

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA.55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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KINGDOM MEANS 'GOVERNMENT'

The truth that is boldly declared in the title of the study is a most important one that will prove to be a key to many treasures that are waiting to be discovered in the Word of God. Arbitrary and erroneous definitions have been given to the word *kingdom* in order to make it fit certain creedal views and theological schemes. To say that *kingdom* means "government" is a simple and honest statement that some will reject the moment they hear it. Simple truths are not looked upon favorably by many theologians. They prefer to keep everything exceedingly complex so that it can be understood only by the few they recognize as scholars. Since this word appears over and over, in the Old as well as the New Testament, to understand it is to comprehend the message of much of the Bible that has been obscure heretofore.

Today, the common definition of the word *kingdom* is that it means a country, governed by one who is called a king; but this is a modern adaptation and it was not the basic meaning of this word when the *King James Version* was translated. The elements of the word reveal this. A king was a monarch, one who ruled alone. He made the laws, interpreted the laws, and enforced the laws. The *dom* portion of this word is a shortened form of *doom*, which meant judgment. Thus the monarch's judgments were his government. All this is demonstrated by Scripture usage. In Ecclesiastes 8:4 we read: "**Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?**" This alone is sufficient to show the strength of the word *king* (*melek*) in the Bible. I am sure that most of my readers have heard of "judgment day" being called "doomsday."

In Psalm 103:19 it is declared that, "**The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom rules over all.**" From this we can see that His kingdom is that which rules; therefore, it is His government, and it

is not the realm that is governed.

The Greek word translated "kingdom" is *basileia*. This being true, the problem to be solved is not what the word kingdom means, but what the Greek word *basileia* means. The word *kingdom* is a word in a living language that has undergone quite a few changes since it was enshrined in the *King James Version* over 350 years ago. The word *basileia* belongs to first century Greek which has now become a fixed or dead language, and its meaning must be settled by its usage at that time.

That the basic, fundamental idea in the word *basileia* is government is a fact that becomes increasingly obvious the more its usages are examined. That it is an abstract word, not concrete, is another fact that must be accepted. If it is ever used in the concrete as denoting a realm governed, (and I question if it ever is) it is a figurative use. Such occurrences should not be used to determine its primary meaning.

Thus, that which is called "the kingdom of God" in the *King James Version* is actually the government of God or God's government. This being true, there are many things recorded in Scripture that can be called "the kingdom of God" when we understand this term to mean God's government. For example, in the fact that God set two great lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night (Gen. 1:17,18), we have a clear case of God's government in action. This was an exercise of sovereignty, for the sovereignty of the universe belongs to God, and He reserves to Himself the right to govern in any or all matters, even setting someone or something to govern or rule under Himself.

Later, after the creation of man, we find Him declaring a certain prohibition in regard to eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This is also God acting in government, exercising His sovereignty, and this act can properly be described as the government of God. And we could go on through the Old Testament and point out a thousand things such as these, all of which can be called the government of God in action.

Such things as these are what men are referring to when they speak of "the kingdom in the Old Testament." However, they should not carry this simple concept of God's government into the New Testament and declare that this is what the Lord Jesus was speaking about when He came into Galilee heralding the gospel of the kingdom (government) of God. This is not what He meant when He said, "**The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is**

at hand" (Mark 1:14, 15).

The careful Bible student will quickly come to know that the term "the kingdom (government) of God," which can have many applications, is in the New Testament applied to a definite time that is still future when certain conditions will prevail upon the earth and the character of divine rule will be so complete and of such nature that this time above all other times is worthy of being called the kingdom of God. No matter how much or in what ways God has governed (exercised His sovereignty) in the past, no matter what events may be pointed out as evidence of divine government in action, a time is coming when God is going to govern this earth and men upon it in such manner that it will be unlike anything He has ever done before. Even as it is written:

"For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him" (Isa.64:4).

This is what Joseph was waiting for when he waited for the kingdom of God (Luke 23:51). This is what David meant when he said, **"Thou shalt judge the peoples righteously and govern the nations upon earth"** (Psa. 67:4). This is what Isaiah prophesied when He said, **"And the government shall be upon His shoulder"** (Isa.9:6).

From this we can see that to enter into the kingdom of God is not simply to come under His sovereignty, for we are always under His sovereignty and there is no place that man can *flee* to get away from it. However, even though we are under God's sovereignty, we will err grievously if we adopt the idea that God is always exercising it to the fullest extent over all things at all times. This is the view of many, and they are usually ready with a proof text from Ephesians which says that God "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph 1: 11). They insist that "all things" means everything, the evil as well as the good, but they steadfastly refuse to recognize the true meaning of the Greek idiom *ta panta*, which Paul himself established in Colossians 3:8, where it obviously means "all these" and has reference to things set forth in the context.

The idea that everything is fully controlled by God now, that He is now governing every detail of the lives of all mankind is the great mental stumbling block that stands in the road of men seeing, understanding, and believing the truth that the world will yet be fully governed by God in a

dispensation of divine government and this time of divine rule is called the kingdom of God.

We need to distinguish between such things as sovereignty and the exercise of sovereignty, as authority and the exercise of authority, as power and the exercise of power. We have clear evidence of this in the words of Paul spoken in Lystra, that in times past God suffered (permitted or allowed) all nations to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16). He did not exercise His sovereignty over them once He gave them this freedom.

In Revelation 11: 17 we read of the twenty-four elders saying: **"We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou has taken to Thee Thy great power and hast reigned."** The *King James Version* here is somewhat inexact. The tenses are very important. A more accurate rendering of the Greek would be: **"For You have taken to Yourself Your great power and You do govern"** (*ebasileusas*).

To His disciples the Lord Jesus declared that all authority (*exousia*) in heaven and in earth had been given unto Him (Matt. 28: 18). Power (*dunamis*) is that which comes from authority that has been given. Thus we see in these passages from Matthew and Revelation, the authority given, the power taken and both being exercised which resulted in government. However, this is still future. The time will come when Jesus Christ will take to Himself His great power and will govern the earth and all men upon it. When He does, this will be the kingdom of God. And it is quite evident from the position of this act in the book of Revelation that it precedes the return of Jesus Christ to the earth. This is one more reason why I believe in and teach the pre-advent kingdom of God, that long period of divine government which will be a reality before the return of Jesus Christ to be personally present for a thousand years and present because of Who He is and what He does in fulfillment of all His offices.

The old rabbis had a term for this aspect of divine government. They called this "the manifest kingdom of God," and linked it up with the fulfillment of all the glorious promises found in the Hebrew scriptures. We will do well to adopt this term and use it in our attempts to make plain the truth of the kingdom of God.

Another term which we need if we would speak clearly on the kingdom of

God is the phrase "the divine assumption of sovereignty," for this is the act of God that will bring His kingdom to the earth.

I take my stand with that small but ever increasing number of careful students of the Word who have come to the fixed conclusion that the kingdom of God as proclaimed by Jesus Christ is a future condition of things, a future reality that will exist upon this earth only after a miraculous intervention by God.

The word *government* says everything that is found in the Greek word *basileia*. It is a more solid word since it has not gone through the changes that have happened to the word *kingdom*, a word that has ended up not meaning much more than a country whose ceremonial chief of state is designated by the title of *King*.

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