**VOLUME 5; CHAPTER 22 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE KINGDOM: THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Blessed is be that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.*

*Luke 14:15,27*

OUR THEME TONIGHT IS THAT OF THE DEMAND WHICH the King makes in respect of His own enterprises upon those who enter the Kingdom. That is the real signification of His words, spoken in answer to one of those who sat at meat with Him in the Pharisee's house.

By bringing these two verses together, I have desired to direct your attention for a moment, by way of introduction, to the matters which precede my text in this chapter. The complete story with which this chapter, and the following two, deal, is full of interest, and to read it quite simply and artlessly, as for the first time, is to discover the growth of the teaching. We, in company with His first disciples, are led on, and ever on, by our Lord in an ever growing understanding of His mission; and in the heart of this whole paragraph to which I have referred, the words occur, "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after Me, cannot be my disciple."

I am going to crave, and perhaps tax, your patience for a moment while we attempt to see all this narrative which surrounds the text, for by extensive examination we shall come to intensive application. In the fourteenth chapter, we have the story of how Jesus went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread, and in that connection the significant declaration is made, that, "they were watching Him." What immediately follows reveals the yet more interesting fact, that while they watched Him, He watched them. Somewhere on the outskirts of the crowd was a man afflicted with dropsy; and the Lord challenged them as to whether it was legal for Him to heal him on the Sabbath; and when they held their peace, He healed the man and let him go. Then He observed how they chose the chief seats, and in a parable rebuked them. According to the law of the Kingdom of God, if a man makes a feast, a dinner or a supper, he will not call his friends, nor his brethren, nor his kinsmen, nor his rich neighbor. Why not? Notice this very carefully, "Lest haply they bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee." I do not know a more caustic piece of satire than that upon the whole business of entertaining even as it obtains today. Do not ask your friends lest they ask you again! That is often the very reason why we do ask them. In that remarkable contrast between the ideal of Jesus, and the habit of our own age, there flashes into view the difference between the self-governed kingdom of the world, and the Kingdom of God. As one of the number listened to Him - and I am never quite sure and I quite frankly say so, whether he was impressed with the beauty of the ideal, or whether he was a cynic and laughed at its impossibility - but whether for that reason or the other, this man said to Him, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." In other words this man said, that is a counsel of perfection, surely it must be a vision of the Kingdom of God that a man shall be so forgetful of himself as not to invite friends lest they should ask him again, but that instead he shall ask and entertain and show hospitality to men who cannot return it. "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." Whether satirically, or in admiration, he meant to say, "That will be a wonderful social order, blessed is the man that is in that Kingdom, blessed is the man that lives there." Then, catching up his own figure, that of eating bread in the Kingdom, Jesus said to him, "A certain man made a great supper; and he bade many"; and went on to describe how all that were bidden made excuses; not one of them gave a reason, they made excuses. One said he had bought a piece of land and must needs go and see it - and either he was an extremely bad business man, or a very bad dissembler, for no sensible man will buy land until he has seen it. A second man had bought five yoke of oxen and must go and try them - and the same criticism applies to him as to the first. The third man said he had married a wife and therefore he could not come.

All these were excuses! "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God," said the man; and Christ replied in effect, Men do not believe that; the supper is made, the invitations have been sent out, but the men invited will not come into the Kingdom, "they all with one consent began to make excuse"; because the bidden guests have refused, the master of the feast is now calling the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind; and because these do not fill the table, he is sending forth again to constrain all to come in. God is anxious for the coming of His Kingdom because of the blessing its coming brings to men. Man is not anxious for the coming of the Kingdom, he is not prepared to pay the price of the Kingdom.

Then multitudes followed Him, and He turned and said, "If any man cometh unto Me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple."

"Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." Do you really think so? said Christ. Listen, the man that is going to help Me to bring in that Kingdom will have to do so through the process of suffering. The man that follows Me in the building and in the battle which issue in the coming of the Kingdom must be prepared to take up his cross and follow Me. Thus He explained the reason of the severity of His terms, and at the close I read, "Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto Him for to hear Him. And both the Pharisees and the Scribes murmured, saying, This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them," He then answered their criticism of His attitude by the threefold parable of the lost silver, the lost sheep, and the lost son.

