

SB
535.
1961 e
LaP812

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

117

18/1/98

Sermon preached by MrJ K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 12 June 1932

LUKE 17 v 20/21

"And when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you".

Fifty One years ago today in the morning service for the first time I occupied the pulpit here; this was my text. I remember it today and some of the things that then were said are in my memory, and the power of God was present to heal some, and what was felt and expressed was, there was then a shower of blessings. Fifty years have wrought great changes in the nations of the world and in the visible churches of Christ, not for the better. The old people to whom I came are passed away; I am living longer than I expected to do and have seen vast changes. Excepting those who then were children here - some of whom are now grandparents - the whole of that congregation I have buried and now here we are, and we are before God and I would like to bring you to this point, or bring this point before you, what this kingdom is; how it comes; what are some of its signs.

Today modernism prevails in the so-called Christendom. In my youth I distinctly remember what was then known as German neology nibbling at the Scriptures; then came the higher criticism which has invaded the land, the colleges, the churches, the schools, and the children, the young people in the schools hear the Bible ridiculed, are told that it is not inspired, and God's Name is dishonoured. Their young ears, unaccustomed in their homes perhaps to such dreadful sounds, receive them and their impressionable minds are affected and the religion of parents and grandparents, godly people, is more or less despised. Nothing can keep us from infidelity but God's grace. And the like condition of the mind, though very different in the circumstances, prevailed in the days of Christ on

earth. The Jews were returned from their 70 years captivity. They never returned to the base idolatries which sent them into captivity, but they became a formal, religious nation; they were looking for a kingdom, promised as they thought, a king who should come and deliver them from the yoke of the Romans. There was a general expectation of Christ's coming at that time and they expected Him to be the king they were looking for and when He came, a poor Man, a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness, without prowess, without great following, they despised Him. They were always seeking to ensnare Him by their temptations or contradicting Him when He spoke the truth or attributing His miracles to the devil. They were surprised at His teaching; they said: This is the carpenter's son; whence hath this man His letters? Are we better naturally? Notionally and by profession are we better? They were asking Christ here - whether in a way of temptation or ridicule, we must leave - they demanded that He should tell them about the Kingdom they were looking for, when it should come, and His answer is very solemn, very searching, and of a nature to make every child of God look within. Is that Kingdom, here spoken of, in my soul?

It cometh not with observation. Then how does it come? I remember that the first utterance, when I had read my text, 51 years ago, was this. Then how does it come? I repeat that question, now how does it come? If nobody can see it, how does it come? A kingdom means authority; there is a king. A kingdom means subjects. How does the kingdom of God come? The answer is this, in the first place; it comes by regeneration. Christ told Nicodemus that "Ye must be born again". That new birth changes the inward character and, in every case where it is necessary, the outward conduct of the subject of it. It gives new eyes to see God as He never was seen before; new ears to hear the Scriptures as they were never heard before; new sensations about God which never were before felt and new feelings about self and sin. God is seen to be holy; self is seen to be sinful. How can these two dwell together? This kingdom, thus secretly set up, bears sway, rules the heart, the thoughts, the views, the mind, the feeling, the understanding, the will and the affections. There is no human power can break this kingdom up. It answers to Daniel's word, a stone cut out of the mountain without hands grows and fills the earth. This kingdom grows and fills the soul and very very solemn it is. It comes

so secretly, so solemnly, and with such authority, that though the person may not know it is God's work for some time, yet he does know this, that whereas he was blind, now he sees. He was blind to God, now he sees Him; he was blind to his obligations to God, now he perceives them; he was blind to God's claims on him, now he feels them; he was blind to his sin bought mortality, now he knows it; he was blind to eternal realities, now he perceives them; and that is what every child of God, born of the Spirit, has some experience of. He may seek to rid himself of the gloom that settles on his mind, but he cannot. He may seek to get rid of many of his feelings, but they prevail. God is with him, though he knows it not to his comfort. The authority of divine life in the soul is indisputable, and though sin and the devil dispute it, there it is. "The kingdom of God is within you". It is not in word only but also in power.

Well dear friends, face this; God help us to face this beginning. The second thing that comes without observation and enters the conscience with authority is the convincing power of God's holy law and a very solemn thing that is. You will remember it who have had it, slowly though perhaps it came; it took hold of you; you were charged with owing God a debt and could not get rid of the feeling of it. You were charged with departing from God and you could not deny that charge. You were charged with enmity to Him and could not say you loved Him. And this conviction spread itself; perhaps it began very slowly, without any remarkable word, like a stone thrown into a river whose banks are not far apart, and the rings spread and spread till they touch each bank, and you found the conviction spreading, widening, till it touched your whole being; no part sound. This is the kingdom of God.

