

The Concordant Newsletter

NUMBER 4

OCTOBER–DECEMBER 1996

EDITORIAL

IN THIS our fourth number of 1996, we take pleasure in reprinting “The Kingdom in the ‘Old Testament,’” by Vladimir Gelsenoff. This writing was among the first publications of the Concordant Publishing Concern. From the San Diego address for *Unsearchable Riches* magazine included on the original copy of this study, kept in our archives, we conclude that it must have been issued in 1909 or 1910, before the mailing address was changed to Los Angeles.

In introducing the revised edition of this exposition in 1938, upon which this reprint is based, A. E. Knoch stated: “[this writing] was first published many years ago, and has long been out of print. As nothing equal to it seems to have appeared in the meantime, we welcome the opportunity of reissuing it The careful consideration demanded by the work of revision has once more impressed me with the extraordinary excellence and value of this exposition. The great need for clarity on this elementary theme is evident on all sides, and grows as the apostasy proceeds apace. Hence I take this opportunity of commending it to all who wish to aid their fellow saints to gain an insight into God’s grand purpose through the nation of His choice and their Messiah, Christ Jesus our Lord.”¹



We long to be of service to *all* our fellow believers; not only to the literati within the circle of faith, but to the common man as well, even to the least literate among us. It is only

1. *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.29, p.210.

that our ministry is primarily a *written* ministry by means of the printed word; hence it depends upon the presence of a viable literacy among those whom it would serve.

Those to whom the pursuit of formal study has not been given, who nonetheless hunger for truth and long for understanding, may often be served best on a more personal basis, primarily through the spoken word, which may include the written word read in their presence, with accompanying suitable consideration thereof. Even so, such work can only be done by faithful men who are competent to teach others also (2 Tim.2:2), albeit thus, through more informal yet *nonetheless-accurate* means. What we seek is the *love* of one another among all, together with the *conveyance* of truth unto all; not a universal involvement in any particular means of learning.

Those who have a *heart* for the faith together with the *wisdom* to realize that in Scripture study we are dealing with the *Word* of God together with that which this entails, will not *complain* that certain portions of our writings are too difficult for them to grasp, even where this may be the case. They will be mindful that much of the *Word* of God is, in fact, deeply intellectual and complex. Accordingly, they will be mindful as well that in most cases it is impossible for us truly to explain scriptural texts and issues—to define key questions and prove vital points—apart from our readers' own protracted mental labors.

Such ones, then, since they *love* the Word of God and *long* to understand it, will not decry whatever intellectual requirements the discernment of its various truths may impose upon them.

Any such ones who are truly our *friends*—who *know* us even if we have never met—will also know that we very much care for them, and so seek to convey the particulars of our teachings in as simple a form as we can—while still conveying the particulars of our teachings.

The fact is that virtually all substantial theological writings, including those that are written for nonspecialists and even for nonprofessionals, are at least as “complex” as our

own. If we have erred in our writings, we fear that it is in that we have sometimes inadequately considered our topics, rather than in having presented them in needlessly complex or extended ways. Whether or not our friends may realize that our own perspective here is apt to be nearer the mark, we are confident that they will bear with us in love, and in any case learn many things through our sincere efforts, according as the Lord Himself gives them understanding.

The *reading skills* (to be distinguished from mental disposition) requisite to the comprehension of *much* in our writings, is only that of a *good* elementary school—or at the most, junior-high school—education. In cases where the reader may note occasional words or concepts which are unfamiliar to him, he should simply consult a dictionary or other reference work, thus gaining not only the sense of the passage in question, but the furtherance of his own education as well.

Still, many claim that our writings are “too complicated” for them. It is regularly insisted, often with more confidence than humility, that much that we present is unimportant to ordinary believers, is needlessly complex, and could be greatly simplified with little loss of vital substance. It is not explained how it is so that these same ones who are so insistent as to their own intellectual deficiencies are nonetheless in a position to be certain that much that we present is unimportant to ordinary believers, is needlessly complex, and could be greatly simplified with little loss of vital substance.

In relation to all things intellectual—and this is especially so concerning the *Word* of God—what we all need is soundmindedness and objectivity, even as intellectual honesty. We need the ability to face things as they are, even as to recognize what is important to a subject and that which proves a point.

We need to recognize and confess (at least to ourselves and to God) the sin of mental laziness and especially of spiritual apathy, together with that of self-hoodwinking, which leads

us to imagine that much that is actually vital to our own faithfulness is either optional or altogether unneeded.

Such sins are not confined to any intellectual class of believers. As such, they have little to do with native intelligence, considered in the abstract, and even less to do with academic achievement. They have everything to do with *good sense*, *practical insight*, and *nobility of service*, or rather with the lack thereof. If the more intelligent and better educated are themselves often guilty of these failings, we may be sure that the plain person who would either deny or justify his neglect or ignorance of the things of God under cover of his humble station in life, is likewise often guilty of these selfsame sins.

