

## PART SECOND

# THE THINGS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST

## CHAPTER I

### THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM IN RELATION TO ISRAEL AND THE GENTILES.

The truth indicated—None but the believers of the truth can inherit the Kingdom of God—Abraham “the Heir of the World”—To inherit with him, men must believe what he believed; and become his children by adoption through Jesus Christ—The Gospel and the things of the Kingdom one and the same—It was preached to Abraham, Israel, and the Gentiles by the Lord God, by Moses, by Jesus, and by the apostles—Gospel things susceptible of a threefold classification—The Keys of the Kingdom—Entrusted only to Peter.—The Mystery of the Kingdom—The Fellowship of the Mystery—“Apostolic Succession”—Qualifications of an apostle of Christ—Import of the phrase “the end of the world”—“The sign” of its approach—The Gospel preached to every creature by the Apostles—Modern missionaryism inadequate to the end proposed.

IN the former part of this work, I have shown that it has been the purpose of God from the foundation of the world to set up a kingdom and empire of nations which shall supersede all others previously existing upon the globe. We have now arrived at that part of our subject which relates to the development of this *imperial constitution of the world*, which, when brought to the birth, will have occupied six days of a thousand years each in its formation. No topic can surpass this in interest and importance to every man that breathes the breath of life. God has made the belief of the things concerning it a condition of partaking in the glory, honour, and incorruptibility which belong to it. Whatever ignorance may be overlooked, ignorance of the things pertaining to this kingdom alienates men from the life of God. This is equivalent to saying that no man can attain to eternal life who does not believe the gospel; for the subject matter of the gospel is this very kingdom which it is the purpose of God to establish for the Son of Man and the saints.

It is of primary importance that we believe the truth, and not a substitute for it; for it is by the truth only we can be saved; “the truth as it is in Jesus”, neither more nor less, is that to which our attention is invited in the word. “The truth” is set forth in the law and the prophets; but we must add to these the apostolic testimony contained in the New Testament if we would comprehend it “*as it is in Jesus*”. The kingdom is the subject matter of “the truth”; but, “as it is in Jesus”, is the truth concerning him as the king and supreme pontiff of the dominion; and *the things concerning his name*, as taught in the doctrine of the apostles. As a whole, “the truth” is defined as “*the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ*”. This phrase covers the entire ground upon which the “*one faith*,” and the “*one hope*”, of the gospel are based; so that if a man believe only the “*things of the*”

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*kingdom*”, his faith is defective in the “*things of the name*”; or, if his belief be confined to the “things of the name”, it is deficient in the “things of the kingdom”. There can be no separation of them recognized in a “like precious faith” to that of the apostles. They believed and taught all these things; God hath joined them together, and no man need expect His favour who separates them, or abolishes the necessity of believing the things He has revealed for faith.

There can be no doubt of the truth of these statements in view of Paul’s emphatic declaration that, “though we (apostles), or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached unto you, *let him be accursed*. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed”. Here, then, he pronounces a curse upon even an angel, if he should come and offer to us any other gospel than that which was preached by himself and the other apostles. It is our wisdom, therefore, to receive nothing which has not the sanction of their authority. Paul styles everything else but what he preached “another gospel” that is, “a perversion of the gospel of Christ”; and, as we can only be saved by belief of the truth, such a gospel is both useless and injurious.

“*Gospel*” is a word which signifies *good news*, or glad tidings and *the gospel* some particular good news. “Blessed”, say the scriptures, “are they who know the *joyful sound*”, or the gospel and the reason is, because it makes known the “blessedness” which is to come upon the nations, and will give every one an interest in it who believes and accepts it. The gospel of God is the good news of blessedness promised in the scriptures of the prophets, and *summarily* expressed in the saying, “In thee, Abraham, shall the nations of the earth be blessed”. The making of this promise to Abraham is termed by Paul the preaching of the gospel to Abraham; for, says he, “The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed”. This he styles “the blessing of Abraham”, which is to come upon the nations through Jesus Christ.

Abraham holds a conspicuous place in relation to the blessedness of the gospel. He is named by Paul six times in the third chapter of Galatians, which he concludes by saying, “If ye be Christ’s then are ye *Abraham’s seed* and *heirs* according to the promise”. Hence, men are required to be Christ’s that they may be Abraham’s seed. But why is it so important to be of the seed of Abraham? For the very obvious reason that, as the promise was made to Abraham, it is only by being *constitutionally* “in him” that any son of Adam can obtain a participation in what belongs to Abraham.

This idea may be illustrated by reference to the law of inheritance among all civilized people. If a man be possessed of an estate, the members of his family alone have any right to it at his decease. Though all the world may be his friends, unless they are named in his will, they can have no part in the inheritance he may leave behind. And again, if he have no heir, his estate and property would escheat to the lord of whom he happened to hold his title; but, to avoid this, it would be quite competent for him to *adopt an heir* according to the law. The person so adopted would become his seed in every respect save that of natural birth. In the case before us, God hath promised an estate to Abraham; therefore he is styled “THE HEIR OF THE WORLD” (χρόσιμος)—that is, of the glory, honour, and power, of the nations throughout the globe in their millennial blessedness—a gift worthy of Him that hath *promised* it.

Now the promise of this to Abraham and his seed is a promise to no one else. No stranger can lay claim to it. He must be Abraham’s seed, or he has no right to Abraham’s property. On this principle, no one who is not a lineal, or fleshly, descendant of Abraham can inherit the world with him when

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God fulfils the promise. This is the view taken of the matter by the Jews, who found their hope of participation in the world when it becomes Abraham's and his seed's, upon the acknowledged fact that they are Abraham's flesh and blood. This would be very well, if no other condition of inheritance were specified. But the word saith, that "the children of the flesh are not the children of God; but the children of the promise (*those who believe it*) are counted for the seed". If the children of the flesh had a right to share with Abraham when he obtains possession of the world which God has promised him, then all descended from Ishmael and Esau, his son and grandson, as well as from Isaac, would have equal rights. But God, who not only promises the estate, but specifies the conditions of heirship, has restricted the inheritance to those termed the "children of the promise as Isaac was". He has proclaimed the great truth that "the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman".

To be a son of the free-woman, a man, although a Jew, must *believe in the promise made to Abraham*; he must be of a like disposition with Abraham; he must be obedient like Abraham; he must have faith in Jesus as the seed of Abraham associated with him in the promise; he must believe in his name; he must be constitutionally inducted into Christ by immersion into the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:—being the subject of these conditions he is included in the Family of God, to whose members it is said, "Ye are all the children of God in Christ Jesus through the faith. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is no distinction of Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female among you; for ye are all *one* in Christ Jesus. And *if ye be Christ's then* are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise". These are the children of the promise, the children of God, the brethren and joint-heirs of Jesus Christ, the sons of the free-woman, and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's seed, who are alone entitled to possess the world with him.

Jesus came to preach the gospel. "The Spirit of the Lord", saith he, "is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." It is admitted, then, that Jesus fulfilled his mission; consequently, in his proclamation he preached the *good news of the acceptable season*, or BLESSED ERA of the Lord. But, what was the great focal truth of this acceptable year? Let Jesus answer the question in his own words: "*I must preach the kingdom of God; for therefore am I sent*"; and so much did he preach about this kingdom that the people become impatient and sought to take him by force and make him King. But he would not permit it; "and because they thought that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear, he spake a parable to them", in which he gave them to understand that he must first take a journey into a far country to be presented before the Ancient of Days to receive from Him the kingdom, and then to return; when he would bestow upon his servants power and authority over the cities of the world. According to this arrangement, Jesus rose from the dead and took his departure; when he ascended to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, where he is now. He has not yet received the kingdom, glory, and dominion, or he would have already returned. He is waiting for this, "sitting at the right hand of God *until* his foes are made his footstool". He will then appear in his kingdom and rule as King over all the earth.

