

Focus on the Kingdom

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What Good Is Jesus Without His Gospel?

Part 2

The Gospel must be worked out beginning in Genesis 12 because Galatians 3:8 says that “the Gospel was preached ahead of time to Abraham.” That takes us right back to the Abrahamic Covenant, the Abrahamic Promise. It is about **the Soil and the Seed, the Kingdom and the King, the Land and the Leader**. Jesus began his ministry by commanding people to repent and believe in the Gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 1:1, 14, 15).

The Kingdom of God is the land promise made to Abraham renewed. Whether you speak of the land or the Kingdom, it makes no difference. In Romans 4:13 Paul remarked that to Abraham was given the promise of inheriting **the world**. He is talking about the Kingdom of God, of course, as the renewed earth. It is the earth which Jesus in Matthew 5:5 promised to the “meek.” The land is your inheritance (Heb. 11:8). That’s the land promise now coming to all believers irrespective of their national origin. Inheriting the whole world is no small deal!

In Revelation 5:10, the climax of the story, just as we read in text after text in the teaching of Jesus, Paul and Peter, the Kingdom of God will be administered by saints of all the “people groups.” Revelation 5:9-10 is about the first verse to which a potential convert should be introduced. Jesus has through his blood gathered a mixed group of folks, men and women from all nations, peoples, and languages, and has constituted them in good Israel fashion, since they are the Israel of God, Jews and Gentiles alike (Gal. 6:16). He has constituted them a “Kingdom of priests,” using the text in Exodus 19:6 which applied to physical Israel in that day and is now applied to the totality of the spiritual Israel, the Israel of God. They’ve been constituted a Kingdom of priests, and they will rule with Messiah on the earth; they’ll inherit the land — the land of the promise in which Abraham lived without ever owning that Kingdom land, but looking forward to inheriting the renewed earth (Acts 7:5).

Hebrews 11:13, 39 says that all these noble patriarchs and heroes of the faith “looked forward to the promises,” that is the Kingdom of God to be established on the earth. We then come along later and believe the same Gospel of the Kingdom as was preached to Abraham in advance. And upon reception

of that Kingdom Gospel we receive the down-payment of the spirit — the spirit which is called the “holy spirit of the promise, which is a down-payment on our inheritance, until we acquire possession of that inheritance” (Eph. 1:14-15). That spirit is the spirit of the promise made to Abraham — the promise of the Kingdom which God has guaranteed to all who love Him (James 2:5).

The story coheres beautifully once the vocabulary is put back in place and the Gospel is defined as the “Kingdom” — “the word of the Kingdom” (Matt. 13:19), “the word of God” (Luke 8:11), which is not a synonym for the “Bible.” It’s **the Gospel** within the Bible. To speak of the “word of God” as a synonym for the Bible is highly confusing. It’s to talk of the bullseye as though it were synonymous with the whole target. The heart of the Bible is the Gospel of the Kingdom — the last word to mankind, preached by Messiah initially (Heb. 2:3).

Salvation was announced by Jesus three and a half years *before he died*. To speak of Jesus as *only* a Savior who dies and rises is to destroy the Gospel, to cut it in half. And that, tragically, has happened. But with all the sophistication of modern scholarship, all the Bible aids and helps, surely we can return to the vocabulary of the New Testament and begin to speak like Jesus until he comes back! It will take a lot of redressing the balance to get the Gospel clear.

So begin by speaking always of the Gospel concerning, not heaven, but the Kingdom of God. The word “heaven” could be usefully dropped from the whole scheme because it has been so mangled and massacred by the Platonic notion of “souls going to heaven when they die.” This is an idea totally foreign to the preaching and teaching of the New Testament.

So with the return of the Gospel we would have a clear grasp of the Kingdom. That’s the coming rule of Christ and his saints in the renewed theocratic Kingdom spoken of by all the prophets and hoped for by the patriarchs. May that Day come soon! Until then may that Gospel of the Kingdom — the saving Gospel of Jesus — be preached everywhere, in all the world as per Matthew 24:14.

