



THE
KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH.

PETER AND PAUL'S MINISTRY.

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A KINGDOM is a circle of country and people that own a king as their head of government, such as Great Britain, Italy, &c. The kingdom of Israel in David's day was the people of Israel, who submitted themselves to David's rule. He was their king. The kingdom of the heavens, then, signifies a circle of people on earth who own heaven's rule; the kingdom of God, God's rule. The former being more objective, the latter subjective; that is, the one rather connected with the King, who is in heaven, the latter with the presence of God on the earth. These are the two general titles given to the kingdom in the gospels.

When the throne of the Lord was moved away from Jerusalem, owing to the departure of Israel from Jehovah into idolatry, the government of the earth was handed over to Gentile rule, of which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon was the first and best type. To him the God of heaven gave power, and rule, and authority; but not His presence, like He did by the Shechinah in Jerusalem. He calls Himself the God of heaven; not the God of the earth, like He did when Joshua's triumphant hosts were crossing the Jordan. But the Gentile

rulers—as is always the case with man—perverted the authority God gave them; they have practically acted like wild beasts, as we see later on in Daniel they are likened to, and would act like that till Christ came again, then they would know that the heavens ruled.

Thus we have three forms the kingdom took in Old Testament scripture, as seen in the books of Kings and Chronicles and Daniel. First, the kingdom of the Lord in the hands of David, Solomon, and their successors till the Babylonish captivity. Secondly, the kingdom, as handed over to Gentile rule, and carried on by four successive empires, the Babylonish, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires. Thirdly, the God of heaven at the end setting up a kingdom that never should be destroyed; that is, the millennial kingdom, when Christ comes back again to reign.

But before the king could come to reign, He must come the first time, as Jehovah-Saviour, to suffer, as Matthew's gospel clearly brings out. He came in due time, according to prophecy, the true Son of David, and Son of Abraham, the heir of the throne of Jerusalem, and of the promises made to Israel as a nation (see Matt. i. 1), but was rejected by Israel. The kingdom was therefore put off, and took a new shape consequent on His rejection by Israel; the keys were committed to Peter as the great administrator of it; it took a mysterious form on account of the rejected king being in heaven and away from it, and was to go out to all nations. Jew, Samaritan, Gentile, who submitted to the claims of the King in baptism, became its subjects; it has

grown up to what Christendom is now; but by-and-by, after the church is gathered out, which by the way is going on at this same time, there will be a purging process, all wickedness will be purged out, judgment will be poured out, Israel will be restored, the King will come again, and set up the kingdom in power, and reign with His church for a thousand years.

After this, when all power, and authority, and rule are put down that are contrary to Christ, the wicked dead will be raised and judged and put into the lake of fire; and the Son will then deliver up His kingdom to God and the Father, that God may be all in all. This is the eternal state. It will be still the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of heaven. This is a brief sketch of the whole, so that my reader may enter into the plan of my paper.

Daniel ii. 44. The God of heaven, then, according to prophecy, was going to set up a kingdom in the time of the fourth empire's rule which should never be destroyed. This is no doubt the Messianic kingdom, which will succeed the Roman empire in its last form divided into ten kingdoms.

But, as I said, before the King could come to reign, He must come the first time as Jesus to suffer. A virgin must conceive and bear a son, and they should call His name Emmanuel, that is, God with us. This is the grand subject of the Gospel of Matthew, which its first chapter introduces to us. Man was also fully to be tested, so as to bring out all the more the necessity for the death and resurrection of Messiah to come in, as the basis on which the kingdom in power was to be set up.

Tried without law, under the light of creation and conscience, man had been found lawless. (Rom. i. 18, and ii. 1-16.) Tried under law in the Jew, he had broken it. (Rom. ii. 16, to the end.) Now that the King had come in grace and presented Himself as the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, to fulfil the promises made to Israel, would the nation accept or reject Him? He is born in Bethlehem, according to the prophecy in Isaiah. Gentiles come to His light, and kings to the brightness of His rising from the east; but alas! an apostate Edomite king reigns in the land, who seeks to kill the new-born King, and thus fulfils Jeremiah's prophecy. (Matt. ii. 17, 18.) He flees into Egypt, begins anew the history of Israel, according to the prophecy in Hosea: "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." The nation is not ready for Him either; John the Baptist is sent as His messenger to prepare His way; Repent, he says to the people, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand. The result is that a number take the place of death and judgment in Jordan, by the baptism of repentance, and thus wait for the King's approach. The Pharisees reject John's baptism. Suddenly the King appears, but as Jesus, that is, the God of Israel become a man to die for His people's sins, and fulfilling all righteousness, meets the repentant remnant in the place of death, comes out again, and heaven salutes Him as God's Beloved Son, whilst the Holy Ghost anoints Him for His office.