This is the outline of the great paragraph. If we think of it in its entirety, if we take that extensive outlook, we see at once that the mind of Jesus, throughout the whole process, was occupied with the work He had to do in order to bring the Kingdom in. The man who sat at meat with Him had some gleam of the social order. There came to him some conception of the beneficence of that Kingdom of God in which men should cease to be selfish and should care for their fellow men, and he exclaimed, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." The mind of Christ was centered upon the ultimate, but it was conscious also of the process that leads to the ultimate; therefore, He sifted the crowds that followed Him in order to find amongst them men and women upon whom He could depend for co-operation in the work that lay before Him. My text, therefore, is Christ's enunciation of the oath of allegiance to be taken by all such as desire, not merely to be in His Kingdom and of His Kingdom, but to be workers with Him for bringing it in, and establishing in the world the order which all men admire and which God desires; but to bring in which, all men are not prepared to suffer and toil.

I am profoundly anxious that before we give a little closer attention to the actual terms of this word of Jesus, we should definitely understand to whom it was spoken, and what it means in broad outline. Jesus Christ was not here laying down the terms upon which men may be saved. He was rather laying down the terms upon which men may become fellow-workers with Himself. We have on more than one occasion in dealing with this passage drawn attention to the fact that the figures which our Lord made use of, those of building a tower, and of conducting a war, are applicable not to the men to whom He spoke, but to Himself. I do not desire to stay with that at any length, only we must understand it. He said to them, "Which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost … or what king, as he goeth to encounter another king in war, will not first sit down and take counsel?" by which He did not mean, if you are coming after Me you had better count the cost, but rather, I am in the world to bring in that Kingdom which you admire; I am here for the building of that city. I must count the cost. I cannot associate with Myself in the work of building, or in the work of battle, any save those who take this oath of allegiance, those who are prepared to take up their cross and follow Me. Christ is the builder. He is the King, and He sifts the rank of the multitudes that admire Him, to find the souls that are willing to suffer with Him, and die with Him, in order to accomplish His purpose.

Accepting that interpretation of the meaning of our Lord, let us observe carefully how in this paragraph our Lord revealed His consciousness of what lay before Him ere that Kingdom of God could come which the man, sitting at the table with Him, had admired. I think the subject is a very pertinent one and a very immediate one. There are multitudes of men who are still saying, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." There never were so many men in the world as now, who admire the ideals of Jesus, His ultimate purposes for men, His great teaching concerning the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humanity, His great conceptions for human life manifested in such remarkable words as these, "One is your Master ... and all ye are brethren." That is but a brief sentence but it is the unveiling of the perfect ideal; one master, and all others brethren. I say men by the thousand today are admiring those ideals. If not in the words of the man who sat at meat with Him, still in spirit with Him, they are saying the social ideal of Jesus is perfect. "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God,"

"Very well," says Christ, "if you mean it, are you prepared to go with Me along the road that I must travel in order to bring that Kingdom in? Between chaos and cosmo lies the Cross. Between the disorder that you lament, and the order that you admire, there is travail and blood-shedding and suffering. If you are coming with Me the way I am going, to the goal which you admire, you must take up your cross and follow Me."

