2 Chronicles - Commentaries by William Kelly

Lectures on the Books of Chronicles, 2 Chronicles 2:4-4: Lectures on the Books of Chronicles

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2 Chron. 2:4-4

Now, Solomon represents a wholly different state of things; and persons may ask, Then is there no type here? To be sure there is, but it is not the type of Christianity. It is the type of the millennial kingdom; it is the type of what God is going to do. And if persons were to say to me, Do you mean to say that there will never be anything grand for this world? is all the world to be only for the devil—only for unbelief and flesh? I say, No, I maintain what God means; and there I differ entirely from my good friends the dissenters in this particular—that they do not look for this future dealing of God for the earth. They regard the present as being the closing term of God with the world. Now I believe the contrary. I believe that the present time is God's calling a people for heaven—calling a people on heavenly principles for Christ, founded on the cross, who are waiting for the glory. These are the two terms of Christian existence. Our starting point is the cross, and our terminus is the glory of the Lord Jesus. We are bound by, and we are now between, those two points. We are strangers and pilgrims. The cross has separated us from the world, and we are waiting for the Lord to bring us into His own heavenly abode—the mansions in the Father's house.

But when the Lord comes and takes the Church, has He done with everything? Is that all? Does not God mean to bless the world? Does not He mean to bless Israel? Does He not mean to bless the nations? I am sure of it. It is not to me a question at all. Persons may say, Well, we must not be too bold; we must not be too confident of what we do not know. But I think we ought to be confident of what we know, and I do not expect persons to be confident of what they do not know. On the contrary, I advise them not to be. Yet I suppose that every Christian is confident about something. Is he not confident of his own sins, to begin with? Is he not confident of the Savior? Very well, then he cannot speak too boldly of both, for I do not sympathize with those that are very sure of salvation and do not feel their sinfulness. I think it is a dangerous kind of confidence.

If I am true before God in the feeling of my sins, I am privileged to be equally sure of the blessedness of my salvation, because He is a Savior for the lost; and I cannot exaggerate either. But if you admit that principle as to so all-important a thing as the sins that expose you to hell, and the salvation that will bring you to heaven—if we are confident about that, we might well be confident about anything. There is nothing so hard as that—nothing. There is nothing that required such an immense conquering of difficulties as the delivering us from hell and the bringing us to heaven; and Jesus has undertaken both, and will as surely as He has accomplished the one, so the other.

But there must be an immense gap in the thoughts of any Christian—I care not who he is, or what—if he thinks that the Lord is merely going to bring people out of the world to heaven. Has He made the world for nothing? Was the world made merely to be the football of Satan? Is it merely the sport of the enemy of God? No, He means to wrest this world from the enemy's grasp, and He means to make this world a happy world; for the poor political quacks of the world have proved their total futility, and their inability to remedy the present state of disorder. He is the true physician in every sense, and the great wonder-worker; and He will heal the world of all its plagues and evils that are now showing themselves, as we know, to be incurable distempers, but not so to Him. The mischief is not that man cannot heal them, but that man pretends to heal them; for I quite admit that it is no disrespect to any man to say that he cannot heal this poor sin-stricken world. No doubt about it, but the pretension to do it is bad, and that is just where man shows his folly—pretending to do what only God can, and what God does through the suffering of His own Messiah.

Here is the joy to me -that this glorious state of the world by-and-by is not to be apart from the cross any more than Solomon is from David. Solomon reigns in David's stead, and the reign of Solomon is the necessary complement of the sufferings of David. The two are bound up together in the most remarkable manner, and give us this complete type which I have been endeavoring to show. But then it is the type not of a people taken un to heaven after suffering upon earth, but the type of the power and glory of God that will shine from the heavens upon the earth. And therefore you see the true answer to people who reason. And it has always been a great question among theologians whether the future state of blessedness is to be on the earth which is to be metamorphosed or sublimated into a heavenly state, or whether the people of God in their risen condition are to be in heaven.