The gospel, then, was preached to Abraham by the angel of the Lord; and it was preached by Jesus to his own nation, and to them only; for "he was not sent, save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel". Paul also declares that it was preached to that generation of Israelites whose carcasses fell in the wilderness; but it did not profit them *because they did not believe it*. Therefore, God swore in His wrath that they should not enter into the rest it proclaimed. Before he suffered on the accursed tree, Jesus sent his apostles, and seventy others, throughout the land to "preach *the kingdom of God*". In

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recording their obedience to his command, Luke says, “They went through the towns preaching *the gospel*”; so that it is clear that to preach the kingdom is to preach the gospel; and to preach the gospel is to preach the kingdom of God.

This is a most important demonstration; for *it enables us to determine when we hear the gospel*. The gospel is not preached when the things of the kingdom are omitted. And this is one grand defect in modern preaching. Either there is nothing said about the kingdom; or a kingdom is preached which is a mere matter of speculation; a kingdom of heaven in principle, in the hearts of men, or somewhere beyond the skies! But the gospel does not treat of such a kingdom as this; a mere fiction indoctrinated into men’s minds by “the cunning craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive”. So inseparable is the idea of gospel from that of kingdom that we find them, not only substituted for each other, but associated together as terms of explanation.

Thus, “Jesus went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing *the glad tidings of the kingdom of God*”; and in the prophecy of Mount Olivet it is written: “*THIS gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the habitable (ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένη Roman Empire) for a testimony to all the nations; and then shall come the end.*” After he rose from the dead, he commanded the apostles, saying, “Go, preach *the gospel* to every creature: he that believes and is immersed shall be saved; and he that believes not shall be condemned”; and “Lo, I am with you always, until the end of the world”. In view of these texts, can anyone be so mystified as not to see that salvation is predicated on believing the gospel of the kingdom, and being baptized into Jesus Christ?

They were to preach “*this gospel of the kingdom*” 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.” They began at Jerusalem, passed throughout Judea, then went to Samaria, and lastly, to the end of the earth. They began on the day of Pentecost, and preached only to the Jews for several years; at the end of which, Peter and Paul began to proclaim the kingdom to Gentiles also. The labours of the apostles were indefatigable. They 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. “They spake the word of God with boldness.” “The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul”; and great kindness was among them all. In about thirty years, the gospel of the kingdom was proclaimed in all the world, to every creature under the heaven. They finished their work, and fell asleep, the Lord having abundantly fulfilled his promise of co-operating with them to the end of the world.

Thus, the same gospel that was preached to Abraham was preached also to Jews and Gentiles by the apostles after the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of power. There was, however, this difference: when it was preached to Abraham and to the generation which perished in the Wilderness, *it was altogether a matter of promise*; but when preached by the apostles to the Roman nations, *some things connected with the promise were fulfilled*: so that the gospel of the kingdom, as they preached it, was partly a matter of promise, partly a matter of history, and partly doctrinal. It was thus presented to mankind in a threefold point of view, which may be stated in this form:—

- I. Promises to be fulfilled; or, things concerning the kingdom of God.
- II. Promises fulfilled already; or, things concerning Jesus.

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### III. The doctrinal import of the fulfilled promises; or, things concerning his Name.

A man might believe all the promises and the 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. This is the great turning point in the faith of an enlightened Jew, and Christian. Is Jesus of Nazareth the personage described in the law and the prophets; has he right and title to the throne of David, and to the dominion of the world?

The Jew says, “No, we look for another”: but the Christian replies, “He unquestionably is the person: we look for no other; but assuredly expect the re-appearance of ‘this same jesus’ on earth, to restore the throne and kingdom of David; to occupy them as the King of the Jews; and to be the Melchizedec High Priest and the Ruler of the nations”. 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.

On the other hand, a man may believe that Jesus is the Son of God; that he was sent of God as a messenger to Israel; that there is remission of sins through the shedding of his blood; that he is the saviour; and that he rose from the dead:—if he believe these things, but be ignorant, and consequently faithless, of “the things of the kingdom”, he cannot obtain glory, honour, incorruptibility and life in that kingdom. The condition of salvation is the *belief of the whole gospel and obedience to it*. It is not, “He that believes in Jesus Christ, and is immersed, shall be saved”; but “He who shall believe THE GOSPEL, and is immersed”. Simply to believe in Jesus is to believe no more than in “THE MESSENGER”; but, he was sent to preach the gospel to the poor; to show the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: this was his MESSAGE, the message of God to the Jew first, and afterwards to the Greek. Let it be remembered, then, that salvation is predicated upon *belief in the MESSENGER and in the MESSAGE he brings from God*.

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. “I came to preach the kingdom of God”, says Jesus.

“Oh! we believe that thou camest from God, because no man could do the miracles thou doest unless God were with him; but we do not believe a word in a kingdom in Judea under thy rule. We have no idea of thy coming to this cursed earth again to reign in Jerusalem, and to sit as a priest upon a throne there. This is nothing but the day dream of those who take thy words, and the sayings of the prophets, as if they were to be understood in the carnal, or literal sense. It would be derogatory to the interests of God to suppose or desire such a consummation. No, no; we believe thou art at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, now reigning over mankind; that we are thy ministers and ambassadors on earth; and that in enriching us, the world is giving its substance and doing homage to thee; and that when we die, we shall come to thee, and kingdoms rule beyond the skies! Our churches are thy kingdom here, and it is our deep and pious conviction, that the more they confide in us, and the less they trouble themselves about the millennium, the better it will be for them, and for the peace of the denominations to which they belong.”

This is in effect the language of the religious leaders of the world, and of those who surrender their understandings to the traditions with which they make of none effect the “word of the kingdom of God”. But these traditions are sheer nonsense, and without the least foundation in the scriptures.

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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.

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”. In the convention of the apostles and elders, James invited their attention to Peter’s narrative and the prediction of Amos. He stated that the work to be done was to *take out of the nations a people for the name of God*, as it is written, “AFTER THIS I will return, and raise up the dwelling place of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it *as in the days of old*: that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the heathen which are called by my name. And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord.”

In Athens, Paul announced that God intended to rule the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ; and that He had raised him from the dead as an assurance of its verity. In the Ephesian synagogue he disputed for three months, persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. Paul stood at the bar of Agrippa, and was judged “for the hope of the promise made of God unto the fathers; unto which promise the twelve tribes of Israel, instantly serving God, day and night, hope to come”, Hence, he preached the hope of Israel’s twelve tribes, as set forth in Amos, and all the prophets; and directed their attention to Jesus as the personage whom God had raised up to accomplish their desire. Indeed, he told the Jews at Rome plainly, that he was a prisoner in chains on account of the hope of Israel; and in illustration of it, “he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, both out of the law of Moses and the prophets, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ”. According to the law and the testimony he spoke, diffusing the light of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, for two whole years in Rome, “the great city which reigns over the kings of the earth”.

To understand the relations of things, it must be known that the gospel stands related to Abraham’s descendants before the preaching of John the Baptist; to Israel from John to the day of Pentecost; from this epoch until the calling of the Gentiles; and then to the Gentiles at large. “The law and the prophets were until John, then the kingdom of God was proclaimed” to Israel by John, Jesus, the seventy, and the twelve.

There was “*a mystery*”, however, connected with the gospel which was not manifested in the proclamation of it before the day of Pentecost. The people were taught in parables, but the apostles were favoured with an interpretation of them in private; for, said Jesus to them, “To you it is given to know the *mystery of the kingdom of God*, but to them it is not given”. Referring to this, Paul says, “My gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of *the mystery*, which was kept secret since the world began, but *now* is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets ... made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.” “Pray for me”, says he, “that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known *the mystery of the gospel*, for which I am an ambassador in bonds.” Again, “By revelation God hath made known unto me, Paul, *the mystery*, 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 mystery*, Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part Second Chapter 1. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

which, from the beginning of the world (ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων) hath been hid in God, who created all things: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the high places might be made known through the church the multifarious wisdom of God”.