He is now led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil; He refuses to satisfy His own hunger by a miracle, to prove Himself Messiah to the Jews in the

same way, by casting Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and to take the kingdoms of the world from the devil's hands, before the time. Satan flees, and the Anointed One returns in the power of the Spirit into Galilee to call the people to repentance, and to preach His own kingdom. He announces its righteous principles in Matthew v., vi., and vii.; gives proofs of His being the Anointed in chapters viii. and ix.; sends out others to preach the same thing in chapter x.; but is rejected, chapters xi. and xii., and pronounces woes on the cities that rejected Him. The empty house out of which the unclean spirit had departed would not receive the King, a greater than Jonas and Solomon, consequently would have a greater judgment. All natural relationship is now disowned. The disciples only were His brothers, sisters, and mother.

We have a clear division here in our gospel. The King has offered Himself to His own nation and is practically rejected. Chapter xiii. introduces a new phase of the kingdom.

A sower goes forth to sow. He sows in a field, which further down is interpreted as the world. A new thing is begun, and in a new sphere. Chapter xiii. gives us what are called the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. It is the form the kingdom takes consequent on the King being rejected by the Jewish nation. Under seven parables its progress and aspects during the present time are seen, beginning with the parable of the sower, as introductory. The kingdom of heaven, then, in its present form is produced by the sowing of the word in the hearts of men. In the

parable of the wheat and tares is shewn its establishment in the world, of which the field is the type, and the opposition of the enemy in sowing tares. This closes with judgment and purging at the end of the age. The evil example of the professed servant of Christ using the civil power to root the tares out of the world, that is, put the heretics to death, is here spoken against. This has nothing to do with putting evil persons out of the *church*. This is clearly the church's duty as shewn in 1 Corinthians v. Here it is rooting heretics out of the *world*, that is, putting them to death, as the pope and others in power often have done against the Lord's word. Both are to remain together till the harvest, at the end of the age, when the angels will come forth and sever the wicked from amongst the just, the righteous, that is, the saved during the present dispensation, will then shine forth in the heavenly part of the kingdom, that of their Father, and the Son of man would take the earthly part.

The third parable, or that of the mustard seed, shews the outward growth of the kingdom in the world from a very small beginning; and the fowls of the air, type of unclean things, lodging in its branches.

The parable of the leaven shews the hidden working of leaven, or evil mixed with the pure meal—pure meal a type of the word of God. A mixture of false doctrine with the true, leavening the mass.

In the two following parables, spoken to the disciples alone in the house, we have an inner view of the kingdom as shewn in the treasure and pearl. Christ, for the sake of the treasure,

hid in the world, gives up all He had to buy that field—seeking goodly pearls and finding one of great price, He sells all that He had to purchase it. Oh, what love this brings out in Christ to the church, hidden and beautiful in the midst of the world. May we realise at what a cost He has bought us!

Lastly, the kingdom net takes out of the sea, that is, the nations, a multitude of fish, bad and good. It is drawn to shore, the good are put into vessels, the bad are cast away. The explanation of the parable gives pretty much the same result as took place in that of the wheat and tares, the angels come and separate the bad from the good, and the latter are left for the millennial earth. We must always remember that these are similitudes of the kingdom and not of the church, which will be translated to heaven before. Thus chapter xiii. gives a general sketch of the kingdom of heaven since the Saviour's day. It began with the sowing of the word, it was then established in the world; owing to unwatchfulness, it then partook of a mixed character, tares being sown in. Outwardly it became a great tree, but hidden corruption leavened the mass. There was, however, a hidden reality in its midst, as pictured by the treasure and pearl. Even outwardly it was but a gathering out of the nations, not universal, before Christ's second coming, and finally a separation between bad and good.

