

EARNESTLY CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH – March 2016

Southview Bible Church * 2007 So. 7th St. * Council Bluffs, IA. 51501

Phone: (712) 322-5743 E-mail: pastor@southviewbible.org * Web Site: www.southviewbible.org

The Gospel of the Kingdom

The word “gospel” literally means “good news”. When John the Baptist came preaching repentance he said, “**Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**” (Mt. 3:2). Jesus also came preaching, “**Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**.” (Mt. 4:17) John in preparing the way of the LORD called the people to repentance. Jesus then offered the kingdom to Israel on the condition of repentance. The fact that no formal definition of “the kingdom” was offered indicates that what was being presented was consistent with Old Testament prophecy in keeping with the Jewish expectation of a literal earthly Messianic Kingdom (cf. Mt. 19:28; 20:20-28).

However, Israel did not receive Jesus as her Messiah (cf. Jn. 1:11). Jewish opposition came to a climax in the “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit” (cf. Mt. 12:22-32). After the events of Matthew 12 the kingdom was no longer presented as being “at hand”. Instead the kingdom was then “DELAYED” as seen in the parables of Matthew 13. As Jesus got closer to the cross, instead of talking about the kingdom being “**at hand**”, His focus then became His impending death (cf. Lk. 9:31; 9:51; 12:50; 13:33).

The KINGDOM is what we might call “**God’s MASTER Program**”. Everything in one sense fits under this umbrella. All of God’s children in every era are eventually headed towards the kingdom (Jn. 3:3; 1 Cor. 6:9). The coming kingdom is the goal of all. However, we live in the Church Age. During this time Christ is building a forever family of believers called “the Body of Christ” or “The Church” (cf. 1 Cor. 12:27; Col. 1:24). The Messianic kingdom is yet future and remains to be established (cf. Acts 1:6; Heb. 10:13).

Colossians 1:13 says that we as believers have been “**transferred**” into the kingdom. But this is a POSITIONAL reality which is not yet realized in practice. Compare the POSITIONAL reality of being seated together with Christ right now in the heavens (cf. Eph. 2:6). As God’s children we are already citizens of the coming kingdom (cf. Phil. 3:20), but we are not there yet. However, we are to “**walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory**” (1 Thess. 2:12). As “kingdom citizens”, a “kingdom ethic” and “kingdom values” should define us (cf. Rom. 14:17).

Early in Christ’s ministry He presented the “**gospel of the kingdom**”. But toward the end of His ministry that emphasis faded in view of the cross. On this side of the cross, in the Church Age, we are **NOT** proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom as being at hand. Instead our emphasis is now specifically on “**the gospel of Christ**” (cf. Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Gal 1:6-9). This will remain the emphasis until the Tribulation Period. Then once again the coming kingdom will imminently be in view, and then “**this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world**” (Matt. 24:14).

Today in an effort “to build the kingdom” many emphasize being “missional”, “relevant”, “authentic”, or “social”. Often the hype is not about “the gospel of Christ” but instead about “social justice” and “cultural renewal” related to the kingdom. The “kingdom gospel” often quickly morphs into a “social gospel”. Various so-called “evangelical” leaders are now saying that the GOSPEL is not merely a message of reconciliation through Christ, but also involves a social dimension. The emphasis is not just about personal salvation, but also about solving world problems such as injustice, poverty, and ecological concerns. Thus the GOSPEL is subtly (or not so subtly) changed into a social gospel. (Yes, we have seen this before!)

Responding to the gospel of Christ consistently results in good fruit, including doing good to all as we have opportunity (cf. Gal. 6:10). However, the fruit of the gospel, is not to be confused with THE GOSPEL. The “Great Commission” is not to be confused with a “kingdom social agenda”. The gospel of Christ is not about setting “the whole world right” or “restoring creation”. Rather the gospel is all about “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16).

Thot: “I used to go to a poor sinner with the Bible in one hand and a loaf of bread in the other...but I soon found out that he wasn’t any more interested in the Gospel on that account. ...If I had the Bible in one hand and the loaf in the other the people always looked first at the loaf; and that was just the contrary of the order laid down in the Gospel.” – **D.L. Moody**

Earnestly Contending, Pastor Dwight J. Oswald