

Article 2**The First Dominion : The Purchased Possession**

Redemption means to buy back. And what is to be bought back? Evidently that which was lost; for that is what the Lord came to save. And what was lost? Man, for one thing; “for thus saith the Lord, ye have sold yourselves for naught; and ye shall be redeemed without money.” Isaiah 52.3. What else was lost? Necessarily all that man had. And what was that?

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” Genesis 1.26-28

The Psalmist says of men: “Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.” Psalms 8.5-8

This was man’s original dominion, but it was not retained. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have these words of the Psalmist: —

“For not unto angels did He [God] subject the world to come, whereof we speak. But one hath somewhere testified, saying, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower [or, “for a little while lower”] than the angels; thou crowned him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands. Thou put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He subjected all things unto him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we see not yet all things subjected to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower [for, “for a little while lower”] than the angels, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor; that by the grace of God, He should taste death for every man.” Hebrews 2.5-9, R.V.

A wonderful picture is in these words opened to our view. God has put the earth, and all that pertains to it, under the rule of man. But that is not the case now. “We see not yet all things put under him.” Why? Because man lost everything by the fall. But we see that Jesus, who was made “lower than the angels,” that is, was made man, so that all who will believe may be restored to the lost inheritance. So that just as surely as Jesus died and rose again, and just as surely as by His death and resurrection those who believe in Him shall be saved, so surely will the lost inheritance be restored to those who are redeemed.

This is indicated in the first words of the passage quoted from the Book of Hebrews: "Unto the angels had He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." Well, has He put the world to come in subjection to man? Yes; for when the earth was created He put it in subjection to man, and Christ has taken man's fallen state in order to redeem both him and his lost possession, for He came to save that which is lost; and since in Him we have obtained an inheritance it is clear that in Christ we have in subjection the world to come, which is nothing less than the earth renewed as it was before the fall.

This is shown also by the words of Isaiah: "They shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols. But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited; I am the Lord; and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain; I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right." Isaiah 45.16-19

The Lord formed the earth to be inhabited, and since He works all things after the counsel of His own will, it is certain that His design will be carried out. But when He had made the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, and man upon the earth, He "saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." Genesis 1.31. Then since God's plan is to be carried out, it is evident that the earth is yet to be inhabited by people who are very good, and that it is to be at that time in a perfect condition.

When God made man, He "crowned him with glory and honor," and gave him "dominion over the works of His hands." He was therefore king, and as his crown indicates, his kingdom was one of glory. By sin he lost the kingdom and the glory, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3.23. Then Jesus stepped into his place, and through death, which He tasted for every man; He became "crowned with glory and honour." It is *the man Christ Jesus*, (1 Timothy 2.5) who has thus won back the dominion that the first man Adam lost. He did this in order that He might bring many sons to glory. In Him we have obtained an inheritance; and since it is "the man Christ Jesus" who is now "in the presence of God for us," it is plain that the world to come, of which is the new earth,—"the first dominion,"—is still man's portion.

The following text also makes this clear: "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Hebrews 9.28. When He was offered He bore the curse, in order that the curse might be removed. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Galatians 3.13. But when the curse of sin came upon man, it came also upon the earth; for the Lord said to Adam: "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the

ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee." Genesis 3.17,18. When Christ had been betrayed into the hands of sinful men, "when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put upon His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head." Thus when Christ bore the curse that came on man; He at the same time bore the curse of the earth. So when He comes to save those who have accepted His sacrifice, He comes to renew the earth as well.

THE TIME OF RESTITUTION

Therefore it is that the Apostle Peter said: "And He shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, *which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.*" Acts 3.21. And so we have the words of Christ: "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 divides His sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25.31-34. This will be the consummation of the work of the Gospel.

Now let us return to the words of the apostle in Ephesians 1. There we learned that in Christ we are predestinated to the adoption of sons; and as we learned in another place, if we are sons we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. Therefore it is that in Christ we have obtained an inheritance, for He has gained the victory, and is set down at the right hand of the Father, awaiting the time when His foes shall be made His footstool, and all things be put in subjection under Him. This is as sure as that He overcame. As the pledge of this inheritance, which we have in Him, He has given the Holy Spirit. It is of the nature of the inheritance, and therefore makes known what is the riches of His glory of the inheritance. In other words, the fellowship of the Spirit makes known the fellowship of the mystery.

The Spirit is the representative of Christ. Therefore the Spirit dwelling in men is Christ in men the hope of glory. And Christ in men is creative power in men, creating them new creatures. The Spirit is given "according to the riches of His glory," and that is the measure of the power by which we are to be strengthened. So the riches of the glory of the inheritance, made known through the Spirit, is nothing less than the power by which God will create all things new by Jesus Christ, as in the beginning, and by which He will create man anew, so that he may be fitted for that glorious inheritance. Thus it is that when the Spirit is given in the fullest measure, those to whom it is given taste "the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." Hebrews 6.5

So the Gospel does not deal exclusively in the future. It is present and personal. It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, or that is believing. While we believe we have the

power, and that power is the power by which the world to come is to be made ready for us, even as it was made in the beginning. Therefore in studying the promise of the inheritance we are simply studying the power of the Gospel to save us in this present evil world.