In making mention of these things, I speak not as one who has never failed therein, but as one who has often done so. Yet I speak as well as one who would seek to fail less often therein. I would not entreat others concerning these needs as one who has “arrived,” for I surely have not. Rather, I would do so simply because these things are important; indeed, because they are central to all true faithfulness. Just because we are not academicians does not mean that we need not be careful with the Word of God. Simply because we are not professional philosophers or linguists, does not mean that we may commit as many fallacies as we wish, or break as many laws of language as we please.

Yet in the face of so much that is factually incorrect or logically invalid in the many winds of teaching circulating about, may we be mindful that “the entire body,” immature and faltering as it may be, is nonetheless “growing in the growth of God” (Col.2:19b). Wherever greater growth has yet to be realized, is a place where God has yet to grant the increase (1 Cor.3:6,7). All praise be unto Him in our considerations of any of His beloved ones who are infirm in the faith: whether in years ahead or in eons to come, *they will be made to stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand* (Rom.14:4). J.R.C.

THE KINGDOM IN THE “OLD TESTAMENT”

THE QUESTION, What is the kingdom of heaven? is of perennial interest. The bewildering diversity of answers has been the subject of anxious inquiry. We have endeavored to answer that question from Scripture, and now place our findings before truth seekers.

It is a canon of exegesis to interpret any phrase or word in the Scriptures by its presence in other parts of the Bible. Adhering to that principle, we find that the phrase “the kingdom of the heavens” is founded on Daniel 2:44 as well as 7:27.¹ An examination of that basic passage in the light of the immediate context and the prophecy as a whole establishes the following facts:

1. The kingdom of the heavens is a kingdom in the sense in which the empires represented by the parts of the great image were kingdoms.
2. It is limited to the *earth*, embracing the kingdoms under the whole heaven.
3. It is the kingdom of a *people*.
4. It is a *future* kingdom.

And now, to clearly comprehend the subject, we must scan

1. “In their days, that is, of these kings, the Eloah of the heavens will set up a kingdom that for the eons shall not come to harm. His kingdom shall not be left to another people. It will pulverize and terminate all these kingdoms, and it shall be confirmed for the eons” (Dan.2:44); “And the kingdom and the jurisdiction and the majesty of the kingdom under the entire heavens will be granted to the people of the saints of the supremacies. Their kingdom is an eonian kingdom, and all other authorities shall serve and hear-ken to them” (Dan.7:27).

the progressive unfolding of the kingdom idea in the Hebrew Scriptures. In fewest words we deal with the subject.

To begin with, we must concede that the Bible is not merely a book of moral and religious principles in mystical language, but a consistent, systematic disclosure of an explicit purpose which has been in operation since the dawn of time. To grasp that purpose it is requisite to admit that God's ways are admirably adjusted to the physical and moral condition of mortal man, and that His revelation is suited to his mental calibre. Israel's history affords convincing proof of this. When Yahweh descended on Mount Sinai with burning fire and murkiness, the tornado, the blare of the trumpet and the voice of declarations, the sons of Israel trembled at the majesty of the theophany. They cried to Moses: "Speak *you* with us that we may hear; yet *Elohim* must not speak with us lest we die." (Ex.20:19; *cp* Heb.12:19). In effect their argument comes to this: The brightness of the fire is too dazzling for our eyes: the roaring tempestuous trumpet overtaxes our hearing. Let God speak to us through you. We can behold your form, we can hear your voice: but this awful sight and deafening sound we are incapable of bearing.

In fine, they expressed the desire to see the Deity in man's guise, and hear Him speak with a man's voice. God graciously acceded to their request. He said to Moses: "They have done well in all that they have spoken. A Prophet shall I raise up to them from among their brothers, like you, and I will put My words in His mouth, and He will speak to them all that I shall instruct Him" (Deut.18:17,18). Accommodation to Israel's level was complete. Such perfect adaptation, coinciding with their wish in every respect, involved, in the very nature of the case, grave accountability. Hence the solemn warning of verse 19: "Yet it will come to be that the man who should not hearken to My words that the Prophet shall speak in My name, I Myself shall require his blood from him." In accor-

dance with this promise, when the fullness of the time came, the only begotten Son put on the garments of flesh.

As the infinite God has declared Himself through His Son's assuming "the likeness of sin's flesh," so He has conveyed His thoughts in the language of sinful men: He has clothed them in the very words in which mortals interchange ideas; He has used them with the significance which inheres in them in the tongue employed. Ordinarily we speak plainly: so does He. Occasionally we employ figures and emblems, parables and illustrations: so does He. Because an orator chances to use a figure or an illustration to make his point more vivid and impressive, do we, in perusing his oration, change the meaning of the words as alchemy does, or would, the substance of metals? Assuredly not. If, then, God has spoken to us "as man speaks with man," it is clear that we must treat His word in the same way in which we do other literary productions—consider the words in their fundamental and unquestioned usage, and not think of proposing arbitrary or speculative senses for them.

