

XIX. - Preparation, foundation, working through and consummation.

To him I say, whose future is according to the working of Satan, in all the power and signs and wonders of the lie. 2 THESS. 2:9.

The Kingship of Christ begins with man. The kingship of Christ takes root in man, not only in his soul, but also in his body. Through the latter it penetrates into the world of visible things. Furthermore, since man is not an atom but a member of the human family, the royal rule is established not only in the heart of the individual but also in all society. Inasmuch as our lineage is subject to the influence of the spirit world, for better and for worse, Christ, as our King, must also rule over that spirit world.

Only now taken to that extent is Christ's kingship capable of preserving the world and thus making the mission of Christ to our earth fulfill its purpose. But, as we noted at the end of our previous article, the extent of the area over which the Kingship extends is thus determined, but no less attention must be paid to the distinction of its operation in the various periods through which it passes. These distinguished epochs are four in number. There is for this Kingdom a period of preparation, beginning in paradise and continuing until John the Baptist. There is, in the second place, a period of its foundation, beginning at Bethlehem and ending on the Mount of Olives at the ascension. Then there is the third period, the period of influence in the course of world history. And at last there will come a fourth period of yet another character, the period of consummation, which will begin with that which will usher in Jesus' return on the clouds, and which will find its conclusion in the handing over of the Kingdom to the Father.

It is evident that these four periods have a completely different character, and it is the person of the Christ who sharply differentiates them. In the first period, the Christ is not yet on earth. In the second he comes to earth. In the third, He is gone from this earth again. And in the fourth He comes back to this earth. In fact, in all these four periods the Kingship is one, but its effect differs according to the relationship in which the King stands to his kingdom. In the first period, let us say, under the dispensation of the Old Testament, the King announces his coming, suggests it, and has everything prepared for it. In the second period he appears and shows his power for a moment, only to have it subside again in his death, but to triumph over it just as decisively in his resurrection. When the foundation of his kingdom is thus provisionally completed, he withdraws again to where he was before, and now rules his kingdom from on high. This will take place until the

struggle between Christ and the adversary is completely over, and the leaven has leavened the three measures of wheat. And once that point has been reached and the harvest of the earth has ripened, then the King will come again to quench resistance "through the spirit of His mouth', and now to make the breakthrough in full splendor of the Kingdom, which will be handed over to the Father in its consummation. The first two periods are long behind us; we are currently living in the third period; the fourth or final period still remains, and remains the expectation of all those who, in Faith and Love, also hold fast to Christian Hope.

The period of preparation awakens the need for the Kingdom of Christ, visualizes it, gives it not only a historical form in Israel, but at the same time also a point of connection with the person and house of David, and creates a circle that is equipped to receive the King. The first arrangement for this work of preparation already started in paradise; it continues in Noah's days; through Abram's calling it begins to become active and, again splitting and dividing, the contrast, which already began with Cain and Abel, is continued through Jacob and Esau, to finally take root in Judah's tribe and in the house of Israel. Continuous division and splitting, in order to make it clear that although our human race withdraws from God's authority, the Lord in His sovereign will repeatedly lays His hands on a part of that race, includes that part in His covenant, subjects generation after generation to His majesty, and thus brings the rise of a kingdom of heaven increasingly nearer to the kingdom of the world. In Israel's national existence, this preparation also takes on its figurative form. This national existence of Israel is not the Kingdom of Christ, but it merely portrays it and shows it in a figurative form. Prophetically, the idea that what is to come will be a Kingdom, rises in the minds. In order to make it clear that David's kingship and the existence of the Israelites were not real, but only imaginary, David dies, his hereditary kingship is extinguished, and his people must leave their land in exile. All the actual, all the real, is taken away. What remains is only the idea, the prophecy, the spiritual form. And that idea, that prophecy, that spiritual form, finally cries out for fulfillment and realization, and it is that fulfillment and realization that comes when the holy Child is born in Bethlehem. A child that could only come to a farm, to a people and in a spiritual environment, as the fruit of history offered itself to Israel of that time. Those who had no eye to see the spiritual then looked back to the line of David, Solomon and Rehabeam, and those who had no spiritual ear to hear tried to understand Israel's ancient existence, its preparation, foundation, development and execution, and to choose Israel's triumph over the nations as their ideal. But he who had ears to hear

what the Spirit spoke also let go of the shell in order to grasp the pearl, and passed from Israel's sensuous national existence into the full spiritual reality of the Kingdom of Heaven. This preparation was not accomplished outside of Christ. The King, anointed of God over Zion, was himself active in all of this. As it says in Isaiah 63: "In all their distress He was distressed, and the Angel of His face preserved them. Through His love and mercy He redeemed them, and He received them, and He carried them all the days of old. Thus he became to them a Savior."

