

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM.

"And thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure forever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever." 2 Sam.7:16.

"The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever." Rev.11:15b.

About 1000 years before Christ, David, Israel's great king, occupied the center of the stage. He was the best loved of all the Hebrew kings. More space is given to his history than to any other Old Testament character.

David is in the New Testament from the first verse of Matthew to the last chapter of Revelation. According to the concordance his name is found in the New Testament 58 times.

David had been given rest from his enemies. Jebus, the last stronghold of the Canaanites in the promised land, had been taken. The original covenant with Abraham to give Israel the land of Canaan was completely fulfilled. Under the leadership of king David the ark had been brought up to Jerusalem with great rejoicing, such as is pictured in Psalm 24. With David comfortably settled in his own palace he gives expression to his desire to build a temple for the worship of Jehovah. This in turn brought forth the statement from Jehovah that he would build David a house.

The house that Jehovah would build for David is mentioned in this chapter at least eight times. It has reference to a line of kings and an eternally enduring kingdom. In other words, the good news of the Kingdom of God is here proclaimed to David in these words, "And thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure forever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever."

In his book, "The Prophets and the Promise", Beecher says with reference to the Messianic promise,

"Henceforth this Messianic doctrine, preached by the prophets, sung in the Psalms, built into the temple, rising with the smoke of every sacrifice, the quickener of Israel's conscience, the bulwark against idolatry, the protection of patriotism from despair, the comfort under affliction, the warning against temptation, the recall to the wandering—in short, a doctrine of salvation offered to Israel and every Israelite; more than this, Israel's missionary call to the nations, inviting all without exception to turn to the service of Jehovah—is this doctrine of the promise of blessing, made to Abraham and Israel, renewed in David and his seed, to be eternally without recall, and including the human race in its scope."

Before the time of David the Messiah had been set forth largely in his office as Prophet and Priest. From this time forth, while the prophetic and priestly functions are none the less proclaimed, there is added the new feature of the Messiah as King. In his office as King he is to gather out of all nations and ages a great spiritual Kingdom as a result of his prophetic and priestly work. From the time of David the prophetic revelations dwell largely on the subject of the typical kingdom, its nature, its work, and its destiny. It has been said that the keynote to which the harp of prophecy is attuned is set forth in these words, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy Kingdom." Psalm 45:6.

The first Christian preaching centered around the theme, "The Gospel of the Kingdom." Jesus came preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. His first recorded sermon is on this theme. Parables of the Kingdom occupy a large part of His teaching. Dr. R.C. Reed has given nine New Testament answers to the question, "What is the Kingdom?" (1) It is a spiritual Kingdom. Regeneration by the power of the Spirit is an absolute condition of entrance. "Except one be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5).

(2) It is a present Kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount has the exhortation, "But seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Mt.6:33). (3) it is a coming Kingdom. We are taught to pray, "Thy kingdom come." (4) It is a Kingdom not of this world. The answer of Jesus to Pilate was, "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered unto the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence." John 18:36. (5) It is a kingdom established through the agency of the church. The answer of Jesus to Peter contains these significant words, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." (6) It is a kingdom for all races. Mt.8:11. (7) It is a universal kingdom. The great commission of our Master begins with the words, "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations." Mt.28:19. (8) It is a victorious kingdom. Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself." John 12:32. (9) It is an everlasting kingdom. In the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary concerning Jesus he said, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Lu.1:32-33)

The apostle Paul went about preaching the kingdom. The apostle John on the last page of sacred Scripture records the testimony of the King on the throne, who said, "I am the root and offspring of David."

What about the effect of the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom? When David first heard it, although he evidently realized but little of its full meaning and message, yet it called forth from him adoration and thanksgiving, and it gave him confidence for the future. Years after the death of David, during one of the dark days in the history of Israel, the people were strengthened in their faith when there was given to them by divine inspiration an expanded form of this Messianic promise as found in poetry of Psalm 89. There the note of the lovingkindness of God and his faithfulness to his covenant rings out clearly to comfort and to cheer God's children. "Love moved Jehovah to enter into the covenant with the house of David; faithfulness binds him to keep it."

Throughout the Christian era, under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the gospel of the Kingdom has brought its message of hope and comfort and salvation into a world of despair and suffering and death. In the world of today, ^{when earthly kingdoms} are seeking to usurp the place and power of the Kingdom of God, when at times the spirit of the anti-Christ seems to be prevailing, the gospel of the Kingdom brings the assurance to the believer that he is receiving a spiritual kingdom that cannot be shaken, and teaches him to pray, "For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever."

Still ringing in my ears is the song of a little Korean girl as I heard it early one morning in a village by the sea in South Chulla where pioneer evangelism had gone. To break the quietness of that country village suddenly there came the clear notes from the voice of a little child. What is prettier than the voice of a little child singing? I listened carefully and located the singer. She was down in a narrow alley between the houses that were thatched with straw. I recognized the tune of her song. She was singing,

"Chan-song hannan se rai ees er
Saram kit pu ha do da."

Think what it would mean if the Christian church would simply put this song and its message into the hearts and voices of the little children around the globe! Wars would cease to the ends of the earth, and the prophecy of Rev.11:15 would be hastened to fulfillment.