

The Gospel of the Kingdom

by

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A Booklet written to consider what the 'gospel of the Kingdom' is, questioning the partial gospel of salvation only and the false gospels that deny the true place of Jesus being King in a believers life.

The Gospel Of The Kingdom

The Gospel

The gospel is the 'good news' of the Kingdom of God which includes the 'good news' of salvation through Jesus Christ, to be received by faith on the basis of Jesus' death, burial, resurrection and ascension. There is only one gospel and it cannot be restricted to any part of it and neither can it be misrepresented without it becoming a 'false gospel', a distortion of the gospel.

Sadly most denominations preach a gospel of salvation only, the whole aspect of the Kingdom being lost. Some denominations even preach a false gospel of salvation, one not requiring true faith, but the true gospel of the Kingdom is often replaced by a salvation message which combines a message of salvation with a false teaching regarding the kingdoms of men in which they interpret the 'Kingdom' as being *their* churches with *their* creeds and *their* own forms. After salvation they teach, "Now you must find a (denominational) church, become a member of it and submit to the authority of its hierarchy, its leadership,' which replaces Christ as Leader!" They do not point the new believer to the Holy Spirit to be their Teacher, who is now within.

Some denominations preach a kingdom message that offers benefits without any repentance or exchanged life in Christ; a gospel of self. It is often referred to as the 'Prosperity Gospel' by those who oppose it.

Paul spoke of a distortion of the gospel of Christ, which taught compliance to the Law by works rather than a walk in the Spirit. Writing to the church in Galatia Paul says, “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; although there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.” (Galatians 1:6&7)

Paul upholds his teaching by virtue of having received it through a “revelation of Jesus Christ” and not from man, telling the Galatians, “if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.” (verse 9)

Although the gospel of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ is part of the gospel of the Kingdom, it should not be restricted to it leaving new believers as babes. Paul writes to the church in Rome, “I have *fully* preached the gospel of Christ.” (Romans 15:19) So it is we see that the ‘gospel of Christ’ is the full ‘gospel of the Kingdom’. We need to be clear, there is only one gospel.

Seeing the Kingdom

Jesus told Nicodemus that “unless one is born again one cannot *see* the Kingdom of God.” (John 3:3) The natural man, Paul taught, does not accept the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Despite a new believer having been delivered from the domain of darkness to the Kingdom of His beloved Son,

by the Father, (cf. Colossians 1:12&13) he might still not see or enter the reality of the Kingdom.

It may seem contradictory that although a new believer has been transferred from the domain of darkness into the Kingdom, he still might not see or enter it, but we need to understand our standing in Christ differs from what might be the reality of it in our lives.

What the Father does in a new believer's life, in his inner man - in his spirit - through spiritual new birth has to be brought forth in his whole life - spirit, soul and body. A process of spiritual growth begins that takes the believer from infant-hood to a mature man, a process that Satan wishes to halt as soon as it has begun and frustrate every step of the way. This is Satan's tactic in every believer's life, to frustrate the call and purpose of God in their life.

Paul tells the church in Corinth that he could not speak to them as spiritual men but only as "men of flesh" and as "babes in Christ," because they were still "fleshly," (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3) even though Paul rightly addressed them as "the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours." (1 Corinthians 1:2) Their standing in Christ is how he addresses them but the reality of their state, the reality of how they were living, is what he questions.

Paul speaks to the church in Ephesus about this spiritual growth telling them to "no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness and

deceitful scheming,” but “speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the Head, even Christ.” (Ephesians 4:14&15)

We see that among the churches in Galatia they had been deceived by false brethren and Paul tells them how false brethren had sneaked in to spy out the liberty which they had in Christ in order to bring them into bondage. The believers in Galatia were returning to a walk in the works of the law, trying to walk by works of the flesh, rather than walking by the Spirit. As a result Paul told them, “My children, with whom I am again in labour until Christ is formed in you.” (Galatians 4:19) The reality of the Kingdom of God in their lives was eluding them.

Entrance Into The Kingdom

So it is we see that despite being transferred into the Kingdom of God this reality has to be worked out in a believers life. Speaking of this reality of the Kingdom coming into anyones life Jesus said, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.” (John 3:5) He is explaining to Nicodemus that a man must not only be born naturally but also be born from above before he can enter this reality of Jesus being truly their King. (verse 6)

We need to understand that in everything to do with salvation a new believer is given everything yet has then to make it a reality by faith. By grace the believer is given the highest possible standing - he is righteous, a son of God, redeemed and forgiven, sanctified and set apart unto God - yet he still has to walk in this reality by the renewing of his mind and by walking in the Spirit. It is as

the scripture which says; God “raises the poor from the dust. He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make him sit with nobles and inherit a seat of honour.” (1 Samuel 2:8) From this place of honour a new believer then has to learn to walk in the reality of his inheritance.

