

WHO WILL SHARE IN THE KINGDOM?

[Extracts from Chapter 4 of *The Kingdom of God*]

by

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(Early 1900s)

[Please note: This paper, written many years ago, was a forceful answer to the kind of teaching which today is being promoted by Zane Hodges, Joseph Dillow and the Grace Evangelical Society. It's a reminder that some of the important doctrinal battles, which were fought in previous generations, are still being fought today. The error being promoted, both then and now, is this: *All saved people will be divided into two distinct groups: 1) Those who will inherit the kingdom (persevering, faithful, obedient Christians); 2) Those who will not inherit the kingdom (disobedient, unfaithful Christians)*. Hoste demonstrates that it is Biblically unthinkable to suggest the possibility that there will be a group of saved saints that will not inherit the kingdom.]

A LAWYER, whose business it was to be constantly perusing wills, was engaged one day on one when an event occurred which made the monotonous task supremely interesting. He found his own name in the will. We, too, read in the Word of God of a glorious inheritance, "the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ," and we would fain learn if our names are in the will. Can we who have believed in Christ look forward with assurance to one day sharing in the coming Kingdom glories, or is it, as some assert, "a supreme uncertainty?" Surely the enquiry is sufficiently interesting and important. The whole character of our Christian walk, of our attitude of soul to God, must depend on whether we are heirs, exhorted to walk worthy of our high calling, or mere claimants on suffrance, doomed to exclusion from the Kingdom unless some unknown standard is attained. The heart of man is legal to the core, and legal conditions may commend themselves to some, but legality never yielded fruit for God. Let us then examine the word of God, and may His grace teach us how to walk and to please Him.

Workings of Grace in the Kingdom.

(1) We may notice then, first, that heirship depends on sonship. "If a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:7). With this agree the words of Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who . . . hath begotten us . . . to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:3-4), and those of our Lord to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." A Divine work had to take place *for* the soul before one sinner could have a right to enter the Kingdom. This is the work of redemption. A Divine work must take place *in* the soul before one sinner could be fit to do so. This is the work of regeneration. The new birth is the "open sesame" of the Kingdom. The Lord's words give no hint of some other undefined condition lurking in the background. If entrance to an exhibition is advertised at a shilling, we should be surprised to find at the turnstile that this was only a preliminary condition of entrance. New birth entails new life, and new life produces new fruit, but all who are born of God will share in the Kingdom of God.

(2) Heirship depends on faith not on faithfulness. Only God can fit us for the Kingdom. The blood of Christ alone can be our title. All saints will be in the Kingdom, that is by grace through faith....James tells us that "God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which God hath prepared for them that love Him." These last words, "them that love Him," is a generic description of all the people of God—rich as well as poor—for if "any man love not the Lord Jesus

Christ let him be anathema" (1 Cor. 16:22). For those who love Him the Kingdom is prepared, for those who do not, anathema; and there is no third choice.

(3) The believer has already the pledge of the future inheritance. We read "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9), and the presence of the Spirit in the believer is "the earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. 1:14). An earnest is a pledge and guarantee of full blessing to come. He that has the earnest will enjoy the inheritance.

(4) Moreover, the Kingdom is not merely a future promise, it is a present possession. We enter it now, and this fact is used in the Word as a stimulus to true service. "We receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28). Some would reverse this order, and make it read, "Let us serve God acceptably, that we may receive the Kingdom" but the old order is better. To make a part in the Kingdom depend on attainment, as if some servant had warned the prodigal, when already partaking of the fatted calf, that his father would not receive him unless he served him faithfully.

Divine exhortation is not based on a threat of exclusion from the Kingdom, but on our inclusion in Christ. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth" (Col. 3:4). The apostle indeed prays for many things for the saints of Colosse (ch. 1:9, 10), but he does not pray that they may get into the Kingdom, he thanks the Father that they are in it (v. 13). We have the same truth addressed to the seven churches. "Unto Him that loved us . . . and hath made us a Kingdom of priests unto God" (Rev. 1:6).

(5) There is no thought in Scripture of true believers being turned out of the Kingdom. When Christ comes the Kingdom will be purged. All that offend and work iniquity will be cast out (Matt. 13), but are these unfaithful Christians? No, they are "the children of the wicked one," ungodly professors, corresponding to the tares and bad fish of the second and seventh parables.

There is no desire here to smooth the pillow of the mere professor but to resist an inverted teaching.

