Daniel 2:34-35 (Jane J. Leake) 131674

Clay and Stone: Babylon the Great and the New Jerusalem, Chapter 7: The Kingdom of Stone (2:34-35)

“Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.... And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."— Dan. 2:34,35.

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth." Luke 11:2.

“THY kingdom come." In the splendid cathedral the words are intoned; in the old parish church, gray with the storms of centuries, the words are oft repeated. The old man bows his silvered head and murmurs them as his father murmured them before him, and his father's father, and many a bygone generation. The aged woman whispers them, as in her childhood she whispered them beside her mother's knee. The little child lisps them, with wandering eye and smiling lips, beside its bed. Thousands of times a day the "Pater Noster" rises from those who know less of the words they utter than the infant who prattles them forth as its first lesson in prayer.

How many ever pause to think what that solemn prayer does mean? It means that Christ is coming to reign over the world, as Satan rules now; that the kingdom pictured by the great stone in Nebuchadnezzar's vision will be set up, and will fill the whole earth. Christ will come suddenly, and the earth will be swept with judgment, and cleared of all man's independence and lawlessness. Satan, who is now the usurper, will be dethroned and cast into the lake of fire. People too often think that the world is getting better, but that is Satan's deception. The kingdom is at present like the spiritual Temple, unseen to the natural eye. Every living stone that is quarried from the grave of Christ forms part of it. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation" or outward show, said our Lord. "The kingdom of God is within you.”

We were talking about the meaning of that word "moral." The kingdom of God is a moral force; it is set up by the Holy Spirit over the minds and hearts and bodies of believers. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:3-5). Said our Lord, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." "How can these things be?" cried the astonished ruler. He knew not that clay and stone could have nothing in common. He knew not that the ancient scriptures cried, "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged" (Isa. 51:1). He knew not the lowly door of death typified by the water, or the wondrous resurrection life, brought in by the power of the Spirit. He could not, with all his learning, see unseen things. He could understand an outward ritual of meats and drinks and washings, the observing of days and weeks and months; but he could not grasp the fact that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17).

And how did we who are true believers find that strait gate and narrow way into that blessed but unseen dominion? Listen; for, strange but true, no sooner is the kingdom of God in power within you, than you find you have yourself been translated! How can that have happened to us? Enoch was translated. Yes, "He walked with God, and God took him"; and every soul that has part in the death and resurrection of Christ has had a wonderful moral translation. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness"— the domain of Satan— "and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13).

Christ is in heaven now, refused by the world of which Satan is prince. And now comes the test to us. Are we going to be faithful soldiers of the absent One who is our Lord? We shall have to stand in the very midst of the enemy's city, and obey no sovereign but the world-rejected One. It will not be easy; it may cost us much suffering and loss. It has ever been so in earthly history. Those who have been true to their oaths of allegiance to the kings of this world have often had to suffer bitterly for it.

I remember, long ago, when I was still a child, my father took me to see some of the scenes of his own childhood. We drove far out into the country in Oxfordshire, and at last we reached a lonely farmhouse, where we alighted. His mind was full of his own young days, and his eyes were seeing forms and faces unknown to me, and he was hearing voices that I had never heard. I was interested in all he said, but my eyes wandered incessantly from the gray stone house to some ancient stone ruins that rose, gaunt and bare, from the rough garden around me. "What are those ruins?" I cried eagerly. "That is all that is left of the old minster," he replied; and then came the story, which has been indelibly graven on my memory.

When that ruin had been a splendid mansion, annexed, no doubt, to the minster, the last of its rightful owners had ridden to the fatal field of Worcester at the call of his rightful king. True to his oath of allegiance, he had thrown his influence, his wealth, his sword, into the service of the unhappy Charles. The battle was lost, as you know, and the usurper's dominion was established. Back to the old minster rode the last of the Lovels. He entered his house, but there he disappeared. No trace of him could ever be found. The soldiers of Cromwell came to the place, and lived there, but no one ever saw the rightful owner again. The Government seized the house and dismantled it, and all forgot the last of the Lovels and his loyalty to his deposed sovereign. But what had become of him? When that old farmhouse had been built, as the workmen toiled at its foundations the mystery was suddenly solved. They had come on a secret chamber which had lain beneath the old minster, and there they found a table with a crumbling Psalter open upon it, a chair, and the skeleton of a man lying beside it. He must have fled to that under-ground room, been forgotten by his servants, and, unable to escape, had perished in that living tomb— true to his oath, true to his king to the last.

Many and many a soldier of the Cross has been called to esteem "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt"— stoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword; destitute, afflicted, tormented; true to their deposed King; refusing the rule of the usurper, and by faith "receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved" (Heb. 12:28). If men of the world can suffer so much for a feeble, failing, earthly sovereign, shall we shrink from bearing the Cross of Christ; shall we forget that we are in His kingdom now— His unseen kingdom, which ere long He shall bring to light, and which shall fill the whole earth with righteous rule? "If we suffer we shall also reign with Him," cries the apostle;

suffering now and reigning hereafter always go together in the Scriptures. "He that overcometh, and keepeth My words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to pieces," cries the Son of God, Whose eyes are like unto a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass (Rev. 2:26, 27).

