

# The Kingdom Family of God

The Bible is a book of faith and hope. It looks, not backward or downward, but forward and upward. Its face is ever set toward the Dawn. It always points us toward the best that is yet to come — the completion, maturity, fullness, consummation. In its first pages we read of the heaven blest Eden; of a time when mankind was free from pain, sorrow and evil, because man was free from sin. While man walked in his primitive state of innocence his home was a Garden — the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. He reigned splendidly over all realms from the lowest to the highest, symbolized in the dominion given him over the lowest realm of the fish of the sea, the higher realm of the beasts of the earth, and the highest realm of all, the birds of the heavens. These are but word-pictures of a dominion more powerful and extensive than mortal minds can comprehend. God was his familiar Friend and intimate Father. But we read on a page or two and a change comes over the order of things. Eden, the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, disappears, becoming but a history recorded, a faint memory beyond the pall that hangs dreadfully over the mind of man. Joy, peace, glory, power, holiness and life vanish, and leave in their wake sorrow, discord, weakness, shame and death. When man sinned pain, limitation, frustration and death entered the world, man's heavens grew black with clouds; God no longer communed with him in the spirit of the Day, and he was driven out of the Garden, at the gates of which the cherubim were posted with swords of flame that pointed every way, as if to say, "No return, no return."

Then Jesus came! The message He gave was the Kingdom of God. It was the center and circumference of all He taught and did. After four tragic millenniums the gates of Eden suddenly swung open and the Kingdom of Heaven was seen again on earth. A man in God's image and likeness stepped forth out of that long-closed Land of the Interface and the glory and power and nature of God was seen upon Him. He came with a gospel — the GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD. He lived and moved in the realm of sonship full and complete. He lived and moved in the realm of the Kingdom which He came to proclaim and which for three years or more He demonstrated before men. He began His public ministry with preaching the gospel of God, saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the good news." On His first circuit through Galilee, He taught in their synagogues, and preached the good news of the Kingdom, Himself saying, "I must preach the good tidings of the Kingdom of God to the other cities also: for therefore was I sent." On His second circuit through Galilee, He went about through cities and villages, preaching, healing, and bringing the good tidings of the Kingdom of God. On His third circuit through Galilee, He went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, healing the sick, casting out devils, raising the dead, and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom. When He was near Bethsaida, and saw the great multitudes who were as sheep having no shepherd, He had compassion on them, and ministered to their needs, and spake to them of the Kingdom of God. Even when He presented Himself alive following His crucifixion, by many proofs, He appeared to His apostles during forty days, speaking of the things concerning the Kingdom of God. Creation once more beheld God in the form of man.

Eden is God's picture of His plan for man. Eden is the proto-type of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. This Kingdom plan was fully represented in the Garden of Eden. All four necessary elements of the Kingdom of God were there in Eden. Eden was the land, Adam and Eve were the people, the Lord was the King, and the Lord's command about the eating of the trees of the Garden was the law. God's own ideal for man was not a kingdom as we conceive of it, but a family. All the world was to be a Garden of Eden. God and man were to live together in sweetest, most intimate fellowship. The family is God's ideal for us. Israel was a family — the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were the tribal families of Israel. The family became a kingdom, but it was a family-kingdom. Joseph was given the birthright, Judah was given the scepter, unto Levi was committed the priesthood, and each tribe had its part.

Adam was the son of God, and Eve was his daughter-wife, with their home in a Garden, and God Himself a Father-Mother in the midst. Its atmosphere was love; its music the rhythm of their wills with His. Sweeter music never filled human ear. When the work of redemption is fully accomplished, and every bit of darkness and discord destroyed, we know again the glories of Eden — the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Then the ideal of the Father's heart is realized. The Garden becomes a City, but it is a Garden-City, all the sweet simplicity of the nature-life of the Garden, and all the authority and glory of the City, are joined in that wondrous Garden-City and City-Garden. God's elect are now citizens in that glorious City. We are a family of sons gathered into Christ Jesus. We see His face in the spirit, His likeness is upon our countenances, for His name is written in our foreheads. Our light is the glory of His presence, His life-giving Spirit the water that flows through our street and waters our tree. Our atmosphere is love; and the music of wills made one in Him pervades our land.

The Kingdom of Heaven on earth is the eternal union of heaven and earth. The Kingdom of Heaven is not a place in heaven or upon the earth. It is the blending, merging, intersecting of heaven and earth. The spiritual realm provides the government, the righteousness, the wisdom and knowledge, the peace and joy, the love, the wonder, the eternal significance, and the glory of the Kingdom. The people and things of earth are the outward forms and visible expression of the inward reality of the Kingdom.

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