From these writings we learn that the gospel of the kingdom of God is a phrase which embraces the whole subject; and that the mystery of the kingdom, and the fellowship of the mystery, are things pertaining to the gospel of the kingdom in a special sense, but unknown until revealed to the apostles. The mysteries of the kingdom were placed on record in the sacred writings; but their signification was hidden from the prophets themselves, until “THE KEYS” thereof were vouchsafed to the apostles. Hence, says Peter, “Of the salvation of souls (ψυχῶν) the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the *grace* that should come *unto you*: searching what, or what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand *the sufferings of Christ*, and the glory that should follow. Unto them it was revealed that *not unto themselves*, but unto us did they minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into”.

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, to the Jews first and afterwards to the Gentiles*. The prophets, who foretold these things, were not able to penetrate the mystery of them; and the angels themselves, who brought the word to them, desired to understand them. But this was not permitted; and it was preserved as a *secret* until after the sufferings of Christ, which were to be the foundation of the manifestation.

When the “point of time” drew nigh for “the finishing of the transgression, the making an end of sin-offerings, the making reconciliation for iniquity, and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness”, Jesus who had been anointed the Most Holy, the sealed prophet of the Father, and fully confirmed as Messiah the Prince, selected one man of the twelve (who had the least reason to exalt himself above his brethren as “the prince of the apostles”), as the depository of the keys of the Mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

This highly-honoured individual was Simon Peter, son of Jonas, who denied his master with oaths and curses. But, being converted, and restored to favour by his gracious Lord, he was prepared to be the unassuming “servant of the least”; and to strengthen his brethren in all the trials and afflictions they were called upon to endure for the truth’s sake. “I will give unto thee, Simon Barjona”, said the king, “the keys of the kingdom of God; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Here was an appointment of Peter in a special sense to the particular function of binding and loosing men on earth.

But we would ask any reasonable man, unspoiled by human folly and absurdity, If a power be conferred on A, nineteen hundred years ago, is it therefore bestowed on B, living nineteen centuries after? The keys were promised to Peter, and not to successors of Peter, if it were possible for him to have them in such an office; which none but the most stupidly ignorant of the scriptures would venture to affirm. The custody of the keys by a successor of Peter is the most farcical assumption that ever poor crazy mortals were guilty of. When we come to see what the keys of the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven axe, we shall see at once that the very use of them for the first time operates upon Peter’s own possession of them, as the telling of a secret to all the world does upon his power over it afterwards by whom it was told.

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Had Peter, instead of using the keys, hid them till his death-hour, and then imparted them to a single person, this individual might truly be said to have “succeeded to the keys”. But this he did not, dared not, do. He communicated them to such multitudes of Jews and Gentiles that they became the common property of the world; and none but men “earthly, sensual, and devilish” as the priests, “seducing spirits, speaking lies in hypocrisy”, whose trade it is to “make gain of godliness”;—none but such as these would have conceived of the possibility of a transfer of the keys of the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven to a successor; especially to such a succession of impious impostors as the prophets of the Roman See.

A key is used in scripture as a symbol of the power of revealing, or interpreting, secret things: also for power in general. As a key is to a lock, so is power to things intellectual, moral, and political. The scriptures say of Messiah, “The keys shall be upon his shoulder”—*i.e.*, “The government shall be possessed by him”. And again, “I have”, says Jesus, “the key (κλεις) of Hades (ᾅδου) and of death”; which is to say, that Jesus hath the power to open the abode, or chamber, of the dead, and to restore them to life. In these instances, a key is the symbol of political, and physical power; but it also represents scientific or knowledge-imparting power. Thus, under the law of Moses, it was divinely appointed that “the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and Israel should seek the law at his mouth; for he was the messenger of the Lord of Hosts”. The priests, however, became so corrupt and ignorant that Israel sought in vain for knowledge at their lips, and therefore perished for lack of it. The Lord charged this home upon them by the hand of Malachi. “Ye are”, says he, “departed out of the way, O ye priests; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of Hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.”

This was precisely the state of things when “THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT” made his appearance in Judea. He denounced them for their corruptions. “Ye have made”, said he, “the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Hypocrites that ye are, ye draw nigh to God with your mouth, and honour him with your lips, but your heart is far from him. But in vain do ye worship him, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Among these hypocrites were the lawyers, who, feeling the keenness of his reproaches, remonstrated against it. But he turned upon them, and said, “Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken, away the KEY OF KNOWLEDGE: ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered”.

This was the unhappy condition of the Jewish nation at the appearing of Jesus; as it is of all the nations at the present time against whom the kingdom is shut by clerical traditions. The Lord Jesus came to restore to Israel the key of knowledge. “They erred, not knowing the scriptures”; but he was about to open them, so that in spite of the hypocrites, they might enter into the kingdom of God. O that men could be induced now to devote themselves to the study of the scriptures without regard to articles, creeds, confessions, and traditions! These things are mere rubbish; monuments of the presumption and folly of former generations indoctrinated with the wisdom from beneath. If a Berean spirit could be infused into them; if they could be persuaded to “search the scriptures daily” for the truth as for hid treasure; they would soon leave their spiritual guides alone in all their glory of mysticism and patristic lore, and rejoice in the liberty of that truth which can alone make them “free indeed”.

The gospel invites men to enter into the Kingdom of God. The way of entering is made exceedingly plain in the Bible. There is now *no hidden* mystery concerning it as there was before the sufferings of Christ were manifested. The mystery of the kingdom has been unlocked. The key of Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part Second Chapter 1. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

knowledge has been given; but unfortunately it has been stolen again by Peter's pretended successors; and, upon a smaller scale, by every other ecclesiastic who would discourage or throw hindrances in the way of a free, unbiassed, and independent examination and avowal of Bible truth in their churches; or, an unrestricted advocacy of it, though at variance with the institutes of dogmatic theology, in all the pulpits of the land.

The leaders of the people dare not permit such a course to be pursued; for the Bible is hostile to their systems, and sets forth things which, if believed, would empty their rostrums, disperse their flocks, and close their doors; and elaborate such a social revolution, that truth and righteousness would triumph in the midst of the earth; and the people be enlightened in the knowledge which comes from God. Such a consummation, however, need never be hoped for, so long as the instruction and government of the nations are in the hands of the existing orders or rulers, lay and ecclesiastical; for "like priests, like people", and *vice versa*; they are corrupt and altogether gone out of the way; and, therefore, are devoid of all power to resuscitate the things which remain, and which are ready to vanish away.

Before a man can enter into the Kingdom of God, he must be unloosed from his sins in the present state; and liberated hereafter from the prison-house where the dead lie bound in chains of intense darkness. The unloosing from sins, Jesus committed to Peter; but the enlargement from the chamber of death he reserved to himself.

*Knowledge* is the *key* to remission, or release from sins, and to an entrance into the Kingdom of God. No one can enter this kingdom in his sins, and destitute of a character approved of God; and none could answer the question, "How can a man obtain the remission of sins; and what kind of a character would God henceforth account worthy?"—until the apostle Peter revealed the secret, communicated to him by the spirit, on the day of Pentecost. If the reader peruse the second chapter of the Acts, he will there learn how Peter used one of the keys of the kingdom given to him by its King. On that occasion, I say, he used but one of the keys. He revealed the mystery of the gospel of God's kingdom to Jews only.