With the completion of the Preparations, the second period then begins, the period of the foundation of the Kingdom of Christ, when the promised of the Father is born of Mary in Bethlehem. In John the Baptist, just before his coming, the prophecy of preparation is drawn together once again more than ever before, and Jesus himself declares that the prophetic period now comes to an end, and that the Kingdom of heaven itself will now begin. And in the short years that the King of the Kingdom of God has been on earth, he has revealed the majesty of his Kingdom in every area of human life. Already during the preparatory period, the full extent of his Kingdom was outlined. The chosen ones were personally awakened to life. Who can enjoy the psalms without feeling that it is a redeemed soul that struggles in them to grasp salvation? But also, outside the spiritual and unseen terrain, the power of the Lord had intervened in the order of visible things. The miracle was the means of deliverance for Israel from the Red Sea, and this miracle has always intervened in the world of visible things, and has always accompanied Israel on its pilgrimage through the course of history. The power of the King, both over the material world

The power of the King, both over the material world and over nature, was to be demonstrated already in the preparatory period, and not only as a revelation of power but also as a means of salvation. The miracles of the Old Covenant are almost all redemptive works. But it did not stop there. It is in the patriarchal society first, and then in the national existence of Israel, that the King, anointed of God, practically expresses his influence and effect on the society of mankind. And finally, with regard to the fourth area, the area in which the King waged his battle with the unholy powers, this battle was depicted in Israel's struggle with the nations. Those nations were ruled by the spirit of the demonic, as manifested in their idolatry, guile and devilry. And though Israel in its smallness is nothing compared to the mighty empires of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Persia, yet that small Israel, as long as it holds on to God, is honored in its independence, and even

under Solomon it seems as if Israel already rules over the demonic power of the nations.

But now the same thing breaks through much more clearly, when finally in the second period, in that of the foundation, the King himself is born, and the Kingdom of heaven enters. Here, too, action is taken in the four areas: 1° in the soul, 2° in the body and in visible things, 3° in the society of mankind and 4° in the struggle with demonic powers. In the three years of his walk on earth, the King of the Kingdom of God made his royal majesty shine in each of these four areas. He calls his youth and they surrender to him. He teaches the multitude and captivates them by his word, and soon the apostle can testify: "We have beheld his glory as of the one born of the Father." The circle that joins him is not wide, but those who join him are called to life, and will soon be his witnesses in all the world, first by the word they speak, and now still by the word they recorded and left us as an heirloom, a spiritual heirloom. But to the spiritual effect on the soul Jesus does not confine himself, he also attracts the body. If there are sick people, he heals them. He restores sight to the blind. At his word of power, the afflicted takes up his bed and walks. Sometimes it even seems as if the healing of what ails the body is more important to him than the salvation of souls. And finally, he reveals his supreme power over the body, by bringing back to life those who had died, and in the end himself, after he has died, to rise again from the dead and to reveal himself to his own in a glorified body. From the body, the royal power of Christ then extends to all things visible in nature. He controls the vegetable kingdom at the wedding in Cana, in the multiplication of the bread, in the cursing of the fig tree; and likewise, he shows his power over the animal kingdom, in the wild animals that prowl around him in the desert, and in the miraculous fishing. Yes, even the elementary force of nature he manages to subdue to his power, and when there is a storm on the lake of Gennesareth, he subdues the storm that has arisen by his word of power. The King does not transform human society as such when he comes to this earth. He is not doing what the Anabaptists of all ages have wanted, namely to establish a new order for social life. He does not affect the relationships in the family, the relationships between employers and workers, the relationships between people and government, he honors them and allows them to continue. But Jesus does try to make a holier spirit work in all these relationships. He combats "the addiction to the sensible and to the visible". He sanctifies marriage in a nobler form. He elevates the position of the woman who is always oppressed in the East. He draws the children to the foreground. He takes care of the poor, feeding five thousand.

He places the whole of life under the highness of religion, and points in everything to the high and holy ideal that speaks in the law of his God, drawing this ideal together in the power of love. Thus, he leaves intact what had arisen from the ordinance of life, but pours into it another spirit, in order to reign through that holier spirit Royal also in society; and immediately you see, when Christian circles begin to form, that they display a different social image than what existed before. And just as royally, Jesus makes his fourth appearance in relation to the spirit world. God's holy angels herald his coming and appear repeatedly during his short earthly life. He refers to these angels in the Lord's Prayer. He speaks of the joy of the angelic world as one passes from sin into the kingdom of heaven. He says that the angels who are sent to serve us stand before the Father. On the other hand, from the very beginning he engages in battle with the unholy spirits. He casts the ruler of the world back into the desert at the first Temptation. He casts out the demons from the possessed. And he acts openly against the brood of vipers, just as John the Baptist did before him, in order to break the power with which Satan imprisoned the spirits in countless persons and circles, even when there was no question of possession. He even transferred the struggle with the demonic powers to his apostles. Their vocation, too, was to do harm to the demonic realm; and to cast out devils was a definite part of their task from their first mission among Israel. And that even with the passing away of His Apostles this battle would not yet be complete was most clearly shown by the daily prayer of "Deliver us from evil," which Jesus put on the lips of His disciples and redeemed for all centuries.