The teaching as to the Kingdom, which is here resisted, is no doubt a reaction against the abounding antinomianism of the present day, but it really substitutes a worse antinomianism in its place. It is like curing a tobacco slave by offering him the opium pipe. It warns professors that they will lose the Kingdom if they are adulterers, fornicators, drunkards, and this is perfectly Scriptural, but it hastens to assure them that they may still go to heaven, for heaven is of pure grace, and that is grossly antinomian. Whatever a man's profession may have been, we have no right, as long as his life is openly vicious, to tell him he is a Christian, or indeed to comfort ourselves with the thought that he may be one.

If Christians are Excluded?

When we ask what will become of Christians excluded from the Kingdom, the answers are, as we should expect, perplexingly diverse, for one man's theory is as good as another's. One writer warns us "not to be wise above that which is written," and the next moment attempts to be so. "Some, *perhaps*," he suggests, "from the lower heavens of Enoch and Elijah, will behold without entering." But this is the mere speculation. What does he know about the heavens of these two prophets? "Others," he affirms, "will return temporarily to corruption and their souls to Hades." He does not explain how "one who has put on incorruption" can return to corruption. It is a contradiction in terms of which there is not one hint in Scripture. "Others are to be cast into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and

gnashing of teeth." Gnashing of teeth is used in the Word (see Ps. 33:5; 37:12; Acts 7:54) as the expression of hatred and rage. Can this be the attitude of soul of a child of God under what is supposed to be his Father's corrective discipline? This is most subversive doctrine, but there is worse to follow. "The Lord's people guilty of the very gravest offences are temporarily in Gehenna (!) . . . it will continue during the reign of Christ." The comparative emptiness of the lake of fire during the Millennium is adduced as an argument by one of these teachers to point ominously to its use for "wicked Christians," on the same ground, I suppose, that the emptiness of a prison from lack of convicts would clearly indicate that the governor intended filling it with his relations and friends!

One crumb of comfort is thrown to these poor, perishing Christians. "They shall not perish for ever," which, we are assured, is the true meaning of the Greek in John 10:29, instead of "My sheep shall never perish," as we have it in an authorised and revised translation. This is the sort of emendation which a man self-taught from an interlinear translation of the Greek Testament might be expected to make, but there is not a scintilla of ground for translating the Greek idiom in this way. The exact form of the Greek with the negative, as we have it here, occurs in five other places, all in St. John's gospel, chapters 4:14; 8:51, 52; 11:26; 13:8. If John 10:28 must be altered, then the same change must be made in all, and a strange sense is the result. Fancy Peter meaning, in John 13:8, when he said "Thou shalt never wash my feet," that our Lord might wash his feet, but "not for ever." The form of the Greek really excludes perishing at all for the sheep of Christ.

This teaching of a Millennium in the lake of fire for "wicked Christians" as a governmental punishment from God, is the true Romish doctrine of Purgatory, and worse. Those who hold it must be the most anxious or the most self-complacent of men.

This doctrine naturally grafts itself on to the deadly doctrine of Universalism, for if some are raised from the second death why indeed not all?

Thank God for His will that none should perish, for His salvation provided for all at the infinite cost of the blood of Christ, and for the promise that all who believe, "being now justified by His blood, shall be saved from wrath through Him," but equally true is it that "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Between these two portions there is a great gulf fixed, and the whole drift of revelation precludes the thought of transference from one to the other after this life.

There is one other explanation put forward to explain the future position of those Christians who are, according to this theory, excluded from the Kingdom. "They will be simply left in their graves." But what will become of those living on the earth when the Lord returns? If they are worthy neither to be taken away nor to inherit the Kingdom, how are they to be disposed of?

A Partial Resurrection and Rapture!

I believe the doctrine of a partial resurrection and rapture is without solid base. The 144,000 of Revelations 14 are said to be these favoured raptured saints! But in chapter 7 we learn they are Israelites chosen in equal number from the 12 tribes. On what principle can Judah, Simeon, Benjamin mean the church? If this were so then "the church" in which there is no Jew or Gentile, might mean Jewish tribes in which all are Jews. The Bible becomes a gramophone which will say anything you like to put into it. No, the church will have been taken away years before the 144,000 Jewish witnesses even begin their testimony, much more before these are seen with the Lamb on Mount Zion.