In chapter xvi. the Lord refuses to give the Pharisees any sign but that of Jonas the prophet, that is, Himself thrown overboard by the world, but raised by the power of God. He then warns His own disciples against the evil

doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees, which He likens to leaven, and draws attention to Himself, first, by asking His disciples men's opinion of Him; and then, secondly, by asking whom they said He was? Peter confesses Him as God's Anointed, the Son of the living God, upon which the Lord commends him, and gives for the first time the revelation of the church to be built on this confession of Peter, against which the gates of Hades should not prevail. He also hands over to Peter the keys, that is, the administration of the kingdom of heaven, in the new form it was to take consequent on Christ's rejection, as we have seen pictured in Matthew xiii., and commands the disciples not to give any further testimony to the Jews that He was the Anointed. He then goes on to speak of the cross, as necessary to come in, before the church and kingdom could be set up; the path to the kingdom in glory, which is introduced at the end of the chapter, must be by the practical denial of self, the taking up of the cross and following Him. Then the kingdom in power would be set up, as we see figured in the scene in the mount of transfiguration.

Thus the assembly of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven under Peter's administration, were to replace Israel on the earth; both founded on Christ crucified by the world, but raised by the power of God. The kingdom in power and glory would come in its time, but the present way to it was by identification with Christ in His rejection, taking up the cross and following Him.

The church, then, as Christ builds it, holds a

secret and inner place in the kingdom of heaven. Christ builds it and keeps it in His own hands. The stones are attracted to Him as the foundation, and are built upon His dead, risen, and ascended Person, a spiritual house. Only real Christians belong to it in this aspect. (See 1 Peter ii. 4, 5.) Christ builds it and keeps it in His own hands. The power of the devil is exerted in vain to destroy it. The foundation was the rejected Messiah of Israel, raised to glory, and there revealed as the Son of the living God, communicating eternal life to all who believed, and bringing them into the family of God, as well as revealing the Father.

The scene of the mount of transfiguration gives us the third aspect of the kingdom in picture, namely, as set up in power and glory upon the return of the Messiah in glory and majesty.

Jesus takes up Peter, James, and John into a mountain apart, and is transfigured before them. His face shines as the sun, His raiment is white as the light. Moses, the representation of the law, and Elias of the prophets, shine as His attendants in the glory of the kingdom. The disciples stood with Jesus on the mount. So the Old Testament saints and the New, as raised from the dead, or translated to heaven without dying, will have their place in the heavenly part of the kingdom. Other saints will form the earthly part, with Jesus and His heavenly saints reigning over them. That this is no fancied picture may be known from the second Epistle of Peter i. 16-18: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables," he says, "when we made known unto you the power

and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of his majesty, for he received from the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, and this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." Thus Peter in this epistle confirms the Lord's word, that the mount of the transfiguration gives a picture of the kingdom set up in power, on the return of the Son of man from heaven. Psalm viii. had prophesied that into the hands of the Son of man would be committed universal dominion, and here is the picture of it.

To sum up, then, what has been brought forward, Matthew i. to xii. gives us the kingdom of heaven offered to the Jewish nation and rejected. Chapter xiii. gives a sketch of the form it has taken consequent on Messiah's rejection, shewing that at the close the angels would come forth, and purge out of His kingdom all things that offend, and separate between the good and evil, removing the latter out of the scene by judgment. Chapter xvi. shews that the church of Christ would be built and gathered out at the same time, which was an inner circle of reality, against which the gates of Hades should not prevail, at the same time to Peter is committed the keys or administration, of the kingdom of heaven. Matthew xvii. shews us, by the scene on the mount of transfiguration the power and second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, attended by His raised and translated saints, Himself reigning with them over His earthly ones. This last aspect will be introduced by the return of the

Son of man. All this is the kingdom of heaven, first offered and rejected, then set up in mystery during the present time, whilst the King is in heaven; lastly set up in power over the earth upon His return.