To alter the meaning visible in the words by permutative spiritualization is to make the Bible the convenient material for every kind of "private interpretation," as the confusing variety of opinions on the subject of the kingdom manifestly proves. Men have imagined that God could not have a kingdom in the ordinary sense of the word, and in order to reduce the material to a relation with that preconceived notion, it has been necessary to interpret it in a manner which, it must be admitted, invests it with the qualities of a riddle rather than those of a formal communication.

The first chapter of Colossians views the beloved Son in the effulgent glory of creation and reconciliation. Past and future are vitally related to the Firstborn from the dead. First is the creation of all things in Him (Col.1:16). This is the starting point: it looks to a dateless past. Next comes the reconciliation of all through Him (verse 20). This is the goal: it points to a distant future. We observe that, in both creation and reconcil-

iation, two spheres appear—the heavens and the earth. These two spheres must not be fused, and what pertains to the one must be rigidly excluded from what pertains to the other.

If creation and reconciliation embrace two spheres, earth and heaven, His purpose must necessarily bear this twofold stamp, and as enunciated in Scripture, it appears to do so.

The burden of God's purpose on its terrestrial side is a *kingdom*. Its focus is a *nation*—Israel. Its keynote, *dominion*. The end in view, the restoration of the earth. Israel is an instrument for *rule*. Through their medium God will establish His government in the earth, shepherd the other nations, and administer the affairs of this nether sphere. The burden of God's purpose on its celestial side is *revelation*. Its focus is the *church which is His body*. Its keynote, *grace*. The end in view, the restoration of the heavens. The Church, both now and hereafter, is a medium for *display*. Through that spiritual corporation God will exhibit the transcendent wealth of His grace throughout the oncoming eons (Eph.2:7). Hence the astounding statement, almost staggering in its immensity, "we became a *theater* to the world and to messengers and to men" (1 Cor.4:9).

Leaving for the present the consideration of that side of God's purpose which concerns the heavens, we proceed to trace the development of the kingdom idea, confining ourselves to the Hebrew Scriptures, and resolutely adhering to the sound principle of taking each word at its face value. We shall show that, in the totality of its features, such an interpretation will justify itself by the general cogency of its results.

Lexicons define a "kingdom" as "a territory, people, state, or realm, ruled by a king . . . [a] monarchy" (FUNK AND WAGNALLS STANDARD COLLEGE DICTIONARY). A potentate, a metropolis, a territory, a people, a system of administration and dependencies—these are the ideas which the word suggests; and it is reasonable to suppose that, in adopting it, Scripture intends to convey no other ideas than those ordinarily implied. The

assumption thus advanced may easily be tested. But at what point shall our investigation begin?

When the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, He declares to the nations on His right, "Hither, blessed of My Father! Enjoy the allotment of the kingdom made ready for you from the disruption of the world" (Matt.25:34). Here we learn that (1) the Father has *prepared* a Kingdom, and (2) that He has prepared it *from the world's disruption*. This sends us to the opening page of the Bible.

Genesis 1:1 asserts the creation of the heavens and the earth in the beginning. And it is unnecessary to say that they came forth from the hand of God in utmost perfection and beauty. We have an express statement to the effect that they were not created "waste and void," as they afterward *became* (Isa.45:18). Genesis 1:2 describes the chaos—the result of disruption. The following verses (3-25) relate the rehabilitation of the ruins. When the earth was made fit for habitation, Adam appears upon the scene, and the Creator delivers to him the following charge: "Be fruitful and increase and fill the earth, and subdue it. And *sway* over the fish of the sea, and over the flyer of the heavens, and over the beast, and over all the earth, and over all life moving on the land." (Gen.1:28).

Moreover, God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden "to serve it and to keep it" (Gen.2:15). The words "serve"² and "keep" suggest, respectively, cultivation and supervision. The task assigned is development of natural resources and their administration, as well as dispensing the products of the soil to the creatures under him, along the lines indicated by the Creator (Gen.1:29). On the surface, we have

2. The Hebrew word for "serve" ("dress," AV) is the same rendered "to till" in Genesis 2:6; 3:23; 4:12. Adam was a tiller of the ground before the fall, not in consequence thereof. Indeed, he was contemplated for that occupation from the outset (Gen.2:5). The only difference before and after the fall lay in this: whereas before, the ground responded generously to his efforts afterwards it yielded scanty returns.

here something concrete to which each subsequent declaration sustains a relation.

Adam's defection threw the vast machinery of the universe out of gear. It is important to note, however, that though his apostasy changed God's method of dealing, it did not alter His purpose; for, three millennia afterwards, David, in poetic language, muses in wonderment over the truth revealed to our progenitor in Eden: that a *man* is given authority to rule for God (Psa.8).