But does it not say that "to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation?" (Heb. 9:28). Yes, but the context does not favour the idea that these are certain faithful

Christians. The atmosphere of the chapter is the day of atonement. On that day the altar of incense was supposed to be transferred into the Holiest, being conventionally represented by the golden censer. In verse 5 of Hebrews 9 we see this order actually noted, which shows that this special day is in view.

On the day in question Israel was divided into two classes. The High Priest alone in the Holiest, the rest of the nation outside the tabernacle. The antitype is now in progress. The Great High Priest has entered in. Those that look for Him are the people of God in contrast with the world—Amalekites and Edomites—who have no interest in such matters. The word translated "look for" occurs in five other places—Romans 8:23-25; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Galatians 5:5; Philippians 3:20, and always in connection with the coming of Christ. The Apostle takes for granted that all these saints, whether their state was good like that of the Philippians, or low like that of the Corinthians and Galatians were looking for Christ. If these last named churches were in a bad state they were, according to the "partial rupture" theory, in danger of being left behind, and they ought to have been told so. Why does the apostle not warn them? Why is it to these fallen Galatians he writes, "we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (not by faithfulness). Why is it to these carnal Corinthians he reveals the mystery, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed . . . the dead shall be raised incorruptible." Could anything be more inclusive for sleeping and living saints? It was thus the apostle was taught of God to revive these failing saints, not by threats of passing through the great tribulation or of losing their part in the Kingdom, but by unfolding to them the exceeding grace of God.

"Wicked Christians" in Hell.

Even more explicit is I Thessalonians 4:16-18, "The dead in Christ shall rise first . . . then we which are alive and remain (lit., who are being left) shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." "The dead in Christ," none left in their graves; "We which are alive," none left on the earth. Not a hint of a partial resurrection, not a word of any saint being left behind, not a whisper of a third class of unworthy saints, of "wicked Christians," who will be shut up in darkness or hell fire. The apostle closes by exhorting the saints to "comfort one another with these words." How could they if in "supreme uncertainty" of their own fate or that of their beloved dead? It would be like telling a man whose wife had sailed on the "Titanic," to take comfort in the thought that she was alive and well before there was the slightest news that she was. This would be truly to "sing songs to a heavy heart." In the last chapter of this same epistle the apostle adds one word more of assurance to these saints to gladden their hope and encourage them to holiness. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake (i.e., be wakeful—the same word employed in verse 6) or sleep (i.e., be sleepy—the word used in verses 6 and 7 and quite distinct from the word translated "sleep," in chapter 4:14), we should live together with Him." The Spirit seems to have anticipated this erroneous teaching when he uttered, by the mouth of Zechariah, the words, "The Lord my God shall come and *all the saints* with thee" (chap. 14:5), and, by the mouth of Paul, "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with *all His saints*," and again "when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired *in all them that believe*." How could the Lord come with all His saints, if some had never been taken away. How could all believers admire Him if some are "in outer darkness," "in Hades," or "in the lake of fire?" To ignore the plain teaching of such Scriptures and to build on a disputed interpretation of Revelation 14 and on inferences and analogies, is like a Unitarian going to the book of Exodus to refute the divinity of the Lord, and ruling out the writings of John.

In Romans 5:2, we see that rejoicing in hope of the glory of God belongs to the justified. This agrees with 8:17, "If children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together with Him."

We suffer with Christ by the fact that we are one with Him. "The suffering with Him," as one has said, "implies a pain due to union." The only other place this exact word occurs is in 1 Corinthians 12:26, "If one member suffer, all the members *suffer with it*." The suffering is inseparable in one form or another whether the believer is a Great-Heart, of a Faint-Heart, for he has Satan against him because he belongs to Christ, the flesh lusting because he is a temple of the Spirit, and the world opposing because he is of the Father. But he makes up his mind to be identified with Christ in suffering now, so as to be associated with Him later in glory. That the word translated "if" here does not necessarily imply doubt seems clear from a reference to the only other places where it is used: Romans 3:30; 8:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:6; 1 Corinthians 8:5, 15, 15.

Suffering for Christ is somewhat another thought. This was granted as a special gift to the Philippians, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:29). That a share in the glory is the outcome of faith is clear from two other expressions in Romans 8, verse 18, where the apostle speaks unhesitatingly of "the glory which shall be revealed in us," and verse 20, where the glory is so assured as to be regarded as already granted, "whom He justified, them He also glorified."

Mistaken Teaching as to the Kingdom.