The result is that both in the preparation of the Kingdom of Christ among Israel, and in the establishment of this Kingdom in the period between Bethlehem and the heavenly city of Jerusalem, there was a great deal of preparation, establishment, operation, and execution, the action took place on four levels: spiritually in the soul; physically in the material world; socially in society; and anti-demonically in the spirit world. What is more, in each of these four areas the action was constantly brought about by the direct intervention of a supernatural power. The whole action is as if permeated by the miracle. If we could now pass over the third period, the period of continuation, in which we are at present, in order to arrive directly at the fourth or last period, the period of completion, we would find the same character of Jesus' royal act here again. We will explain this more extensively in view of the Revelation of John. But this much can already be said, that also in the period of the consummation the act of the Christ will have a partly spiritual, partly material, partly social, partly anti-demonic character, and that also then the act will often be

of a supernatural nature. The idea that the action of Jesus in his Kingdom would be and remain exclusively spiritual therefore appears, the deeper one digs into the subject, more and more untenable. Rather, it must be determined that the King's action in the Kingdom of God has a predominantly supernatural character; that the miracle is inseparable from it; and that both the body and the soul, and likewise the powers of the spirit world and the forces of nature, are governed by this supernatural action. What we call the miracle is not added to it, but is at the forefront of it. This applies to each of the four areas, at least as long as we are talking about the first two periods and the last or fourth period. In the preparation, the foundation and the completion of the Kingdom, the miracle sets the tone, and in the main everything that appears in the course of history is brought about by the miracle alone. The third period, the period of development, is, however, characterized by the fact that in this period the miracle increasingly hides and a natural development largely replaces supernatural intervention.

It is not as if the supernatural intervention therefore ceased completely. Rather, in the spiritual realm, it persists all the time. All rebirths accrue to the soul in a supernatural way, and without rebirth no one enters into life. He who has not been born again of water and spirit cannot even see the Kingdom of God. And if you ask Jesus how, from where, and in what way the rebirth comes to our souls, the answer is that it is like the blow of the wind in the sail. You hear the sound of the wind, but you do not know from where it comes, nor where its blow goes. Nor would we dare deny that miracles still occur from time to time in the physical realm as well. Much of what is called miracles in this sense may be explained by an effect that affects the nervous system subjectively through faith, but even then faith must be supernaturally strengthened by special grace to obtain this effect. Moreover, healings have been produced which do not even permit this explanation. The question, which is decisive for the character of Jesus' Kingship in this third period, is not, however, whether here or there, now or then, a miraculous healing or salvation was not also recorded in history, but, quite differently, whether the supernatural revelation of Christ's power is still, as in the first and second periods, the rule: Whether, also in this third period, the miracle is the ordinary act of power through which Jesus presents, continues and upholds his royal majesty; and whether, consequently, one must say that, just as in the Old and New Testaments, also in these last eighteen centuries the history of Christianity has been one continuous story of victories, and that it has remained, in the main, one mighty, impressive revelation of miraculous, supernatural effects. And if one asks the

question in such a way, according to the only correct way in which it may be asked, then the answer cannot be in doubt, it is certain that in the period of the working through, on the material and the demonic level, the supernatural intervention almost entirely recedes, and the history of the Kingdom of God more and more takes on the character of a leavening of the three measures of dough, by the leaven that was laid in the flour.

The character of the action in the third period, in the fourfold yard, on which that action still emanates today, may be briefly described thus. In the sphere of the life of the soul, this action, before as well as after, remains of a supernatural nature, beginning with the rebirth and continuing with the conduction of grace. It is true that the spiritual life is carried more than before by Covenant grace in the generations and thus also by the service of the Church and by spiritual life together, but even so all spiritual life, in its emergence and progress, remains the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit; and after all, the Holy Spirit always works in a supernatural way in the life of grace. In this the direct! In this the direct rule of our King still holds good, and our King leads that rule over the spirits by the Holy Spirit. With regard, secondly, to the effects on the body, and on nature as a whole, Christian action, by penetrating the social life of art and science, has discovered and traced the means of curing all kinds of diseases and of making all kinds of natural forces subservient to itself, and this on such a broad scale that its scope far exceeds the benefits of earlier supranatural action. A fact which immediately springs to mind if one compares the means of healing and controlling nature available to us in Christian Europe today with the earlier situation before Christianity entered the world, or with the situation which still prevails in the pagan regions of Asia and Africa. As far as the third estate is concerned, that of our human coexistence, the rule still holds that Christianity does not overturn the existing order of things, but raises and ennobles it to a much higher level through its spiritual power. And finally, as far as the anti-demonic working of Jesus' Kingship is concerned, in Christian countries Satan's working is still going on, but it is completely broken as a ruling power. In the moral sphere it still continues, and even rises, being steadily counteracted by the moral power of Christianity. But as a spiritual power the demonic is no longer in any Christian country what it used to be in Europe, and has remained in the pagan country to a large extent.