The third thing, the beautiful ensign, among all the blessed regalia of a kingdom, is confession of sin. One of the greatest, one of the sweetest, one of the most continuing blessings of vital religion. How many of you could go with David in the Psalm I read, honestly? How many could say "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight". Well that is one wonderful mercy, a sign of God's kingdom in you. You who have it, turn not from it. This is always accompanied by prayer, for confession is a necessary part of prayer. Prayer is the approach of a sinner to the holy God, and

conviction and confession will always have this in it, that you are unworthy of His notice, unfit for His presence, and yet pray for the forgiveness of sins. "Pardon mine iniquity O Lord, for it is great". "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin". We shall never get along without prayer as long as we live if we be Christians. It is a Christian's vital breath; it is the Christian's weapon on his knees; it is the Christian's approach to the Father through the Son by the grace of the Spirit. It is the Christian's opening of his heart, making known his requests to God, seeking to have the image of God imprinted on his soul by the Holy Ghost, according to divine predestination, for the saints are predestinated to have upon them the image of God's dear Son. Prayer? Why sometimes a child of God is at it from morning till evening, perhaps with little or no interruption. Then it comes down, then it rises, but wherever it is and whenever it is, there is an approach to the Almighty God. Now an infidel thought comes, and O how soon we should fall a prey if the Spirit were not to help our infirmities in such a temptation. Now an independent feeling comes, a proud, haughty feeling; and why should we be always labouring and praying? Then comes the Spirit; then He works such a sense of need that you cannot do without praying; you must pray. Then comes the Name of the Lord and that spreads over the distressed soul: "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." That Name spreads itself over the soul - if I may speak in this way - so that it animates the feelings, it produces intense desire, it works real longing for Him. He is real; a Man in heaven real to you on earth. A Man who died for sin on earth and entered heaven with His Own blood. A Man sitting at the right hand of the throne of God interceding. A Man standing there as a High Priest interceding for all who come unto God by Him. This controls every feeling, stills all doubts about His Person and His work, gathers the affections up to Himself. His very Name is like the Name of a King sitting on the throne of your heart. His very Name has such savour in it that it is better to you than wine, than the whole world. O, this blessed Name of Jesus. "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus", and sinners, under the teaching of the Spirit, call on this Name, Jesus; mention it before the Father, plead it, urge it. This Name becomes a loved Name, a great Name. It fills the whole earth of the sinner's heart and affections; there is no room for the time being for anything else. Here is liberty, here is authority; here the

sinner turns from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for the Saviour from heaven. Men, blessed with this, say "He is the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely" Liberty from the law is seen and, being seen, is desired. The Spirit of adoption is longed for, the sealing of the Spirit is sought after, the earnest of the inheritance is sought; all things that are gracious and eternal are seen to be in Christ. That wonderful word in the Ephesians draws the soul: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ according as He has chosen us in Him from the foundation of the world, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children to Himself by Jesus Christ". And when faith gets a view of these blessings in Jesus Christ she longs to inherit them and to feel them, and in all this there is the kingdom of God. Nobody sees it coming to you. You feel it, no matter how you are occupied or where you are. When the shower must fall it does not wait for you to get out of the field. O, mercy's arms are long and they come, and mercy's smiles are like the sun shining in its brightness and power. It is a kingdom; it swallows the world up or rather takes it away, and the sinner says - happy in knowing it, joyful in feeling it - "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee". I thought for a minute or two this afternoon what a blessed thing it would be if I could fly away and be in heaven, to be where Jesus is, where there is no sin, no night, no devil, no temptation. No smiting sun, no consuming hunger and burning thirst; just to be where Jesus is.

This kingdom that comes not with observation, has certain things in it, has laws and statutes and, as we say of our king and his laws, the law reigns, the law of the king reigns; that is, has authority, Christ said "I will be thy King", and the blessed sinner says, Lord do be my King; take my heart, seal it, make it Thine. O, who is like Christ? Who can compare with Him, His beauty? How great is His goodness; how great is His beauty. And He reigns; He reigns by His gospel. The Apostle Paul to the Romans said a great word: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ". Why not? For it is the power of God unto salvation. Salvation felt, salvation enjoyed, the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, the justification of the sinner in the righteousness of Christ. The sanctification of the

sinner, Christ being made that to him. The liberty of the soul, Christ being the redemption. Wisdom to walk in God's way, Christ being made wisdom. The kingdom of God. And, as in Daniel, we are told of the stone cut out without hands that was destined to fill the earth and, in filling the earth, it, of necessity, had to overcome and destroy all other kingdoms, so, when Christ comes into the heart, other kingdoms fall before Him, and then that word by Isaiah is entered into somewhat - I have often looked at it with longing - "O LORD our God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us" Now you can say that, who fear God; I can say it; but then, go on - "They are dead". Have you ever been able to say it? - "They are dead they shall not rise"; they are extinct. That is according to the promise of God in Zechariah: "I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land." That is a wonderful prospect, more a prospect than an experience with some of us, but what a prospect, when all the idols will give way to God, He destroying them. And with this the power is very sweet. It is not naked omnipotence but it is loving authority. Love accomplishes what the rod did not; love subdues, love blesses, love makes the soul happy, love sets before the sinner the great Object of it, and the fulness of it and the sweetness of it and the continuance of it. So men sing, honestly sing - "Jesus, I love Thy charming Name". Then they enter into the Psalm again and again: My heart is bubbling, boiling, with a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Then this was the first thing that was said: "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into Thy lips". And when you get that grace poured into your lips, into your heart from the lips of Jesus Christ, it is not a thing that the world can see, except in the effect of it perhaps in your family, but it is a power, a wonderful authority, and I will keep this before you, that there is authority in the kingdom and this is authority needed. Subjects have access to their king, and the subjects of King Jesus have access to His divine Majesty and they are glad when they get it, for then they get the relief of casting their burdens on the Lord. They get the comfort of love when they perceive that He cares for them, and they get a particular request sometimes that He would cause them to hear His voice in affliction; to understand somewhat of His reason for dealing with them as He does sometimes in affliction. The subject hears the rod of the King who appoints it. He is not like Jacob in