The necessary change comes about initially through receiving the milk of the Word, not solid food. This is not by hearing only but by being doers of the word. (James 1:22) Peter wrote, “Like new born babes long for the pure milk of the word that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.” (1 Peter 2:1)

It requires first, of course, a turning away from sin, from self and from the world, and a turning fully to God, which is true repentance. In this first step that brings salvation not only is believing required but a confession that Jesus is Lord. (Romans 10:9&10) These are not just words to be spoken but have to be a reflection of what is truly in any new believers heart; confessing Jesus as their Lord and King.

It is then by growing in a knowledge of God and Jesus as Lord, that we learn it is through His divine power He has granted us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through this true knowledge of Him who called us. We are granted His precious and magnificent promises in order that by them we might become partakers of His divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world. (cf. 2 Peter 1:2-4)

Peter teaches that by applying the word to our lives, by being effectual doers of the word, we are able, by the Spirit, to supply moral excellence and by this, knowledge,

which in turn brings self control, that brings perseverance, through which we attain godliness, which brings about brotherly kindness and then God's unconditional love.

It is these qualities, Peter says, that prove our purification from our sins through the shed blood of Jesus and faith in Him, and by which we make certain our calling and God choosing us, which gives us, he says, "*entrance* into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." (cf. 2 Peter 1:5-11)

We see that this walk begins with moral excellence. Paul makes this clear in his teaching that, "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers nor swindlers, shall inherit the Kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6:9&10) Paul says such were some of the church in Corinth but they had been washed, sanctified and justified - made righteous - in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of God. (cf. verse 11)

The wonderful thing is that for the believer, new life is possible because God has put His laws into their inner parts and written it upon their hearts. (Hebrews 8:10) God has given the new believer a new heart and put a new spirit within them, removing the heart of stone from their flesh and given them a heart of flesh, putting His Spirit in them to enable them to walk in His statutes and be careful to observe all His ordinances. (Ezekiel 36:26&27) This is to be truly born again of the Spirit of God.

True Christianity is not about man trying to attain salvation through works but by receiving new life in Christ

through faith, being changed within so that a believer can walk in newness of Christ's life by means of the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

This walk in newness of life is made possible because the believers old life - the old man - was crucified with Christ in order that they may be raised with Him and live with Him, (cf. Romans 6:4-8) and so walk in this newness of life.

Thus we see the reality of the Kingdom coming forth in a believers life, the Kingdom believers have already spiritually entered. Greater wonders of the Kingdom then lie ahead, having received a Kingdom that cannot be shaken.

God has spoken, promising that, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven," referring to the "removing of those things that can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things that cannot be shaken will remain. Therefore let us be grateful since we have received a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, and so let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:26-28)

The Gospel Of The Kingdom

As we consider what the Kingdom of God is, we see the very purpose of God in sending Jesus, His only begotten Son, was to begin to declare and manifest the Kingdom that this might enter into the hearts and lives of men. John the Baptist was sent as a voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way for Jesus' ministry - "John

the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying. ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.’ (Matthew 3:1)

Isaiah had prophesied centuries earlier, “How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news - *the gospel* - who announces peace and brings good news of happiness; who announces salvation...,” (Isaiah 52:7) which scripture Paul quotes in his letter to the Romans; “Whoever calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him who they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? And how will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things.’” (Romans 10:13-15)

We see that John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for Jesus’ ministry, to prepare the way for the King and His Kingdom. Jesus followed John, “going about in all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom,” (Matthew 4:23) preaching the gospel of God and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:14&15)

It was the gospel, or good news, of the Kingdom that Jesus came to preach, continuing throughout His ministry to teach about the Kingdom with many parables, explaining what the Kingdom of God was to be likened to.

Men, however, had expected an outward manifestation of the Kingdom of God at that time. When the Pharisees

demanded of Jesus to know when the Kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, 'Lo here!' or, 'Lo there!' for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you. (Luke 17:20-21)

Answering Pontius Pilate Jesus said, "My Kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My Kingdom is not of this realm." (John 18:36)

Picking up on this, Pilate replied, "So you are a king?" to which Jesus answered, "For this reason I was born and have come into the world..." (verse 37)

When Jesus commissioned His twelve disciples sending them out as apostles, or 'sent ones', for that is what an apostle is, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Jesus told them, "As you go, preach, saying, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.'" (Matthew 10:1-8)

Luke tells of the same occasion saying, "He sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to perform healing." (Luke 9:1&2)

We then see that Jesus appointed seventy others, sending them out in twos, going ahead of Him to every city where He was to go. Jesus told them, "Heal those in it who are sick and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near you.'" (Luke 10:1-11)

At the end of Jesus' ministry, before He ascended to heaven, He appeared to the eleven and said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation..." (Mark 16:15) Speaking of the same occasion Matthew writes, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all that I commanded you..." (Matthew 28:18-20)

We can see that there is a sending out, and, in addition, the preaching of repentance for the forgiveness of sins to be proclaimed in His Name to all nations, (cf. Luke 24:47) with a necessity to observe all that Jesus commanded.

