

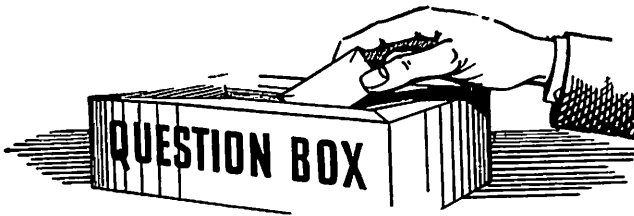
John 20:31 sums it up thus:—

“There were indeed many other signs that Jesus performed in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. Those here written have been recorded in order that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have (eternal) life by His name”.

Romans 15:4 emphasises this as the Christian hope in the words:—

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”. (of eternal life).

(To be continued) W. BROWN, DUNFERMLINE




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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I HAVE recently been studying in the Gospels, particularly the parables, and I have been struck by the teaching of Jesus regarding the Kingdom. Would you please comment on the teaching concerning the Kingdom and say how it fits in with our idea of the Church?

CHRIST is King! Hallelujah; Praise the Lord! If more christians appreciated the fact that Christ rules in their lives then I believe we should see a stronger, more dedicated, and more virile Church. I thank the questioner for bringing this to our notice, because it is undoubtedly true that of late we have been presented with a Christ who has done his work some two thousand years ago and now sits benignly in heaven doing nothing, rather than a Christ who is a ruling Christ, exercising control and direction of our lives.

It was Jesus himself who made the call stating the importance of the Kingdom. As Mark records, “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel’.” (Mark 1:14,15). I think we shall best appreciate the Kingdom if we look at it from four aspects, namely:

- 1 The nature of the Kingdom
- 2 Its worth (value)
- 3 Its extension (growth)
- 4 Its consummation

#### Interchangeable Terms

Matthew, commenting on the parables, says “it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt. 13:11). Luke, in his record, say, “unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God” (Luke 8:10). Here we see that the designations ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ and ‘Kingdom of God’ are identical terms.

In his letter to the Colossians Paul says of God, “Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13). Later in the same chapter Paul says of Jesus, “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence” (Col. 1:18).

Paul here introduces another kingdom, the kingdom of Christ, which is the church. So we see the interchangeable terms; kingdom of God; kingdom of Heaven; kingdom of Christ; the Church. What we must bear in mind is that the church is the kingdom, ruled and governed by Christ and in existence now. We now need to see what our involvement in this kingdom is.

### The Nature of the Kingdom

1 It is an everlasting kingdom. Daniel in his prophecy depicts one like unto the Son of man coming before the Ancient of days. The scripture then reads, "And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all nations, people, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13,14).

What think you of Christ, dear readers? The lowly Nazarene? The despised and rejected one? I tell you HE IS KING! And we had better start appreciating that fact right away, because no one is going to destroy his kingdom.

2 It is a new kingdom, Jesus said, "No man seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles, etc" (Mark 2:21,22).

God's new order, taught Jesus, cannot be patched onto the old, worn garments of Judaism. By the same token we christians cannot take the new life in Christ and try to stick it onto the old and decaying life which we should have forsaken.

3 It is a spiritual kingdom. The word of God came to Jeremiah the prophet "After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33).

No more written laws. God's covenant it so be established in the hearts of men. The Parable of the Sower tells us about the good seed of God scattered into the soil of the hearts of men. Jesus poses the same question to each one of us. 'What kind of soil am I?'

### The Growth of the Kingdom

Small beginnings. We can hardly imagine that tiny band of frightened men growing into a vast kingdom. But we shouldn't be surprised, should we? With God at the helm all things are possible.

Didn't Jesus teach this in the Parable of the Mustard Seed? Here was a seed that was difficult to see with the naked eye, and yet it grew to be the greatest of all the shrubs, so large, in fact, that the birds of the air were able to nest in it.

This great growth was about to be repeated in the spiritual world. To the casual observer in the days of Jesus, the visible evidence of the new era was a poor, tiny, contemptible band of Jesus' followers. Could this be the great purpose of God? People tended to see the kingdom as a huge joke, but God was at the helm, and that tiny band of men carrying the divine message was destined to span the earth and sweep the Gentiles into the kingdom as well. If God be for us, who can be against us?

Furthermore, what about the leaven? When Jesus taught this parable he was not comparing the kingdom with leaven but to what happens when you put leaven into a batch of meal. The action is fermenting, dynamic, restless, pervasive. Have you ever thought how leaven works. It starts to work on the particle nearest to it, and spreads through the whole by the influence of particle to particle.

Isn't this the way the kingdom spreads? The message spreads from soul to soul. We are intended to work on those souls which are nearest to us. Never mind the national and international campaigns on a huge scale. Be like the leaven. Work on the people who are nearest to you.

### The Worth of the Kingdom

What is it worth to be in the kingdom of God's dear Son? How worthy is Christ to you? When you found Christ did you find your greatest treasure? Far too often we are only prepared to give to Jesus those remnants which we can spare. This is not what Jesus taught when he spoke the parables of people finding valuable things (Matt. 13:44-46).

What did Jesus teach. When the people found the pearl of great price and the hidden treasure they recognised these things as being of superlative value. What did they then do? They sold all that they had and brought those precious things. They paid all that they had, and they did it

joyfully!

How meagre our responses oftentimes are. We should realise the great treasure that is ours in Christ.

Worthy the lamb that died they cry  
To be exalted thus.  
Worthy the lamb our lips reply  
For he was slain for us.

Some christians say, 'Make the kingdom more worthy. Separate the bad from the good'. In the Parable of the Tares Jesus supplies the answer. Let both grow together until the time of harvest, then God will separate them. We are not to anticipate the judgement of God. We have not sufficient knowledge.

#### The Consummation of the Kingdom

Matthew 13:47-50 shows that judgement follows the end of the present kingdom. The wicked are severed from the just (v 49) and the wicked are then cast into the furnace of fire(v50).

Christ is coming again! "and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).

Some premillennialists refer to a seven year period of what they describe as 'The Great Tribulation'. At the beginning of this period Christ will come for his saints. During the seven year period God will then deal with Israel again. At the end of this period Jesus will come again with his saints to rule on earth.

Let us say emphatically that the Bible does not teach this. In 1 Cor. 15:24-28 Paul makes it clear that this present reign will continue to the end of time. When Christ leaves the throne at God's right hand it will be the end of this age, and he will then deliver the kingdom up to the Father.

Christ is coming again! Let us look expectantly and confidently for him. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.