

THE KINGDOM COMING.

The Convulsion sermon, preached Aug. 25, 1903, by Rev. D. A. Steere, M. A., Luke 11: 2 "The Kingdom Come"

An Oriental despot is perplexed as to a dream. He cannot remember it, but curiously desires to recall it. Like an African King of the present day, he commands His wise men to explain, threatening instant death if his request is not complied with. The wisdom of the wise is not equal to this feat. They confess their impotence. One man rises to the occasion, and undertakes the impossible. He will not only make known the dream, but also its meaning. He sends his "retainers" had desired the mystery of the God of heaven concerning this secret.

The panorama stands out before the mind of the venturesome Israelite, and what is of more importance, he sees the meaning of this vision. The image of dream-like incongruity, the golden head, the silver arms and breast, the brass knees, the iron legs, the feet partly iron and partly clay, withal of brightness excellent and awe-striking, is a symbol of successive kingdoms. Clear and beautiful becomes the symbol in the hand of a master, loining up in colossal proportions the meaning of this vision.

Paul declares that "through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God." John says, it is the "kingdom of God which is at hand." The kingdom in its simplicity, then, may be soon apprehended. The theologian with thoughtful brow, and the little child who has not yet been tormented with a formula, come in the same field of vision.

The kingdom in its simplicity, then, may be soon apprehended. The theologian with thoughtful brow, and the little child who has not yet been tormented with a formula, come in the same field of vision. The scholar is involved in allusion; all his books are closed, and he sees Jesus Christ as his atoning Lamb. He hears the lines heard at his mother's knee.

As for its quality, it is of innate purity and fineness. There is no alchemy of worldly ingredients. It is only spiritual, never carnal. Its ends are not to be attained through any, even the slightest guile. "My kingdom is not of this world" it is writ large over the door of entrance. It is like the purest water, containing therein the subtle ingredients of life for plant and animal. So pure that men overlook it, as they underestimate the simplicity of nature.

It is not money, power nor force of iron-clads, nor of letters even. So the giants of the century smile, they laugh the Christian. They sneer at his puny efforts to convert the world. The short-sighted Christian fails to see the potency of simplicity. The light makes no noise, and yet we were all dead to the light, even though it shone ever.

Turn back, for a moment, to the starting point. Daniel makes a coherent explanation which was satisfactory to the monarch, and which now lies open to the reader of the Book for his devout meditation. The point at which the narrative seems to have been brought there is to be in, after a time a kingdom of good men, which will grow through opposition. Through centuries, through millenniums, it will hold its onward course, until ultimately all the world shall come under its dominion.

Turn now the page of history and hear the words of that majestic personage authorized to interpret the Scriptures. He speaks, not incidentally, but constantly, of a kingdom which will sweep the earth like a storm. "Mark 4: 13; Matt. 13: 35; Luke 17: 20; 11: 12; 13: 11, etc." It is a kingdom of righteousness, a kingdom of truth, a kingdom of God, a kingdom of the heavens. Yet, as here on earth, it is not here on earth in its full force; it is seed with hidden potencies; it is leaven, to influence the mass amid which it is placed. It is the "little stone" of Daniel started by a Divine hand to roll on and under the feet of the kings of the ages it becomes the one ruling power in the world.

The sublime personage, the Messenger of the Covenant of Malachi, had about him a band of friends. They asked him one day to give them a model of prayer, just as another great teacher had done for His disciples. He immediately laid before them a simple, brief and comprehensive series of petitions. After recognizing and reverencing the Supreme Being under the tender name of Father, he put in the forefront of this prayer, this pregnant wish, "Thy Kingdom come!" The imperative in the original is of that form conveying the idea of stringency, as that other similar one is used in the great commission, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature." Have we noted that it is before the prayer for daily bread, before even the forgiveness of sins? First of all, His saints are to beseech him constantly for the coming of His Kingdom. In all times, in all places, in all tongues, the followers of Jesus are to lift up their cry, "Let Thy Kingdom advance!"

to the tenderness of children towards a Father, to the love of man rescued from eternal loss by the grace of God. It is, in the favorite phrase of Holy Writ, a kingdom for the lowly, for the contrite, for the meek of the earth, for the poor in spirit. So while it is typed, announced, and illustrated by those of earth, as all spiritual truth must be to be understood by us, after all it is not of this world. It is a kingdom indeed, of power and of glory, but a glory not of earth. It is a manifestation of Heaven's own law, the ruling idea in the heart of God. Its keyword is "righteousness." God wards it its "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

The outlook is good. The indications are hopeful. The tallies which mark off the successive transactions seem slow in coming in, but the plan of God is being carried out all the while. It is like the glacier movement. For a time its progress seems so slow that its motion is perceptible. Anon, there is creaking and groaning; still nothing seems to come but sounds. Listen attentively, and you hear solemn explosions, and their echoes. The sea, pushing, bounding, downward toward the sea at which it has been aiming all the while. So is the kingdom of God. The ways of the Lord are manifold, hidden often in mystery, but there is standing in His empire. It is steady progress toward the appointed goal.

This is the time of the bringing together of the nations by the facilities of intercommunication. The modern mission is a time of its stationing, of the electric wire stretched over land and under sea, just when the exigencies of the gospel needed its swiftest messages. The missionary movement of the century now passing is a time of its epoch of exploration, made possible by the strong arm of England being free for its protection; the way through the desert has been opened up for the messenger of the Lord. The man who is interested in the advance of spiritual forces notes all this and lifts his heart to God with renewed assurance. He feels that the Kingdom is at hand.

The outlook was never so full of promise. Some men are still crying, "Watchman, what of the night?" The morning has come long ago; and we are working on to the high noon of the Kingdom.

Hopeful indications. The first that strikes us is what we may be allowed to call christianized education. The great advance in university work cannot but cause serious questioning by thoughtful men. How will this affect the interests of the Kingdom of our Lord as the absolute question. Will there be any elimination of the authority of Christianity? Will it take a place as one of the great religions of the world? Or, will it dominate them all by reason of its inherent vitality?

It is a wise thing to enlist all the forces of science and literature on the side of the Redeemer of men. That is the place for them. Every Christian must rejoice that he is entering his age of the million to found and to equip schools of learning, of this modern new learning, and that in notable instances the Christian cultus is not only recognized, but made paramount. Baptists, as they are, are entering the heritage of the material things, are, comparatively speaking, doing their share. The new university of Chicago is built in view of the propagation of the Kingdom. The McMaster University prepares to be a center for the spreading of the principles of Christianity. Others of the older institutions are taking on features more distinctly Christian.

We, in a modest way, are contributing our quota to the work of intellectual regeneration, set on foot by the forces of education dissolving the bonds of the pessimist. The wise men of the West are bringing to the Messiah their gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The church is giving more than ever, and the working forces of the Kingdom of God. Let us be glad that trade education is receiving such an uplift; and let us believe in the subjugation of this world to Christ. Its not alarm to disclaim the benefit of the educated. We are the more acquiescent that men should try their irreligious theories of education, for they will find out their inherent want, and will presently acknowledge that the heart of humanity is more important than its head. Men will see that the truth is with us as a whole, and that all truth will lead to Him in whom all things consist.

The other hopeful indication is in THE YOUTH MOVEMENT. The vigorous element in our congregations is for the first time receiving its due recognition. "Signs of the times" are a phrase of the Bible, and it is a sign which means more than the casual reader of newspaper reports may apprehend. The ferment of great religious assemblages means that there is some thing there, some idea. The Young People's movement signifies that our young hosts are marching, the advance guard of the Kingdom of Heaven. Not the mere crowds, vociferations, hearty singing, addresses, banners and badges; these are but the foam upon the wave, the undercurrent is the power of youth, the desire of young souls to know and to do—aspiration, to help a world that is in sore need of vigorous hands. The leaders are wise in the outset in placing before the Young People the necessity for a new discovery of Divine Christianity. This course can have but one result, the re-juvenation of the Baptist denomination. The members to be of our churches will not only have the stereotyped idea of things dear to us, all that we have done of our during the latter age, individual liberty of conscience, a regenerated church membership and the ordinances in their true form and proper place, but will also have superseded whatever is good and true in the new discoveries of Divine things; the ripe fruit of reverent study of the Book itself, the latest results in archaeological research, the last correction of western ideas by oriental modes of thinking and saying; all the benefits of modern explorations, the latest word as to the place of comparative religions, and the answers of patient observers as to the best methods of dealing with those who worship false divinities.

WHAT IS THE FINAL FORM. Is it respectable Christianity? Steady church-going religion, minus the power of normal Christianity? We think not. We believe that there will be no final form, that from its very nature the highest idealism is to be sought after to the end. Progress toward the heavens is upon us, as mountain heights rising peak on peak. When the highest peak is gained, the joy splendors of pure holiness, then heaven and earth will come together, and we will be one again. Then cometh the end as far as this present state is concerned.

PRESENT PORTION? The outlook is good. The indications are hopeful. The tallies which mark off the successive transactions seem slow in coming in, but the plan of God is being carried out all the while. It is like the glacier movement. For a time its progress seems so slow that its motion is perceptible. Anon, there is creaking and groaning; still nothing seems to come but sounds. Listen attentively, and you hear solemn explosions, and their echoes. The sea, pushing, bounding, downward toward the sea at which it has been aiming all the while. So is the kingdom of God. The ways of the Lord are manifold, hidden often in mystery, but there is standing in His empire. It is steady progress toward the appointed goal.