Thus our contextual examination enables us to see what was Christ's consciousness of all that lay before Him. I turn again to words already referred to in order to discover that consciousness. He said, "Which of you, desiring to build a tower …what king, as he goeth to encounter another king in war …" "To build a tower"; "to make war upon another king"; these are significant words as revealing Christ's consciousness of what it was necessary for Him to do in order to bring in the Kingdom. All of you who are students of the Bible - not merely of small portions of it, restricted parts, but in the majesty of its sweep and the growth of its revelation - will at once recognize that when Jesus speaks of building a tower there is a remarkable suggestiveness in the illustration. The first occasion upon which we read anything of the building of a tower is in Genesis, in the account of the attempt at Babel. Why did men suggest the building of a tower, according to the Genesis story? I remember a Sunday-school teacher telling me years ago that they attempted to build a tower so high that if another flood came they could climb to the top and be safe! If you go back to the ancient story, you read "Let us make us a name." They said in effect, let us become confederate without God. There existed in their mind the passion of humanity for the solidarity of humanity, and they were trying to realize it, without God. They said, "Let us build a tower which shall be the symbol of our independence and our federation." Exactly the same thing men are still attempting, to confederate, and disarm the nations without putting God in the forefront; and they will never succeed. The passion is a Divine one. It is the method that is wrong. Go on through the Old Testament, and we read of building over and over again; sometimes it is a city, but constantly the passion for building, for construction is manifest; it is all material, and therefore doomed to ultimate failure. I track the movement from the Babel of Genesis to Babylon of Revelation, where I hear the strange and wonderful music, "Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the great." When? When the kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

Christ came to build, to construct; to create the federation of men. He did not come into this world merely to save individual souls out of it; He did come to do that; but He came also to reconstruct human life, and the human order; and the mission of the King will never be complete, until the city is built, and the anthem rings through heaven and earth, and all the universe, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men." Then there will be reconstructed human society, reconstructed national life; no longer kingdoms, but the Kingdom; no longer nations, but the nation; no longer peoples, but the people. Confederacy upon the basis of loyalty to God. Thus Christ took the old figure of the Old Testament, and said, "To build a tower; to realize the aspiration of humanity; to accomplish the purpose of God; to lead broken, battered, bruised peoples into unity about the throne of God and in relationship to the most high; that is My work."

Yes, but if the mission of Christ is building, and that is constructive, the mission of Jesus is therefore that of war, and that is destructive. "To make war against another king." He was in the world to make war against the king who offered Him, in sublime impertinence, all the kingdoms of the world if He would give him one moment's homage; against the one presiding over all the things that hurt and spoil humanity. Let us gain the light of another simple saying of Jesus upon this great subject. "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth." There are only two forces at work in the moral realm; the force that gathers, and the force that scatters. The prince of the force that scatters is the devil, and the force that scatters is evil, sin. The Prince of the force that gathers is the King of kings; and the force that gathers is the force of love and light and life. Said Jesus, "I am in the world to gather, to build; but in the process, I am in the world to fight, to destroy the works of the devil, to enter into conflict even unto death with all the things that harm and spoil, to enter into the '… one death-grapple in the darkness twixt old systems and the Word.' "

This the mission of Jesus, to build and to fight. Which of you if you had a tower to build would not select with definiteness and precision those who would help you in your building? What king of whom you ever read in the pages of history, deserving that name, if he were about to make war against another king did not count the cost, whether he could meet him who came with twenty thousand, himself only having ten thousand? In other words, said Jesus, "I need men upon whom I can depend. I am not in the world to give the world a spectacle. I am in the world to reconstruct, and I can only reconstruct as I destroy. I am a Builder, but I am a Waster too. I am here to fight in order that I may put an end to war, and lead humanity to God and so to peace." To build, and to battle. The coming of His Kingdom, of which we have spoken, can only be accomplished in this twofold way.

Nineteen centuries have passed away since He uttered these words, and the work is not yet accomplished. Nineteen centuries ago someone wrote the letter to the Hebrews, and in it these words occur, "We see not yet all things subjected to Him." The centuries have run their course, yet here and now I repeat the words of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews: "We see not yet all things subjected to Him." The tower is not built; the city of God is not established. The commonwealth does not perfectly exist; the warfare is not ended. The foes of God are in every land, and every city, and every village. I need only state that, you know it; and if you know anything of the ideal, I think you can say as much as this Pharisee long ago said, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God," Yet that Kingdom is not perfectly come. The war is on; so is the building. The scaffolding is about the building; we have never yet seen all the beauty even of the outline. The enemies are all about the wall; and he who would have any share in the building must work with the sword and the trowel.

