

“Seek ye First the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness”

Our New Testament reading for the day includes our Master’s exhortation, that the primary things to be sought after in life are those things that pertain to the Coming Kingdom, and the Righteousness of God. His words are: “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [i.e. the food, drink, clothing etc of verse 31] shall be added unto you” (Mat. 6:33). In our considerations therefore, we shall examine each of these aspects in turn: namely that of “seeking” particularly in connection with the coming Kingdom, and secondly, in connection with the Righteousness of God.

SEEKING

Matthew chapter 13 parabolically describes the Kingdom in terms of a precious treasure, to be sought after at all costs:

“... the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field” (Mat. 13:44).

Again, we have seeking in connection with the Kingdom: here, it is a great treasure to be obtained. The discoverer rejoices so much at what he has discovered, that he is willing to give even his last penny to obtain it. Giving even “all that he hath,” he seeks to obtain what is described in Luke’s record of the Master’s discourse as: “a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where not thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Lu. 12:33).

The allusion here is to Proverbs chapter 2, speaking of the virtues of Wisdom: “if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of Yahweh, and find the knowledge of God” (Prov. 2:4-5). A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth (Lu. 12:15), and so it is only reasonable that he gives his all to obtain eternal things, even the incorruptible treasure of immortality. Being enlightened to the true nature of man, and the vanity of life without God, men of the spirit count all the things of this life to be but dung (Phil. 3:7) when compared with the glories to come. So the Prophet likewise exhorts:

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness” (Isa. 55:1-20).

And in allusion to these same things, Messiah exhorts:

“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you ...” (Jno. 6:27).

The message of these combined testimonies is that to exert oneself in the things of the world – even if it be ostensibly to obtain the things necessary to sustain a mortal existence – is vanity. Our primary focus needs to be on the obtaining of the spiritual food, provided by no less than the Son of the Almighty, which will eternally satisfy our hunger for righteousness. And then, the Master teaches, “all these things shall be added unto you”. These spiritual meats are available to all: they cannot be “bought” simply by the giving of worldly money, and therefore can be obtained by the poorest among men: “he that hath no money”. Rather, a man must give his all – everything he has in life, to be granted the gift by grace.

THE KINGDOM

Solomon, upon his ascent to the Throne of David, was invited by Yahweh to choose a blessing that he could receive:

“... Yahweh appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said: Ask what I shall give thee...” (1 Kings 3:5).

Solomon’s answer is very instructive for us to consider. What was his heart’s desire? If we were similarly given such an opportunity for a Divine Blessing – anything we like, what would be our response? Great riches? A long and prosperous life? Not Solomon: he sought first the things pertaining to the Kingdom he had been given rule over. He sought the Wisdom of God in order that he might correctly and wisely administer justice in the kingdom:

“... give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people” (1 Kings 3:9).

Solomon sought after Wisdom, as hid treasure. His desire was not for the things pertaining to his own affairs, and his own sphere of existence, but for the Kingdom, that he might have the wisdom to govern it righteously in the sight of Yahweh. And so, in the words of Messiah, all other things that he might have sought after were “added unto” him:

“And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart ... and I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour ...” (1 Kings 3:12-13).

Here is a tremendous example for us to give heed to. Because Solomon sought the wellbeing of the kingdom over which he would reign above all else, his desire was granted – but those things he could have sought after, but did not, were given to him also. Not that if we seek the Kingdom that we shall be granted riches in this life; that would not be right at all. Rather, the “Greater than Solomon” shall obtain glory and honour in his kingdom, and we who shall live and reign with him, shall be partakers of the prosperity of that kingdom to come. In that day, we shall sing with loud voices:

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev. 5:12).

SEEK RIGHTEOUSNESS

The citation which we began with is often quoted by brethren – put in part. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God” is a phrase that all Messiah’s brethren should instantly recognise, but the passage continues “... and his righteousness”. We seek not only a coming kingdom, but one in which the governing laws, precepts, and principles shall themselves show forth the Righteousness of God. We seek both the Kingdom, and the Righteousness together: indeed, one without the other would be an impossible situation. The prophet Zephaniah gave a similar exhortation:

“Seek ye Yahweh, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of Yahweh’s anger ...” (Zeph. 2:3).

Notice that here, seeking meekness and righteousness is paralleled with seeking Yahweh. This is characteristic of all of the worthies of old: their pursuit after the righteousness of Israel’s Deity, in seeking His Ways, in all meekness and humility. Hence we read: “without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of **them that diligently seek him**” (Heb. 11:6). A number of characters in Scripture are said to have sought Yahweh: we shall only consider one: Jehoshaphat.

The inspired Narrative in 2nd Chronicles speaks of king Jehoshaphat at the beginning of his reign:

“... and Yahweh was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; but **sought to the God of his Father**, and walked not after the doings of Israel” (2 Chron. 17:3-4-)

Here is one who, like Solomon sought after the ways of Yahweh in his dealings with the kingdom that he had been appointed to reign over. Spurning the idolatry of his day, he sought to the Deity that his Father worshipped, and so we read that “Yahweh was with Jehoshaphat”. Moreover, as Messiah taught, other things were “added unto him”:

“Therefore Yahweh stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance” (2 Chron. 17:5).

Likewise king Solomon, because he sought Yahweh’s ways above all else, Yahweh blessed him abundantly. Not that he sought after riches and honour, but that seeking first to rule righteously before his God, Yahweh blessed him with the things of this life, as well as that which is to come. As Proverbs 15:9 teaches: “the way of the wicked is an abomination unto Yahweh: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness”.

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

In these two examples before us, we see this principle outlined very plainly. Both Solomon and Jehoshaphat were men who Sought Yahweh, and His Righteousness, and were plentifully rewarded for so doing. But even these exemplary cases fade into insignificance when compared with the righteousness of Messiah. The Spirit of Christ in the Psalms writes concerning him:

“Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Psa. 45:7).

Christ fed upon the spiritual food of the Word, which enabled him to discern between good and evil:

“butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good” (Isa. 7:16).

As “the Word Made Flesh”, Messiah was pre-eminently the Wisdom of God, as it is written:

“of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:30-31).

The primary things that concerned the Master, were not the material things of this life. “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work” (Jno. 4:34) was his maxim. Seeking only those things that related to his Father, he was the Son in whom Yahweh was “well pleased”.

The Spirit writing to the Hebrews directed their attention to consider Christ from a particular aspect. That is, the aspect of one who constantly sought the things of God:

“... let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the Captain and Perfector of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1-2).

Jesus endured all things for our sakes. What kept him strong, able to bear the shame of the cross, was not simply a brute determination: it was the motivating power of a joyous vision of the future. That vision is one that we can share – indeed, it must be so, for the Apostle presents Christ as an example to follow in this particular. Let us therefore lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and focus our attention upon the finish line in the race in which we are engaged. Let us constantly have a vision of the Kingdom before our minds, and do all that we can to keep a focus on that vision, seeking to show forth the glorious righteousness of Yahweh in some way – however imperfectly – that in the day to come we might be granted glory, honour, and immortality.