Matthew xviii., xix., and xx. give us present principles as to it, consequent on the rejection of the King, whose rejection is again mentioned in chapter xvii. 22, 23. To enter into it there must be conversion, and becoming as a little child, to be greatest in it was to be most like a child. This spirit would be tested. The one that received a child in the name of Christ received Him, and the one that stumbled one of the youngest that believed in Jesus, it were better for him that a millstone were hung about his neck and he cast into the sea. The Son of man had come to save the lost, even children, thus they had a place in the kingdom of heaven, which is confirmed in chapter xix. 13, 14. In the middle of the chapter, the assembly is again referred to as the final place of reference in regard to the disputes between brethren in the kingdom; and to the assembly was committed the power of discipline, of binding and loosing. Where two or three were gathered together to the Lord Jesus Christ's name, there He was in the midst. The spirit of a little child, the spirit of grace and of forgiveness was to characterise the professed subjects of the kingdom now. Thus the assembly is again seen as an inner circle in the midst of the kingdom of heaven.

The original order of creation was also to be preserved in respect to marriage; the prin-

ciple was, God had joined the man and woman together, and so the marriage tie was never to be dissolved except for fornication. As to riches, the law permitted them, and they were a sign of blessing to a godly Jew; but now the King was rejected, riches were to be left and the King followed. This was the way into eternal life; the way into the kingdom set up in power at the end.

Chapters xxi. to xxiii. give the final presentation of the King and His rejection. He is betrayed, crucified, buried, and on the third day raised from the dead. He appears amongst His poor remnant in Galilee, whom He is not now ashamed to call His brethren; and as the One to whom all power is committed in heaven and earth. He sends them forth from Galilee to disciple all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which has been the grand formulary of baptism in connection with the kingdom of heaven ever since, and will continue till the King's return.

The Acts of the Apostles give us the establishment of the kingdom of heaven, and of the church amongst Jew and Gentile, consequent on rejection of the King by the Jews. The Lord in answer to the question put to Him by His disciples, as to whether this was the time when He would restore the kingdom of Israel, answered that it was not for them to know the times and the seasons, which the Father had put in His own power. But they should receive power after that the Holy Ghost should come upon them, and they should be witnesses unto Christ, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the

uttermost parts of the earth. He thus intimated that the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth was for an interval to replace Judaism, and that it would not be till after that interval that the kingdom would be restored to Israel, and set up in power.

The Lord then ascended to heaven, and upon the intimation by the angels that He would in like manner return, the disciples return to Jerusalem and await in prayer the promise of the Father. Acts ii. gives us the account of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and the formation of the church of God. Peter, as the great administrator of the kingdom, is prominent in the testimony. He preaches a marvellous discourse on the three names, Jesus, Christ, the Lord, as setting forth the glories of the Person he was speaking of, and charging home on the Jews the sin of having rejected Jesus, he declares that God had made Him Lord according to Psalm cx., and Christ from Psalm xvi. He was the same Person David thus spoke of, raised from the dead to sit on David's throne: and sitting at the right hand of God till His enemies were made His footstool. Pricked in their heart, numbers say, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Repent, says Peter, of your awful sin of having rejected God's Anointed, and be baptised unto the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. The result of this appeal was that three thousand received the word and

were baptised unto the name of God's rejected King, thus owning likewise His lordship. By His death and resurrection they were brought on new ground, having thus saved themselves from the Jewish nation as a whole. The kingdom of heaven was set up in a new form, and all who in baptism bowed to the claims of Him whom God had made Lord and Christ, became the professed subjects of the rejected King. The children of the believers had their part in it. The Holy Ghost came as a consequent thing on those who had repented and were baptised; introducing them into the church, the body of Christ. In chapter iii. Peter adds to the testimony, that if the Jewish nation repented, God would send Jesus again, and set up the kingdom in power over Israel, raising the dead bodies of His saints at the same time. This testimony was rejected, and ended with Stephen's martyrdom.

I would now press on my reader the importance of well distinguishing between the kingdom of heaven, set up and administered through Peter's ministry, and the church composed, as we saw in Matthew xvi., only of those whom Christ built in, living stones, and composed of those baptised by the Holy Ghost. It is the confounding of the kingdom and the church, as Christ builds it, that has led to the enormities of Rome, which church, pressing Peter's administration of the kingdom and applying it exclusively to herself, at the same time says she is the body of Christ, and all outside her are damned. All these professed Christians, in order to reconcile matters, say that in baptism all are regenerated, that is, born again, and become members of Christ.

