

Proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God Today

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What is our part in the proclamation of the gospel of Christ-the gospel of the Kingdom-today? 'The gospel of Christ' or 'the gospel of God' in the New Testament are the same as 'the gospel of the Kingdom'. This was revealed at Pentecost. Just the apostles could not establish what was-and is-the gospel but by the Holy Spirit, so we cannot understand the mystery of the Kingdom (Mark 4:11-12) and communicate it apart from the Holy Spirit. To be in the Kingdom is to know it, and to know it is to preach it. Such preaching is really a witness. We must, then, keep in mind the following:

(I) THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS CHRIST'S KINGDOM

If we do not believe in heart and mind that Christ rules as King over all the Kingdom in its widest dimensions as creation, and in its intimate nature as the Kingdom of the redeemed, then we will not proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom with power and assurance. We need to see and believe that it is Christ's own Kingdom, however that may relate to the Father also being King. The following Scriptures bear out his unique Kingship:-

The Son of man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers (Matthew 13:41). Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom (Matthew 16:28). Jesus said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). And he said to her, 'What do you want?' She said to him, 'Command that these two sons of mine may sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom' (Matthew 20:21). When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne (Matthew 25:31). And he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom' (Luke 23:42). Jesus answered, 'My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world' (John 18:36). And he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom' (Luke 23:42).

It is apparent from these quotes that the early church went out with great gladness, great assurance that Christ was on the throne of God and reigning. Authority had been given unto him so that he could send His people into all the world proclaiming the gospel. It would do well for us to continually ponder Christ's active Kingship and so proclaim it.

(II) THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS THE FATHER'S KINGDOM

The Kingdom is the Kingdom of God. There is no such entity as 'the Kingdom', a power situation which is dynamic within itself. It is God Who is powerful, and the power of the Kingdom is the power of God Himself. In our last paragraph we saw that Christ is the power and authority of the Kingdom, but whereas it is 'the Kingdom of the Son of man', it is first the Kingdom of the Father and the Kingship is delegated to the Son. Thus in Luke 22:28-29 Jesus speaks of the Father appointing to him a Kingdom, 'You are those who have continued with me in my trials; and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom'. In Ephesians 5:5 Paul speaks of 'the kingdom of Christ and of God', and in Revelation 11:15 we read, "Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever"". The Sermon on the Mount is filled with references to the Father and His Kingdom. I Corinthians 15:24-28 is the key to Christ's present reigning, his defeat of the enemies under the ennoblement of the Father, and finally Christ's delivering the Kingdom to the Father 'that God may be everything to every one' or, 'that God may be all in all'.

This is immensely encouraging to those who proclaim the Kingdom. The kingdom of the world cannot maintain itself. It is taken up into the Kingdom of God, its evil dissolved, and all is made to be subject to God.

(III) ENTRANCE INTO THE KINGDOM DETERMINES THE MANNER OF MODE OF

- (a) Living in It and
- (b) Proclaiming It

Those who proclaim the Kingdom cannot properly do so unless they are living in the Kingdom in accordance with its Kingdom principles. These principles are well set out in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. chs 5-11). We say 'principles' and not 'prescriptions'. To be under the King is a great act of grace on the part of God, both in giving us entrance into the Kingdom, and then so relating to us that we live the life that He has given us in Christ and His Spirit. In Matthew 18:1-4 Jesus makes it clear that unless one humbles himself as a little child he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. A child in society is no 'great one'. In the Kingdom of heaven greatness is seen in serving. He who does not strive to be master but is glad to serve has greatness. Christ comes into the world not to be served but to serve. Humility is the hall mark of the Kingdom. Christ shows the humility of the Kingdom in the passage of Philippians 2:1-11. Paul enjoins his readers to (i) 'in humility consider others better than yourselves', and (ii) 'look not to your own interests but the interests of others'. Christ showed that the way of himself- and thus of the Kingdom-is humility. It is true that 'God raised him up to be both Lord and Christ' (Acts 2:36), and in this Philippian chapter to be Lord over all, but the Christ who was made King was the Christ who inherently was humble. Humility was his hallmark. In Revelation chapter 5 Christ is the Lamb that had been slain, but at the same time the powerful Lion of Judah.

From all this we deduce that Christ's defeat of evil by the Cross was his demeanour before God and Man, namely that of humility and serving. Thus to live in the Kingdom is to be humble. 'The Kingdom of God is not [matters of] eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit'. Thus it can be called 'The Kingdom of the Son of his love' (Col. 1:13), and it is right to say that the criteria of the Kingdom are the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

To proclaim the Kingdom, then, we must let go all matters of pride, of seeking to build our own kingdom, of being Nimrods and Lamechs and proud Nebuchadnezzars, becoming like Christ in his death (Phil. 3:10) as did Stephen the first witness to be killed. He showed his Master in the forgiveness of those who were killing him and said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit'. As we live in the Kingdom, in the Spirit, our ministry will be authentic, a true proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom. What an immense privilege and responsibility for all who have been entered into the Kingdom, by grace!

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