They believed in the kingdom, glory, and dominion, promised to the Son of Man in Daniel and the prophets; they were well aware that the kingdom was to belong to their nation; that the King was to be David's son, and to live for ever; and that the righteous were to take the kingdom with him: these things were the substance of the national hope; but they did not then know upon what conditions the obtaining of them was predicated. Hence, it was Peter's duty to instruct them. He first recalled to their recollection certain notable things concerning Jesus. That the wonders he performed by the power of God evidently showed that God approved him; that *they* had been guilty of his death in clamouring for his crucifixion; but that all this was predetermined of God; that God had "loosed him from the pains of death" by raising him from the dead. He then proceeded to show by their prophets that the things which had thus happened to Jesus were verifications of certain predictions. He adduced the testimony of David, that the Christ was to be "*raised up to sit upon David's throne*", and consequently, must previously suffer death; and that after he was resurrected, he was to ascend to the right hand of God. He then concluded by saying, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and King Anointed (Χριστός, *Messiah*)". For the truth of this statement he appealed to what they saw and heard; to the cloven tongues like fire sitting upon their heads, the "sound of a rushing mighty wind", and the many languages spoken by Galilean fishermen without previous study.

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The result of the Apostle's reasoning was their conviction that Jesus was indeed the King of Israel, even the Shiloh that had been promised them for so many ages. They acknowledged him to be the "Son whose NAME should be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Father of the Future Age (*Avi Ad*), the Prince of Peace". This belief, however, also convinced them that, being this great personage, they had committed an enormous crime; and had "killed the Prince of Life". Their consciences smote them; "they had denied the Holy and Just One, and desired a murderer before him"; and had imprecated his blood upon themselves and their posterity. Of what use was their faith to them in this extremity? They believed *in the kingdom*, they believed *in Jesus*, they were penetrated with remorse, but still they were conscious only of guilt, and of judgment well deserved. It was yet a *hidden mystery* to them what should be done for pardon of this great transgression. What was "*the righteousness of God*" which He required of them? Should they go to the high priest, and offer a whole burnt offering, and confess their sin? This would have been impracticable. Caiaphas would have offered sacrifice for them upon the altar upon no such confession as this; for in confessing themselves sinners for killing Jesus, they would have charged the high priest as a principal in the crime. To what, or to whom, were they to look for a solution of "the mystery"? Who could *unlock* it, and *open* to them the *door* of liberty, and *loose* them from their sins?

Is not the reader prepared to answer, "The Holy Spirit alone could reveal to them of righteousness, because Jesus had gone to the Father"? This is true; and the time had arrived to do it. But how, or through what channel, was the Spirit to do this? Was it to be by words thundered from heaven; by a still, small voice whispering in their ears; by a feeling that they were forgiven; by words of inspiration spoken by the tongues of angels; or by the mouth of man? After what has been said, the reader will be prepared to say, "The keys of knowledge, or the power to reveal the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, were committed to Peter; therefore, the new doctrine concerning righteousness, or justification to life, was to be revealed through him". This is also true, but the "devout Jews" were ignorant of this arrangement; therefore, instead of addressing Peter alone, they inquired of all the apostles, saying, "*Men and brethren what shall we do?*" Mark, reader, though the question was put to all, only one of them, and that one, Peter, replied to the inquiry. He was the spokesman of the twelve, by whose mouth God had chosen that Israel should hear the word of the gospel, and believe; or, as Paul writes, "The gospel of the circumcision was committed to Peter, in whom God wrought effectually for the purpose".

The answer given by Peter announced for the first time, what believers of the gospel of the kingdom and in the things concerning Jesus, *must do*, in order to become joint-heirs with him of the promise made to the fathers. To these *devout* Jews, who now believed what both the prophets and apostles had spoken, who were now humbled in disposition as little children, swift to hear, and anxious to do, whatever the spirit should dictate; the holder of the keys to unlock the mystery of the gospel, said, "REPENT *and* BE BAPTIZED *every one of you* IN THE NAME *of Jesus Christ* FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS".

Such an annunciation as this had never been made before. In this way "repentance and the remission of sins" were "preached *in the name of Jesus*". This is God's way of righteousness, and besides this, there is no other way of salvation; "for there is *none other name* under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved". God's salvation is placed in the name of Jesus; and this name is accessible to mankind only upon the condition of believing "*the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus*", and being baptized in his name—"He that believes the gospel and is baptized shall be saved" is the unrevoked fiat of the Son of God.

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The words of the Spirit by the mouth of Peter went home to the hearts of these devout Jews. “They that *gladly* received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added to the congregation about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” These disciples were “a kind of firstfruits of God’s creatures begotten of his own will *by the word of truth*”, which “lives and *abides for ever*”.

But, though the mystery of the gospel was thus made known in the name of Jesus, even Peter, to whom the keys of the mystery were given, did not yet understand “the FELLOWSHIP *of the mystery*”. The keys were not given to him when Jesus spoke the words; nor were both of them given to him on the day of Pentecost. The mystery was revealed to the Jews first: and several years elapsed before it was known, or supposed, that the Gentiles would be admitted to a joint-heirship with Jesus on an equality with the Jews. During this period of about seven years, the body of Christ consisted solely of believing Israelites, sons of Abraham by flesh and faith.

At the end of this time, however, God determined to “visit the Gentiles, *to take out of them a people* for his name”. He graciously resolved to invite men of all the nations of the Roman territory to accept honour, glory, and immortality, in the kingdom and empire about to be established on the ruins of all others. Hitherto He had only invited His own people Israel to this high destiny; but now He was about to extend the gospel call to the nations also.

Before this, however, could be accomplished according to the principles laid down in God’s plan, it was necessary to prepare Peter for the work. Although an apostle, he was still a Jew, and had all the prejudices of the Jew against the Gentile. He considered it “unlawful for him to keep company, or come unto one of another nation”. The Jews had no more social dealings with the Gentiles than with the Samaritans. And if any had suggested the propriety of his going and preaching the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus to the Gentiles, he would have positively refused. If, however, he had been ever so willing, he could not have done it for various other reasons.

In those days, no one could preach effectually unless he were sent; and, as he had not been sent of God, his mission would have been a failure. Then, he did not know whether God would accept the Gentiles on the same conditions as the Jews, if, indeed, He would admit them to a joint-heirship at all. But, the law was a sufficient wall of separation to keep Jewish preachers and Gentiles apart until God’s time should arrive to do it away, and to bring them together into “one body”.

Peter, then, had to be prepared for the work. The narrative of his preparation is contained in the tenth chapter of Acts. A direct attack was made upon his prejudices. He became very hungry about 12 o’clock in the day. While waiting for something to eat on the housetop, an amazement came over him. In this state, he saw a great sheet full of all sorts of unclean creatures, fit and appropriate emblems of the moral condition, of the Gentiles. At this crisis, the spirit said, “Rise, Peter, kill and eat”. But Peter preferred hunger to defilement; and would not consent, until it was repeated for the third time, that the legal distinction between clean and unclean was done away:—“What God hath cleansed, call not thou common”, or unclean.

The impression made upon Peter by this vision is best expressed in his own words. “God hath showed me”, said he, “that I should not call *any man* common, or unclean. Therefore came I to you, Gentiles, as soon as I was sent for.” In this way the second key of the kingdom was imparted to him. Its use was to make known the Fellowship of the Mystery.

As soon as Peter's preparation was complete, even while he was debating within himself the meaning of the vision, three Gentile messengers from Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian regiment, arrived from Caesarea, to request him to visit him. The Spirit told Peter to go with them, nothing doubting, for He had sent them.

Now, while God was preparing Peter's mind for a ready obedience, He had sent a messenger to tell Cornelius to send for Peter. It would be well for the reader to reflect on the character of Cornelius before the angel visited him. He was not a pagan Gentile, or a wicked sinner in danger of hell fire; but a proselyte of righteousness, or an outer-court worshipper. "He was *a just and devout* man, and *one that feared God* with all his house; gave much alms to the Jews, among whom he was of good report; and he prayed to God always." No better man, lay or clerical, can be produced from any modern sect than Cornelius. He was a God-fearing, "pious", and generous-hearted man. He was not a perverse, hot-headed, ignorant disciple of some sect; but a man approved of heaven, whose prayers and alms ascended before God as a memorial of him.

But why dwell so on the character of this excellent man? Because a special messenger was sent from heaven to tell even this good man, this just and devout Gentile, to send for the apostle Peter, that *he* might come from Joppa, and tell him *what he ought to do*. But, as though this were not explicit enough, the angel stated that "Peter should come and tell him *words, whereby he and his house might be saved*". Now it is worthy of especial note by the religionists of this self-complacent generation, that this just person was not in a saved state under the new order of things: that he had both to *hear words* and to *do* something for his salvation which he had then as yet neither heard nor done. And let it be observed, furthermore, that *the angel* of God was not permitted to preach the gospel to Cornelius; or, in other words, to tell him what he ought to do; or "the words by which he and his house might be saved". He was only allowed to tell him to *send for Peter*.

According to modern notions, this was quite unnecessary; for, cries popular ignorance, it would have saved both time and trouble if the angel had told Cornelius at once what it was necessary for so excellent a man to believe and do, instead of sending three men through the broiling sunshine to fetch Peter to Caesarea. O what a lesson is contained in this interesting narrative for the "clergy", "ministers", and people of these times! How it convicts them of infidelity to the gospel, and sinfulness before God; or, if sincerity be granted to them, and, doubtless, there are among them many honest and well-intentioned persons, who "err, not knowing the scriptures"; grant, then, that they sincerely love truth in the abstract, yet comparing their creeds and preaching, and practices, with the testimonies contained in the second, tenth and eleventh of the Acts, to say nothing of others—how condemned are they as vain talkers, and deceived leaders of the blind. It is really painful to listen to the superficial dissertations of the textuaries, retailed to the people from the pulpits of the day. Theological speculations on isolated scraps of scripture are substituted for the words of Peter and the other apostles, by which alone even the "pious" can be saved. They talk of true religion, of primitive Christianity, of the gospel, of churches of Christ, and of an evangelical ministry; but where among Papist or Protestant, Church or Dissent, are these things to be found, reflecting the precepts, precedents, and morality of the "pure and undefiled religion" of the New Testament?

This New Testament Christianity is the grand desideratum of the Protestant world; which, however, we despair of beholding even in theory until Messiah shall appear in his kingdom, and abolish all existing names and denominations, which serve, indeed, as a kind of ecclesiastical police, but are perfectly useless as institutions capable of indoctrinating mankind with the things which they

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ought to believe and do, if they would become joint-heirs with Jesus of the kingdom, glory, and empire of the Ancient of Days.

From the testimonies before us, then, we learn,

1. That “piety” and morality alone, will not save men;
2. That good and pious men must believe certain things, and do certain others, for salvation;
3. That these things, indispensably necessary to salvation, are set forth in Peter’s words spoken to his contemporaries;
4. That Peter’s words are the keys to the mystery, and fellowship, of the gospel of the kingdom;
5. That there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles in relation to this mystery;
6. That God hath appointed men, and not angels, to preach the gospel;
7. That Peter was to be sent for, because to him alone the keys were given;
8. That, though piety and morality alone cannot save; neither can faith, unaccompanied by fruits meet for repentance, give a man inheritance in the kingdom of God.

Peter having arrived at the house of Cornelius, announced to all present, “the things which God had commanded him to speak”. Having stated the great discovery made to him by the spirit, how that “God was no respecter of persons; but that in every nation he that fears him (not however with that fear “which is taught by the precepts of men”), and works righteousness (such as God requires) is accepted of him”—he directed their attention to “that WORD which God sent unto the children of Israel by Jesus Christ”, preaching peace. He told them that they were acquainted with that word; for it was published throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after John’s proclamation. As they knew it, he did not occupy time in repeating it in detail. The reader knows what the word was that God sent to Israel by Jesus Christ, for we have already spoken of it; but, lest it should have escaped him, we will reiterate it.

“I was sent”, says Jesus, “to preach the kingdom of God.” This was his message to Israel. Hence, he styles it in the parable of the sower, “the word of the kingdom”. This word was so notorious to all that sojourned in the land of Israel, that it was as familiar as any question could possibly be. It was known also to every one, how that Jesus was anointed, or christened, with the Holy Spirit at his immersion in the Jordan by John; and how he went about doing good and healing the infirmities of the people; and none knew better than Roman centurions, that he was slain and hanged on a tree. These were matters of household notoriety and belief. A far more comprehensive faith than that of the moderns; but yet impotent to the justification of Cornelius and his house. More words were yet to be reported to them.

Peter therefore affirmed that God had raised him from the dead; and shown him openly, not to the public in general, but to certain witnesses previously chosen for the purpose, even to the apostles, who could not possibly have been deceived, because they ate fish and bread with him, and drank with him, after he rose from the dead. These things they heard and believed. The next thing he declared to them was, that God has commanded them to preach to the people Israel, and to testify, that Jesus was he that is appointed of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead. Now, said Peter, and this was the

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fellowship of the mystery, “To him give all the prophets witness, that WHOSOEVER *believeth in him* SHALL RECEIVE REMISSION OF SINS THROUGH HIS NAME”.

This was new doctrine to Gentiles. They had heard of it before as preached to Jews; but they heard it now for the first time, that “*whosoever* believed”, whether Jew or Gentile, should receive remission of sins through his Name. Peter had made a very straightforward and simple statement of truth to them. This he called preaching “repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus”. There was no sermonizing, or text-weaving; no scratching of itching ears; every thing was delivered in a concise and dignified manner, which carried the impress of truth upon its very front. But, he not only opened the mystery of the Gospel of the Kingdom to these Gentiles, but he “preached the gospel to them with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven”; for, “while he yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them who heard the Word”. When the six Jewish Christians, who accompanied Peter, *saw* this, they were astonished, because that on the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit as on the apostles themselves on the day of Pentecost. They could make no mistake about this, for “they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God”.

Here, then, was the Word preached, and the Word *confirmed* by the Lord working with Peter. No one that heard the account of these things could doubt for a moment, whether “God had purified their hearts by faith”, and accepted them. But still there was something wanting. Peter had told them of remission of sins through the name of Jesus to every one that believes in him; but he had not informed these believers, *how they could avail themselves of this omnipotent Name*. How were they to be washed, sanctified, and justified by this Name? How were they to take it upon them? In what manner was it to be named upon them? The apostle says, that when the Spirit fell upon them, he had only “begun to speak”. If he had not been interrupted by this extraordinary effusion, he would doubtless have fully explained himself upon this point; for, he was not only commanded to preach the name of Jesus, but to command *believers* to be immersed “INTO THE NAME (εἰς τὸ ὄνομα) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”.

Here, then, is a great matter. *The NAME OF JESUS is placed in the institution of immersion, based on an intelligent, child-like belief of “the things of the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ”*. God has always placed His name in His institutions. Under the law He placed it in the Tabernacle, and afterwards in the Temple at Jerusalem; but, under grace, He has placed it in such a baptism as we have just defined, in conformity to which we can “worship him in spirit and in truth”, without going to Jerusalem or Samaria. Cornelius and his household were in Caesarea, and in a private house. Peter did not require them to go to Jerusalem, or to a synagogue, in order to worship, or do homage, to God, in spirit and in truth. They had believed the truth spoken by the Spirit through Peter; and they awaited the command of the Spirit as to the manner in which they might work the righteousness of God. Peter, feeling his way with caution, because of his six brethren of the circumcision who accompanied him, inquired, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be immersed, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?”

From this question we learn that there were cases in those days in which the use of water was forbidden, or considered as Improper The apostles did not preach water to the people as the moderns do. They permitted no one to have access to the water unless they believed he was a proper subject. They were sometimes deceived, but that was not their fault; they did their best to discharge their duty faithfully. If a man did not believe the gospel of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they would not immerse him; for it was commanded them that “he that believeth not should be condemned”, *i.e.*, should not be unloosed from his sins in the name of Jesus.