If we are to escape this mistaken teaching as to entrance into the Kingdom, we must avoid the erroneous premisses on which it is based.

(1) **The first is that all who are called disciples in the gospels were genuine**, and that, therefore, every warning addressed by our Lord to such must apply to-day to true children of God.

A member of parliament might address a public meeting in his constituency as his electors without any illusion on his part that all were so. The Lord said to some that believed on Him, "If ye continue in My word then are ye My disciples indeed."

Some of those addressed were "sons of the devil" (see John 8:44). In John 6:66, we read, "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him," and the Lord had "known from the beginning" that these did not really believe in Him. The word disciple means a learner, and a man might be ever "learning (same word) and never come to the knowledge of the truth." Judas was among the disciples, when the Lord spake of "cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye" and might have benefitted by these warnings, but, alas, "he loved the wages of unrighteousness." So with the word servant. If Satan is transformed into an angel of light, no wonder his servants take the place of ministers of righteousness. The evil servant of Matthew 24:48, had taken the place of the true servant, but was a hypocrite at heart, and was judged accordingly.

(2) **The next mistake is to imagine that all in the early churches were true saints.** The epistles were addressed to the saints in the churches, but not all in the churches were therefore saints. As Augustine says, "The church has children among her enemies and enemies among her children." John, speaking of such, says "They went out from us but they were not of us," and Jude speaks of "ungodly men who had crept in unawares and were turning the grace of God into lasciviousness." There were those, too, among the Hebrews, who had "forsaken the assembling of themselves together" and become in some cases apostates. Such were false professors who, though admitted by error into the local churches, had never possessed true faith in Christ. How fitting then are the warnings imbedded in the epistles. If some taking their place as believers acted like the ungodly, let them take heed lest they should prove to be so.

Then follows {in 1 Cor. 6} a terrible list: fornicators, idolators, adulterers, drunkards, revilers, who would not inherit the Kingdom of God. We are asked to believe that this list describes "unfaithful Christians," who will eventually get to heaven after a thousand years of hell fire. But thank God the next verse disproves this. The apostle is describing not Christians at all but types of the unrighteous world, for he goes on to say, "And such **were** some of you, but ye were washed, ye were sanctified, ye were justified, etc." A David may fall into immorality, a Noah into drunkenness, a Lot may settle down in Sodom, and a Peter may deny his Lord, even thrice, with oaths and curses; but one swallow does not make a spring, nor does even one grievous fall constitute a believer an unrighteous man. Lot never ceased to be righteous even when living among the Sodomites. David was never characteristically an adulterer, nor Noah a drunkard, nor Peter a blasphemer... The epistles are for saints, the warnings in them for professors. "No whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolator, hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God." This verse has been embodied in a circular widely distributed by post, and is quoted in the interests of this mistaken teaching as "explicitly asserting the exclusion of certain believers (!!)" who are warned that their crown is in jeopardy." Is it not shocking to speak of such as "certain believers?"

Then in Galatians 5, after the enumeration of the works of the flesh, the warning note is sounded, "they that do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God." These "workers of iniquity" are again supposed to be failing believers, but in the philosophy of these teachers no room is found for the radical distinction that exists between "practising" sin, and being "overtaken in a fault." But the distinction is drawn in the very context of the passage above quoted, in the first verse of the next chapter. Truly the flesh is in the believer, and there is no sin he may not "be overtaken" in (Gal. 6:1), but he does not become "a man in the flesh" for that. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, all fell into lying and other faults, yet they will not spend the Millennium with all liars in the lake of fire, but will sit down, as we have already seen, in the Kingdom of God (Matt. 8:12). But murderers, whoremongers, and idolators are classed with the fearful, the unbelieving, and will have their part in the lake of fire, though they might all have been saved in virtue of the precious blood of Christ, had they been willing to repent of their sins and believe God. To blunt the edge of the warnings to these wicked men by supposing they may be Christians who will eventually enter heaven, is very like "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness." The word of God speaks with no uncertain sound. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," and where men are characteristically and openly vicious and unholy they will never see the Kingdom nor Heaven either.

"Overcomers."

(3) **A third misconception which lies at the root of this mistaken teaching is that there is a particular class of believers who are described as "overcomers,"** while the rest are the "overcome." Though many hold this view I believe it is erroneous. It would be like saying that some living fish swim up stream and some never succeed in doing so, whereas we know there is in every living fish a power that enables it to overcome the current which sweeps away the dead.