The Davidic covenant adds to that marvelous picture by supplying the royal family in perpetuity. Luke 1:32-33 says that the Messiah is to be begotten in the womb of Mary (begotten, brought into existence, not just “conceived,” but “begotten, fathered in her,” Matt. 1:20). That Messiah and only he is entitled one

day to sit on the throne of David and rule over the house of Jacob, exactly as all the prophets had said. It is really a ghastly confusion to say that Jesus is now ruling on the throne of David. That would be like saying that the Queen of England's throne is really in Costa Rica. That is nonsense. Acts 1:3-8 was designed by Luke to block any such misconception. And of course the Kingdom of God did not begin in AD 70, when Jerusalem, the capital of the Kingdom, was ruined and destroyed!

In Acts 1:3 the disciples had a six-week seminar with the risen Jesus, where of course the topic was his favorite topic — the Kingdom of God. They discoursed together for six weeks on the Kingdom of God. These were disciples who had already preached the Kingdom, who knew exactly what that was, but needed even further instruction. In Acts 1:6, then, they asked their final question — the right question, of course. These Apostles, these holy Apostles, were not idiots. They were about to go to the world as accredited agents of the risen Jesus. They knew exactly what they were talking about. Jesus, as instructor, was more than sufficient. At the end of that period of six weeks, they asked: Since you are talking about the spirit coming, does that mean that the Kingdom of God is going to come now? Jesus answered, **“It is not for you to know the times or periods** which the Father has set by His own authority. **But** you will receive power when holy spirit has come upon you” — **“in a few days”** (v. 7, 5). He very clearly distinguished in his answer between the coming of the spirit at Pentecost **in a few days** and the yet future coming of the Kingdom as restored theocracy to Israel. It is “the blessed coming Kingdom of our father David” (Mark 11:10). That restored theocracy, that world empire to come, was not going to come at Pentecost, Jesus said. This of course fits exactly with Luke 19:11-27.

Getting Rid of the Gospel of the Kingdom

All of this is very clear until (a) one drops the term “Kingdom” from one's vocabulary; or (b) collapses the future Kingdom into the present. These are the mistakes that have to be corrected. It is impossible to read the Bible intelligently with the wrong framework. But, ever since the time of Origen and the allegorizing church fathers, the Kingdom of God has been under a cloud and in a fog. Strength will return to the Church when the Gospel of the Kingdom is restored — in fact when the Gospel is restored.

Matthew 24:14 states that **“this Gospel about the Kingdom** must be preached everywhere.” That's the only Gospel there is and ever was — the one and only Gospel of the Kingdom. It is the Kingdom being made clear and offered to the potential convert as his hope and his anchor, and as conveying and transmitting to him the very spirit and the mind of Jesus. When that

Kingdom comes, the world will be full of the knowledge of God. The *spirit* of the Kingdom, the *promise* of the Kingdom, the *hope* of the Kingdom are present; the *preaching* of the Kingdom is present. But the Kingdom itself lies in the future, as in the Lord's Prayer: “Your Kingdom come.”

It's a simple fact that Jesus was a herald of the Gospel of the Kingdom. It's a very simple fact that many evangelicals do not understand this. And it's not hard to see why. Some extraordinary theories have been super-imposed on the New Testament which render the Gospel of the Kingdom null and void.

In some circles, it was actually said — and it is hard to imagine a greater cancellation of the New Testament than this — that “the Gospel of the Kingdom is *not* to be preached now. It was preached to Jews. It should not be preached now, but it will be preached again during the tribulation by Jews to Jews.” That is a terrible insult to Messiah and the precious documents of the New Testament. It is a terrible confusion, equal almost to the confusion of saying that the “Kingdom of Heaven” is different from the “Kingdom of God.” These are techniques of preaching which render the text incomprehensible. And no wonder the churches are weak.

The effort to keep the Gospel from you is sometimes very subtle! Note that a number of modern translations have Jesus preaching the “good news” but not “the Gospel”! These translations translate the same Greek word as “the Gospel” when Paul preached it, but “the good news” when Jesus preached it. But that is to separate Jesus from his words and Gospel, and that is the ultimate antichrist!