Now, I say both are true—not exactly that the earth will ever become heaven, but that all the saints that have suffered from the beginning of the world till the Lord returns, from Abel downward, will be a heavenly people. And therefore it is quite a mistake to suppose that because now the Church is heavenly in its calling, therefore the saints that are departed will not be heavenly too. It was true, the heavenly calling was not revealed to them; and they were not blest, as we are, with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. But they are the saints of the high places; they are the saints of the heavenlies too. They shall judge the world; they shall judge angels, just as truly as we. They will be caught up to meet the Lord, and we shall be with them, and they with us, in the presence of God. I do not mean to say that there will be no distinctions. That, again, is another mistake; but I maintain that this is the truth of Scripture most plainly.

But then God means to convert Israel, and this is the reason for which Israel is now kept—kept in spite of their unbelief, kept in spite of their hostility. They are the great fomenters of all infidelity. There is hardly a wicked thought of modern infidels, no matter who they may be, but what is but the evolution of the old infidelity of Spinoza and other infamous Jews of past days. The Jews have always been the keenest and the subtlest weavers of the web of infidelity. Well now, in spite of all that, God watches over them. They are in the house—the city of refuge.1 They are not permitted to be destroyed, although they deserve it. The avenger of blood must have destroyed them otherwise. They are kept there till "the death of the high priest which is anointed with... oil." When the Lord leaves His present place of priest in heaven—when He terminates that character of priesthood which He now occupies—then the blood-stained one will return to the land of his possession. That is the future that is for Israel by-and-by. There will no doubt be a sifting out of the guilty. There will be not only the manslayer that is innocent of murder by the grace of God, but there will be the murderer that will be put to death, because there will be a judgment. He will stand before

the congregation for judgment. The Lord will destroy some of those murderers—kill them before His face, as it is said in the Gospel. They are to be slain before Him. But others grace will count, because they are converted, and because they confess their sin. Grace will justify them. This is the double type of the one guilty, and the other not, who might be in the city of refuge.

I refer to this here because it is so intimately connected with the subject of this book—the type of the kingdom, the grand kingdom that the Son of David will bring in in that day for the earth. And there is the grand mistake of Popery, for instance, in using all these scriptures for the Church now. These scriptures suppose power—suppose the exercise of earthly righteousness, as I shall show presently. That is not the character of the Church. The character of the Church is to be persecuted, not to exercise power. The character of the Church is to have heavenly and not earthly glory; so Popery has been guilty of the greatest possible departure from it. But not Popery only. It is a natural snare to the heart, because natural people like to be comfortable in this world; people like to be something. No wonder. It is exactly what the heart would covet, and this is what requires a great deal of faith to judge and to refuse.

Well then, Solomon is seen here not only at the head of Israel, but also controlling the Gentiles and making use of them as the servants of these great purposes; and so he demands timber in abundance. "Even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build [shall be] wonderful great. And, behold, I will give to thy servants, the hewers that

cut timber, twenty thousand measures of beaten wheat, and twenty thousand measures of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil."

Then in the 3rd chapter. "Solomon began to build the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where [Jehovah] appeared unto David his father in the place that David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Oman the Jebusite." v. 1.

There again you observe the link. The glory is built upon the suffering. It was there that the sacrifice was offered; it was there that the destroying angel's hand was stayed. It was on mount Moriah. It was there, too, on the threshing-floor of the Gentile, because there must be that link. You see, it was by the hands of lawless men that the Jews crucified their own Messiah. And, accordingly, it was on the threshing-floor of Oman the Jebusite, the enemy that had been in possession of Jerusalem. We find the wonderful wisdom of God which marks this type. So the house, then, is prepared with all magnificence; but into all its details I do not pretend to go.