For a period of forty days after His resurrection Jesus appeared to His disciple and spoke to them "of the things concerning the Kingdom of God." (cf. Acts 1:3) We see the gospel of the Kingdom is not restricted to salvation only, nor is it restricted to demonstrations of Kingdom power, but a walk in the commands of Jesus that are written on every true believers heart.

As the Acts of the Apostles begins, Jesus not only commissioned His disciples to go to all nations and "the remotest part of the earth," but empowered them as witnesses by the power of the Holy Spirit who Jesus was to send from the Father. (verse 8)

The book of Acts then ends with Paul spending two years in Rome, "preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ..." (Acts 28:31) Throughout the New Testament we see that the true gospel is the gospel of the Kingdom.

The Kingdom Is Like...

In Matthew's gospel Jesus refers to the Kingdom as the Kingdom of *Heaven* whereas Mark and Luke refer to it as the Kingdom of *God*.

Jesus explained that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a "merchant seeking fine pearls. Upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all he had and bought it." (Matthew 13:45) To have the Kingdom as a reality in our lives it requires us to give all we have. There is no halfway house. To buy the Kingdom necessitates us giving our whole life. That is the cost - an exchanged life.

Jesus said that the Kingdom is like "a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." (Matthew 13:44)

To begin with we might not realise or understand what a huge thing the Kingdom is, but it is everything. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field; and this is smaller than all seeds, but when it is full grown it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree." (Matthew 13:31&32) In the beginning it might not bring too big a noticeable change in a persons life but eventually it will change everything in their lives, not only having an effect in ones own life but also in effecting change in others; The tree "forms large branches so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade."

Speaking of this change in a persons life that the Kingdom of God brings, Jesus likened the Kingdom to

“leaven which a woman took and hid in three pecks of meal until it was all leavened.” (Luke 13:21)

To fully understand the reality of the Kingdom we find it is an unfolding of the mystery of what the Kingdom is. Jesus said, “For whoever has, to him shall more be given and he will have an abundance, but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.” (Matthew 13:12)

The Kingdom comes into a persons life by hearing the word of the Kingdom but the word of the Kingdom must find good soil in a persons life for it to take root. Jesus likened the word of the Kingdom to seed which is sown in the hearts of men, finding differing results. If it is like seed thrown by the roadside, Jesus likened it to the evil one immediately snatching it away. If it is like seed sown on rocky ground it seems to be received with joy but affliction and persecution soon see it falling away. If it is like seed sown amongst thorns, the cares of the world, or deceitfulness of riches, soon prevent it being fruitful. But if it is like seed sown on good soil it bears fruit in differing quantities, “some a hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty.” (verse 8)

This is the effect in an individuals life but Jesus also spoke of the corporate nature of the Kingdom message being received by the true church during the church age.

Jesus speaks of the Kingdom message being received by true sons but Satan sowing false brethren among them throughout the church age. Jesus likened these true and false believers to seed, the good seed being the true sons of the Kingdom but the bad seed being sown by the

evil one. The seed and sons of the evil one initially look the same as the sons of the Kingdom but in due time prove to be false. This reality, Jesus explained, would exist until the end of the age, to the time of the final harvest just before His return. Only then would the true and false brethren be separated.

This reality of true and false brethren being in what is deemed to be the church we find in the 2000 year history of the church, false brethren always springing up among the true church. This has always resulted in a mixture, maligning and twisting truth, creating counterfeits of the true Spirit led walk. But Jesus explained that the end-time separation would come so that at the end of the age the righteous would shine forth at last “as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.” (cf. Matthew 13:24-30 and 37-43)

This reality of false brethren, brethren who will become false prophets and false teachers clothed in sheep’s clothing but would inwardly be ravenous wolves, would be inevitable, Jesus explained. (Matthew 7:15) Jesus warned that “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does he will of My Father.” (Matthew 7:21) Jesus explained that “the gate is narrow” that leads to everlasting life, but “the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction,” saying “the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.” (Matthew 7:13&14)