Of the earliest age we have only the scantiest outline. The events of nearly two millennia are condensed within the compass of two chapters (Gen.4:1-6:8). Yet, notwithstanding its brevity, this fragment unveils a criminal career of unmatched activity and extraordinary character. Here is murder and blasphemous assumption of deity: violence and abuse of the sexual relation; talent and inventive genius employed in the service of lust; cities sodden in sensuality and reeking in crime. Wickedness assumed such grave character and gigantic proportions that the total destruction of the race—except eight souls which had not participated in the prevailing forms of wickedness—was the only effective remedy.

After the deluge, the charge to multiply and fill the earth, formerly given to Adam, is renewed to Noah and his three sons. The original idea of dominion is confirmed. The corrupt practices of the antediluvians, however, introduced new elements of disorder in the relations of man to nature and the animals. These new conditions are met. "The fear of you and dismay due to you shall come on every living animal of the earth, even on every flyer of the heavens, and in all which is moving on the ground, and in all the fishes of the sea. Into your hand are they given. *Every moving animal which is living is coming to be food for you.* As the green herbage, I give to you all. Yea, only flesh with its soul, its blood, you shall not eat" (Gen.9:2-4).

But there is another point. From the experience of the ante-

cedent age emerged another problem. With the exception of marriage, there had been no defined relations and responsibilities. Each man was a law unto himself. There was nothing to safeguard life from lawless encroachments. The extent to which violence had prevailed pleaded for a restraint of some sort. And this is precisely what God proceeds to do. "Yea, and your blood for your souls I will require. From the hand of every living animal will I require it, and from the hand of humanity. From the hand of a man's brother I will require the soul of a human. The shedder of the blood of a human, by a human his blood shall be shed, for in the image of the Elohim has He made humanity" (Gen.9:5,6). The progenitors of the race are invested with authority requisite for the enactment and maintenance of these obligations.

Though there is no categorical statement bearing on the point, the implication that Noah's sons were to establish in their respective lines government on the basis of responsibility between man and man, is required by the trend of the narrative as a whole. From them mankind branches off in three streams, subdivided into lesser divisions, nations, families (Gen.10:5,20,31,32), each with a specific vocation and definite destiny in view, as will be presently shown. The division of mankind into nations was of divine appointment (Gen.10:25; Deut.32:8; Acts 17:26), with the evident intention of founding a supervisory system that would insure effectual enforcement of the principles entrusted to Noah's sons. Moreover, we are informed (Deut.32:8) that, in dividing Adam's sons into nations, the bounds of their habitation were assigned with a view to Israel as a ruling nation, with centralized authority.

This system of administration, in its broad features, is outlined in Noah's prophecy (Gen.9:25-27). Supremacy, political and religious, belongs to Shem. He monopolizes blessing. The tent of God is in his midst. The Deity is known as "the God of Shem." The Japhetic peoples, enlarged by a policy of expansion due to conquest and colonization, surround that

center. Subordinate to both are the Hamitic nations. We are not required to understand the “servitude” of this passage in the sense of slavery; it implies no more than subjection; they do not enjoy political autonomy. The occasion to divulge the position and function of a ruling people in a more detailed manner was furnished by the nations attempting to gather around a center of their own on the plains of Shinar (Gen. 11:1-9). God upset their scheme, and, by confounding their speech, consolidated the national boundaries, which thereafter became philological as well as geographical. This brings us quite naturally to the next stage.

In the very land where a centralization diametrically opposed to His purpose had been attempted, God appears to a descendant of Shem—Abraham—and speaks as follows: “You go from your land and from your kindred and from your father’s house to the land which I shall show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, and you must become a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and those making light of you I will curse. Blessed in you and in your seed are all the families of the ground” (Gen.12:1-3). So, we see, the early intimation of a *great nation* is assuming definite shape. The initial announcement shows its greatness to consist in the enjoyment of blessing in a measure and to a degree not shared by others, and in the further fact of its being a *medium* of blessing to all the families of the ground.

Upon Abraham’s return from Egypt, after his separation from Lot, Yahweh said to him, “Lift your eyes, pray, and see. From the place where you now are, northward and toward the south-rim and eastward and seaward, for all the land which you are seeing, I am giving it to you, and to your seed, till the eon” (Gen.13:14,15). Henceforth, a *land* is inseparably associated with that nation. Later on, its boundaries are determined and its possession for an inalienable inheritance is pledged to Abraham’s posterity by an immutable, *unconditional* covenant—a covenant in which God assumes all obligations, Abra-

ham being a mere spectator to the transaction—sealed with God’s oath (Gen.15:12-21; *cp* Heb.6:13-18).

Anterior to this covenant, Abraham was promised an *heir* and posterity numerous as the sand of the sea. Striking is the strange incompatibility of His counsels with the agents chosen to carry them out. He said He would make a great nation—of whom? A man as good as dead—that is, whose virility was destroyed by senile decay—and a barren woman, past the age of child-bearing. Again, He said: “In Isaac shall your seed be called.” But he, too, had a barren wife. “Isaac is entreating Yahweh for the invigorating of Rebecca, his wife, for she is barren. And Yahweh is being entreated by him, and Rebecca, his wife, is pregnant” (Gen.25:21). Also, in the cases of Jacob’s wives, we read, “God opened her womb” (Gen.29:31; 30:22).