Now going through the Acts we shall see that baptism is always connected with the administration of the kingdom, not with admission in the church. It is the baptism of the Holy Ghost that admits into the latter. (See 1 Cor. xii. 13; Acts ii. 4.) Ananias and Sapphira were at best doubtful members of Christ, but there is no doubt that by baptism they had been brought into the kingdom.

But Acts viii. brings out the matter still clearer. We read that after Stephen's death, all the assembly at Jerusalem were scattered except the apostles. Philip went down to Samaria, and preached the Anointed to them.* My reader may remember that the Lord had borne witness to the woman of Samaria, that He was the Anointed, in John iv., though chiefly in the character of Prophet and Priest, that is, the Prophet come down to reveal to her God's mind as to salvation, and God's Priest come to change the order of worship. But Philip's testimony, no doubt, was to Him as God's King rejected by the world, but exalted in heaven and coming again to reign. He preached the Christ unto them. The people gave heed, amongst them Simon Magus the sorcerer. And when they believed Philip preaching the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised both men and women. They were thus brought into the kingdom by faith and baptism. But in verse 16 we read that the Holy Ghost had not as

* Whenever the article is prefixed to Christ, it especially denotes Christ's official character, that is, the Prophet, Priest, and King, to which Old Testament scripture points. The article should be prefixed, Acts viii. 5.

yet fallen on any of them, only they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. They bowed to His name as Christ and Lord, in baptism, but had not yet received the Holy Ghost. Afterwards they received it through the laying on of the hands of the apostles, Peter and John. Simon Magus was brought into the kingdom but not into the church.

Thus here we have evidently an outer circle of privilege and responsibility, where Jesus was owned as the Anointed and Lord, but those in it needed another baptism, that is, that of the Holy Ghost, before they were brought into the church of God. And here I would add, that many Christians revolting from the high church claims of the Roman, Anglican, and Greek churches, have gone to the other extreme; they have accepted the truth of the church as the real body of Christ, but have denied the outer circle of the kingdom, and of the house of God. Baptism by water is connected by these Christians with the formation of the real body of Christ on earth; that is, they make them members of the church by baptism; or else the milder ones make it a profession of faith, only to be practised by believers, and after they are saved. They seem to have a ground for this in Acts x., where Peter, as the administrator of the kingdom, opens the door of the kingdom to Cornelius, the first Gentile. In this case, he and his family were baptised by the Holy Ghost, before they were baptised by water; hence they say this is the right order. But I would submit to my reader, whether this was not a special case and out of order, in order to break through Peter's prejudice of receiving Gentiles into the kingdom as well as

Jews. He had to have a special vision to make him go down at all; perhaps if the Holy Ghost had not sealed Cornelius and his family on the reception of the word, he would have been still doubtful as to baptising them with water, but seeing what God had wrought, he said, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised *which have received the Holy Ghost* as well as we?" Then commanded he that they should be baptised in the name of the Lord.

In every other case, except that of Paul's, which is doubtful, baptism preceded the gift of the Holy Ghost; I do not say faith, with which in the case of adults, the new birth would go. We see after this the utter failure of the twelve apostles to carry out further the commission of the kingdom received in Matthew xxviii. Saul, who is Paul, was therefore raised up as God's special messenger, and he, not neglecting to preach the rejected King, as we see in his discourses at Thessalonica and Corinth, and seeing that the converts were brought into the kingdom by baptism, at the same time was made the great minister of the church in its double aspect of the house of God and the body of Christ.

