christian apart from faith.

Then add to courage knowledge and to knowledge temperance or moderation, to that patience or endurance, to that godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity or love, which is the crowning Christian grace; it is the very nature of God Himself. And I am told that the way our translators have put it is not exactly how it stands in the original. It would better be, "Have in your faith, virtue," and so on. When we read: "Add to your faith, virtue," we have some such idea as that of adding brick to brick; but if we read "have in your faith virtue," it occurs rather in this light: There is a little fruit-bud in April on the apple tree. Now, it is a fact that in that bud there is, in a very elementary, very embryonic form, an apple, perhaps half-a-dozen apples; and if it be not there in embryo, it will never be there full grown when September comes. It is so small as to be microscopic, still it is there, and in the same way our faith really has within it in embryo form all these other graces. What is needed? Why, DILIGENCE under the gracious influence of the Spirit of God, so that we may mature and come to fruition; just as under summer influences the sap flows up through the trunk and branches to the buds and silently yet surely expands them into perfection. Oh! Christian, here is something that is going to determine your place and mine in the kingdom.

Let me put it like this: One thing that will determine your place in that day is the measure in which there has been found in you solid Christian character — the reproduction in your life of those excellent graces which in all their perfection were seen in Jesus — *that* is the thing that God loves. If there is a saint in whom the character of Christ is eminently seen, you are not going to be surprised — are you? — if the Lord Jesus picks out that saint for a very important place when the day of His kingdom comes.

Time prohibits my reading to you other Scriptures, but if you know Luke 18 — that is the chapter where we have the parable of the pounds — you have it taught that *service* is going to help to determine our place in the kingdom. When the Lord comes back, having received the kingdom, he will call His servants before Him in order that He may know *how much* each man has gained by trading. Turning also to 1 Corinthians 3: 13, you will find how service is to be tested in view of the kingdom to see whether men have built gold, silver, precious stones, all things that stand the fire, or whether wood, hay, stubble, things which are destroyed by fire; for "the fire shall try every man's work *of what sort it is.*" Let us each, as concerns our service, take to heart those words "how much" and "of what sort," for as we have served our rejected Lord, so will our position in the kingdom be.

Then there is a third thing; if you turn to 2 Timothy 2: 12: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him," evidently not only service, but *suffering*, is going to help to determine the place of the saint in the kingdom. Stephen, for instance, did not range over many countries, carrying the Gospel in a wide circle, as Paul did. But Stephen died for His Master's sake; Stephen suffered even when his face was shining like the face of an angel, and a large place in the kingdom will be his.

In the light of these Scriptures I think we can see that three things will determine our place in the kingdom — service, suffering, and character; the character of Christ developed as the fruit of our own diligence, under the hand of God, and amid the stresses of daily life.

Now that the meetings are practically over, I want to give a final appeal. Have you fresh views of divine truth? Is the Word of God more precious to you? Oh! how are you going to use it in view of the coming kingdom? Are you going to be like the men in the house of "Interpreter" whom the wife of "Christian" and her boys saw? You will remember they were taken into a very dirty room, and they saw a man with a rake in his hand, working amongst the sticks and stones and dust of the floor, and they perceived that just behind him was an angel standing and holding up a crown of glory. Yet, John Bunyan says, he did not regard, but went on raking to himself the sticks and stones and dust of the

floor. We know his name, do we not? "Muckrake" is what John Bunyan calls him.

How many Muckrakes there are among the children of God! How many setting before them merely the getting on in this world, and the question of riches! How many are there setting Christ supremely before them? His interests; His love; His service, and the day of the glorious kingdom that is coming. God help us each to keep the Saviour, who is coming, shining before our souls as the bright and morning star, and to live in view of the coming of His bright day. If we have it thus, we shall not be caught by the seductions of this world; we shall have Christ and His kingdom our crowning objective. Oh, what glory it will be when we shine forth at His appearing; and even sweeter the enjoyment of the Father's house and all the fullness of the Father's love.