Such words as "he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" are pressed by some to show that there are believers who will be hurt of the second death. But the contrast is not between one class of believers and another, but between physical death and eternal death. The promise was for the consolation and strength of the persecuted saints at Smyrna. They might be hurt of the first death, they would never feel the second. "He that overcometh" describes a true believer who is proved to be real. Overcoming does not imply never being overcome, but overcoming at last. A general may suffer reverses and yet conquer in the long run. Then his reverses are forgotten. He is now the conqueror. Of

Gad it was said, "a troop shall overcome him but he shall overcome at last." And thus he proved an overcomer. When Joshua fought with Amalek and Moses held up his hands in prayer, then Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed, but by the power of God Joshua proved to be eventually the victor. And so by grace the church will overcome her Amalek at last.

"Jehovah is our strength,
And he shall be our song,
We shall o'ercome at length
Although our foes be strong,
In vain doth Satan now oppose
For God is stronger than our foes."

The final victor in the great spiritual conflict of this life is the overcomer. Overcoming is the prerogative of the child of God and is by faith. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4, 5). This overcoming is attributed to those who are of God, because they are of God, and because of the greatness of Him Who indwells them. "Ye are of God . . . and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37). It may be objected that all the passages quoted from John refer to overcoming the world, whereas the "overcoming" in Revelation 2 and 3 is more general; but what could be more general than the verse just quoted from Romans promising final victory and more than victory over "tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or sword," and over the nine-fold opposing forces of the following verses?

On the other hand, if we sum up the promises of recompense to the overcomer, what is there left for these believers who are, by this theory, in no sense overcomers? I do not maintain that "overcoming" is automatic. No true believer would say so; he feels his weakness, he knows the power of the enemy, he watches and prays for overcoming grace. His cry is increasingly "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe," but in praying thus he does not prove himself to be an extraordinary Christian, he proves himself to be a Christian.

To refer again to Revelation 21:7, 8, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; . . . but the fearful, and unbelieving . . . shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." Are these "overcome believers?" No, they are expressly said to be unbelievers. Instead of overcoming by the grace of God they have rejected that grace, and are eternally lost. And notice there is no intermediate class.

"Blessed and Holy."

But does it not say "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power?" (Rev. 20:6). Can it be said that all believers are "blessed and holy?" Will there not, therefore, be some who will not qualify for the first resurrection, and over whom the second death will have power? We have seen that there is no such thing in Scripture as a partial resurrection of the just. "Blessed and holy" is merely a characteristic description of the just, of all the people of God. Not one of such will ever taste of death. And this is exactly what our Lord says, "If a man keep My saying (the equivalent of obey the gospel), he shall never see death" (John 8:51). This is expressed in equivalent terms by the Pharisees. "He shall never taste death." Again, "He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." "This is the bread that came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." Even physical death is abolished for the believer, he sleeps, but does not die, much more will he never taste the second death.

These teachers only ask us to revise our whole conception of scriptural teaching. We thought, and still believe, that the travellers on the broad road are worldlings going down, unless they repent, to a lost eternity; but we are told they may be true Christians on their way to eternal glory, but in danger of forfeiting a place in the Kingdom. So with those described as "adulterers, fornicators, drunkards, etc." We are asked to believe that they may be citizens of heaven, who must be shut out of "the Kingdom of God," as a punishment for their sins. This kind of difference between heaven and the Kingdom simply does not exist in the word of God. "Entering the Kingdom" is a Scriptural equivalent for being saved....The antithesis to being in the Kingdom is being cast out into outer darkness, and there is no hint of any deliverance from that awful condition. It is "the blackness of darkness forever" (Jude 13). Again, in Matthew 25:31-46, those who do not "inherit the Kingdom" will go into eternal punishment, that "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." These persons are addressed as "Ye cursed!" Is this the way in which the Lord would address His redeemed, the beloved of the Father, "blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ?" Truly this teaching is subversive of all sane and sober interpretation of God's word. These teachers affirm that companies like the wonder workers of Matthew 7:22; the foolish virgins of Matthew 25:12; the professors of Luke 13:24-30, may perfectly well be children of God shut out of the Kingdom but on their way to heaven. But one of the prerogatives of all true sheep is to be known of the Good Shepherd, who said, "I know My sheep and am known of mine." How then can those be sheep to whom the Lord says, "I never knew you?"