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The paidorhantists do well to refuse to be immersed; and the Baptists do wrong to urge it upon them. For the sprinklers do not believe the gospel of the kingdom, and neither have they the spirit of the gospel; and therefore, they are not fit to be immersed. The institution of God's name ought not to be desecrated by the immersion of such misbelievers into its formula. Water should be forbidden them. It is not water, but faith, they need at present—that one, heart-purifying faith, such as Cornelius and his household possessed, and “without which it is impossible to please God”.

It cannot be said that the paidorhantists (from παιδές, *infants*, and ραντισταί, *sprinklers*, that is, *infant sprinklers*) make too little of water; one great offence against high heaven which they commit, is making infinitely too much of it. The efficacy the apostles put in the heart-purifying faith and conscience-cleansing name of Jesus, they place in a few drops of “*holy*” or common, water, and a physical regeneration of a hypothetic principle in the flesh! They require no faith, no repentance, no confession to qualify their subjects for the water and formula of the Name. They ask only a suckling of eight days, with godfathers and godmothers, whose characters are not even inquired into, to answer questions, which oftentimes they do not understand, and oftener have no intention to conform to the requirements of; or, dispensing with these godless gods, give them the infant with a proxy parental faith in the dogmas of a sect, and it will suffice.

Paidorhantist “ministers”, with solemn mockery of the holy and august name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, will sprinkle the face of the mindless weakling, and impiously proclaim to the people that such is the “one baptism” of the religion of Christ! Is it not wonderful, that God has witnessed this blasphemy for ages, and not rent the heavens with indignation upon them? Great indeed, is the forbearance of the Most High; but the time shall at length come when His patience will have an end. How astounding is the presumption of such! “The people of the Lord”, say they, “are we! Wisdom will die with us!” Yet they are *faithless* of the words of Peter, for they do them not; and have changed the ordinance of God, and made it contemptible. A rhanized, but unbaptized, community is the vast majority of the professing world; and therefore “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope (no true one) and without God in the world”. Them that honour God, He will honour; but they who seek honour one of another, and desecrate His name, are fattening their hearts for the day of slaughter; and are fit only for capture and destruction.

Cornelius and his household differ from these *in toto*. They all believed the words of Peter, awaiting his commands. He had inquired if there were any present who could, in the face of what they saw and heard, “forbid water that they should not be baptized”. He doubtless paused a reasonable time that objections might be urged if any could possibly exist. But all Jewish prejudices were abolished by “the demonstration of the spirit”, and they held their peace. Things being brought to this crisis, it only remained for the Spirit of God to pronounce the word. Therefore, Peter opened his mouth, and “COMMANDED *them to be BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF THE LORD*”.

After this manner Peter used the keys of the kingdom of heaven given to him by the Lord Jesus Christ. When he had accomplished this work, *he no longer retained the power of the keys*. They were transferred to the multitude of the believing Jews and Gentiles. The spirit had revealed the mystery of the kingdom, and the fellowship of the mystery, by the mouth of Peter on Pentecost, and at Cæsarea; so that the keys became the common property of all believers. The Lord “who hath the key of David, hath opened, and no man can shut”; He hath set before the Gentiles “an open door, and no man can close it”, so long as the scriptures are in the hands of the people. The false prophet may dangle keys at his girdle, and affect the power of the Son of God; but so long as “THE LAW AND THE TESTIMONY” are Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part Second Chapter 1. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

accessible “whosoever is athirst may come; and whosoever will may take the water of life freely”. The scriptures contain the keys. Popes, priests, clergy, and ministers may suppress, torture, and garble the truth, and throw hindrances in the way; but the man who discards their authority, and thinks for himself, may, by the enlightening efficacy of the living word, become “wise unto salvation by the faith which is in Jesus Christ”. Let the people then help themselves, if they would that God should aid them.

From what has been advanced it is manifest that “the word of the kingdom” presents itself to us in the scriptures in a three-fold relation:

1. As the gospel preached to Abraham, etc.;
2. As the same gospel preached in the name of Jesus on Pentecost, or the mystery of the gospel of the kingdom; and
3. As the fellowship of the mystery of the gospel preached. first by Peter to circumcised Gentiles; and afterwards by Paul to the worshippers of idols.

There are not three gospels; but one and the same gospel, as before stated; originally all promise; then promise, history, and doctrine preached to Jews only; and afterwards offered to the Gentiles upon the same terms as to the Jews. But though I have set forth these things with some minuteness, the reader will still feel that the treatise is incomplete so long as I have not set forth “the things concerning the kingdom of God”, to which such frequent reference has been made, as the grand theme of “the glorious gospel of the blessed God”; and without the knowledge of which a man’s faith is destitute of the “one hope of the calling” which is the anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast within the veil in Christ Jesus; who is there “waiting to receive the kingdom and return”. This, then, will be the subject of future illustration, in the hope that we shall make it so plain that “he may run who reads”. I shall now proceed to say a few words upon

#### APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION.

“Divines” contend that the mantle of the apostles fell upon the elders, or bishops, of the churches who survived them; that these survivors were “*the successors of the apostles*”, and that when these died away, the apostolic mantle fell upon those who succeeded to their offices in the churches, being invested by the imposition of hands; and that thus from generation to generation until the present day, the succession has been perpetuated by the institution of ordination, or “holy orders”; so that the living orders of ecclesiastics, composed of pope, cardinals, bishops, priests, and ministers, are “successors of the apostles”, endued with like authority and power in the churches, and entitled to the same obedience and consideration.

They found their claim to these high pretensions upon certain passages of scripture, written concerning the apostles and their co-labourers, which they apply to themselves, and argue that the grace of office has been transmitted from one to another by the imposition of “holy hands”! Thus, when an aspirant to apostolic succession presents himself before a bishop for ordination, the latter says to this effect: “Receive thou the Holy Ghost by the imposition of my hands for the office, or work, of a priest, in the house of God; whosoever sins you remit are remitted, and whosoever sins you retain are retained”. This, says the thirty-sixth article of the national religion, “hath nothing that of itself is superstitious or ungodly”. By virtue of this consecration and ordering, absolution, or

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remission of sins, is pronounced by the priest standing up alone in the midst of the people, who kneel to receive it; and in the form it is declared that “Almighty God hath given power and commandment to His ministers to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins”. Thus, the national parsonocracy claim the apostolic attribute of remitting and retaining sins, of binding and loosing, even as the Papists; with this modification, however that they remit sins in the gross, while the latter do it both wholesale and retail. Thus do the national and Popish clergy, speak blasphemy continually.

But the state-clergies are not alone in their assumption of apostolicity; the Dissenters are condemnable on the same account. They claim to be ambassadors of Jesus Christ; and they permit none to “administer ordinances” who are not ordained by the imposition of hands. The ordained do not undertake to forgive sins after the manner of the apostles; but they apply to themselves scriptures which relate only to the apostles, by which they constitute themselves their “successors”.

But, the truth is, that neither State nor Nonconformist clergies are entitled to be regarded as “successors of the apostles”. The nature of the office may be comprehended by the qualifications of the office-holder, which were indispensable. They may be thus stated:—

1. An apostle of Christ to the circumcision must be one who has companied with the Lord Jesus from his baptism until his ascension; so as to be a witness to his resurrection;

2. An apostle of Christ to the Gentiles must have seen Jesus, and have conversed with him, as well as the former:

3. An apostle must be chosen, ordained, and sent of the Lord; and authorized by him to forgive and retain sins.

4. An apostle must be able to work signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds, as signs of his apostleship.

5. To be an apostle a man must have believed the pure gospel of the Kingdom of God, have been immersed, and walk according to the truth of it.

