

The Present Kingdom
of Christ

VS.

The Mistakes of the
Scofield Bible



By the
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A score of years ago certain optimists told us that a new heaven and a new earth were at hand. They have not arrived. Instead there appears a depression in morals, a loss of spirituality, a decreased church attendance. This condition of life has given a new impetus to those who look for the immediate personal coming of Christ. Those who hold this doctrine tell us that these consequences are to be expected; indeed, they are inevitable. This world, they say, must wax worse and worse until Jesus comes again to take the Christians out of the world and leave the ungodly to their fate.

All Christians believe that Jesus is coming again. The question is when and for what. However, it is not this phase of Pre-Millennialism with which we are specially concerned; it is rather with its teachings in regard to the kingdom of God as found in the Notes of the Scofield Bible, a standard for most of those who hold Pre-Millennarian views. It is the purpose of this writing to compare the teaching of these Notes with the Bible itself.

The Scofield interpretation takes away the kingdom from this age.

The following is the view of the kingdom which the Scofield Bible asks us to accept: "This is the good news that God proposes to set up on the earth in ful-

fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (II Samuel 7:16) a kingdom, political, spiritual, Israelitish, universal, over which David's heir, God's Son, shall be king and which shall for a thousand years be the manifestation of God in human affairs." (Notes of the Scofield Bible on Revelation 3:14, 7:14, 14:6).

Three things here deserve special notice: (1) It is an Israelitish kingdom. (2) It belongs to the future millennial age and not to the present. (3) The present age, according to these Notes, has no place for the kingdom, hence no place for a social gospel, no place for the petition, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." What present value for a Christian has an Israelitish kingdom in some future age? The Scofield interpretation takes away from the Christian Church the kingdom it was established to preach.

Dr. Scofield rests his view of the kingdom on a single text, II Sam. 7:16 "And thine house and thy kingdom,"—referring to David—"shall be established forever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever."

Does not this better fulfill the promise and suit the facts of history, than the interpretation of Dr. Scofield?

(1) The kingdom of Israel under David was a type of the heavenly kingdom that Jesus was coming to found. (2) David was a type of the heavenly king, the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was the heir and successor of David. (3) Jesus Christ has been on the throne set forth in II Sam. 7:16 for nineteen centuries if not from the foundation of the world, and will be on it forever. (4) Since Jesus Christ is on the throne promised him forever, it would violate the Scriptures for him to abdicate that throne to reign over restored Jews at Jerusalem.

2. Did Jesus Christ come to earth to establish a Davidic kingdom at Jerusalem? That is the issue and it is vital to the Church. For centuries the Christian Church has been teaching that the kingdom belonged to Jew and Gentile alike, with the one condition that they must be born again. Jesus Christ did not draw race or color lines in the kingdom of heaven which he came to found. It was true that he was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but he welcomed the woman of Sidon and had a place for the woman of Samaria. The amazing faith of the Roman centurion secured him a place in the kingdom. The door was flung wide open to the Gentiles in the Great Commission.

3. The Lord's Prayer is not for the restoration of Judaism. That was given

as a model prayer for the disciples of Jesus in all ages. According to the Scofield Bible, when we pray, "Thy kingdom come", we are asking for the restoration of the Davidic kingdom in the Millennium. Is that what we should teach our children when they repeat this prayer? "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven". Does not that mean here and now? This is the heavenly kingdom, but is it to be set up in Palestine? What interest would such a kingdom have for the children in our Sabbath Schools, or for Christians generally?

4. Evidence from the case of Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews. He was a member of the Davidic kingdom. He was born into that. But Jesus told him that he was not a member of his kingdom. He had to be born again to get into that. What was true of Nicodemus was true of every Jew. No one of them, without the new birth, could be in the kingdom that Jesus came to establish. Therefore his kingdom was not a Davidic kingdom. Also it did not belong to the future, else Nicodemus could not have been born into it. Nor can any of us, my dear fellow Christians.

5. Did the Jews crucify Jesus for proposing to restore the Davidic kingdom? The Davidic kingdom was just what the

Jews wanted. In the Triumphal Entry Jesus was hailed as the restorer of the Jewish kingdom. If Jesus offered to the Jews just what they wanted, why did they crucify him? The answer is that Jesus demanded repentance and faith in himself from a renewed heart to enter into the kingdom which he preached and which he died to establish. I have heard the Jews charged with many things, but never with not knowing what they wanted, or with putting a man to death when he offered them just what they wanted. Yet this is the logical conclusion of the Scofield Bible.

6. If Jesus was preaching the restoration of the Davidic kingdom, Pilate had good legal ground for his condemnation. To restore the Davidic kingdom meant open rebellion and war with Rome. Several insurrections took place in Palestine against the Roman authority on account of taxation and interference with the Jewish religion by Roman rulers. This finally reached a climax in 70 A. D. when the Jews tried to restore the Davidic kingdom and Jerusalem was destroyed. If Jesus preached the restoration of the kingdom of David, as the Scofield Bible claims, then he was urging rebellion against Roman authority and was a state criminal. But Pilate said, "I find no fault in him." It would seem that either Pilate or Dr. Scofield

has misunderstood the teaching of Jesus. And the Jews were hunting for evidence against Jesus too.

Did Jesus change his message in the midst of his ministry and postpone the kingdom till the Millennium? The Scofield Bible holds that when the message of Jesus was rejected by the Jews, he changed his message and preached "rest and service." (Notes of Scofield Bible on Matt. 11:28). This change postponed the Davidic kingdom until the future. The following Biblical evidence is offered to prove that Jesus neither changed his message, nor postponed the kingdom.

