

The King of Kings

II. - The Everlasting Kingdom

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulders: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6,7).

The ultimate essence of the entire universe is the Spirit of God, its Creator. Beyond that, everything is illusory and transient. It all disappears with the using. According to James, life on the earth is *“a vapor that appeareth for a time and vanisheth away”* (James 4:14). God does not seem to interfere with this disintegrative process, even when it affects His children. If He did, to do so would be to encourage the idea that there is substance and value to the world after all. What He wants to do is to impress His creatures with the reality of the realm of the spirit. This is the realm over which He presides as the undisputed Ruler.

Jesus said to Pontius Pilate, *“My kingdom is not of this world.”* He was certainly not interested in usurping Caesar’s power. Indeed, He was not even interested in calling forth cohorts to save His life. For Him to interfere with the processes of earth and make of it once again an Edenic place to live, would be to defeat the ultimate purpose which is to bring everything under His complete control, so that its motivations and processes and energies will be of the spirit realm and not of the flesh realm. This is, of course, the quality of the eternal. All who would be one with God throughout eternity must possess this quality of the Spirit.

In the last issue (q.v.) we discussed the meaning of governance. There are many human misconceptions about the word, as we discussed it. In this prophetic statement by Isaiah, the word for governments—*shar*—occurs three times. In every case it means “rulership.” Even the phrase—*“Prince of peace”*—means “Ruler of peace.” As we suggested, the ultimate purpose of God in the world is that everything will be under His rulership, including the process of peace. True peace will come only as the entire universe is in harmony under God’s aegis (cf. Romans

8; I Corinthians 15; and Hebrews 2). This will include all of nature, as well as all of mankind. At the present time, all the spiritual forces of the universe are under His rulership. This includes the Kingdom of God, sometimes referred to as the "Kingdom of heaven." In Matthew 13, the so-called "Kingdom parables" are referred to by Matthew as the "Kingdom of heaven." Luke, in the same parables, (Luke 21) refers the Kingdom as "The Kingdom of God." The difference may be that Matthew, a Jew, was more reluctant to use the name of God than was Luke, a Gentile.

In these parables, which give us a very precise delineation of the Kingdom of God by Jesus Himself, the main thread or theme that runs through all of them is the inevitable expansion of the kingdom from something very tiny, as the mustard seed, to something very all-encompassing, as leaven or yeast in the loaf of bread. We conclude then that whatever the meaning of the Kingdom of God, its ultimate extent will be the entire universe—*"Heaven and earth and all that are therein."* When the earthly aspects of this Kingdom will take place is not known, despite all the myriads of efforts by "religious promoters" to garner support for their enterprises by sensationalist predictions. People are always vulnerable to future predictions as is indicated by the overwhelming number of predictors—astrologers, spiritists, palmists, fortune tellers and so-called "prophets" within the Church—all of whom profit from this vulnerability.

So what can we know for sure?

The Bible is very clear about the spiritual kingdom which exists now and will exist forever, and that there will be something of an earthly kingdom focused in the Middle East. Prior to the establishing of this kingdom there will be a time of great upheaval. What has gone on recently and what is going on now does not really fit the descriptions of Revelation. In the midst of this upheaval, one will rise up who will claim to be the Messiah. This figure is commonly known as the "anti-Christ," but that term is somewhat misleading. Most people think of him as being against Christ (the common usage in English), but in Greek the name means "in place of Christ." He is a false Messiah. He will in fact be received as the Messiah—the ultimate deception.

After he has won the people over and received full power, he will turn against the people of God and persecute them severely (the time of Jacob's trouble). At this

point Christ will return to the Mount of Olives with His cohorts from heaven and totally overcome him. At this time the so-called "Millennial Kingdom" will begin and there will be a thousand years (assuming a literal translation) of peace when Christ will rule "with a rod of iron." During this time, Satan will be chained and harmless, but will be released when the thousand years are ended. At that time he will gather together such forces of evil that have been held at bay during the millennium and launch a siege of Jerusalem. Satan and his hosts will be quickly vanquished by Christ and the Everlasting Kingdom will be established upon the earth. (Read Ezekiel 38; Daniel 11; Zechariah 14; Revelation 19 and 20). There are many other passages, but these are basic to the ideas that we have advanced. For a further discussion, read the author's collection of essays—"The Prophets Speak."

There is little or no debate about the reality of the Spiritual Kingdom of God. Of course, if God rules over the realm of the spirit, He rules over the most essential element of the universe. But there is some debate over the issue of an earthly kingdom, as an everlasting one. And there is much room for discussion. Absolutes in this area can get us into difficulty. However, in the passage that is before us, the phrase—"upon the throne of David"—would seem irrelevant if there were not an earthly kingdom. Again, the reference to "peace" is more significant in the context of an earthly situation than a heavenly one. That there should be peace in the spiritual kingdom of God would be assumed, but peace on earth, in the light of the thousands of years of conflict would be prophetically meaningful.

Obviously we have only scratched the surface of the subject. But in a survey of the many prophetic passages, especially relevant to Israel, there is an overwhelming sense that much of it goes beyond spiritual symbolism. For example, in Ezekiel 44-48 there is a temple erected from which flows a great river down through the Judean Valley and into the Dead Sea. The newly-watered wilderness springs forth in verdant growth and the waters of the Dead Sea are sweetened, permitting life once again to flourish in it. Is this merely symbolism? Does all of this take place for a brief period of time? On the other hand, is this earthly phenomenon really everlasting? One must be careful about absolutes here. One only suggests that these passages be read with the possibility of an Everlasting Earthly Kingdom. The author has always treated the subject with reserve, and that, after a great many years of study both in the Hebrew and in the Greek texts. And yet, even so, one hesitates to be absolute. It is often true that the less one knows, the more certain

one is about one's convictions. Often such ones assume that their conviction comes from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The problem with this attitude is that people with quite variant ideas make the same claim.

The ultimate conclusion or "bottom line," if you will, is that Christ is the "Father of eternity," and the "Ruler of peace" whose Kingdom is without boundaries. All who possess His Spirit by the "new birth," will and, in fact do, participate in this Everlasting Kingdom. How much of it may or may not be earthly, is subject to debate. What is not subject to debate is that we belong to God for eternity. How He chooses to incorporate His earthly creation is within His province and not readily understood by finite minds.

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