It is always a great thing, in looking at Scripture, never to go beyond what you know. That gives you firmness, because a person who pretends to know more than he does, must, after all, if he is an honest man, admit it to some extent. He can hardly pretend to honesty if he disguises it. But it is a great thing not to go beyond our measure, because then we can speak distinctly; whereas, otherwise, at the very best we must be somewhat ambiguous, or—what is a very great fault in dealing with the Word of God—rash. Oh, it is a serious thing to impute to God what God does not say, and to run the risk of making the God of truth appear a liar. And so it must be, where men guess instead of waiting to learn; but then we must always wait to learn, and I believe that where we have the faith to wait God will give us to learn.

I abstain, therefore, purposely in this case from saying some things that I have a judgment about, but that are not necessary. There is only one point of deep interest that I will speak of, and that is the distinction between the cherubim here and the cherubim of the ark in the tabernacle. When the ark was brought into the temple here, the wings of the cherubim looked out toward the house; that is, instead of looking "inward"—which is a mistake in our version—they really looked outward. In the tabernacle, on the contrary, the cherubs looked upon the blood that was upon the mercy seat. All their attention was occupied with that. The cherubim were the emblems of God's judicial authority. Now this is just exactly the difference. Righteousness now is so perfectly satisfied that it has no other task than to proclaim the greatness of the victory that Christ has won for us—no other work, as far as we are concerned, but to clothe us with the best robe. How precious for us! The righteousness of God is that which preserves, for no sword is in the hand there. In the garden of Eden the cherubs had a flaming sword. It was to guard and keep off man. But in the tabernacle the cherubs are simply the witnesses of what grace has done. They have nothing to do. They are guarding, not guarding man from it, but maintaining guard, as it were, even over the perfection of what grace has done for sinful man. But in the temple it is another thing. There the cherubs, or witnesses of the judicial power of God, look outward. It is now a question of righteous governing.

That is not the case now in the gospel. Righteousness does not govern. In the Millennium, righteousness will reign through grace. That is a totally different state of things. I do not mean as to the work of Christ, because that is the same work no matter when or where. The work of Christ is always grace reigning through righteousness. But I am speaking now of the character of the millennial reign; and I say that the great distinctive feature then will be not grace reigning, but righteousness. "A king shall reign in righteousness," and "princes are to rule in judgment." That is the point of it; and hence, therefore, as we see in this very case of Solomon, so he acted. It was on that principle that he slew Joab—on that principle also that he dealt with Shimei who had been spared during the time of David, the man of grace, the witness of grace. But under Solomon it could not be. It was perfectly right that they should die. It was not a mistake; it was a right thing; it was according to the principle that was then established; just as when the Lord Jesus was here upon earth, He said, "I am not come to destroy men's lives, but to save." But when He comes in glory, He will destroy; and it will be as right then to destroy, as now it is His glory to save.

Hence, then, we must distinguish. If we do not do so, the Word of God will be a mass of confusion to us, or we shall make fearful confusion with it, which is exactly what people do. That is, they do not rightly divide the word of truth. Now, if we only understand the Scriptures, everything will be in its place—everything in its due season and order. That is what I am endeavoring to help Christians to by the suggestions that I am making upon these books; that is, to help them to apply rightly the precious Word of God, whether it be typical or anything else.

I say, then, that the cherubs look outward; they look to the house, and that is the great point. It is the old house, because it was the sign of the judicial power of God that was going everywhere throughout the earth with its center in Jerusalem. But God's power was now dealing from that center outside; and, although there was an inner circle of Israel, the circumference of blessing was the earth itself—I might say the universe, only we are here looking simply at the earth.

And further, let us note that there were two pillars, the sign of divine stability. This kingdom, when it shall be in the hands of the Lord Jesus, will not be a mere type, but a reality. It will never dissolve through the weakness of man. It shall not be left to others. Hence, therefore, as the witness of it, there were two pillars—Jachin and Boaz. These show as a figure, but only as a witness. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."

Aaronic-type priesthood on high, He will come forth in His Melchisedec character of priesthood; and Israel will return to the land of their inheritance in peace and prosperity. The writer of these articles on Chronicles gives further exposition on the cities of refuge in his Lectures on the Pentateuch.

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