

cern for personal safety in relation to God.

Who was the spokesman? He was the man to whom Jesus, the Son of God, had said, in presence of the eleven disciples, and about a year previous to this day, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of heaven was what John the Baptist and Jesus himself were perpetually preaching about, as a thing not yet established, but "at hand." Jesus claims Himself to be the King in that kingdom. He, therefore, has the absolute and unquestioned right to appoint all its officers. He designates Peter to the work of opening that kingdom by the words we have quoted from Matthew xvi. 24. At the time these words were uttered, that kingdom was not completely prepared, and Peter was not morally fit to handle those keys, and so the commission waited till a future time when it would become a present fact. "I will give," said the King.

But now the necessary acts had been performed by the King; the miracles wrought, the instructions given, the atoning death endured, the resurrection accomplished, and the ascension to the right hand of the Father also. The King has been crowned in heaven, and now the day has come when His kingdom is to be proclaimed on earth. And Peter has gone through those experiences which have eliminated his moral weakness, filled his intellect with the facts concerning Christ's kingdom, and as one of the blessed one hundred and twenty he has been "filled with the Holy Ghost." The key of that door, which if not opened, would forever exclude the Jews from the kingdom, falls into his hand from the hand of the King, and he is now opening that door. And as the door is opened to this eager multitude of devout Jews, what does this divinely authorized speaker tell his hearers? Are the first things, the indispensable things, the fundamental things, to be believed, endured, attained, accepted, or accomplished by those who would become subjects and citizens in that kingdom? Listen.

"And Peter said unto them, Repent

ye and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

These indispensable "first things are four in number, two of them being conditions or acts, required of man, and two others of them, favors bestowed by God.

The first, second, and third of these four things we shall treat as briefly as is consistent with our main design, which is to bring to the point the fourth, and to furnish for it an appropriate setting.

First then, is *Repentance*. "Repent ye," said Peter. This is the indispensable change of mental attitude demanded of these Jews. They had been either indifferent to, or prejudiced against, Jesus Christ, the King in this new kingdom. They must now change all that, and come over to the side of the King, as His claims have been presented by His authorized servant. If this very natural demand is complied with, they will place themselves in such a position as will fit them to be treated with by the King. This kingdom is to have its seat in the wills of men, and therefore is the demand made that the will be submitted, and in that submission changed. Repentance is the cessation of rebellion in all its degrees, and an offer on the part of the aforetime rebel to be loyal in the future. It is clearly indispensable.

The second thing is *Baptism*. "Be baptized every one of you." Baptism was required as the outward sign that the repentance was real. The theological meaning of baptism has been since that day the theme of much controversy. It is not probable that these devout Jews inquired much on that line, or that the apostle took any time from administering of the rite to the thousands who that afternoon were baptized, for the purpose of explaining its meaning. For whether the baptisms were by affusion or immersion, the number that were baptized would occupy all their time and energy. The converts, we believe, simply saw in it an initiatory rite, which, when performed or submitted to, sealed their own voluntary repentance, and publicly identified them with the name of Christ.

The *third* thing, which is the first of