this case - A fire burned about Jacob and Jacob knew it not. No doubt he felt the fire, but who had lighted it and why it was lighted, he seems not to have had any apprehension of. But now when you get to the throne of grace and the Spirit is your teacher, leading you to pray according to the will of God, then you are led to understand why your divine King has done this, why He has permitted that, and to pray that all trouble may be sanctified. Then you say "Thy kingdom come". A very hard petition for nature; a comprehensive petition; a very hard petition for nature for, when the kingdom of God comes against the kingdom of self, then there is a conflict, and nature has to come down. O, but what a great thing it is. The Apostle Paul had this and he said: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". All things were dung and dross to him for the sake of Christ. He willingly resigned all he had for Christ; gave up every privilege of his birth and education for Christ, and that comes into the Scripture: If a man will save his life he must lose it. If a man be My disciple he must take up his cross and follow Me. If he love father or mother, husband or wife, house or land more than Christ, he is not worthy of Him. I know it is difficult for any here to rise to such a state of experience. This great thing, self, O, how it exerts and asserts itself, but the rod of Christ by which He rules and feeds is sufficient for this. He feeds His people with His rod; He rules with His rod; He satisfies them with His rod; He comforts them with His love. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation"; it is within you, within your soul. And now, though self and the world and the devil dispute every step you take in this blessed kingdom, this is true: You are no longer "strangers and foreigners" to the kingdom "but fellowcitizens with the saints and of the household of God". The world cannot find the way to this kingdom; you do not know this way - I wish you did - those of you who are dead in trespasses and sins. The way to this kingdom is a narrow way, a path that no fowl knoweth, which the vulture's eye hath not seen, but it is a way that the Holy Spirit has cast up to faith and faith says, this is the way the prophets went; this is the way the Lord Jesus cast up; this is the way of tribulation that leads to peace and comfort and heaven and the Lord Himself went through this way of trouble and of death; and faith says

His track I see, and I'll pursue
The narrow way till Him I view

Is this before you? By moments it is before me. O, the day will soon come when some of us will leave this world and wing our way into that blessed place Jesus has prepared; He has promised it to some of us. A good many years ago He promised it to me; He told me that where He is, I shall be. What a happy persuasion; it is part of the joy of the Lord to have a word from Jesus Christ that He looks on you, will take care of you, will guide you with His counsel and afterward receive you to glory. And this is within you. O happy man who has this kingdom of God in him. But if it does not come with observation, it is not always secret. No, when Peter and John were dragged before the Pharisees and the Sadducees and they threatened them and told them they were not to teach in that Name again, what did they say? We cannot but speak the things we have heard and seen. And what was said of these men? Why, their enemies took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus and learned of Him. You cannot live as you used to do; you cannot speak as you always spoke; you are not able to enjoy what formerly was a sort of life and peace to you; you are separated. As to speech, this is said, "I will turn to the people a pure language", a pure lip. They speak the language of Canaan; the teaching of the Spirit in their hearts makes them wise unto salvation. "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth and addeth learning to his lips". He speaks of the things he has heard, of the things he has seen. He has heard the gospel and he speaks of it; he has heard Jesus Christ speaking and he speaks of it. Well, may God make this kingdom distinct in our hearts, more and more distinct; that, although we may not have remarkable revelations - these are very much withdrawn today - we may say, we got a whisper of love; we heard a kind invitation to us to come to the throne of grace and we felt the power of some truth upon our souls. Mark Christ's coming; mark His going; mark the inward sense of peace that comes sometimes. Mark it; you will see the source of it, even God in Christ, and you will find this, that that divine kingdom in your souls is the kingdom of God that shall never be taken away from you; the kingdom shall never be taken away. It is called an everlasting kingdom because God is the author, the King, of it, and because He will have His subjects to be where He is. Now dear brethren, in whom this kingdom is, what shall I say? Go down on your knees and bless God for giving it to you, for putting it in your souls. And what shall I say to those who have it not? I will say this - you do not know the perilous condition you are in; you do not know

how soon your soul will be required by God, and if you enter His presence in the nakedness of sin, under the burden of guilt, and under the terms of a broken law, there is nothing for you but everlasting punishment, banishment from the presence of God's glory.

AMEN.