

PRESENT TRUTH

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Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 KJV)

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Spiritual War Series

The Coming of the Kingdom Part 1

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Previously

For the last eight or nine months this spiritual war series has looked at the enemy and the kingdom of darkness and how it has become established in the earth. This issue will begin to look at the Lord's answer to the manipulations of the enemy with the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

Definition

First, we should define what is meant by the Kingdom of God. We don't have kings in America so the idea of a kingdom is a little vague in most peoples' minds. A kingdom is where a king rules over a geographical territory and the population that resides in that territory. Another way of saying it is that a kingdom is a country that is governed by a king. So, we can say that the Kingdom of God is the government of God as it relates to His people, where Jesus rules as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

Historical Perspective

The Hebrews equated the Kingdom of God with the Kingdom of Israel. They couldn't see that the Messiah was applicable to more than Israel, nor that the Kingdom of God was also bigger than Israel. Even the disciples continually asked Jesus if He would now restore the kingdom to Israel.

At one time, God had directly governed Israel through the prophets and judges of the Old Testament. Under God, the government of Israel was completely and dramatically different than the governments of the heathen nations that surrounded them. However, there came a time when Israel was not satisfied with this arrangement, but wanted to be more like the nations around them and have a visible king that could be seen and would represent them in battle and other

occasions of royal pomp and circumstance.

1 Samuel 8:6-7 NASB

- (6) But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD.
- (7) The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.

But even in their rejection of Him, He had a plan that had already been established. Isaiah spoke of the coming future King.

Isaiah 9:6-7 NASB

- (6) For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
- (7) There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

The coming child, who has Prince of Peace as one of His names, will have the government on His shoulders. He will sit on the throne of David and over his kingdom. The kingdom will be established and upheld with justice and righteousness. The major characteristic of His government is peace and His rule and His peace will continually increase. This is one fantastic promise of the coming of the Kingdom of God, where Jesus rules as King in justice and righteousness, where the atmosphere is peace.

The Time of the Messiah

Since the child, the son that was given is Jesus and He, as King, is necessary for the Kingdom to function, when and where is the Kingdom of God? Is it something that we can see now or is it all still in the future?

John the Baptist, who was the one to prepare the way for Jesus, preached a simple message: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:2) [NOTE: *Some have tried to make a distinction between "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God"; but, in the Scriptures, there is no distinction. Matthew, a Hebrew, writing to Hebrews used "heaven" instead of "God" because of their reluctance to use God's name, lest they use it in vain. Scripture references describing the same events between the four Gospels refer to the "kingdom of God" where Matthew refers to the "kingdom of heaven".*] The declaration of the Kingdom of God was continued by Jesus and He continued to speak of the kingdom repeatedly as He was "about the Father's business". His first public sermon began with "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17) Mark's version of this is even plainer.

Mark 1:14-15 NASB

- (14) Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God,

- (15) and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Mark is linking the "gospel of God" with the Kingdom. This is important because we, in our evangelism and Church services, have un-linked the gospel and the Kingdom making them to appear to be unrelated. However, this is not what Jesus did.

Matthew 4:23 NASB

- (23) Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

Matthew 9:35 NASB

- (35) Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

Matthew 24:14 NASB

- (14) "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Notice that with the gospel of the Kingdom goes healing and deliverance. These are demonstrations of the validity of the Kingdom of God and the fact that the King has overcome all of the power of the enemy and has been given all authority in heaven and in earth. The Church has lost much of her demonstrations of power because she has stopped preaching the gospel of the Kingdom.

Transition

Jesus after continuing with John's message made an interesting statement revealing the transition between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

Luke 16:16 NASB

- (16) "The Law and the Prophets *were proclaimed* until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.

John was the transition point in God's message. Until John, all of the Word of God and His requirements were contained in the Law and Prophets. Since John, the Word of God and His requirements are contained in the gospel of the Kingdom.

Matthew 11:11-13 NASB

- (11) "Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen *anyone* greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.
- (12) "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.
- (13) "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.

Not only was John the transition point in the message of God, he was the greatest of men under the Law and Prophets. Even so, the one who is the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John! That means that John was not considered a citizen of the Kingdom! (This may mess up your theology a little.) But from John's time forward those who were violent about the government of God were pressing into the Kingdom, taking it by force. This tells us then that Jesus brought the Kingdom into the earth through the proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom.

As Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God, the Pharisees asked Him the obvious question.

Luke 17:20-21 NASB

- (20) Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "**The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed;**
- (21) **nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.**"

What does Jesus' answer mean? He is saying that the Kingdom is not coming visually (Greek word means *ocular-evidence*) so, don't go looking here and there because the Kingdom is already "in your midst" or "among you". Where the King is, there is the Kingdom!

The Mystery of the Kingdom

There is a mystery associated with the Kingdom. While the gospel of the Kingdom is proclaimed, not all aspects of the Kingdom are revealed clearly. Jesus repeatedly said "He who has ears to hear, let him hear". He spoke about the Kingdom in parables and gave this explanation to his disciples.

Mark 4:11-12 NASB

- (11) And He was saying to them, "**To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables,**
- (12) **so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN.**"

Those who follow Jesus as King can know the mysteries of the Kingdom but others can't see them. The Kingdom is "hidden" in plain sight. Notice that one of the reasons for this is to prevent some from returning and being forgiven. (This may mess up some more of your theology or at least grate on your "free will" bone.) We all need a good dose of the sovereignty of God. This is the explanation of Jesus.

John 6:44-45 NASB

- (44) "**No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.**
- (45) "**It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.**

[NOTE: *This is why it is important to come under the government of the King so that we don't*

waste our time and God's resources on those who are NOT being drawn by Him.]

Jesus said this in Mark right after telling what we call the parable of the sower. The disciples asked Him the meaning of the parable. He spoke of the mystery of the Kingdom as shown above and then He said this:

Mark 4:13 NASB

- (13) And He *said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?"

The parable of the sower is basic to understanding the other parables about the Kingdom. It is important that we have "ears to hear" what Jesus was saying.

Matthew 13:18-23 NASB

- (18) "Hear then the parable of the sower.
- (19) "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil *one* comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.
- (20) "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;
- (21) yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is *only* temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.
- (22) "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.
- (23) "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

Let's put Jesus' explanation of the parable of the sower in Matthew in a table format so that we can compare (remember, this is dealing with the word of the Kingdom not salvation as it is preached today).

GROUND	CONDITION	PROBLEM	RESULT
Roadside	Unprepared, hard and packed down Hears the word but doesn't understand it.	The Enemy steals the word away	Nothing, no change
Rocky	Received with joy but no room for roots	Persecution and affliction arise because of word	Temporary, fall away immediately
Thorny	Heard the word, ears to hear	Worries of the word, deceitfulness of wealth, desires for other things (Mark 4:19)	Unfruitful, word choked

Good	Heard the word and understands it	Fruitful increase 30, 60, 100 times
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This parable is about the type of ground, which is us. The two extremes are roadside and good ground. The roadside ground is a waste of seed; the Kingdom word is not understood; the enemy steals it and it is not thought about again. The good ground produces fruit at varying levels depending on how fertile it was. Each of these extremes are 25% of the type of ground available. The real issue is the other 50%, the types of ground that are in the middle and produce nothing even though the word of the Kingdom was received.

I submit that in our hearts we each have all four types of ground. It is important that we cultivate and prepare the ground in the various areas of our heart in every way to receive the word of the Kingdom.

These two middle types of ground show us the problems that we face both internally and externally. The stony ground tells us that the word of the Kingdom will bring affliction and persecution. These are external reactions to our receiving the Kingdom word. It produces a conflict externally with those who walk in worldly understanding and not under the government of God. The thorny ground tell us that the word of the Kingdom is in conflict with our old natures, our desires, and the way of the world. When the word of the Kingdom comes to us, we have to be prepared to deal with the problems that this will present *externally* in our relationships and *internally* with our own nature.

This is the basic understanding that we need from the parable of the sower in order to understand the other parables. The word of the Kingdom is the rock that crushes all other kingdoms, even our own. A Kingdom word is in conflict with the world and with our old nature. We become overcomers when we allow the word of the Kingdom to produce fruit in our lives as it overcomes in these two arenas of conflict.

The last few paragraphs describe the essence of Spiritual War—conflict with the world and conflict with our old nature. The Devil is a defeated enemy. Jesus did that. However, the Devil operates in both of these conflict arenas empowering them against us.

[The next issue will look at the difference between the Kingdom in its present form and the coming Kingdom in its physical form and how this affects us.--Art Nelson]

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