If, therefore, we are going to help Him we must take the oath of allegiance, and this is it, "Whosoever would come after Me, must take up his own cross and follow Me." In the days of Rome's greatness the Roman soldier took what was called the Sacramentum, which was an oath of allegiance, and when he did that he promised to obey his commander and not desert his standard. Our King says, "Those who would come after Me along this pathway of building and battle, toward that ultimate Kingdom, must take the Sacramentum, the oath of allegiance." What is it? Not a formula to be repeated. There is not a word sufficiently strong to express it; no vow that man can make can be depended upon in the day of crisis. The oath of allegiance is not a ceremony. Ceremony in itself forever fails, and there is none imposing and solemn enough to carry the meaning of the building and the meaning of the battle. The oath is an act, of which the Cross is the symbol. If the Cross is the symbol, what is the act? The silent, and actual surrender of the whole being to Christ. I do not know how to say this as it ought to be said! The thing I have said is a spacious thing if I did but know how to say it! If I could only utter it in the true tone, and with the right emphasis; if it could only ring as it ought to ring like a clarion call through this assembly, arresting us, startling us, there might be some hope. If I am to help to bring in the Kingdom of God, I must go after Him to building and to battle; but in order to do it I must take up my cross.

By the shores of the Galilean lake after His resurrection, He talked to Peter, and the last thing He said to him in the wonderful process of restoration from wandering to service, was this, "When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. … Follow Me." John adds in parenthesis, "This He spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God." Yes, but He also spoke of the principle upon which Peter should live and serve. In that word of Jesus there is the most remarkable unveiling of the meaning of taking up the cross. "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest." So long as I am doing that, I cannot help Him to build and to fight. Soul of mine, art thou girding thyself and walking whither thou wouldest; is the underlying reason even of thy preaching the pleasing of thyself? Then thy preaching never helps Him to build or to fight. You may be very popular with your friends, but you cannot help Christ to build. But, when you stretch out your hands and let Him gird you, and let Him command you; when you will take that life of yours with all its powers and possibilities, and all its resources, and sincerely hand it over to Him; when you will take up your cross; then you will help Him to build, and you will help Him to fight; your blow will tell on the strong-holds of evil, and the influence of your life will hasten the coming of the day of God.

"Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." We all come as far as that. I think the whole audience comes as far as that. I do not believe there is a man or woman or child in this house who has seen anything of the vision of the Kingdom of God as revealed in Jesus, but would say, blessed is the man who lives there. Jesus saw the great multitudes; He sees them now; He holds us for the moment; let Him speak. Oh, that I could be silent and be hidden, and Christ only heard and seen! The pierced hands seem to me to be sifting amongst us tonight, beginning here in the pulpit. He is after men and women who will help Him to fight. Am I prepared? If any man will come after Me toward that Kingdom, he must come My way. If any man will help Me in the building and the battle, he must take up his own cross. That is the Sacramentum. Are we prepared to take the oath of allegiance? Presently, many of us will gather about the table which we call the sacrament; and in that sense it is well so named. Any man who sits at that table and takes that bread and fruit of the vine, who does not at the same time deny himself and realize his responsibility to the world and to Christ, is a traitor as he partakes. "This is My body broken, My blood shed, for you." Let a man examine himself, and eat. This is the sacramentum and the symbol of it. Not that the taking of the bread and wine is sufficient; but it is the outward and visible sign of the inward and invisible attitude. There may be men and women here who have never yet enlisted under the banner of Christ, who have never yet begun to follow Him even for their own soul's salvation; let such begin to follow Him tonight for His sake, for the sake of the world, for the sake of His battle and His building; and if you will do so, I invite you to this table. Tonight there is no after-meeting, no inquiry room where we can speak together; none is necessary. Sit at this table, as one who says, "Tonight I will take up my cross and follow Him." By such act you take the oath of allegiance. God grant that the King may tonight find some men and women for His building and His battle.