WHO ARE HEIRS?

“And if ye are Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”
Galatians 3.29

Of what are we heirs if we are Abraham’s seed? Why, evidently of the promise to Abraham. If we are Christ’s, then we are heirs with Him, for they are Christ’s who have the Spirit, and they who have the Spirit are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. So to be a joint-heir with Christ is to be an heir of Abraham.”

Heirs according to the promise. “What promise? The promise made to Abraham. And what was that promise? Read Romans 4.13, for an answer: “For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.” So then, they who are Christ’s are heirs of the world. We have already learned this from many texts, but now we see it connected definitely with the promise to Abraham.

We have also learned that the inheritance is to be bestowed at the coming of the Lord, for it is when the Lord comes in His glory that He says to the righteous, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” When the world was created it was designed for the habitation of man, and was given to him. But that dominion was lost. True, men now live on the earth, but they do not enjoy the inheritance that God originally gave to men. That was the possession of a perfect creation by perfect beings. Nay, they do not even possess it; for “one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever.” Ecclesiastes 1.4. While the earth abideth for ever, “Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.” 1 Chronicles 29.15. No one really possesses anything of this world. Men labor and fight to amass wealth, and then they “perish, and leave their wealth to others.” Psalms 49.10. But God works all things after the counsel of His own will; not one of His purposes will fail; and so as soon as man had sinned and lost his inheritance, a restoration was promised through Christ, in these words: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between by seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Genesis 3.15. In these words the destruction of Satan and all his work was foretold. The “great salvation” “at the first began to be spoken by the Lord.” Thus “the first dominion” (Micah 4.8), even “the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.” Daniel 7.27. That will be real possession, for it will be everlasting.

THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING

But all this is to be consummated at the coming of the Lord in glory, “Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy

prophets since the world began.” Acts 3.21. Therefore the coming of the Lord to restore all things has been the grand hope set before the church ever since the fall of man. The faithful have always looked forward to that event, and although the time has seemed long, and the majority of people doubt the promise, it is as sure as the word of the Lord. The promise, the doubts of the unbelieving, and the certainties of the fulfillment of the promise are vividly set forth in the following portion of Scripture: —

“This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance; that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour; knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water [compacted out of water and amidst water, R.V.]; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished; but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” 2 Peter 3.1-13

Now read the passage again, and note the following points: Those who scoff at the promise of the coming of the Lord are *willingly ignorant of* some of the plainest and most important events recorded in the Bible, namely *the creation and the flood*. The word of the Lord created the heavens and the earth in the beginning. “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.” Psalms 33.6. By the same word the earth was covered with water, the water with which the earth was stored being made to contribute to its destruction. By the flood the earth “perished;” the earth in its present condition bears scarcely any resemblance to that which existed before the flood. By the same word by which the earth was created and destroyed, the earth, which is now, is kept until the time of the perdition of ungodly men, when a lake of fire instead of a flood of water will overwhelm it. “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” The same word accomplishes it all.

THE GRAND CLIMAX

To us it appears that the coming of the Lord has been the one grand event toward which everything has been tending ever since the fall. The “promise of His coming” is the same as the promise of a new heavens and a new earth. This was the promise to the “fathers.” Those who scoff at it cannot deny that the Bible contains the promise, but as no change has appeared since the fathers fell asleep, they think that there is no probability of its fulfillment. They ignore the fact that things have changed much since the beginning of creation; and they have forgot that the word of the Lord endureth forever. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise.” Notice that it is the singular, not the plural form of the word. It is not *promises*, but *promise*. It is a fact that the Lord does not forget any of His promises, but the apostle Peter is here speaking of a definite promise, namely, the promise of the coming of the Lord, and the restoration of the earth. It will be a “new earth” in very fact, because it will be restored to the condition in which it was when it was first made.

Now although it has been a long time, as man counts, since the promise was made, “the Lord is not slack concerning His promise,” because He has all time for His own. A thousand years are with Him as one day. So then it has been scarcely a week since the promise was first made, at the time of the fall. Only about half a week has elapsed since the “fathers fell asleep.” The passage of a few thousand years does not abate one jot of the promise of God. It is as sure as when it was first made. He has not forgotten. The only reason why He has delayed thus long, is that “He is long-suffering to usward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” So we should “account that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation,” and should gratefully accept the kindness thus graciously offered, instead of taking His merciful delay as an evidence of lack of good faith on His part.

It should not be forgotten that while a thousand years is with Lord as one day, one day is with Him also as a thousand years. What does that mean? Simply that while the Lord may wait a long time as man counts, before carrying out His plans, that should not be taken as evidence at any stage that to do a given amount of work will necessarily take as great a length of time as has been taken for the same amount of work in the past. One day is just as good as a thousand years with the Lord, whenever He chooses to have the work of a thousand years done in a single day. And this will yet be seen. “For He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness; because a short work will the Lord make in the earth.” One day will suffice for the work of a thousand years. The day of Pentecost was but a sample of the power with which the work of the Gospel is yet to go.

And now that we have had this summary of what the Gospel of the kingdom really is, and have been referred to the promise to the fathers as the foundation for our faith, we may next take up the study of that promise, beginning with Abraham, whose children we must be if we are to be heirs with Christ.