God is the Fulfiller as well as Giver of the promise; and His method of procedure makes it evident all along that their realization is not “by natural course,” but by directive—is it too much to say creative?—acts on His part. The increase in Egypt under conditions where other nations have either perished or lost their identity; the exodus; the passage through the wilderness; the events in the land—in a word, every phase of Hebrew history justifies the saying of the Psalmist, “He has not done so for any other nation” (Psa.147:20), and affirms them to be a people of His *own* making.

We are now to consider a departure fraught with disastrous consequences to Israel. They reach Sinai. Moses ascends to the One, Elohim. Then Yahweh calls to him from the mountain, saying: “Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and tell to the sons of Israel, *You* have seen what I did to the Egyptians when I bore *you* on vultures’ wings and brought *you* to Myself. Now, if you shall hearken, yea hearken to My voice and observe My covenant then you will become Mine, a special possession, above all the peoples, for Mine is all the earth. As for you, you shall become Mine, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex.19:3-6a).

God bids them take a retrospect of His wondrous doings. As a vulture soaring high in the air scorns every impediment which obstructs a pedestrian's course, so had God carried them through the dangers of the desert. Recall the facts. He led them dryshod across the sea; sweetened the waters of Marah; gave them bread from heaven and water from the rock; He satisfied their hunger and assuaged their thirst. How different their part had been! They had *underestimated* His power. "Can He provide a table in the wilderness?" They had doubted His presence. "Is the Lord in our midst?" And now, in the face of such experiences, they *overestimate* their own strength. "Whatsoever the Lord has spoken *we will do.*" Alas! they had not learned the lessons which one of their illustrious sons learned so thoroughly in a later day, "I am aware that good is not making its home in me (that is, in my flesh), for to will is lying beside me, yet to be effecting the ideal is not" (Rom.7:18); it is only, "For all am I strong *in Him Who is invigorating me—Christ!*" (Phil.4:13).

They are about to enter the land. Thus far they are not hedged by restrictions. Every step of the way has developed a tendency to resist God's appointments; yet they express confidence in their ability to conform to His requirements without even knowing what is expected of them. Entrance into the land under such circumstances means a certain recrudescence of the scene at Babel. Goodness has been outraged, so they are placed under a stern, inflexible schoolmaster—the law—to learn the exceeding sinfulness of sin. A covenant *conditioned by obedience on their part*, is entered into. "And no more will the feet of Israel wander from the ground which I gave to their fathers, *should* they hearken to do according to all which I instruct them, and to all the law they were instructed in by My servant Moses" (2 Kings 21:8).

On the other hand, if they will not hearken to the voice of Yahweh their Elohim, to observe and to do all His instructions and His statutes, then "Yahweh shall lift up against you a

nation from afar, from the end of the earth, just as the vulture swoops down, a nation whose tongue you have not heard, a nation strong of face who neither lifts the face of the old one with partiality nor is gracious to the youth" (Deut.28:15,49,50).

The Sinaitic covenant was a temporary expedient to restrain inevitable outbreaks of sin. Imposed unto a period of reformation (Heb.9:10), it could not invalidate the Abrahamic covenant ratified beforehand (Gal.3:17). On entering the land the nation solemnly assumes its duties. Heaven and earth are summoned as witnesses. Six tribes stationed on Mount Gerizim pronounce the blessings; six tribes pronounce the curses from Mount Ebal. As the Levites read the curses, the people respond "Amen" (Deut.27:15-26; Josh.8:30-35).

Their career in the land was a mournful record of lawbreaking and apostasy. King, priest, and people, "did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh." So, true to the terms of the covenant, "He causes to go up against them the king of the Chaldeans, and he slays their chosen ones by the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and has no pity on young man and virgin, old man and very aged—the whole He has given into his hand . . . And he deports those left of the sword unto Babylon" (2 Chron.36:17,20). But at the moment when the nation is being removed because of its unworthiness, the promise of God is announced (Jer.31:31-34):

"Behold the days are coming, averring is Yahweh,
 when I contract with the house of Israel,
 And with the house of Judah, a new covenant.
 Not as the covenant which I contracted with their forefathers,
 In the day I held fast their hand to bring them forth
 from the land of Egypt,
 Which covenant of Mine they annulled,
 And I loathed them, averring is Yahweh.
 For this is the covenant which I will contract,
 With the house of Israel after those days, averring is Yahweh.
 I will bestow My law within them,

And I will write it on their hearts,
 I will become theirs for Elohim,
 And they shall become Mine for a people.
 And no longer shall they teach, each man his associate,
 And each man his brother, saying, 'Know Yahweh,'
 For all of them shall know Me,
 From their smallest unto their greatest, averring is Yahweh,
 For I will pardon their depravity,
 And I will remember their sin no further."