With him it was not only that the Gentiles were admitted by baptism into the kingdom of heaven on earth, but that they had common privileges and a common part with Jewish believers, as fellow-heirs, members of Christ's body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel. He was the great administrator of the church, the body of Christ. See Ephesians iii. This is developed in the Epistle to the Ephesians. The saints are seen in three relationships there: 1st, to the God and Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ, who makes known in the first chapter all His counsels and purposes in regard to His Son and the heavenly family. (Eph. i. 1-15.) 2nd, to Christ the Head of His body. (Eph. i. 19-23.) 3rd, to the Holy Ghost who builds and inhabits the house of God on earth. (Eph. ii. 19-22.) Now these are counsels and purposes hidden in other ages from the sons of men, but now revealed unto His apostles and prophets by the Spirit. (Eph. iii.) That the Gentiles should have blessings in the kingdom was not a subject unknown to the prophets. It is again and again mentioned, even in reference to the present dispensation: but here Israel was to be the great central nation in blessing, and the Gentiles second to them. But here is another thing unveiled to us: our God and Father is calling out a heavenly family, between the time of the Anointed's rejection and His return to reign. These He had chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blame before Him in love. These He had predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. These He had accepted in the Beloved, in whom they had redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He makes known to these His will and purpose, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, that is, the age to come, He would gather round His Son all things in heaven and earth, even in Him, and in Him these had already found their inheritance, as the fruit of God's will and purpose, and fellow-heirs with Christ in all that glory. They had already been sealed by the Spirit, who was the blessed pledge in their hearts, of being brought into this

glory, of whom God's Son was the centre. At the end of the chapter, feeling how little the saints had entered into these glorious prospects, the apostle prays that they may understand all about this wonderful God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory; what was the hope of His calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what was the exceeding greatness of His power to those who believed, to bring them into the inheritance, as witnessed by His raising His Christ, as man, and setting Him above the highest archangel in the heavenly places, and giving Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, and also quickening the saints who were dead in trespasses and sins.

Now this is an additional glory, and mystery unveiled, and which only took place as an accomplished fact on the day of Pentecost. We find, indeed, the scattered children of God gathered into one, for whom Jesus died after His resurrection; He proclaimed peace to them on the ground of His blood, He shewed them His hands and His side. He had breathed on them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," bringing them into His own blessed position and state. He had declared to them the Father's name (see John xiv.), but as we see in Acts i., the Holy Ghost had not yet come, they were not yet baptised into one body. But Jesus having gone up on high, the Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost, and afterwards on the Samaritans and Gentiles, and all those believers were baptised by the Spirit into one body, builded together on earth to be God's habitation

through the Spirit. The middle wall of partition was broken down by the cross, one new man was formed in union with Christ the Head, raised to God's right hand by the power of God, and Gentile and Jewish believers were put on an absolute basis of equality, as members of the body of Christ.

They were also made joint partakers of God's promise in Christ by the gospel. They had one nature, one life, one Spirit, and one blessed heavenly hope. Now of this Paul was the minister. He was the administrator of the mystery. This family and body was to be seen in the world; Christ as Head was to dwell in the saints' hearts by faith, and the angels of God were to be the wondering spectators of the wisdom of God as seen in it.

I may add that this assembly is also shewn to be the bride of the heavenly Bridegroom (see Eph. v.), espoused now as a chaste virgin to Christ, being prepared by His word to be presented to Him in the heavenly glory as His bride, co-partner with Him in all His heavenly and earthly glories. Of this Adam and Eve are shewn to be the type.

Now in this inner circle of blessing, baptism has no place. It is mentioned in the epistle to the Ephesians, but not in connection with the one body but in connection with the Lordship of Christ, as we have seen already in Acts ii. There are three circles in Ephesians iv. : 1st, one body, one Spirit, one hope; 2nd, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, the outside circle of profession; 3rd, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all Christians. God is the Father, of whom every family in

heaven and earth is named. (See chap. iii.) This is the widest circle.

As to baptism, Christ sent not Paul to baptise, but to preach the gospel. The 1st Corinthians brings out the church as administered by Paul in a double aspect, as the temple of God (chap. iii.), and the body of Christ. (Chap. xii.) The epistle to the Ephesians shews the privileges of the church as the object of the counsels of God; 1 Corinthians, her responsibility.

