

spirit for those who entered the kingdom under his ministrations. He baptized with water unto repentance, while he pointed to the Lamb of God that should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire, "which taketh away the sin of the world" by the Spirit. But yet it is the same kingdom in one sense, transferred, as it were, from Moses to John, and from John to Jesus.

Jesus said to the Jews, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof," Mat. 21: 43. This shows they held the kingdom in a certain sense. Again, "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, who are entering, to go in," Mat. 23: 13. "Ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and ye yourselves thrust out," Luke 16: 16. As the first legal children of the kingdom, now bearing no fruit, they "shall be cast out," Mat. 8: 11.

Hence the kingdom of heaven is likened unto such different things. As among the Jews then, it might be likened unto "an householder" who planted a vineyard and hedged it, &c., (23) and went into a far country; and in due time sent his servants one after another, for the fruits; whom they beat, stoned, and killed. Then the Son was sent, whom they killed, hoping to get the inheritance. With John the Baptist, like unto a mustard seed, which he could hold in his hand while he prepared the way or soil: as an apparent lifeless form he could sow it and transfer the field to Jesus, under whose spiritual, life-giving power, it would spring forth and branch into luxuriant life and beauty. Yes, with Jesus the kingdom of heaven was spirit, and life, and power, to the eternal salvation of the soul by grace and truth. "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you," he said. The kingdom received by him to be carried on to perfection, he had received in legal form and outline, and as under law, as a ministrations of death, from Moses by magnifying that law and becoming its end in death; while from John the Baptist, as representing in the stage of repentance and external washing as a preparation for the pure indwelling of divine faith as the spirit of life, he had received it by fulfilling "all righteousness."

And soon after this time, these three necessary departments, styles and principles, as parts, periods and principles absolutely necessary to the constituting of the perfect spiritual kingdom of God, will, by their respective representatives, meet, harmonize, agree in the one spirit (of Jesus) and resolve into one; and as such, testified to, and approved of God by the cloud of witnesses enveloping the whole, (on the mount of transfiguration) which, clearing away, will disclose "Jesus only" the one embodiment of the spiritual kingdom of heaven.

And this is the kingdom of heaven

referred to, the least in which was greater than John the Baptist. While aside from this kingdom, no prophet, priest, king or any under the legal dispensation, indeed, none of all born of woman were greater than he.—John the Baptist was here contrasted as in his official capacity, dignity and knowledge, and as born of a woman, which fell far short in experimental and spiritual knowledge of divine things as revealed by the Spirit in being born of God. John was connected with, and represented the kingdom of heaven in its future of repentance, as a preparatory stage for the living faith coming after. He represented the kingdom as a house builded in form, yet wanting the living inhabitant. He prepared the way for the Lord. And, as representing this external preparation, as of outward work, or baptism in water, he was as far behind the least in the more perfect kingdom of heaven in spiritual knowledge of the divine and glorious mysteries of truth and grace, resulting in eternal salvation, as repentance and water baptism were behind faith and spiritual baptism. The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ.

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." This marks a definite time—from the days of John the Baptist until now. This is as much as to say it did not suffer this violence before or after. "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John," is added in the next verse as a reason or answer of this. Luke says, concerning this "the law and the prophets were until John, since which time the kingdom of heaven is preached, and every man presseth into it."—Luke 16: 16. That is, the legal dispensation was in force, and the Jewish nation exclusively held and claimed the covenant and keys, or lettered legal system, as the oracles of God, called the kingdom of God; and a Jew only was admitted until the fulness of the time was come, when, for their disobedience and abuse of, the kingdom was to be "taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." The appearance of John the Baptist, as the forerunner of Messiah, indicated that time.

In the prophecy of Daniel it reads concerning this time—"seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy."—Dan. 9: 24. This seventy weeks is about one year and a half, and to my mind, includes the time of the public ministry of John before the baptism of Jesus. When John had baptized him, he initiated him into the kingdom, and hence restored it. God had committed the kingdom to men—to the Jews—till the time of the restitution of all things connected with it. The Jews, by gross wickedness and unbelief, it would seem, hastened the time. But the fulness of the time was come for God to send forth his Son. And

Elias must first prepare the way.—And the kingdom must be transferred as it were. And in the apparent disorder and excitement of this transfer and restoration, the kingdom suffers violence. The disciples of Jesus even did violence in their misconceptions of the principles, and Jesus said to them in correction and in answer to them; "how is it that Elias must first come? Elias verily first cometh and restoreth all things."—Mark 9: 12.