The first covenant had failed owing to their mortal corruption: so, by a new covenant, God pledges Himself, without any obligation on their part, not only to pardon their sins and reinstate them as a nation in their land, but also to regenerate them so as to make further defection impossible.

The next stage in the unfolding of the purpose is the choice of a King. Like the preceding, this item, too, is made public in consequence of failure on man's part. The anarchy under the judges and the venality of Samuel's sons led Israel to demand a king. Let it be understood, there was no sin in asking for a king. God intended that Israel should have one. Jacob looks forward to the time when the Prince of Peace shall arise out of Judah with the sceptre (Gen.49:10), and Balaam beholds His star from afar (Num.24:17). The mistake lay in asking for a king *like unto the nations*. Samuel makes it clear that such monarchic rule means tyranny. Under Saul they tasted it to the full. At length, after much disciplinary trial, David, the first king of Israel "according to God's own heart," i.e., His definite choice for the throne, is crowned. He desired to build a house for Yahweh. This he was not allowed to do, but on that occasion God made with him an eonian covenant, "arranged in all things and observed" (2 Sam.23:5) to raise him a "seed," the throne of whose kingdom will be "established for the eon" (2 Sam. 7:11-17). Along with this promise goes the choice of Jerusalem for a metropolis. The kingdom idea is thus completed.

To clearly understand subsequent developments, we must

bear in mind, that, while this covenant is *unconditional*, and therefore irrevocable (Psa.89:28-37), God reserves the right to inflict such remedial punishment as the delinquency of David's successors may necessitate.

The books of the Kings and the Chronicles detail the history of the Davidic dynasty. Their tale supports the censure of the Son of Sirach:³ "Except David and Hezekiah and Josiah, all committed trespass: the kings of Judah failed" (Ecclus. 49:4). We have observed that David's descendants would be chastised for iniquity "with the club of mortals, and with the contagion of the sons of men" (2 Sam.7:14); in other words, through calamities inflicted by men. A long series of such disciplinary measures failed to produce adequate salutary effects (1 Kings 11:11,12; 2 Chron.12:2; 16:9; 21:10,16; 24:24; 28:5,6,9; 33:11). Therefore He delivered them into the hands of the Chaldeans. But at the time when Zedekiah is deposed and carried to Babylon in fetters, the inviolability of the promise is solemnly reiterated (Ezek.21:25-27):

"And you, violated, wicked prince of Israel,
 Whose day comes in the era of depravity's end,
 Thus says my Lord Yahweh:
 Take away the turban, and heave off the crown.
 This shall not remain thus.
 The low elevate, and the lofty abase.
 Depraved, depraved, depraved will I constitute it.
 Moreover, this shall not come to be again
 till He comes Whose is the judgment,
 And I will give it to Him."

3. i.e., the censure of the author of the book of this title, known today as Ecclesiasticus (from the Vulgate). This work is one of the earliest of the deuterocanonical/apocryphal books. It would appear that the original title, according to the afterword in the Hebrew text, was "Wisdom . . . of the Son of Sirach." It is a notable example of the Hebrew "*Hokmah*- [i.e., 'Wisdom'] literature." Modeled in great part on Proverbs, it concerns itself with ethical maxims and folk-sayings, expressions of praise and lament, besides observations about Jewish life and religious mores in the second century B.C.

This great declaration molds and governs the outlook of exilic and post-exilic prophecy. The crown being removed from David's house until the Rightful One comes, it looks forward to His advent (Jer.23:5,6):

“Behold! Days are coming, averring is Yahweh,
When I will raise for David a righteous Sprout,
And a King shall reign and use intelligence,
And He will execute judgment and justice in the land.
In His days Judah shall be saved,
And Israel shall tabernacle trustingly,
And this is His name, by which they shall call Him:
Yahweh, our Righteousness.”

The kingdom of Judah was reduced to a province of the Babylonian empire. But no sooner are the Jews and the temple vessels brought to Babylon, than Nebuchadnezzar is divinely instructed of the future mapped out for the people he has deported. He fell asleep, absorbed by the question, *What shall come to pass hereafter?* That night's dream was a complete answer to the thought which had preoccupied his mind: “The great Eloah makes known to the king *what shall occur after this*” (Dan.2:29-45). A succession of empires are to lord over the Holy Land, but at an appointed time the kingdom shall be restored to Israel.

The decree of Cyrus permitted the Jews to return and rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. A small remnant returned under Nehemiah and Zerubbabel. In the reign of Darius the new temple was finished (Ezra 6:15). Conditions, however, were different from what they had been. Nation, king, and priest had experienced failure through sin and were alike under judgment. The second temple had no coffer (“ark,” AV). Without a propitiatory shelter (“mercy-seat,” AV), the annual cleansing of the nation from sin was no longer possible. What standing had the people? is the question emerging from the failure of the Aaronic priesthood. The Book of Zechariah has this situation in view.

