

# THE CHRISTIAN.

"FAITH COMETH BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD."--Paul.

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## The Christian.

### THE BEGINNING.

"And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell upon them, as on us at the beginning."--Acts, xi. 15.

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever."--Dan. ii. 44.

I wish, in this sermon, to point out to the readers of THE CHRISTIAN, *The Beginning of the Kingdom of Christ*. I look upon this as a very important matter, because without this knowledge we may never know whether we are in the kingdom or not, we may even suppose we are in and find, when it is too late, that we were without the gate. You have bought one hundred acres of land, you receive your deed describing said land, telling you where it begins, the courses and distances of the line that enclose it, but still you do not know where those lines are. You call a surveyor and put the deed in his hand, and by the aid of his compass and chain, he soon marks you bounds, so you may know whether you are on your own land or that of your neighbor. But if you fail to give him the proper beginning, or if the man thinks it does not matter much where he begins so long as he follows the right course in running the lines, you will be apt to find you are cutting your neighbor's timber or cultivating his land. So in regard to the kingdom of our blessed Redeemer, we need to know its bounds, and we can never be assured of these unless we get the proper beginning point. But it may be asked, are not all men agreed as to the beginning of this kingdom? I answer, no. One man will tell you that the kingdom had its beginning in the days of Abraham, another that it was set up by John the Immerser, another by Christ during His personal ministry, and yet another will say the Lord Jesus will set up His kingdom when He comes again to our earth. Which of these are right, or are they all wrong! "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." In the investigation of this subject, we will first give our attention to this wonderful dream of the King of Babylon and its interpretation by the Hebrew captive. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, and it gave him great anxiety. He could not recall the dream nor could any of his wise men tell the dream to him. But, when the decree of the king had gone forth to destroy all the magicians, Daniel desired time of the king that he might tell him the dream and its interpretation. Daniel said, "Thy dream and the visions of thy head upon thy bed are these"  
... Thou, O king, sawest and beheld a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee, and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest still, that a stone was cut out without hands, which

smote the image upon the feet that were of iron and clay and break them to pieces. This is the dream, and the interpretation is simple and natural. The four parts of the image described represent four kingdoms, and the stone cut out without hands represents a kingdom which the God of Heaven was to set up in the days of those kings. Thou O king, art this head of gold, and after thee another kingdom, inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, and the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron, but whereas the feet and toes were part of potter's clay and part of iron, the kingdom was to be divided, it would be partly strong and partly broken or brittle. A glance at ancient history will show us these four kingdoms to be the Babylonian, Mede or Persian, Macedonian and Roman, and the Roman kingdom is well represented by the iron and potter's clay. Now, the stone cut out without hands smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay and break them to pieces. That is, while the Roman kingdom was still in existence, the God of heaven was to set up his kingdom which should break in pieces and consume these kingdoms, and that kingdom shall stand forever.

We will now proceed to examine the claims for the beginning as they are represented, and first, was the kingdom begun in the days of Abraham? Not if Daniel spoke by inspiration, for he lived hundreds of years after Abraham had passed away, and in his day this kingdom was far in the future. Was it brought in by John the Baptist. Let us see what John did preach, "In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, and saying, repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." We do not find it here, only near by. Did Jesus set it up when he entered upon his public work? We read in Mark i. 14, 15, "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." Jesus said to his disciples, the chosen twelve, when he sent them out, "And as ye go preach saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand."--Mat. x. 7. Much the same language is used by the Master in sending out the seventy, "And say unto them the kingdom of God has come nigh unto you."--Luke x. 9. After the Saviour had been some time engaged in his public work, and not long before he laid down his life for us, he had a conversation with his disciples at Cesarea, Philippi, in which he asked the question, "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am," and the answer was, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." But upon the Saviour putting the same question to them, Peter answered "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." For this noble confession, Jesus pronounced a blessing upon Peter in which he said, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

We see that in this passage, the church and the kingdoms are used as synonyms, and therefore we have the declaration that the kingdom was at that time yet in the future, for what Christ said, I will do, was not already done. We see then that the kingdom was not in existence in the days of Abraham, John the Baptist, nor yet in the time of our Saviour's sojourn on earth. Is it then still in the future, to begin when Christ shall come again on earth? In the letter that Paul wrote to the Colossians, we find this language: "Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers in the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood even the forgiveness of sins." Here, then, in the days of the apostles, we find the kingdom in existence, for men could not be translated into it if it did not exist. The Beginning, then, must be found between the time when Christ talked with his disciples at Cesarea, Philippi, and the time when Paul told the Colossians they had been carried into it. Now, we have some passages in the word of the Lord which cluster around this beginning point. In the visions which Isaiah saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, we find this declaration, "And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountains of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted among the hills, and all nations shall flow into it, and many people shall go and say, come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths, for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."--Isa. ii. 2, 3. In Micah. iv. 2, we find nearly the same language. Our Saviour said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Jesus said to Peter, I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. That a great change took place after the ascension of Christ is evident to every student of the Bible. Before this the apostles were told by Jesus not to go in the way of the Gentiles and not to enter into any city of the Samaritans. But to go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But now their commission is "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned. Luke, in giving this commission, represents the Christ as saying, "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. About eight days after the apostles received this commission, we find them waiting at Jerusalem for the fulfilment of the Saviour's promise. On the first Pentecost after this occurrence, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit