

# SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER    ISA.55:10    FOR THE EATER

*BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM*

## THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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# THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The theme of the Bible is the kingdom of God. This statement is made in full recognition of the fact that Christ fills its pages, that He is the crown of its revelation, and that all Scripture points to Him. He is the personality set forth as the principal actor. He is the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Lord Jesus Christ of the New. Nevertheless, its main subject from beginning to end is the kingdom of God. This is its central idea and the concept that embraces its total message. This is the truth that is found in one form or another throughout the length and breadth of God's Holy Word. To understand what is meant by the kingdom of God is to hold the key that will unlock its treasures.

Any book that makes sense, that conveys a message, must have a central idea, a theme, a plot. When men make the claim, as many do, that the Bible is a confusing book, and that it has no relevancy to the present time, it may be that they have failed altogether to find its central theme. As long as men regard it as being nothing more than a book of moral instruction, a compendium of religious rituals and observances, or as a handbook of church customs and practices, it is bound to be a confusing book.

On the title page of my own Bible I have written, "The Book of the Coming Kingdom of God." This is what I believe it to be, and while the actual term "the kingdom of God" is not found in the Old Testament, this does not mean that the truth concerning it is not found there. In fact, it is in the Old Testament that the thousand and one prophetic declarations are found which are later subsumed in the New Testament under the great designation, "the Kingdom of God."

When the Lord Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "**The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand**" (Mark 1:14, 15), He did not need to define this term. He was proclaiming something which every Israelite understood and for which the faithful in Israel had hoped. He was announcing the imminency of that condition of things upon the earth that the Hebrew prophets had already set forth, a period of time when this earth and all nations upon it would be governed by God (Psalm 67: 4). This was not a new concept. It was an ancient body of truth summed up in the neat descriptive term, "the kingdom of God."

The disciples of the Lord Jesus were exhorted to give the kingdom of God first place in their lives (Matt. 6: 33). It was the kingdom of God that Christ proclaimed when He began His public ministry (Mark 1:14). Its proclamation was the work that God had commissioned (*apostello*) Him to do (Luke 4: 43). It was the kingdom of God that He proclaimed and demonstrated in every city (Luke 8: 1). It was the message the twelve were sent forth to herald (Luke 9:2), and it was the truth the seventy were told to proclaim (Luke 10:9). His disciples were taught to pray for its coming (Luke 11:2). It was the hope and the destiny of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets (Luke 13:28). It was the hope awaited by Joseph, that good man who arranged for the entombment of the Lord Jesus after His crucifixion (Luke 23: 50, 51 ).

In the ministry of the Lord Jesus the kingdom of God was the subject of the parable of the **sower** (Matt. 13: 19), of the **tares** among the wheat (Matt. 13:24), of the **mustard seed** (Matt. 13:31), of the **leaven** (Matt. 13:33), of the **hid treasure** (Matt. 13:44), of the **pearl of great price** (Matt. 13 :45, 46), of the **net cast into the sea** (Matt. 13:47), of the **laborers in the vineyard** (Matt. 20:1), of the **marriage of the king's son** (Matt. 22:2), of the **wise and foolish virgins** (Matt. 25:1), of the **seed growing secretly** (Mark 4:26).

The kingdom of God was the subject of the ministry of Jesus Christ in the forty days that elapsed between His resurrection and ascension. It was the subject of some of the most important declarations He made while upon the earth (Matt. 12:28, Luke 17:20, Luke 17:21, John 3:3).

When all the facts are gathered, there can be no doubt but that the kingdom of God was the subject of Paul's ministry from beginning to end. It was the

hope he held out to those whom he had brought into relationship with Jesus Christ (Acts 14: 22). It was the subject of his ministry in the synagogue in Ephesus (Acts 19: 8), and the entire three years of his ministry there is described as being one of "proclaiming the kingdom of God" (Acts 20:25). And it was because he had proclaimed the kingdom of God to them that he was able to say he had not "shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). It also made it possible for him to say that he was pure from the blood of all men (Acts 20:26, 27).

The kingdom of God was Paul's message during the full day (from morning till evening) that he met with the chief of the Jews in Rome (Acts 28:23). It was at the close of this day that God declared by the lips of Paul the momentous words recorded in Acts 28:28. These words brought an end to the Acts dispensation and signaled the beginning of God's administration of absolute grace. Nevertheless, the kingdom of God continued to be Paul's message in the two years of his life of which we have a record after Acts 28:28 (Acts 28:31). And it should be noted here that the proclamation of the kingdom of God is vitally linked up with the teaching of those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, even as in Acts 28: 23 and in Acts 8: 12. In Acts 20: 24, 25, proclaiming the kingdom of God is equivalent to and is used interchangeably with testifying to the gospel of the grace of God.

Paul's words in 1 Cor. 6:9, 10, 1 Thess. 2:12 and 2 Thess. 1:5, make it plain that the kingdom of God in its full manifestation was, both the hope and destiny of those addressed in these epistles. Ephesians 5:5, Colossians 4: 11, 2 Tim. 4: 1 and 18 give witness to the truth that the kingdom of God remained the hope proclaimed by Paul until the close of his ministry.

Indeed, the kingdom of God is the grand central theme of all Scripture. So much so, that the man who has little knowledge of the kingdom of God has no real knowledge of the Bible, no matter how many bits and pieces of the Word he may have collected. In order to make sense, these bits and pieces must sooner or later be related to a central theme. If they are related to Christ, this is still not the end. If His glories revealed in the Word are considered, we will always come to the kingdom of God of which He is the divine King.

The one who is not instructed in the kingdom of God will never understand the parables, for this is what most of the parables are about. He can never be like the Christ-commended householder who brings forth out of

his treasure things both new and old (Matt. 13:52). Furthermore, the one who does not study the kingdom of God is not studying the Bible, and he who is not proclaiming the kingdom of God is not proclaiming the Bible. Those who fail to declare the truth concerning it are not declaring the whole counsel of God. They cannot honestly claim to be "pure from the blood of all men."

In view of the important place that the kingdom of God has in the Bible, one would think that this term would often be upon the lips of all whose lives have been shaped by God's Book, and that it would have a very large place in the writings of those who claim to be expounding the Word of God. But, alas, it is not. One can only be amazed at the small place that is given to this theme among believers, and the writings of many Bible teachers will be searched in vain for any mention of it. The indexes of their writings will show that the treatment of it is very meager indeed. This is especially true of those classed as dispensationalists.

Before me is the index of one Bible study magazine that covers twenty volumes representing twenty years of writing. In this index the references to the kingdom of God can be counted on the fingers of one hand; and when these are traced out, the material is so insignificant that one can only conclude that the neglect of this subject was intentional. And the indexes to another Bible study publication covering a period of fifty years, show an almost total neglect of this subject. I have leaved through four years (24 issues) of another publication, but I cannot find any treatment whatsoever of the kingdom of God. It seems to be the policy of these editors to keep the subject out of their written ministry.

In regard to this I would appropriate the words of James and say, "**My brethern, these things ought not so to be.**" Furthermore, there should be no such thing as a book or a sermon that professes to deal with the parables while consistently ignoring that the subject of these parables is the kingdom of God.

In the words of the translators of the *King James Version*, they have the Lord saying that the kingdom has suffered violence (Matt. 11: 12 ). And while this translation is open to question and the passage in which it is found is an obscure one, the meaning of which is not yet fully understood, yet the phrase is an apt one and we can say beyond question that the truth concerning the kingdom of God has suffered great violence at the hands of

men all through the Christian era. It has been incorrectly defined, erroneously interpreted, and hopelessly confused.

To define the kingdom of God as being the church establishment is a disgrace. To define it as being the universal sovereignty of God which has always been and always will be, as so many do, and then to apply this concept to the occurrences of this phrase found in the New Testament is to do violence to the truth declared in the many usages of this term by the Lord Jesus Christ. To say that the kingdom of God is something within all Christians, and then to prove this by citing words that He spoke to His malignant enemies, can only be described as a wicked usage of the word of our Lord.

There is one debt that all Christians owe to God. This is to get into His Book and find the real truth concerning the kingdom of God.

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