In Solomon's day, in whom the wisdom of God was manifested in the earthly sphere of the kingdom of Israel, there were three circles—the kingdom, the temple, and the bride, so I believe there are now. Peter having the administration of the kingdom, Paul that of the church. Peter and the twelve were sent to baptise, to disciple all nations; Paul was not sent to baptise, but to preach the gospel. He preached a Christ crucified, rejected by the world, and glorified by God; so far he agreed with Peter, but he went beyond him, for in contrast to the saints saying, I am of Paul, I of Apollos, I of Cephas, he said, Of God are ye in Christ Jesus. (See 1 Cor. i.) Christ glorified was preached to the saints, and an introduction into the heavenly sphere of things. In the second chapter, the Holy Ghost is shewn as making known this Christ, and the heavenly secrets of which Old Testament prophets said, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him." They were now revealed by the Spirit, and communicated in words, the inspired words of New Testament scripture, so that the saints had the mind of Christ. (1 Cor. ii.)

Now the church, as the temple of God, was built on this Christ, whom the Holy Ghost had made known: "other foundation could no man lay than was laid, that is Christ Jesus." Paul was the master-builder laying the foundation, other christian builders built up the walls, the Holy Ghost dwelt in the house. (1 Cor. iii.) The great thing here is the true foundation. Whatever does not confess a true Christ in profession, cannot be built on it. I am not now speaking of salvation, I am speaking of the outward profession of a true Christ, whether they are real Christians, or mere nominal professors, figured by gold, silver, or precious stones, or by wood, hay, stubble. Such form the temple of God in the world. There the Holy Ghost dwells. It is not confined to locality, though there is an exhibition of it in each locality, but growing up in the world till it gets figured by a great house in 2 Timothy ii., the foundation standing sure; but now the word is to the professing Christians, "let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity."

The great point for the saints here is to see its true nature, in contrast to sectarianism, which says I am of Baptists, Methodists, &c.; it is the temple of God, and built upon the true foundation, Christ. To act up to its true nature, is for saints then to depart from all that denies it, namely, sectarianism, world and church joined together, and false ideas of Christ, and to gather on the ground of Christ rejected by the world exalted to heaven, the true foundation and chief corner stone, and recognising the presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly, as He who dwells in it to regulate its affairs. Consequently in

chapter v., we find the local assembly at Corinth, which expressed it in the place, gathering on that ground unto the name of the Lord Jesus for discipline. They had the power of the Lord Jesus Christ in their midst to put evil away. They were to keep a feast, too. A table was set up in the midst of the house, where a memorial of redemption was kept up, and from which all evil, figured by leaven, was to be put away, just as much as Israel kept the feast of the Passover and unleavened bread, putting away leaven from their houses. The saints were to recognise that the assembly was the place where judgment was executed under the government of the Lord, and were to have confidence in their brethren, it might be in two or three wise ones, to settle their differences, and never carry their differences before the world's law courts. (1 Cor. vi.) All this has to do with the circle of profession, which is built on a true Christ, and has the presence of the Holy Ghost in its midst. The temple of God is His, the Holy Ghost is His representative in it, regulating its affairs, and the name of Christ the true foundation, the gathering point.

Various instructions as to this outward circle continue up to chapter xi.; then we come to instructions as to the assembly as the body of Christ, composed only of those who are baptised by the Holy Ghost into it. The Lord's table is shewn, however, in chapter x., to be the place where the true communion of the saints with their altar, that is, the death of Christ and the unity of the body is expressed, and this in contrast with the circles of Judaism and heathendom. It was impossible then for the saints to

have communion either with that system which crucified the Lord, or with that which worshipped devils. It was the Lord's table where Christ was present as Lord who invited them there, to remember His death, and have communion with it, which separated them from every other corporate system in existence, and to Himself. Thus, whilst baptism introduced into the kingdom, the outside circle of profession, at the Lord's table the saints expressed the unity of the body. Chapter xi. commences Paul's instructions about the church as the body of Christ, and its workings. But before commencing, the true order of creation is taken up. (Vers. 1-16.) Christ has come into it, and the assembly was the place where its true order was to be recognised. Outside in houses, in the sphere of creation, the women might pray and prophesy, yet recognising her place under the man, by having her head covered. Inside the assembly she was to be silent (see chap. xiv.), still recognising her place under the man. The ordinance of the Lord's supper is regulated, which the saints had turned into a feast of drunkenness. They were to learn to judge themselves, so as to eat in a worthy manner.

