

GOD'S KINGDOM

THE only hope of suffering humanity the perfect Kingdom of God. All through the chequered history of world empire, never had there existed any system of government that satisfied the needs of mankind. But because God's Kingdom has the answer to all human problems and woes it is rightly designated in the Scriptures as "the desire of all nation".

Not many people have an accurate knowledge of what the Kingdom of God is. To some who professed to be Christians, it means going to heaven to enjoy eternal bliss; others regard it as a good living or a life of pleasure in this world; and yet some others say that God's Kingdom is in one's "belly" when one does not allow evil to rule one's heart.

The word kingdom is intelligibly defined in The Concise Oxford Dictionary as a "territory subject to king". Thus God's Kingdom is the universal empire or government of righteousness and peace covering both heaven and earth to be inhabited by spirit persons and human beings, under the control of Jehovah, the Almighty God, "Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15). This is the form of government known as Theocracy. It does not make sense, therefore, to think of God's Kingdom as a state of condition or as something which the human belly can accommodate!

God has long promised through His prophets to establish His Kingdom wherein His faithful worshippers of all ages will be blessed with eternal life in perfect peace and happiness. The history of the world is dotted with the rise and fall of government but God's Kingdom is one that knows no decline or decay – it is an everlasting perfect government. In glory and majesty, and all that answers to righteousness, it excels all others.

King David, in one of his famous songs, declared: "All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." – Psalm 145:10-13.

The importance of God's Kingdom cannot be over-emphasised. It was the message of hope and salvation that Jesus Christ brought to this world. At the very beginning of his ministry on earth, he proclaimed: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17) Later on, he taught his disciples to pray to our Heavenly Father:

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." – Matthew 6:9,10.

Jesus Christ further showed the paramount importance of the Kingdom when said: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things (that is, our needs) shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33.

What is more, Christ particularly instructed that the good tidings of God's Government, which, he very well knew, would bring comfort to the poor and relief to the broken-hearted, should be proclaimed throughout the world. Said he: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." – Matthew 24:14

Head and King

The Holy Bible clearly shows that God Almighty has appointed and crowned Jesus Christ as the head and king of His glorious Government. Concerning him, Isaiah prophesied: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end..."(Isaiah 9:6,7) He further said: "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." – Isaiah 32:1.

The coronation of Jesus Christ, ever before it took place in heaven, was long, long ago revealed to Daniel the prophet in a vision. He stated: "And there was given him (Christ) dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." – Daniel 7:13,14.

Jesus Christ himself testified to his kingship before Pontius Pilate during his mission on earth. He said: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." And when Pilate asked him, whether he was a king, he answered positively: "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth..." – John 18:36,37.

Referring to Jesus Christ who should rule righteously in God's Kingdom St Paul said, quoting the Psalms, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Hebrews 1:9; Psalm 45:7.

The Capital

The capital of God's Kingdom is Mount Zion in heaven. It is the seat of Christ the King about whom God said: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." (Psalm 2:6) With Jesus Christ in heaven, apart from the holy angels, are those who constitute his cabinet. These are the anointed Christians, the saints, numbering 144,000 chosen from among men on earth beginning from the twelve apostles. They make up the "Little Flock" as distinct from other countless disciples who are the "Other Sheep". (Luke 12:32; John 10:16)

The revelation of Jesus Christ to his apostle in a vision concerning himself and his cabinet gives no room for doubt. St John wrote: "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb (that is, Christ – John 1:29) stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads...These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins (that is, in the sense of spiritual purity). These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." – Revelation 14:1-5.

It is an indisputable fact of the Scriptures that the saints (not canonized, man-made saints) are made kings and priest under Christ to reign with him in his Kingdom. (Luke 22:28-30;

Revelation 1:6; 5:10). This honour is given them by a special grace of God. Everyone of them, by reason of his calling and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, is a leader or shepherd who must devote his life wholly and solely to the service of Christ in preaching the gospel of the kingdom, as the early apostles did, in order to win souls to him. – Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 16:15-20.

Kingdom on Earth

We must at this junction state with all emphasis that it is not the 144,000 anointed Christians alone that will be saved as some erroneously think. There are countless numbers of others – men and women – who would be saved. But the point is that their place in God's Kingdom is not heaven but the earth made glorious – a paradise wherein abounds perpetual happiness for the saved ones. – Psalm 37:10-11,22; 2 Peter 3:13.