“Overcometh!" What does that mean? It means that in this day of wild confusion, of the form of godliness, and the denying of the power of it (the Holy Spirit)— this day when the rightful Sovereign of this world has been sent into "a far country"— you, young Christian, strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, stand for the absent King. Will it be easy? No; it will bring down upon you scorn and scaith and actual loss here. "Occupy till I come," cries the absent Lord; and when He comes, what then? "Because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities, or five cities," as the case may be. Do you realize that you yourself will have part in that coming kingdom— actually helping the rightful King to govern this very earth? Just in the measure in which the kingdom of God reigns within you now, so then will you reign with Christ, when that great stone, cut out without hand, crushes the kingdoms of this world to powder, and fills the whole earth. It is not my idea; you will find it everywhere in the Word of God. In all ages, in all phases of the professing Church, Christ has had His over-comers.

And now, ere we close this slight glimpse at the great Kingdom of Stone which shall come from heaven suddenly, unaided by any mortal hand, and fill the whole earth, let us all gaze at one who, like a brave soldier of Jesus Christ, faced shame and loss and death itself for "the hope that was set before him"— one who has long rested in Christ, but will surely reign with Him ere long.

Why this crowd in the streets of this capital city of France? Why this eager multitude that collects, with bated breath, before the gates of this gloomy prison? They have gathered to behold a peer of France go forth to the court of his Sovereign lord. The sun rides high over the fair city. It is exactly noon when those great gates swing open, and the procession slowly enters the streets. Six hundred bowmen surround the chariot, and on it sits Berguin, the peer of France, the man of letters, the friend of King Francis I. That chariot is a wretched tumbril; that escort guards a prisoner. For has he not fearlessly proclaimed the Gospel of his absent Lord? Is he not a valiant soldier of the Cross? Robed in a cloak of velvet, a doublet of satin and damask, and golden hose, he appears before the expectant crowd with a look of triumph on his countenance. "For am I not," says he, "to be this day presented at court—not at that of Francis, but at that of the Monarch of the Universe?”

With wonder and astonishment the crowd gazes on that man. "How bravely he is arrayed!" cries one. "He is more like one who is going to a bridal banquet than one who is going to be burned!" cries another. And yet again they whisper as they gaze upon his serene face, his calm, unruffled mien, "He is like one who sitteth in a temple and meditateth on holy things." Ah! right they are. The peer of France seated on that wretched tumbril, which slowly bears him through the crowded streets, is a living stone in a Temple that their eyes see not; yea, a worshipping priest from whose heart ascend praises to God most high censed only with the holy Name of Jesus Christ. He will mix naught in that incense of man's construction—no human name, however blessed. Those knees of his will bow to no image of wood or stone. That proud voice of his has declared, in the very center of the great Babylonish temple even then building, that there is only One Name given under heaven whereby men may be saved.

But the figure of the cross stands high upon the Temple tower? Yes. But the crucifix is on the splendid altar before which the candles burn? Yes. But the organs peal with the sacred name of Christ? Yes. Then why this scene? Why this cry of "To the fire with the heretic"? He hath found the lowly door of His Lord's grave. He hath been quarried and shaped and fitted by the great Unseen Builder for his place in the Temple of living stones. The imitation thing will not do for him. Cast out like his Lord, he who has so often ridden to the brilliant court of Francis, rideth now on that wretched tumbril to take his place amidst the noble army of martyrs around their world-rejected King. The most radiant face in that crowd is his. Words of pity do not move him; hoots of scorn do not ruffle him, for had not both followed his Lord and King as His citizens led Him to the Cross on Calvary? "Marvel not that the world hates you," rings in his opened ears. "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven" (Luke 6:22, 23).

It is a lovely April day; the spring is clothing the sunny land of his fathers with luxurious verdure; the birds are building their nests amidst the fresh foliage of the trees, and the flowers are bursting into bloom. From all the fair scene on earth, from his noble name, his titles, his wealth, his loved books, he is going in the heyday of his manhood to the martyr's stake. It is in loyalty to His unseen King. To his earthly sovereign he had ever been true, and thrice before that king who loved him had stretched across him the scepter of his mercy. Thrice he had stepped betwixt the Church of Christ and the fearless overcomer, who loved not his life unto the death for the truth which she had belied. But now the hour has come, and Berguin is to die. The place is reached; he alights from the tumbril, and steps to the stake. He places himself against it, and while they bind him there, he turns to the crowd to tell them the cause for which he gladly suffers. But those around will have none of it. With clashing arms and rolling drums and yells and shouts they drown the martyr's parting words. The smoke and flame soon wrap him in their dread embrace, and his spirit passes to the waiting throng on high.

And what then? The priests in the great temple tower scatter the martyr's dust to the four winds of heaven, with the foolish hope that Berguin the heretic shall never rise again. And what then? A pale-faced, delicate youth turns from that scene of the martyr's triumph—turns from the presence of that overcomer's departure, with his eye ablaze with fire, his heart throbbing with earnest desire to tread in such steps as that, and if need be to have a last end like Berguin's. It was John Calvin who caught the martyr's mantle as it fell—John Calvin who passed into the unseen kingdom that day—a hero who was to rescue many a weary wanderer from the vain will-worship of the temple tower.

“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Then Berguin and Calvin, and you and I, and thousands more, shall reign with Christ in glory.

“Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing CITY, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13:13, 14).

“Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, LORD Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

Hail to the Lord's anointed,

Great David's greater Son!

When to the time appointed

The rolling years shall run.

He comes to break oppression,

To set the captive free;

To take away transgression,

And rule in equity.

The heavens—which now conceal

Him In counsels deep and wise—

In glory shall reveal Him

To our rejoicing eyes;

He Who with hands uplifted

Went from the earth below,

Shall come again all gifted,

His blessing to bestow.

Kings shall fall down before Him,

And gold and incense bring;

All nations shall adore Him,

His praise all people sing.

Outstretched His wide dominion

O'er river, sea, and shore,

Far as the eagle's pinion

Or dove's light wing can soar.

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