"Know, therefore, and understand, from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah, the prince, shall be seven weeks."—Dan. 9: 25. John the Baptist, in the spirit of Elias, received this commandment, as the restorer of all things; and the legal restoration, and the receiver of the kingdom of God, was witnessed by the Spirit as a dove, and the voice of the Father in testimony of pleasure and acceptance—"This is my beloved Son, hear ye him."

"The prince (Jesus), shall be seven weeks." This includes the time of his temptation in the wilderness, forty days. Then the devil leaveth him, and behold angels came and ministered unto him. Now, when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth he came and dwelt in Capernaum. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Matt. 4: 11, 17. Luke, speaking in reference to the same time, says he went into the synagogue, and they gave him the book, and he read—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and the eyes of all them in the synagogue were fastened upon him.—And he began to say unto them: This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."—Luke 4: 18, 21.

This is to show the specified time. Seven weeks, or forty-nine days were accomplished after his baptism, before the set time fully and officially taking charge of his kingdom. From the day of John the Baptist until now—this particular day and time, the kingdom of heaven suffered violence. The law and the prophets were until John, making the kingdom, as it were, settled and secure; but since John it is preached to all classes and conditions—preached as removed, and as independent of the masters, Scribes, and Pharisees—preached as under transfer and restoration, and as on condition of repentance instead of the old carnal ordinances and Jewish rites, and as pointing to Jesus, the Lamb of God to take away sin, and "every man presseth into it."

This pressing, and vehement contentings, without a proper heart-felt regard, and understanding of its principles, was the sense in which it suffered violence, and not by physical force, or any thing of that kind. In the same sense it was said the Scribes

and Pharisees, hypocrites, should see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sit down in the kingdom, and they themselves should be thrust out.

The miraculous birth, and attending circumstances connecting with John and Jesus, together with the general disorder and confusion, both religiously and politically had created an excited and vehement disputations spirit, and "all men were in expectation." And so vague were the prophecies concerning John the Baptist, and so sudden and unusual was his appearance and preaching, that no doubt quite erroneous and unjust conceptions were entertained of his mission; and here was a moral violence. While the intolerable burdens, placed upon the prescribed classes, made them ready for any change. And no doubt but a majority of those coming to John's baptism, came in a contentious disputations spirit without any experimental knowledge, or even special respect and understanding of the principles of the kingdom as presented by John. And by this right—by the right of numbers—may be said to have taken the kingdom, and that by violence.

For the law and the prophets were until John; and these had, so to speak, the legal authority to hold and protect the kingdom. But from the days of John the Baptist, till Jesus Christ officially received the kingdom, it was at the mercy, so to speak, of all the regions round about Judah. John had not the spiritual authority to discern and judge spirits, nor the legal authority to forbid the kingdom to any process of agreeing to its external demands which were outward, its literal water baptism unto repentance. He could only warn them of him that came after, whose fan was in his hand, and he would thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat, and burn the chaff.

When the kingdom, as it just had then done, came into the hands of Jesus it would be unto much greater perfection. And John being cast into prison, as indication of his mission having ceased, Jesus would by the Spirit of God cast out devils, and the spiritual kingdom of God, or the same, in demonstration of spirit and of power, would have come unto the subjects. And here the initiatory process was changed, and the baptism, by the Holy Ghost and with fire, protected from violence. Besides, now, Jesus has all authority and rule. All things are delivered to him of the Father; and no man can know the Father save the Son and to whomsoever the Son reveals him.—The word of God as a two-edged sword guards the kingdom. And those that labored and are heavy laden are invited to come, even as the Father shall draw them, and none shall pluck them away, while no unclean thing shall enter.

And yet there is still a certain sense in which the kingdom of heaven shall always suffer violence in this specified time, represented by John the Baptist. The time of repentance in christian experience, included between the law and Christ, will ever suffer this violence or be subjected to a contending, striving, dis-