



A King and A Kingdom

“When the apostles preached on the day of Pentecost, they announced that God had raised up Jesus to sit upon the throne of David. In the porch of the temple, they told the Jews that God would send Jesus Christ to them at the time of the restitution. When Philip preached the word concerning Christ to the Samaritans, he announced ‘the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ’.
— *Elpis Israel*, p. 195.

BROTHER THOMAS realised the importance of freeing the minds of men and women from the pollutions of clerical theology, so that they might see the wonder and beauty of the declared Truth of God uncluttered with the creeds and “mysterics” of church dogmas.

On page 192 of *Elpis Israel*, he draws attention to this principle stating that the apostles were to “preach *this* gospel of the kingdom” (the gospel preached by Christ) in the name of Jesus. How did they execute the work? “They went forth and preached everywhere, *the Lord working with them*, and confirming the Word with signs following’.”

In itself, this is proof that the message the apostles preached was indeed “the gospel of the kingdom”, for John says that “the spirit beareth witness, because the spirit *is the truth*”; and the Lord Jesus, in praying to the Father, stated: “Thy Word *is the truth*” (1Jn. 5:6; Jn. 17:17).

The apostles “filled the Roman empire with their doctrine, and made such an impression upon it that tumults were excited; and they were charged with treason against the state, because

they proclaimed another king than Caesar, who should rule the world in righteousness as the sovereign Lord of all the earth” (Acts 17:7, 31; *Elpis Israel*, pp. 192-193).

Here, in clear, concise language, is the key to “the gospel” — there is to be a “king” who will reign over a “kingdom”. As will be seen from later exposition, the true kingdom of God will be real, tangible, logical; a divine theocracy re-established upon the earth. It is, therefore, a biblically defined kingdom which can be readily comprehended in contrast to the unbelievable pie-in-the-sky concept of a kingdom which is generally promoted by the “learned” and “reverend divines”.

Brother Thomas points out that the gospel of the kingdom was “presented to mankind in a threefold point of view, which may be stated in this form:

- (1) *Promises to be fulfilled; or, things concerning the kingdom of God;*
- (2) *Promises fulfilled already; or things concerning Jesus.*
- (3) *The doctrinal import of the fulfilled promises; or, things concerning the Name.”*

He adds to this expression: “A man might believe all the promises and their

doctrinal import, but if he did not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the subject of them, he would make a very good believing Jew under the law, but he would not be a Christian under grace... Hence, it is the foundation truth of the gospel of the kingdom, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Anointed King, the Son of the living God. He is the Rock, or Strength, of Israel, whose power will never be restored till he sits upon the throne of their kingdom, and is acknowledged as king by the nation" (page 193).

It is clearly evident that without an understanding of this "foundation" it is impossible for anyone to comprehend the significance and value of "the gospel".

Believing All Things Written

The first century believers were of one mind in all essential aspects of "the gospel of the kingdom." Thus, with one voice "they spake the Word of God with boldness" and in so doing were "of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:31-32).

How did they find and maintain such unity of mind and purpose?

"They continued steadfast, firmly and strongly moved to persevere in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42, lit. Gr. *proskartereo*; "constantly attending"). The "apostles' doctrine" is a term which describes those things they had learned through apostolic teaching. These converts wished to fill their minds with all they could absorb by acquiring sound, clear knowledge of the Truth. They carefully and thoroughly adhered to the things they had been taught. They were not interested in searching out "new ideas" or "new theories". They placed an incalculable value on that which they had received from the apostles, and had no other desire than to cling tenaciously to the purity of the enlightenment they had received.

Paul's words before Felix epitomise the disposition of those who remain faithful: "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which *they call heresy*, so worship I the God of my fathers, *believing all things* which are written in the law and in the prophets" (Acts 24:14). This statement indicates that *the Scriptures* provided the grounds for major differences between Paul and his pious Jewish accusers. His adversaries decried as "heresy" that which Paul knew to be the Truth. Thus, spiritual warfare developed because of dissension between truth and error. These were not matters of minor difference; they concerned vital issues related to everlasting life and eternal death.

Ultimately this same divisive spirit arose within the ecclesias.

As time passed, "the thinking of the flesh" produced pride in many who had once been faithful disciples of the Lord. Paul warned that this would occur: "After my departing shall grievous wolves *enter in among you*, not sparing the flock. Also *of your own selves* shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30).

What of Today?

Later epistles of Scripture reveal that Paul's worst fears were realised. The Truth began to be corrupted, and the communities of true believers, known as "ecclesias" were slowly but inexorably transformed into the "churches" of apostate christendom.