On the face of things, the vision in Zechariah, third chapter, deals with the removal of the iniquity of the priesthood and the land (verses 4 and 9). It was the second year of Darius (1:7). The Lord has returned to Jerusalem with compassion; the work of the house is allowed to proceed (Zech.1:16; Ezra 4:24). The prophet sees Joshua standing before the messenger of Yahweh in filthy garments. Using his uncleanness as a point of attack, Satan seeks to stave off the prosperity promised to Jerusalem, once more chosen by Yahweh (Zech.3:2; cp 1:13,17). Satan is rebuked. The messenger commands those before him (before Joshua—the priests and Levites) to take off from him the filthy garments, while saying to him, “I cause your depravity to pass off you” (verse 4). Then Joshua is arrayed in rich apparel, and the messenger gives assurance that he and the Levites (that stand before him) will be given charge over the courts of the house (verse 7). But what of expiation? As the vision fades, there comes a voice (verses 8 and 9):

“Hear, pray, Joshua, the great priest, you and your associates who are sitting before you, for they are mortals of a miracle, for behold Me bringing My servant, the Sprout. For behold the stone which I bestow before Joshua; on one stone are seven facets. Behold Me engraving its graving (averring is Yahweh of hosts), and I remove all the depravity of that land in one day.”

The stone reminds us of the *two* stones which were engraven with the names of the sons of Israel and put on the shoulders of the high priest. To signify the removal of all division or difference between the tribes or between them and Yahweh, here we have only *one* stone. This stone has seven “eyes” or “sparkles,” or facets, for seven indicates satisfaction, as this is its meaning in Hebrew. Moreover, men had engraved the stones which Aaron wore, but now Yahweh Himself will engrave their names, so that they will ever be before Him, and His power will preserve them in His presence. So will it be within the house, where Joshua, the great priest, officiates. As a con-

sequence, Yahweh Himself will also remove the depravity of the whole land. The single gem with seven facets engraven with His own hands within the temple will find its external fulfillment in unity, satisfaction, and holiness throughout the land. Only thus will they be able to enjoy sitting under their vine and fig tree; joyful worship and righteous government (Zech.3:6-10).

Then will He “cleanse the sons of Levi, and cupel them as gold and as silver. And they shall come to be for Yahweh, bringing close the approach present in righteousness. Then the approach present of Judah and Jerusalem is congenial to Yahweh, as in the days of the eon, and as in former years” (Mal.3:3,4).

The relations between priesthood and royalty form the theme of chapter 6. Retribution for the heathen which scattered Judah and Jerusalem has been repeatedly affirmed (Zech.1:15, 18-21; 2:9). Now, at length, the prophet beholds its enactment. Four chariots drawn by horses of different colors come out from between two mountains of copper. Three chariots go out, to the north and south (chapter 6, verses 1-6). The fourth is detailed to patrol Israel’s land (verse 7). In the opening vision of the series (1:7-11), the angelic horsemen were sent on a tour of inspection and returned with the report “all the earth is sitting still, and is quiet.” Now they go forth from the divine presence to rest His spirit, which is to say, to execute His vengeance (*cp* Isa.48:14; Ezek.5:13).

The intention of the last scene (Zech.6:9-15) is obvious: it supplements Ezekiel’s words at the time of the exile with regard to the passing away of the crown from Judah until He comes Whose right it is. Was the crown to be restored now that the seventy years had elapsed? What follows supplies the answer. The prophet is instructed to take silver and gold from the returned captives and make a crown. The announcement follows (Zech.6:12,13):

“Behold the Man! Sprout is His name.
And from under Him shall it sprout.
And *He* shall build the temple of Yahweh,
Even *He* shall build the temple of Yahweh,
and *He* shall bear the splendor.
He shall sit and rule on His throne,
And there comes to be a priest at His throne,
And the counsel of welfare shall come to be
between the two of them.”

The announcement over, the prophet is directed to deposit the crown in the temple as a memorial to keep alive the hope of Israel. Zechariah extends the exilic predictions of the Coming One in one important particular: The Branch will unite the royal and the priestly with beneficial results—“the counsel of welfare shall come to be between the two of them.”

The promise of a personage who combines the royal and the priestly, not through blood descent, but by divine appointment, recalls two instances where a priest-king appears to confer blessing after Israel’s enemies have been reduced to subjection.

Abraham the Hebrew, returning from the slaughter of the kings, was met and blessed by Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High (Heb.7:1).

Psalms 110 commemorates the making of Jerusalem the seat of government after the discomfiture of Jebus. The story is told in 2 Samuel 5-8. David proceeded to make it the center of religious life. Gathering “all the chosen men of Israel,” he took up the Coffer of God. In the course of these proceedings, though a king, he performed priestly functions: “Girded with a linen ephod . . . David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before Yahweh” (2 Sam.6:14,17; 1 Cor.15:27; 16:37, AV). This was a realization of the language of the psalm: “You are a priest for the eon, according to the order of Melchizedek” (Psa.110:4).