To distinguish between true and false brethren Jesus explained that false brethren are to be known by their fruit. Jesus taught that true brethren would hear the

words Jesus commanded and acts on them, and these would withstand the storms that will inevitably come upon all; (cf. Matthew 7:20 and 24) “You will know them by their fruits,” Jesus said. (verse 20)

To Do All Jesus Commanded

We have to be doers of the word not ineffectual hearers. Jesus commissioned His disciples before He ascended into heaven saying to them that they were to teach all that He had commanded. (cf. Matthew 28:20)

When Jesus started to teach He began by saying, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Matthew 5:3) It is in knowing our great need that our hearts are opened to receive - “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” (verse 6)

Taking the pathway to righteousness may bring persecution but Jesus said those reviled and persecuted on account of Himself, theirs would be “the Kingdom of Heaven.” (cf. Matthew 5:10&11)

On this walk of faith, in the Kingdom, there is to be no place for anxiety or fear, even concerning the basic needs of life. Jesus said, “Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness” and all the basic needs of food and clothing will be added. (cf. Matthew 6:33)

The Way - The Spirit Led Walk

In seeking the Kingdom we are promised that if we seek we will find, for “everyone who asks, receives, and he

who seeks, finds, and to him who knocks, it shall be opened.” (cf. Matthew 7:1-12) This is the promise for those who seek - and keep seeking - the Kingdom, yet the gate is, nevertheless, narrow.

Jesus said that we are to enter by the narrow gate, taking care to recognise false prophets by the bad fruits they produce in their lives. Jesus said the true believer is to seek to do the will of their Father who is in heaven, (verse 21) teaching His disciples to pray each day to the Father saying, “Thy will be done, Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10) This is to be our daily prayer.

It is in hearing the words of Jesus - and doing them - that a man will be safeguard in the storms of life. (cf. Matthew 7:24-27)

We need to understand, however, this obedience to the commands of Jesus is not possible in our own strength, a believers walk is to be by the Spirit, for no law can be carried out by works of the flesh. Jesus made the way for His disciples to walk in righteousness by the new life He came to impart to men once they are saved. His commands are then written on their hearts and they are given the faith, the grace and the power to walk in them. “The Kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power,” (1 Corinthians 4:20) and this power brings forth a sanctified life.

Speaking of this motivation imparted within a believers heart and the need, therefore, to consider their brothers conscience, Paul says, “The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking - in carrying out external ordinances -

but in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 14:17) The Kingdom of God is in this inward reality of God in a believers life.

The Future Kingdom

Not only is there a present manifestation of the Kingdom of God there is a future reality. It is the believers certain hope. At this time, as the reality of the Kingdom of God is worked out in each believers life, the reality of the Kingdom within brings an outward manifestation of God’s rule, His blessing, protection, provision and His love. Just as the true church is called to proclaim the gospel of His Kingdom in this age they are also to demonstrate it by the reality of the Kingdom in their lives.

The present reality of the Kingdom in a person’s life will, however, bring a future reward. Jesus said, “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father, with His angels, and will then recompense every man according to His deeds.” (Matthew 16:27) More often than not men’s hearts are only set on the things of this life - the here and now - with little consideration of the future that lies before them after this age. They only consider the temporal, ignoring the eternal.

But part of the proclamation of the Kingdom, in declaring to all men to repent, is that God “has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” (Acts 17:30&31)

The Day of the Lord will not only bring a judgement of wrath upon the final wicked generation of this age who

have rejected the gospel of the Kingdom, those who are left on the earth when the true church is caught away, but Jesus will bring His rewards for His servants who have walked in God's will. Teaching that it better to be humble than to exalt oneself, Jesus foretold of the repayment that would be made "at the resurrection of the righteous." "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." (Luke 14:14)

Jesus taught that we should not seek our rewards in this life. "Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:16-21)

Speaking by way of a parable, Jesus spoke of His rewards for His faithful servants on His return - having "returned from procuring His Kingdom," (Luke 19:15) -

explaining that he who had been faithful “in a very little, have authority over ten cities.” (verse 17)

At the end of this age, at the resurrection of the righteous and the catching away of His saints who are alive and remain at His coming, His saints will be changed in the twinkling of an eye and put on immortality. After the wrath of God is poured on on the earth Jesus will then return with His immortal saints to the earth to reign as King for 1000 years. The Kingdom will then be a reality upon the earth. What was foretold to Daniel will have come.

Jesus Will Return As King

When Jesus returns to the earth with His saints - the church - He has written on His robe and on His thigh, King of kings and Lord of lords.” (Revelation 19:16) Jesus came the first time as a servant but now He comes as King.