What of the Brotherhood in these present times?

Brother Thomas affirms: "The condition of salvation is the *belief of the whole gospel and obedience to it.*" Since apostolic times, ecclesias have been continually placed under pressure to accept new or varied interpretations of "the apostles' doctrine." Such questions as the atonement, the perfect sinlessness of Christ's character, man's

nature before the fall, "clean flesh" in its various forms, divine worship in the Age to come, are only some of the areas wherein the purity of the Truth has come under attack from within the Household of Christ.

Concerning the apostate churches of christendom, Brother Thomas says: "The unhappy condition of the professing world at the present time is, that they have no faith in the message of God, but rather ridicule it, and heap insult upon those who contend for it" (page 194). Quite so. Such a state of warfare is inevitable since the teaching of the Spirit and the thinking of the flesh are at enmity with one another (Rom. 8:7; 1Cor. 2:14).

What happens when a measure of such a worldly disposition becomes active within the ecclesial environment? The answer is written in history: Ecclesias become diverted from the purity of "the apostles' doctrine" and begin the transformation which will turn them into a "dead" ecclesia, as was the case with Sardis. Thereafter, unless they return to their "first love" as Ephesus was called upon to do, they will drift into becoming little more than a "church." Their pious members will gather solemnly each first day of the week, unaware that the light of the Truth has been extinguished in their hearts and that they no longer walk, day by day, in the steps of the Master whom they profess to follow (cp. Jer. 7; Rev. 3:17).

The warning which is implicit in these pages of *Elpis Israel* should be carefully heeded in these present trying and difficult times, when increasing pressures face the Brotherhood from within and without.

The Real Meaning of "Belief"

Brother Thomas warns: "Let it be remembered, then, that salvation is predicated upon *belief in the MESSENGER, and in the MESSAGE he brings*

from God." These words are not as elementary as they may appear. It is not merely a matter of claiming to "know the Truth". Belief is something more than knowledge. In New Testament terminology, "belief" is founded upon an absolute conviction which provides mental, moral and physical motivation.

Providing a sound example in this regard, Paul made a significant allusion to *the spirit* of the Truth when he wrote: "We, having the same *spirit* of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; *we also believe, and therefore speak*" (2Cor. 4:13). This means: "That which I believe, I stand by; I proclaim it without fear or favor; I defend it." Paul was neither fickle nor doubleminded. He did not vacillate. That which he proclaimed and manifested in his way of life, was uncolored, unvarnished, uncompromising. The Psalm from which he quotes undoubtedly refers to the character of Christ, and his life of total dedication to fulfilling the will of his Father. "I will *walk* before Yahweh... I *believed*, therefore have I *spoken*... What shall I render unto Yahweh...? I will take the cup of salvation, and *call upon* the name of Yahweh. I will *pay my vows* unto Yahweh" (Psa. 116:9-14).

To *believe* "the Messenger", and to *believe* "the message he brings from God" is of far greater import and necessity than merely knowing the basic doctrines of Scripture. The Word of God is "*living and energetic*" (Heb. 4:12, lit. Gr.); but it only becomes so when it takes root and *lives* in the minds of individuals, and it becomes *energetic* when it is actively spoken, defended, and morally revealed in the daily affairs of life. By this means, the Lord Jesus Christ became *the Word made flesh*.

In the latter part of page 194, Brother Thomas refers to the cavalier,

live-and-let-live attitude of the churches of christendom. They have their "beliefs." They have their somewhat similar religious philosophies. They have their creeds and their traditions. But will they ever "earnestly contend for the faith"? By no means. They do not understand it, nor do they appreciate its priceless value. Erroneously, they claim that "we are all the children of God" and that "God will be merciful to us all, in His own good way and in His own good time"!

Will brethren merely shake their heads in bewilderment, and wonder how supporters of popular christianity can be so foolish and misguided? Is it not rather more important to remember that *this same spirit* of tolerance and unscriptural love and compassion effected the destruction of the seven ecclesias of Asia, as well as ecclesias in other places, in immediate post-apostolic times? There is a stark and sober warning here for every ecclesia in every generation.

Brother Thomas says: "These traditions are sheer nonsense, and without the least foundation in the scriptures. They belong to a dark and foolish generation, and find their origin in the speculations of men of corrupt minds and reprobate concerning the faith."