In other ways, besides the offering of sacrifice, the king played a priestly part. We read of Melchizedek that he “brings

forth bread and wine” and “blessed” the patriarch (Gen.14:18,19). So also it was with David: “He blessed the people in the name of Yahweh of hosts. And he apportioned to all one perforated wafer, and of broiled beef, and a portion of wine, and a cake of raisins” (2 Sam.6:18,19). In this particular also, the King of Israel walked in the footsteps of Melchizedek.

Malachi draws a dark picture of the remnant in the land. The symptoms of decay appearing at the time of the return have developed into full-blown apostasy. At the fore is a corrupt priesthood, sodden in formalism, steeped in self-righteousness, and an indifferent people bringing polluted offerings to God’s altar. In the background, far away in the darkness of heathendom, Yahweh’s name is great among the nations, and incense and a pure offering are offered unto Him (Mal.1:11). The foreview is the same as in Zechariah (Mal.3:1):

“Behold Me sending My messenger, and he surfaces the way before Me. And suddenly, the Lord Whom you are seeking is coming to His temple, and the Messenger of the covenant, in Whom *you* are delighting. Behold! He comes! says Yahweh of hosts.”

Were it not for the traditional ideas imbibed from youth, we would never have imported anything entirely *new* into Matthew’s gospel. It continues the story where Malachi left it. The same temple, the same indifferent priesthood, the same corrupt people, the same outside nations bringing a pure oblation. The only difference is: Malachi says of the messenger, “I send him”; of the Lord, “Behold! He comes!” But in Matthew the messenger *has* come, the Lord *is* present.

To recapitulate: Taking the word “kingdom” in its ordinary usage, we have traversed the Old Testament and found a doctrine in no sense mysterious or recondite in character. Beginning with the general idea of *dominion*, the disclosure moves steadily onward, terminating with a *king*.

Let us retrace the steps. Adam is invested with authority to rule for God and to exercise *dominion* in the earth. To Noah

and his three sons the general idea of dominion is confirmed. In their days mankind is divided into *nations*, and government established on the principle of mutual obligations between man and man. At the time of Abraham another factor appears—a *great nation* with the promise of a *land* and a *seed*. In the reign of David three items are added: a *city*, a *throne*, a *king*.

After Malachi no prophet’s voice was heard in Israel for three centuries. Decade after decade wore wearily away, bringing no relief to the favored nation. Dismayed by the delay, many abandoned the hope of a Messianic kingdom as an idle dream. Holy men and women suffered all the pangs of hope deferred. At length, the time of visitation dawned. Before ever that day arrived, however, and while as yet the sinful nation persisted in departing from God, John the Baptist, greatest of women-born, had monitions of coming glory, and he has told us (John 1:33) of mysterious messages that came to him respecting the Coming One. He was grieving over the sin of his nation, then in imminent danger—“already the ax is lying at the root of the trees. Every tree, then, which is not producing ideal fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire”—when, in response to the tidings that reached his ears from the far-off regions of glory, he lifted up his voice in the desert, and the point and substance of his message was—

“*The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near!*”

Vladimir Gelesnoff



CORRECTLY CUTTING THE WORD OF TRUTH

The apostle Paul’s entreaty to Timothy, “Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth” (2 Tim.2:15), is surely ideal counsel.

Elaborating on this principle, Miles Coverdale, in 1535, wrote: “It shall greatly helpe ye to understande Scripture, if thou mark, not only what is spoken and wrytten—but to whom, and of whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goeth before, and what followeth.”



“AND YOU SHALL KNOW THAT
I AM YAHWEH”

The knowledge of Yahweh comes through judgment, not as we are tempted to think, through blessing. In working through Ezekiel's prophecy we were struck with the continually recurring refrain which closes many of its sections: “And you shall know that I am Yahweh.” One nation after another is dealt with for their doings, and Yahweh brings upon them evils of all kinds, the sword, and famine and the plague, and the result is always the same. They become acquainted with the God of Israel through His judgments in the earth. Even those nations which He employed to chastise Israel and Judah must suffer for the way in which they treated His people, although they were used by Him as His rod.

And will it not be the same in the future? Will not the knowledge of Yahweh, which will characterize the thousand years of blessing, be based upon the terrific judgments which precede it? The goodness of God does not seem to lead men to an acquaintance with Him, but evil is the salutary and effective means in His dealing with the nations on the earth.

With the individual it is the same. Many take refuge in Him from evil, in faith. Even the saint is often driven to Him by trial. And is not the unbeliever brought to a knowledge of Christ and God in the great white throne judgment, when he will be dealt with for his sins? It will be a severe but salutary experience, and will not result in annihilation or eternal torment, but in a knowledge of the Deity which prepares them for His grace in making them alive and reconciling them at the consummation.

Such a view of evil should help us not only to bear the trials which come to us, but to rejoice in them, and to give thanks for them, for we also wish to know Yahweh in an increasing measure, and be prepared to appreciate the pleasures promised in His presence.

A.E.K.

Concordant Publishing Concern

15570 Knochaven Road • Santa Clarita, CA 91350, U.S.A. • 805-252-2112