With these qualifications, the thirteen apostles (*ἀπόστολοι*, *men sent with commands*) directed the affairs of the churches, which they had formed and established in the world. Their administration was in fact the administration of the Spirit through them; so that in their word was power to the healing of disease, the infliction of it, and the destruction of life. They conferred spiritual gifts upon believers by the imposition of their hands; and gave commandments to the faithful as the vicegerents of the Lord. Now, reason and common sense teach, that if men are real successors to apostolicity, they will be like Peter and Paul in all their qualifications and attributes; but reason also teaches, that after the ascension of Jesus, no man can be qualified for the apostleship unless the Lord appear to him, as in the case of Paul. But the truth is, that this claim of apostolic succession is as groundless as the claim of the clergy of the apostasy to tithes on the ground of their succession to the rights of the Levitical priesthood. If their apostolicity be granted, it can only be as “false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel” continues Paul, “for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works”.

It is a stronghold of these pretended apostles, that the Lord promised to be with them always, to the end of the world. They contend (though, as learned men they must know better) that the phrase “the end of the world” indicates a period of time yet future; and, therefore, that Jesus had reference, not to the apostles only, but to their “successors” likewise. Hence, they argue that the command yet remains with them to be executed, which says, “Go ye therefore, into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”.

But to this I object, *first*, that the end of the world to which Jesus referred, arrived more than eighteen hundred years ago; *secondly*, that the work enjoined upon the persons in the text was fully accomplished by the apostles; *thirdly*, that the Lord is not with them who pretend to be their successors; *fourthly*, that the moderns cannot execute the command, because they are utterly ignorant of the gospel; and, therefore, cannot be the individuals referred to.

In the first place, the Lord Jesus did not use the phrase, “The end of the world”, in the vulgar English sense of it. He said to the eleven, “Behold, I am *with you, πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας, all the days, ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος until the end of the age*”. Here are *certain days* indicated, which were comprehended in the period to elapse from the time when Jesus made the promise, until the end of the age. These days are termed by Paul, “*these last days*”; which he characterizes as those in which God spoke to the Israelites by a son, as well as those in which he was writing to the Hebrews some thirty years after: “*These last days*”, says he. Now, the days taken collectively, he styles according to the English version, “the end of the world”; as it is written, “Now once *in the end of the world* hath Jesus appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” The reader will easily perceive by the remark in the text, that the world spoken of was that to which Jesus stood related by death. That it was near its end when he was crucified by it; but if “*the world*” is to be taken in the vulgar English sense, Paul was wrong in saying, that Jesus sacrificed himself *in the end of it*; for surely that period was not the end of the world, which passed away more than eighteen hundred years ago! But the truth is, Paul was perfectly accurate in what he wrote. He knew nothing about the English sense of his words: for there were neither Englishmen, nor English words in his day. He penned Hebraisms in Greek words; that is, he put the things God had taught Israel into a Greek dress. He wrote “the things of the spirit” in the words of the spirit selected from the Greek language. What he said in the text before us was, “But now once for all, ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων *at the end of the ages*, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself”. The constitution of Mount Sinai was the founding of the Hebrew world, or *χόσμος*; because it ordered, or arranged, the things pertaining to Israel, as a system *sui generis*. This system had *times peculiar to itself* which were appointed at the promulgation of the law. These are termed in scripture αἰωνές, that is, *aions*, from ἀεί, *alway* and ὄν, *passing*. The etymology of αἰών does not express the duration of the time; its continuance is defined by the Mosaic law. The Hebrew Commonwealth *under the Sinaitic constitution* was not intended to continue always. The time of its existence was predetermined of God, but not revealed in the law, or the prophets, but “reserved in his own power”. It is termed αἰών; and its approaching termination, συντελεία τοῦ αἰῶνος, *the end of the time*, that is, of the Hebrew Commonwealth, under the Mosaic law. But, though the precise duration of this *great time* (1,697 years) was kept secret; the *lesser times*, or αἰώνες, *aions*, of which it was composed, were very minutely specified as in the case of the Jubilees, so that the whole time of the commonwealth was the αἰών τῶν αἰώνων, the *aion of the aions*, the time of the times, or age of the ages. Hence, while the Lord Jesus designated the consummation as *the end of the time*, Paul indicated it as *the end of the times*, or ages.

That the delivering of the law was the beginning of the αἰών, or Hebrew world, is obvious from the words of Peter. Addressing the men of Israel, he said, “God will send Jesus Christ to you; whom the heaven must retain *until* times (χρόνων) of reconstitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets ἀπ’ αἰῶνος, *from the age*; for Moses truly said to the fathers”, etc. In the authorized version ἀπ’ αἰῶνος is rendered “*since the world began*”. If this be preferred, it is evident that the world referred to was coeval in its beginning with Moses; for he is cited as the first of the holy prophets by whose mouth God spoke of the reconstitution of the Hebrew commonwealth at the appearing of Christ from heaven. Paul refers to the same epoch, saying, “The fellowship of the mystery hath been hid in God ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων, *from the ages*”; in the common version, “*from the beginning of the world*”. From the beginning of the age, or of the ages, is the correct rendering of the Greek in these texts. They both refer to the beginning of the commonwealth of Israel in the giving of the law from Sinai.

To speak in the vernacular, *God promised eternal life to man before the world began*. Such a statement as this would be incomprehensible to a mere English reader; yet such is the import of the saying, “God, who cannot lie promised eternal life before the world began (πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων); but *in due times* (χαίροῦς ἰδίοις) hath manifested his word in the preaching”. To whom did He promise it? Certainly not to any one before the formation of man. The world referred to cannot therefore be that founded in the six days; but a constitution of things long subsequent to it. A literal translation removes all difficulty. The phrase πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων is, *before the aionian times*; that is, before the times of the Hebrew commonwealth were arranged, God promised eternal life; and in χαίροῦς ἰδίοις, *his own times*, such times, namely, as are particularized in Daniel, He made His word, which had before been a hidden mystery, manifest through the apostolic preaching.

In the parable of the sower, the phrase “*the world*” is used in different senses, which are not distinguished in the English version. Jesus says there, “*the field is the world*”. Did he mean it was “the whole habitable”, “the age”, or the Israelites; for *world* is applied to them all? If it had been the first he would have said, “The field is the ὅλη οἰκουμένη”; if the second, “The field is the αἰών”; and if the third, “The field is the γόσμος”. The last is the record in the case. He represents himself as the sower; and says that the seed which he sowed was “the word of the kingdom”; that it was “good seed”; and that he sowed it into the hearts of the Israelites, or “children of the kingdom”, of whom there were two classes, good and bad”.

These, then, were the field, and therefore, the γόσμος or nation-world. But the enemy sowed tares into this field, which were to be gathered out and burnt. This conflagration was to be at harvest-time, concerning which Jesus said, “The harvest is *the end of the world*”. Did he mean the end of the nation-world? No; therefore he used another word, namely αἰών instead of γόσμος. The harvest was to be at the end of the *aion*, συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος; and not at the end of the *kosmos*, or extermination of the nation Israel from among nations. The extinction of Israel from the earth will never take place; though a full end will be made of all other nations.