The positive instruction as to the assembly, as the body of Christ, is seen in chapter xii. Its true constitution is that it is formed like a body. As the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body are one body, so also is the Christ, for by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. (Vers. 12, 13.) Thus the baptism of the Holy Ghost

formed the body of Christ on the day of Pentecost (see Acts i. 5), and its unity was constituted. Christ was the Head, the Holy Ghost united believers on earth to Him and to one another wherever they are. Verses 14-26 shew its workings in two great points. First, it is not one member, but many. The Holy Ghost as the Spirit of the Head works in many members, not in one. This is the correction to one man's ministerial or priestly authority over the church. Then, secondly, the foot cannot say of the hand, because I am not the hand I am not of the body. This is the correction to independency. For instance, if saints have been gathered to the Lord's name in a place, on the ground of the unity of the body, and the Lord's table has been set up in a place as the exhibition of it, then if for some minor thing, some saints leave that table, and thus split the testimony, it is to create schism in the body. It is for the foot to say of the hand, I have no need of thee. Perhaps two leading brothers have quarrelled, and the thing is taken up personally and saints take sides, so that they cannot break bread together; the table in one brother's house is left, and the saints set up a table elsewhere before the assembly has decided that the former is not the Lord's table, it is to act contrary to the spirit of this scripture, and to create division. This is in principle what the sects have done. They have separated from one another on some minor questions, such as baptism, independent churches, Wesley's doctrine, and have made many bodies in the church. The true principle is many members, yet but one body. Thus both the evils of clerisy and independency in the church are corrected.

What, then, is the great corrective power to all evil in the church, to all independent or clerical workings there? Why, love, as shewn in chapter xiii. All eloquence, gifts, knowledge, faith, almsgiving and devotedness unto death were of no avail if this principle were lacking. It suffered long and was kind, it envied not, it vaunted not itself, was not puffed up, it behaved not itself unseemly, sought not her own, was not easily provoked, thought no evil, rejoiced not in iniquity, but rejoiced in the truth, bore all things, believed all things, hoped all things, and endured all things. This was the character of Christ and the Spirit, whose nature and spirit had been communicated to them, and without it all else was nothing. This was the way practically to maintain the unity of the Spirit.

I do not enter further into the subject. There is connected with it the subject of ministry, which I do not enter into now, except to mention that it is divided into two parts, namely, the gifts of ministry, and the local offices, the latter mentioned in Timothy and Titus.

We have seen that the kingdom of heaven embraces, during its present aspect, all those who professedly subject themselves to Christ, the Anointed, during the time of His rejection. That Peter was the administrator of it, and together with the twelve were to disciple all nations, baptising in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. That he opened the door to the Jews who repented, and to Cornelius the Gentile afterwards, and they were admitted by baptism; Philip did the same thing to the Samaritan, and Paul recognised it at Thessalonica and Corinth and other places, though he was not the minister

of it. Children and households of believers also were the subjects of it.

The church, as the sphere of Paul's ministry, was a circle inside the kingdom at present, but finally to be taken out of it, when the Lord comes again. Jew and Gentile believers were fellow-heirs, members of one body, partakers of God's promise in Christ by the gospel. In this sphere baptism had no place, Christ sent not Paul to baptise (He did Peter and the twelve), but to preach the gospel. There was also an outer sphere of the church founded by Paul, namely, the temple or house of God, composed of all who on the profession of a true Christ were built upon the foundation. This has now grown up to be like a great house, full of vessels, some to honour, some to dishonour. The word to every true Christian now is, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity."

Whilst, therefore, evil in the kingdom is not now to be taken out, but to be left to the time when the Son of man is to gather out of His kingdom all things that offend; the saints are responsible to depart from iniquity, to gather on the true ground of the church, to the name of Christ alone, recognising the presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly, to exercise discipline, to put away evil from their midst if it comes in, to express communion with their altar, with Christ and with one another, as members of His one body at the Lord's table, and to break bread in remembrance of Him.

The great world bodies of Christendom then are all wrong in confounding the kingdom and the church together, and making them one and

the same, and Baptists on the other hand are all wrong in putting baptism out of its place, connecting it with the membership of the true church, and thus forming a wall of untempered mortar to divide Christians, and not recognising the kingdom of heaven and Peter's ministry in connection with it, water baptism bringing into its circle out of the circle of Jews and heathen.

A. P. C.



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