The Throne and the Kingdom

Focussing attention upon the kingdom of Christ and the throne of the kingdom, Brother Thomas cites Acts 2:30, "Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up (resurrect) *the* Christ (Messiah) to sit on his throne" (p. 195). This is an unchallengeable verse of Scripture. The word "therefore" is related to Peter's reference to Psalms 16:8-11, and his proof that the Psalm could not have been applied to David, since he was "dead and buried."

Consider the remarkable points made by the apostle in this verse:

[1] David was a divinely appointed prophet. This may be established from 2Sam. 23:2, etc., in addition to which many of the clearest and most obvious prophecies relating to the coming of the Messiah are found in the Psalms of David.

[2] David "knew", and therefore was a reliable source, because Yahweh had spoken to him concerning these matters.

[3] God had confirmed with an oath all the things He had promised David concerning the coming of the Savior; and his "counsel" was "immutable," because "it was impossible for God to lie" (Heb. 6:17-18; cp. Psalms 89:3-4, 35-36; 110:4; 132:11).

[4] The Messiah would be a direct descendant of David. Moreover, since Peter is clearly referring to 2Sam. 7:12-13, his hearers and readers are inevitably drawn to the fact that the Saviour would be both Son of David and Son of God (v. 14).

[5] Reference to the Messiah sitting upon David's "throne" inevitably points to the reality of the restoration of Israel's kingdom, by which means, the kingdom of God would be established on the earth, all nations being subject to the authority of its Sovereign (Psalms 2; 72, etc., cp. Zechariah 14:9).

The reader is recommended to consult and examine the many biblical passages referred to on the bottom of page 195, all of which are cited from the book of Acts, excepting Amos 9:11 (which reference is quoted by Brother Thomas because it is the subject of Acts 15:15-17). From his wide appeal to the book of Acts it will be seen that he found no difficulty in establishing the truth concerning the King and the Kingdom of God from the very core of "the apostles' doctrine."

These Scriptures foretell that Christ

must return to the city of Jerusalem, that the kingdom of Israel will be restored, and that all nations will become subjects of the kingdom. Details concerning these events are referred to synonymously with "the promise made of God unto the fathers (of Israel)" and "the hope of Israel."

The Secret Revealed

The exposition given in these pages is so clear and so thoroughly endorsed by the teaching of the Word, it is astonishing to think that the "learned divines" of christendom would repudiate such teaching with their ideas of "kingdoms beyond the skies"; but rejecting the Truth is an occupation at which they excel, to their own eternal condemnation — and leaving in a hopeless plight those who are sufficiently uninformed or unwise as to follow them. Indeed, "blind leaders of the blind"!

Brother Thomas states that Christ taught the things of the kingdom in parables; but the apostles, who were given a special commission to continue the work of the Lord after his ascension, were told: "To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God" (p. 196). The word "mystery" indicates something that no one can understand, however, the Greek word *musterion*, from which it is rendered, signifies "a secret; something made known only to the initiated." Paul powerfully uses the word to illustrate the enlightenment which is to be found *only* in the Scriptures of Truth: "My gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of *the secret*, which was kept secret since the Age began. But *now* is made mani-

fest, and *by the scriptures of the prophets* made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:25-26).

Again Brother Thomas refers to Paul's understanding: "By revelation, God hath made known unto me, Paul, *the secret*, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, *as it is now revealed* unto the holy apostles and prophets by the spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel. To me was given to make all men *see* what is the *FELLOWSHIP of the secret*" (Eph. 3:3-9).

Fellowship with this "*secret*" is essential to obtaining eternal salvation. Few, today, understand it. The vital question is: how many manifest a way of life in harmony with the spirit of these revealed truths, after the pattern of the life of the Son of God? "Fellowship" with the "*secret*" things related to the Name and the kingdom, brings individuals into fellowship with God and His Son. Such fellowship requires not merely *knowing* the Truth, but "*walking*" in the "*light*" (1Jn. 1:6-7).

Brother Thomas concludes: "The mystery of the kingdom, then, has been made known, and we find that it had relation to *the sufferings of the Christ; and repentance, remission of sins, and eternal life in his name.*" These, indeed, are the things of the kingdom. Who, today, will be numbered amongst those to receive an "entrance" into "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ" (2Pet. 1:11)?

— John Ullman.

UNFAITHFUL TO THE DOCTRINE.

They are unfaithful to the doctrine of Christ, who from any motive of personal interest would weaken the point of doctrine, or soften it for the gratification of their natural feelings, or for fear of hurting the feelings of the enemy, and so affecting their popularity with him. — J. Thomas.