1. One of the late acts in the ministry of Jesus was to send out the seventy. These had the same good news to tell that Jesus had preached from the beginning. It was the kingdom of God. Luke 10:9 "Say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

2. Matthew 23, with its denunciations of the Pharisees, belongs to the last week of the life of Jesus. If there was a postponement of the kingdom by a change in the message of Jesus, the kingdom message should not be here. But here it is. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither

suffer ye them that are entering to go in. If the kingdom of heaven were Davidic, why should the Pharisees try to keep men out of it? Did they not "compass sea and land to make one proselyte"? Then if the kingdom was postponed, how could they keep men out of it? Also, is it not clear that the kingdom of heaven was still his message and that men were still going into it?

3. When the Jews rejected Jesus the kingdom was not postponed, but taken from them. Matt. 21:44 The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. From that time and henceforth the Jews entered the kingdom, as did the Gentiles, by the new birth. There is no racial preference, except that the Jews are to have the first chance to hear the gospel. This might suffice to show that the kingdom was not Jewish and was not postponed. But there is more.

4. **Evidence from the preaching of the Apostles.** This offer of the kingdom was made in the apostolic age and often to the Gentiles. In Acts 8:12 Philip was preaching the kingdom of God in Samaria. In Acts 14:22 Paul preached the kingdom of God in his missionary work. In Acts 19:8 Paul was preaching the kingdom of God in Ephesus. In

"the kingdom of God" as separate and distinct, the one from the other. "The kingdom of heaven," according to Dr. Scofield, is a Davidic kingdom. "The kingdom of God," according to his interpretation, is an other-worldly concept, without social significance. Is this Scriptural? (Notes on Matt. 6:33).

The evidence from the Gospels shows that these terms are used interchangeably. In the Gospel of Matthew "the kingdom of heaven" is used thirty-three (33) times and "the kingdom of God" five times. Mark, Luke and John use "the kingdom of God" exclusively. In the Epistles "the kingdom" occurs without any explanatory word, indicating that to the writers it has no double meaning. They evidently understood that "the kingdom of heaven" and "the kingdom of God" meant the same thing.

When Mark, Luke and John use "the kingdom of God" for the same incident for which Matthew uses "the kingdom of heaven," does it not indicate that the two expressions have the same meaning? According to Matthew Jesus sent out his disciples to preach "the kingdom of heaven"; according to Luke they were to preach "the kingdom of God." According to Dr. Scofield, they were given entirely different messages. Does this look reasonable?

Seven parables occur in Matthew 13th chapter. Two of these parables are given in Mark 4th. Matthew uses the term "kingdom of heaven"; Mark "the kingdom of God." Are we to believe that the same parables mean entirely different things in the two Gospels? In Matthew 18:3 Jesus intimates that little children are of "the kingdom of heaven"; in Mark 10:14 that they are of "the kingdom of God." We should hold faithfully to a harmony of the Gospels, which the Scofield Bible in this interpretation seems not to do.

Do not the Scofield Bible Notes propose the revival of Judaism?

The future of the kingdom of heaven, according to the Scofield Bible, has the following programme: (1) The return of the Jews as a race to Palestine. (2) The personal and visible return of Jesus Christ to sit on a throne in Jerusalem. (3) The re-building of the temple and the restoration of animal sacrifices. (Eze. 43:19 Note).

Jesus made the kingdom central in his plan of redemption. He preached the kingdom himself and sent out his disciples to preach the kingdom. The Scofield view practically eliminates the kingdom from the Christian programme.

The Scofield view appears to question the value of the atonement.

It appears to do so, for one cannot believe that the devout and able men whose names are used in commendation of the Scofield Bible ever doubted the entire satisfaction for sin made by Jesus Christ on the cross. But once having adopted a mistaken view of the kingdom of heaven and holding to a belief in the restoration of the Davidic kingdom, the restoration of the temple with its sacrifices becomes a logical conclusion.

But logic has its perils when it is based on a mistaken premise. To restore the animal sacrifices after Jesus has offered the one sacrifice for sin, must mean unbelief in the sacrifice on Calvary. When the Jews continued the animal sacrifices for nearly forty years after the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, they were dreadfully punished by the destruction of Jerusalem, the burning of the temple and the scattering of the remnant of their race. That Jesus Christ himself should sanction such sacrifices is unthinkable.

The Scofield view fails to honor the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but

if I depart, I will send him unto you, and when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment." Is not that what the world needed nineteen hundred years ago, has needed in all the intervening years and needs now? Surely no one thinks the work which the Holy Spirit came to do has been finished. Would not this view regard the work of the Holy Spirit as a failure?

It looks like it. Why do they claim that we can do nothing to change the world until Christ comes again? Is it honoring Christ who sent the Spirit to apply the redemption which he had purchased with his own blood? Does not all this mistaken reasoning come about through setting aside the kingdom which Jesus came to establish and which the Holy Spirit is to complete?

The Davidic kingdom will never be restored.

It is only by the misinterpretation of a single unsupported verse of the Bible that this error has arisen. That promise to the Jews as a nation was ended when they rejected and crucified their Messiah. Pilate said to the Jews, Shall I crucify your king? They answered him, "We have no king but Caesar." And from that day to this Caesar has been their king and they have known no

other. Nor is there any deliverance from the Caesars that have harried them from land, to land, but in the acceptance of the Jesus whom they crucified. The Jews today face exactly the same Jesus that Peter placed before them at Pentecost.

This article is written not to call attention to all the mistakes of the Scofield Bible Notes, but only those concerning the kingdom. It is the belief of the writer that the King on his heavenly throne and working through his Holy Spirit is bringing in the kingdom for which he died on the cross. His plan has not failed.

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