But at the end of what *aion* was the harvest to be? Jesus replies, “As the tares are gathered and burned in the fire at harvest time; so shall it be ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, in the end of this age”. That is, in the end of the *aion* in which he flourished. Then he would send his reapers, namely, the Romans, his angels, or messengers (ἄγγελοι) of destruction, to “gather out of his kingdom” of Judea, all the tare-like children of Israel, and cast them into the place of the Lord, “whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem”, where there should be wailing, and gnashing of teeth. When this should be accomplished the *aion* would be finished, and the commonwealth of Israel should “be no

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more until He should come whose right it is to reign.” “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

As Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives, his disciples asked him saying, “*What shall be the sign of the end of the age—τί τὸ σημεῖον τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος?*” or, in the common version, “of the end of the world?” He replied, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached *in the whole habitable* (ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ) for a testimony to all the nations: and then shall come the end”. Having said this, he gave them “*the sign*”, namely, the standing of the abomination of desolation in the holy place, or city, as foretold by Daniel. First, then, the gospel was to be fully preached to every creature by the apostles; and afterwards, the sign was to appear. Did the apostles perform their work, or does it yet remain to be accomplished? Their pretended successors answer, “*No, they did not*”. They contend that there are vast regions which were unknown to the ancients, where the gospel has never been preached; and, therefore, that, as it is to be preached to every creature, it is incumbent on them to do it; and that the end of the world will not come until they have converted all the nations to Christianity! Hence, they have established societies *de propaganda fide*, both Romish and Protestant. Every principal sect has its missionary society, whose utopian speculation is the conversion of the world under the warrant of the apostolic commission! As if a command given to the apostles to preach *the gospel of the kingdom* were a command given to modern missionaries to go and preach Churchism and Dissenterism, Calvinism, Arminianism, and Popery to all the world! But the apostles were not sent to “all the world” in the Gentile acceptance of the phrase. They were sent to all the nations of the then habitable, or civilized world; principally, and almost exclusively, comprehended in the limits of the Roman dominion. Nor were they sent under the idea of converting them nationally to the gospel; but to preach it εἰς μαρτύριον, *for a testimony*; that is, for their information, that disciples might be made among them all; so that a people might be taken out of them (ἐξ ἐθνῶν) for the administration of the affairs of God’s kingdom and empire upon earth. The apostles left nothing for “successors” to do under the commission given to them. They preached the gospel of the kingdom to “every creature” of the Roman nations; if not in the Gentile sense of “every creature”, at least in the sense of the phrase as used by the Lord Jesus.

I feel strong upon this point, sustained as I am by the direct testimony of scripture; which is worth all the theories, and all the logic of the schools *en masse*. The apostle, in speaking of the “*one hope of the calling*”, contained “in the word of the truth of the gospel”, tells the Colossian believers, that “it had come to *all the world*” (παρόντος ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ) in the sense of “every creature”, as appears in another verse of the same chapter. In this place he says, “*The hope of the gospel was preached to every creature which is under the heaven*”. This was the result of some thirty years’ apostolic labour; for the epistle in which he makes the statement is assigned to A.D. 62; which was about eight years before the desolating abomination appeared before the walls of Jerusalem, as “*the sign*” of the end of the age.

The gospel of the kingdom, so efficiently preached by the apostles, was soon after perverted by “men of corrupt minds”; whom Paul, who was very severe, but not too much so, upon this class of professors, styles, “seducing spirits, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and having their conscience seared as with a hot iron”. Let the reader consult the references below. These characters were the “successors” from whom modern apostles and ambassadors of Christ have originated. When the Hebrew commonwealth was broken up by the Romans, they claimed to be successors to the priests and Levites of the law, as well as to the apostles. Thus they united a worldly priesthood (for all Christ’s disciples are kings and priests elected for the purpose of the approaching kingdom) with eldership;

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and became a *distinct order* unrecognized by the scriptures, by which they are repudiated as “reprobate concerning the faith”. This order of men, as I have already stated elsewhere, had the presumption to style themselves *God’s heritage*, or “clergy”; as though He had a delight in them above all other professors! But with all their praying and preaching, and profession, neither they nor their successors love the Lord; for they *do not obey* Him: and He has made obedience the test of love, as it is written, “Love is the fulfilling of the law”. They corrupted, and perpetuate the perversions of the faith from age to age; therefore, says the scripture, “Let them be accursed when the Lord comes”

By the ministerial influence of this order of men multitudes departed from the faith; and by their accession to municipal and state authority, they were enabled to give political existence to the apostasy they had consummated. It is unnecessary to narrate the history of their evil deeds from the beginning to the present time. It would require volumes to do justice to their ignorance, hypocrisy, and crime. As ecclesiastical policemen they have kept the world in order for the advantage and behoof of the oppressors and destroyers of the earth; and have used the people for their own profit under pretence of “curing their souls”.

But while this is undeniably true of the order, I am free to admit that there have been, and no doubt are, many sincere, honest, and moral men, who bear the names of “clergyman” and “minister”:—many, who conscientiously believe their theories to be the true sense of scripture; and who would suffer the loss of all things, and life itself, rather than surrender what they believe to be the truth. There have been many such; and may still be, should occasion arise to necessitate their manifestation. These are men who are in advance of the systems by which they have been created “clergymen”, and “ministers”. Their position is an unhappy one. System has made them; and they conscientiously support and perpetuate the system, having been indoctrinated by their predecessors into the belief that the system is the religion of God! But I have hope that if this book fall into the hands of this respectable class of professors, it may be instrumental in opening their eyes to see the deception practised upon them by the traditions of their fathers.

Sincerity, honesty, piety, and morality, are good qualities without which no man can be saved. I admit they have all these. But they should remember that Cornelius was as estimable a man as they; and had the advantage of them in this, that his character was attested of God by the mouth of a special messenger from heaven; whereas they have no attestation beyond what is purely human. Now piety and God fearing did not save Cornelius: they only commended him to God’s remembrance. It was necessary for him to believe words, and to be baptized in the name of the Lord, as I have already shown. These words were the gospel of the kingdom of God and His Christ. This necessity has never been abrogated. It is in full force to this day. Clergy and ministers do not believe it. Much of it they sneer at as “the millennial *hypothesis*“. If they would attain to the kingdom of God, they must believe the doctrine concerning it. Martyrdom for opinion’s sake is no substitute for “the obedience of faith”. It is self-deception to say that God is with us to the end of the world, when we neither understand, nor believe and obey, the truth.

Lastly, the clergy and ministers of the age, being utterly ignorant of the gospel of the kingdom, are plainly not the persons referred to in the commission. The Lord is not “*with them*”; and without his co-operation, were they as enlightened and faithful as the apostles themselves, they could do nothing. They point to what *is done* among the heathen in proof of his being “with them”. But, there is nothing done there as it ought to be done; or, as things were done when the Lord worked with the apostles. Their missionary societies are but so many institutions for the intellectual, moral, and social training of the heathen in the civilization of European and American religionists. They make Protestants and

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Catholics of the natives; but beyond this they cannot go. They may extend the civilization of Japheth into the tents of Shem, and compel Ham to be their servant; but to beget them in Christ Jesus *through the gospel*, and so to induct them into the heirship of the kingdom of God, is a thing they could as soon accomplish as to still the raging of the sea. If by their labours they were to make all the earth like England and America, it would still need to be converted to the religion of Christ.

Ecclesiastics have done all they are able to do in “civilized” communities. They are powerless for progress among these; and men of naturally strong minds are either indifferent to their ministrations, or have repudiated them altogether. They lack one thing, namely, the knowledge of “the truth as it is in Jesus”. In default of this they occupy the minds of the people with foreign enterprises, benevolent institutions, public meetings, platform and pulpit oratory, fancy fairs, and all sorts of devices to raise the wind to keep the machine in motion. But all will not do. The people begin to flag. The masses take no interest in their preaching. Their churches are cold, formal, and deathlike. Their “spirituality” is gone; and, unless the Lord come to raise the dead, both priests and people will be beyond the reach of cure.

Apostolic succession, then, especially through such a channel, is a mere figment of the carnal mind. The only succession of which any scriptural idea can be formed is, the following in the steps of the apostles’ faith; which no one who understands the word of the kingdom would affirm of the ecclesiastical guides of the people. The power and authority of the apostles died with them. Those *who succeed to their faith* are their successors only in this sense. Their word, which is also the Lord’s word, dwells in such richly in all wisdom; and where the word of the Lord is found, there, by the belief of it, he dwells in the hearts of men. When they work according to this word, they and the Lord work together. But this is not peculiar to a ministerial class, but is common to all the Lord’s people, for he is no respecter of persons. A successor to the faith of the apostles delights to feel that he is a layman; that he is one of the Hock; and of the best of the sheep it contains, because his sole anxiety is to know and obey the great shepherd’s voice. He is not a wolf, nor a dog, rending and devouring the Hock, and investing himself with its wool; but one who would be the servant of the least, that he may be exalted to an unfading crown of glory, when the good shepherd shall appear to give life to all his sheep for evermore.