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FINAL SUGGESTIONS. This is the place and time when things are done that vitally affect us as a people. Here we ratify the choice of teachers for our college and schools. We place men and women in positions where they can make beautiful lives or spoil them. Shall we acquiesce, indifferent as to whether they influence our youth slightly or in great measure, for good? Does it ever strike us, in the rush of this Convention, that we are praying people, having power with God and with men? Ought we not, are we not solemnly bound to seek the great God so to mould the character of our instructors that they may each and all be radiators of holy light, that they may help to send forth moral forces into the world? What else are we here for? This is the legitimate business of a religious body. Literature filled with the words of the world's need. In what more effective way can we aid in the work of Christian education than by praying that our professors and teachers may be healthy Christians? and so to back up this petition, Thy kingdom come!

When you ordain a man to preach the gospel of the Kingdom, after you have weighed him and labelled him, solemnly charged him to be immaculate, how would it do to charge ourselves the again, to have a heart of mercies, and to resolve to pray for that young brother, that he may grow to be a good minister of Jesus Christ? When you have started a youthful pair to face and fight the grim Paganism of the Orient, remember that our duty, as theirs, keeps right on. Support them by your daily petitions; "Thy kingdom come" through that man and woman. When you select your editor, do yourself in his place. Remember it is a position of exceeding perplexity, and pray for him. If any man in this modern time need the sympathy of his brethren, it is the editor. When you appoint your Boards, when in cool business tones the notices are read, pause and think of the burdens you have laid upon their shoulders, and ask yourself if you cannot at least do this one thing, to remember in your daily prayer those men who are to discharge the duties you have thrust upon them, —to do all this for you, for you have put them in your place to act for you. May I be allowed to make a final suggestion, as germane to this subject which engages our attention that it would be keeping with our calling and position as disciples of the Master, and subjects of His Kingdom, that we should undertake to pray for one another; that constantly, at a stated time, the members of each local congregation should read, pause and think of the burdens you have laid upon their shoulders, and ask yourself if you cannot at least do this one thing, to remember in your daily prayer those men who are to discharge the duties you have thrust upon them, —to do all this for you, for you have put them in your place to act for you. May I be allowed to make a final suggestion, as germane to this subject which engages our attention that it would be keeping with our calling and position as disciples of the Master, and subjects of His Kingdom, that we should undertake to pray for one another; that constantly, at a stated time, the members of each local congregation should read, pause and think of the burdens you have laid upon their shoulders, and ask yourself if you cannot at least do this one thing, to remember in your daily prayer those men who are to discharge the duties you have thrust upon them, —to do all this for you, for you have put them in your place to act for you.

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those who worship false divinities. These, together with the best means of propagating the Kingdom in our own country, developing the forces at our disposal, and making the most of every person among us, constitute a religious body. It is nothing less. If any spiritual astronomer discovers a star, the telescope will be put to the eye of the youthful Baptist that he may for himself gaze at its splendor. The fields of truth are widening, or rather our facilities are better for the seeing of the panorama of the kingdom of the heavens. We propose to bring all that we can gather of the treasures of sacred scholarship to bear upon the question of the cultivation of the mind of the youth on direct Christian lines contains the most of hope of anything within the bounds of our horizon. The Kingdom is coming, but it is still a little longer upon the world's pathway than we need imperative. One word compels it.

Let us get this thing right. There are those who would willingly substitute the word of God upon the word of man, giving to Him of His own. But all that is not prayer, no more acceptable than the turning of a crank. Give to the point of self sacrifice; then let our petitions rise constantly, fervently. We would have the prayers of the Kingdom of honest labor now. We are not to minimize labor, but to magnify prayer. We would not be understood as degrading organization, but we ought to gain the exact outlines of the Master. Do not depend upon any organization. It has been historically tried for all it is worth. Churches have been organized to a fair, with the result of crushing out all joyous life. "This is a good auxiliary" comes in time to mean "You must have a leader every Christian man know that the Kingdom of God itself is the thing that earth needs and must have, the righteousness of God—set forth early and late in the Kingdom of Christ. It has flourished without them, conquered Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth and Rome. It could live without them still. Wisely used, as wheelbarrows to carry loads before us, not as in the fashion of the coolie laborer, they may be of great use; they will facilitate our operations. The churches and the elders is the fountain of power and authority, and all Societies are to be in subordination to the churches, otherwise, Rome over again! It is the Kingdom of Christ, it has flourished without them, conquered Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth and Rome. It could live without them still. Wisely used, as wheelbarrows to carry loads before us, not as in the fashion of the coolie laborer, they may be of great use; they will facilitate our operations.

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