

The Messiah

Matthew 5-12

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Dec 1958

In view of our proposed readings on the subject of the mysteries of the kingdom in Matt. 13, there has been a request for an outline of these chapters as leading up to that subject. It is needful to understand what is recorded in these preceding chapters if we are to have a clear grasp of the truth which we hope to consider in the Bible readings.

We note first in Matt. 3, that John the Baptist had been preaching "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," (v. 2). Then following this in Matt. 4, our Lord preached the same thing, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," (v. 17). Or, as it may be rendered, "has drawn nigh." We need to bear this in mind, as it is a key phrase in these opening chapters. Neither John nor our Lord said, The kingdom is going to be set up. In the ways of God the moment had drawn nigh to fulfil the promises in regard to our Lord as the Son of David, Israel's long promised Messiah. All was presented to them but it depended upon Israel as to whether they would accept Him or not. Hence, while it is said the time had drawn nigh, it does not say the kingdom was going to be set up. We shall see why as we go on.

In the going up the mountain, as we have in the beginning of Matt. 5, we have a parallel with Moses when he went up mount Sinai to receive the law from God to pass on to the children of Israel, both the tables of testimony and the ceremonial ordinances connected with them. So here we see our Lord sitting at the top of the mountain with His disciples gathered around Him, enunciating the principles of the kingdom of heaven. We have here what we may call the statute book of the kingdom. It is the King stating the principles of His kingdom which, as we have said, would be established if they would receive it by receiving Him. As we know, this co-called sermon on the mount runs on to the end of Matt. 7, and in the compass of these verses we hear our Lord saying, "Ye have heard that it was said" (Matt. 5: 21), "but **I say** unto you." Fourteen times we hear the Lord saying, "I say." Who but One Who was God dare speak in this way? In the authority of His Own Person, yet in His position as the Messiah, He opens out these new principles.

He begins this outline with the word "Blessed." Nine times it came from His lips. In Deut. 28, the chapter of the blessings and the curses, nine times also we hear this word "Blessed." We also read there of "Cursed," but not here — not yet. It is blessing only He holds out to them on the mount. Sad to say, the cursing does come in later, when He has to say to them "Woe." But here in these three chapters we have what we so often call the word of the kingdom. It is the King giving the law of His kingdom.

Passing on to Matt. 8, we read "When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him," (v. 1). In the two chapters eight and nine, we have a series of ten miracles beginning with the leper and ending with the man who had a devil and was dumb. These have a dispensational link, but what we want to pass on concerning them is that the Lord now demonstrates at the bottom of the mountain that He possesses the **power** of the kingdom to bring into effect all that He had said in **word** on the mountain. Paul at a later date said to the Corinthian saints that the "kingdom of God is not in word, but in power," (1 Cor. 4: 20). We may say that the Lord descended from the mountain and proved in the territory of the devil's power that He had the power to destroy the works of the devil and bring in that kingdom as He had spoken of it when on the mountain. If then we have in chapters five, six and seven the word of the kingdom, we have in Matt. 8 and Matt. 9 an ample demonstration of the

powers of the kingdom, showing that He was able to bring all into effect.

In Matt. 10 we find both these things brought together. He called unto Him His twelve disciples and we read in verse 5, "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast our devils; freely ye have received, freely give," (vv. 5-8). Here we clearly see the gathering together of the elements of the previous chapters. The Lord had instructed them in the word of the kingdom. They had seen the power of the kingdom in the miracles of the Lord. Now He delegates them both to preach that word and exercise that power as He says, "Preach" and "Heal." So they go forth both to teach and to demonstrate that the Messiah was in their midst. This is the gospel that the remnant will again take up during the tribulation. Note the Lord said, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come," (v. 23). This work has been broken off for the moment but will be resumed again after the church is in glory. Once again, as John had said and as our Lord had said, so they say, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." When it is resumed again it will be able to be said that the kingdom of the heavens is about to be set up, but as yet it is still "at hand" or "drawn nigh." We know why that is. Our Lord was here the first time to present the kingdom in testimony for their acceptance or rejection, and we read in Matt. 11 that the result of this preaching and demonstration of the power of the kingdom was that Israel rejected Him as their King. His reference in verse 16 to the children shows that they had rejected both the mourning of John and His own piping, but while that was true of the nation as such, individuals had received Him, as He said, "But wisdom is justified of her children," (v. 19). John thundered judgment; the Lord came both speaking and showing grace; but whether a funeral or a wedding, they would not listen. The twelve, or to be exact eleven of these disciples, were children of wisdom, and many more individuals had accepted Him as their Messiah in spite of His being rejected by the rulers. They had owned their sins by submitting to the baptism of John and had gladly received Jesus as their Messiah. They had thus justified God — as we have so often said in the gospel preaching, God can only justify those who first justify Him. These formed the nucleus of the new features of that kingdom, as we shall see in Matt. 13.

In Matt. 12 we hear the Lord warning them of the serious state they were in and of the impending judgment of God. "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men," (v. 31). We know that this reached its fulfilment at the stoning of Stephen. In that discourse Stephen is used of the Spirit to trace their sinful history and complete rebellion against God. In the days of Samuel God said to him, "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." (1 Sam. 8: 7). In the parable in Luke 19: 14, the citizens said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." We know that looked on to the rejection of Christ and no doubt the condemnation which came from the lips of Stephen when, in stoning him to death, they rejected the Holy Spirit. Hence that generation as such sealed its doom. This nation had rejected God, rejected Christ and ultimately rejected the Spirit. It is also summed up by Paul in Heb. 10: 29, when he records that they had "trodden under foot the Son of God . . . and . . . done despite unto the Spirit of grace." So, with all this in view, we see now in Matt. 12, the King rejects the people.

So, beloved, in Matt. 5-7 we have outlined what we venture to call the word of the kingdom. In Matt. 8-9, we have a demonstration of the powers of the kingdom. In Matt. 10, the disciples go forth in testimony, having authority to preach the word and exercise the power of the kingdom. In Matt. 11, Israel has rejected their King, and in Matt. 12 the King Himself rejects this evil generation and thus paves the way for the introduction of a new aspect of the kingdom of the heavens as we hope to see in

our readings on Matt. 13.