We may read the prophecies of His coming Kingdom, when Jesus returns to the earth with His saints, in the book of Daniel. Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream that spoke of the empires that would follow his, but which would be destroyed by the coming Kingdom of God. Daniel tells the Nebuchadnezzar, “In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a Kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that Kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the

future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.” (Daniel 2:44-45)

Daniel, himself, had a dream later which foretold of the end of the ages that would see the Kingdom of God set up upon earth; “I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a Kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His Kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14)

The coming of Jesus as King, to reign upon the earth, will see the church - His saints or ‘holy ones’ - ruling and reigning with Him. “The saints of the Highest One will receive the Kingdom and possess the Kingdom forever, for all ages to come.” (verse 18)

“Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His Kingdom will be an everlasting Kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.” (verse 27)

Jesus’ Kingdom will have come in its fulness on earth. Jesus will be here, reigning as King.

The Conclusion of this Age

But before this day, before His return, Jesus explained to His disciples that, “This gospel of the Kingdom shall be

preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end - *of the age* - come.” (Matthew 24:14) This is the time that is now drawing near. This is where we are in this unfolding plan of God.

Paul wrote to Timothy that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth,” (1 Timothy 2:4) and Peter explained, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward *us*, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

We see in this the love of God, that God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16) In His love God brought the answer to man’s separation from God through Jesus, His Son.

Jesus came, not only to provide the means of salvation through His death on the cross but through God raising Him from the dead, that those who believe might become sons of God and receive new life - His life. Jesus ministry was to declare and demonstrate the coming of the Kingdom of God and the ministry of the church is the continued ministry of Jesus Christ through His body.

This ministry cannot be carried out except by His Spirit working through us. Jesus told His disciples before He ascended into heaven, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

We see Jesus has given those who are saved this ministry of reconciliation. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, “The love of Christ constrains us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that **they who live might no longer live for themselves**, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore from now on we recognise no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation, the old things have passed away; behold, all things are new. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and **gave us the ministry of reconciliation**, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and **He has committed to us the word of reconciliation**. Therefore, **we are ambassadors for Christ**, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Corinthians 5:14-21)

We see that salvation is not just for each believer’s sole benefit but those in Christ are no longer to live for themselves, taking up the ministry of reconciliation He gives from this position in Himself. Paul explains of himself, “I thank Him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because He judged me faithful, **appointing me to His service**, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me

with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life. (1 Timothy 1:12-16)

The Ministry of Reconciliation

This ministry of reconciliation becomes the ministry of all who have exchanged their life for the life in Christ by making Him truly Lord of their lives; their King. Paul explains his ministry to Timothy, but such will become the ministry of the whole church in declaring the good news of the Kingdom which they have received as the end of the age approaches.

The end of the age will be marked by great tribulation such as the world has never seen, nor ever shall, (Matthew 24:21) yet this will be the time of harvest. John saw in the revelation that was granted for him to see, “a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands.” (Revelation 7:9) One of the elders standing around the throne asked John: “These in white robes - who are they, and where have they come from?” (verse 13) John did not know so the elder replied, “These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (verse 14)

This multitude from every nation, and all tribes and peoples and tongues are the final harvest of the age, the last great harvest.

Paul writes to the church in Rome, “There is no difference between Jew and Greek: The same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich to all who call on Him. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then can they call on the One they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can they preach unless they are sent?” (Romans 10:12-15a) This ministry of the early church is unchanged for of the end-time church we can still declare, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (verse 15b)

Soon the world will find itself in great tribulation, Satan displaying his great wrath knowing his time is short. (cf. Revelation 12:2) That of church which seemed to be of God will slide ever more into apostasy, as the tares are removed from among the wheat; the sons of the Kingdom. The true church will arise, walking in the reality of the Kingdom of God and not loving their lives, even unto death. They will triumph because “the salvation and the power and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ” will have come. To this the end-time true church is destined.

This time is yet future but already the tares are being separated from among the wheat; the true church is being separated from the false. The great falling away is already in progress. The time for the full gospel of the Kingdom of God is beginning to be preached, to the

saints who have not fully entered into their Kingdom reality. But the gospel of the Kingdom must also go to the whole world as a witness. This will be the last ministry of the church of Jesus Christ that is His body. As Jesus' ministry, when He was on earth, lasted 3½ years, so the final move of God in this age will see Jesus ministering through His body, the church, when great tribulation comes. It will last 3½ years, the church declaring the good news of the Kingdom of God to all mankind that they might be saved from God's wrath that will come after Jesus comes to catch away His saints who have laid down their lives in love, even unto death.

The trumpet is already sounding. May God's Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Amen

Colin Winfield - January 2017