

THE FUTURE KINGDOM

Evan A. Fry, Radio Minister
 Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ
 of Latter Day Saints
 Independence, Missouri

Sunday, March 14, 1954
 8:30 a.m. KQBC & KFRM
 Kansas City, Missouri
 All Rights Reserved

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 25:31-36.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on left. Then shall the King say, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Verily I say unto you, There be come stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

Last Sunday at this hour we discussed the Present Kingdom. The kingdom in one of its aspects, or modes, we said, is here now, is available now, may be realized now; for the kingdom of God is an everlasting kingdom, a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world.

Another aspect of the kingdom is the future kingdom. Some aspects of the kingdom must await the day when wickedness and rebellion against God shall have been cleansed from the earth, and the triumphant kingdom remains to rule over all.

During his ministry Jesus told many parable concerning the kingdom. All of them were told in the present tense: "The kingdom of God is like unto" As he came near the close of his ministry, however, Jesus knew that the disciples were soon to be faced with the seeming frustration and disappointment of his death, and soon after that with persecution and suffering which would obscure their vision of the present kingdom. To prepare them for these events, Jesus forewarned them of impending judgments upon Jerusalem; he foretold the events that would signify the nearness of his second coming; and then he dwelt at some length on an explanation of the future kingdom.

In the 24th chapter of Matthew Jesus foretells the destruction of Jerusalem which took place in 70 A.D. according to prophecy; then continues with the signs of his coming and the end of the world. He tells the disciples that no man knows the day or the hour of that coming; and counsels them to be ready for it whenever it comes, to live as if it were always imminent. He tells the parable of the faithful and wise servant who lived in constant expectation of his Lord's return, and who was rewarded by being made ruler over all his goods. He tells also the story of the wicked servant who took advantage of the Lord's absence to beat and abuse and rob his fellow-servants, and who was surprised and banished or cut off from the kingdom upon the Lord's return.

The 25th chapter of Matthew then opens with the verse, "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." The kingdom which had existed before, the present kingdom, the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, then, in the day of Christ's second coming, would be like ten virgins, five who were ready for the bridegroom's coming and five who were not.

The parable of the ten virgins is followed by the parable of the talents -- another word picture of the accountability which shall be required on the day of judgment, and of the final and everlasting division between those who are worthy to enter the final triumphant and perfected kingdom, and those who must remain in outer darkness because of their lifetime of rebellion against the King. Then there follows in the same chapter another account of the division in the day of judgment, when all nations shall be divided as a shepherd divides his sheep from his goats; when the King shall say,

"Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," or "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

This is an accurate picture of the situation both now, and in the future. Some men are willing, obedient, profitable, faithful servants of the King and citizens of his kingdom now. They are wise and faithful servants, living according to the laws of his kingdom. When the kingdom is complete and perfected, they will enter into the joys of their Lord, and receive of those larger blessings which their good stewardship on earth has made them fully able to use and to enjoy. Other men are careless, rebellious, slothful, lustful, gluttonous, oppressive to their fellow servants, ignoring their need of food and drink and clothing and companionship. What right have men who ignore the present kingdom, disobey its laws, rebel against its King, and smite those who are trying to be good citizens, to expect a place in the final, perfected kingdom? Their portion, by their own choice, is to be cast into outer darkness, where their wickedness and rebellion cannot mar the perfection of the eternal kingdom.

When the Bridegroom's cry sounds forth, it will be too late for the foolish virgins of the kingdom to go forth and buy oil for their lamps. When the Lord returns to receive the accounting from his servants for the goods and monies and talents entrusted to their care in the present kingdom, it will be too late to dig up the one talent that was buried in the ground and make it bring forth an increase. After the King comes, it will be too late to recognize the needs of the other citizens of the kingdom -- too late to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to take in the stranger, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick and the prisoner. "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

Until this day of final judgment, the kingdom will necessarily be harrassed by wicked both within and without. Wheat and tares shall grow up together. The net gathers of all kinds. But before the kingdom can be completed, perfected, and sanctified, the rebellious, wicked, careless, and indifferent must be removed from the scene, so that God's will may be done perfectly and universally throughout his kingdom.

Scriptural writers make frequent mention of this aspect of the kingdom. It was this future aspect of the kingdom which Jesus was referring to when he said over the cup at the last supper: "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." It was this future kingdom of which Jesus spoke when he said, "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death until they see the kingdom of God." It was about this kingdom into which all the righteous shall some day be gathered, that Jesus was speaking when he said: "They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." It was this kingdom which the thief on the cross looked forward to when he recognized Jesus as King of the Jews, and asked, "Lord, remember me when thou cometh into thy kingdom."

It was this kingdom of which Paul was speaking when he said, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom of God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, until he hath put all enemies under his feet." It was this kingdom of which Peter spoke when he said, "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

We are dwelling now in one aspect of the kingdom. We are living in the King's territory, subject to his laws. If we accept him as King and obey his laws even though he is absent in person, we shall be considered worthy to have a part in his everlasting, glorious, sanctified, future kingdom, when all things which offend are cast out, and only those remain who are faithful and wise servants, loyal, diligent, obedient citizens, devoted to their Lord and to each other. For the coming of this future kingdom, and for the day when God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven, we continue to hope, to watch, and to pray.