If only people understand the Lord's Prayer, there would be no scramble by almost everyone for heaven. Christ taught his disciples to pray for the kingdom to come so that God's will might be done on earth as in heaven. If these people have the understanding of, and faith in this prayer why do they want to go to heaven and not wish to be in the kingdom on earth? And if all the good will go to heaven as some preachers are teaching, who be on the earth to do the Lord's will when the kingdom comes?

However, the question as to when the Kingdom would come or whether it has come or not, will be treated in due course.

Jesus Christ did not say that all the righteous would be in heaven. Rather he said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." – Matthew 5:5; see also Proverbs 2:21,22.

It is great a privilege and blessing for one to be favoured to be in God's Kingdom on earth, which is described as "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down (to EARTH) from God out of heaven." – Revelation 21:1,2.

All the holy men and women of old before Christ as well as the dead faithful Christians who were not in the class of the "Little Flock" will be raised to life at the resurrection of the dead to become heirs of and great rulers in God's Kingdom on earth. – Job 19:25; Isaiah 32:1; Matthew 8:11,12; Luke 14:13,14; Hebrews 11:32-40.

The Bible gives the understanding that the final end of this evil world will be marked by the greatest tribulation and conflict that the world has ever known – "the battle of the great day of God Almighty". "For then shall be great tribulation", said Jesus Christ, "such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matthew 24:21) It is during this battle that the Devil and all his invisible and visible followers – the demons and the willfully wicked persons – will be destroyed by God through Jesus Christ and his holy army. – Daniel 12:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 20:1-3.

According to the Bible, there will be a "great multitude" of faithful Christians whom no man could number that will survive the battle of the Lord and enter the third world – The World Without End. – Daniel 12:1; John 8:51; Revelation 7:9, 10, 13-15.

The Millennium which is the reign of Jesus Christ for a thousand years, will begin after the battle of the great day. (Revelation 20:4,6) It at this time that there will be a general resurrection of the just and unjust. While the just will be rewarded with everlasting life in the bliss of paradise on earth, the unjust, who either did not serve God before their death or worshipped Him but not in truth, will be punished according to their sins. (Daniel 12:1-3; John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15; Hebrews 9:27) Period of punishment for each of them will be one hundred years. (Isaiah 65:20; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5,6) This serves as a second chance for them to know God, show their obedience and subjection to Him and Christ; and it all bespeaks the justice and mercy of God. Any of them who proves obedient will at the end of the 100 years be given eternal life but the disobedient ones will be sentence to the "second death", which means everlasting destruction. – Isaiah 65:20; Revelation 20:12-15; 21:8.

The millennium is also a period of reconstruction when all the vestiges of the old world will be removed and the earth rebuilt into a paradise like the beautiful garden of Eden. (Isaiah 60:13; Ezekiel 36:33-38) When the work of reconstruction shall have been completed at the end of the 1000 years, then Jesus Christ will, as a faithful Son, handover the entire Kingdom to his Father, Jehovah, that, in the language of St Paul, "God may be all in all." – 1 Corinthians 15:24-28.

The New World

It is this glorious Kingdom that is the New World God promised His faithful worshippers. The beauties of it cannot be described enough in human words. There shall be no oppression, injustice, bribery and corruption or any form of unrighteousness. Even among the beast there shall be peace and harmony; "the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid" and so forth. Yes, there shall be peace, joy and concord everywhere! – Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:17-25.

These wonderful facts of the Scriptures have been described as "the hidden wisdom" which the rulers and intellectual of the world do not know. (1 Corinthians 2:7,8) The reward of the righteous will be great. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Said St Paul. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." – 1 Corinthians 2:9,10.

St Peter spoke of God's Kingdom as the "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness". (2 Peter 3:13) And St John who saw a vision of the New World, described it thus "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea (that is, wickedness in a spiritual parable). And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband...And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things (in the present evil world) are passed away..." – Revelation 21:1-5

With the understanding of the foregoing, no one who is spiritually inclined will fail to appreciate while the faithful have always served God in truth and laboured assiduously as to

prove worthy of the New World, or while Christ asked his disciples to pray for the Kingdom to come. – Matthew 6:9,10; John 4:23,24; 8:31-32,36.

That God's perfect Kingdom is immovable and that it the only hope of distressed humanity is beyond all doubt. We therefore remind all Christians of St Paul exhortation, to wit:

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." – Hebrews 12:28