Divine Conspiracy?

A number of prominent commentators on the New Testament, authors on the central issues of the Gospel of Jesus — the Gospel as Jesus preached it — have made exactly the point that we are trying to make in this article. Dallas Willard, in an important book called *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* writes:

“We are flooded with what I have called ‘gospels of sin management,’ in one form or another, while Jesus' invitation to eternal life now — right in the midst of work, business and profession — remains for the most part ignored and unspoken.” He goes on, “Must not all who speak for Christ constantly ask themselves these crucial questions: Does the gospel I preach and

teach have a natural tendency to cause people who hear it to become full-time students of Jesus?"¹

I think the answer is very clearly not. It's clear that most churchgoers are not students of the message of Jesus at all. This raises the question as to whether they have understood the Gospel or even heard it properly.

Dallas Willard goes on to point out, "We who profess Christianity will believe what is constantly presented to us as gospel. If gospels of sin management are preached, they are what Christians will believe. And those in the wider world who reject those gospels will believe that what they have rejected is the gospel of Jesus Christ himself — when, in fact, they haven't yet heard it!"²

In a section entitled "The Kingdom Must Make Sense" Professor Willard says this: "This cannot come about unless what Jesus himself believed, practiced, and taught *makes sense* to us. And his message must come to us free of the deadening legalisms, political sloganeering, and dogmatic traditionalisms long proven by history to be soul-crushing dead ends. Obviously it does not so come to us now, and this is a fact widely recognized."³

In other words the Gospel of Jesus does not come to us clearly, he maintains. He then quotes the citations that I brought together in my own book *The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah*: "At the 1974 Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization, Michael Green asked rhetorically, '**How much have you heard here about the Kingdom of God?**' His answer was, '**Not much. It is not our language. But it was Jesus' prime concern.**'"

And then Dr. I. Howard Marshall of the University of Aberdeen has commented, "During the past sixteen years I can recollect only two occasions on which I have heard sermons specifically devoted to the theme of the Kingdom of God...**I find this silence rather surprising because it is universally agreed by New Testament scholars that the central theme of the teaching of Jesus was the Kingdom of God.**"

I think that's really very remarkable because not only was the Kingdom of God the central teaching of Jesus — it was his central preaching in regard to the Gospel. The fact that seems to have been almost entirely suppressed is that Jesus was the prototype preacher of the *saving* Gospel. He didn't just teach about the Kingdom of God; he presented the Kingdom of God material as essential, saving Gospel.

If one examines articles on, for example, Jesus as mediator, in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, a reference there is found to the fact that "Jesus was a prophet, priest and king." But if one goes

on to see what is said there about those three categories, it's amazing that the section on Jesus as "prophet" amounts to only about seven or eight lines! The section on Jesus as "priest" amounts to several pages. Surely it's possible to discern from this extraordinary deduction of Jesus in his function as prophet, the fact that his Gospel of the Kingdom has been suppressed. It simply isn't preached. Jesus, in other words, is not preached.

Professor Willard in his book *The Divine Conspiracy* goes on to quote from Peter Wagner, perhaps the best-known leader in the worldwide "church growth" movement. He also refers to the unanimous opinion of modern scholarship that the Kingdom of God was indeed the message — and we should add, the Gospel — of Jesus. Peter Wagner says:

"I cannot help wondering out loud why I haven't heard more about the Kingdom of God in the thirty years I've been a Christian. I certainly read about it enough in the Bible...But I honestly cannot remember any pastor whose ministry I have been under actually preaching a sermon on the Kingdom of God. As I rummage through my own sermon barrel, I now realize that I myself have never preached a sermon on it. Where has the Kingdom been?"

Now surely that's the most engaging quotation! Peter Wagner has been planting churches all over, but he has not been preaching what Jesus preached. It must therefore follow that Peter Wagner has been founding churches in the name of Jesus, sailing under false colors. One cannot plant a church, a Christian church, in the absence of the very saving message of Jesus himself. Peter Wagner on his own confession has not been preaching the Gospel. He's never even preached on the Kingdom of God. That must mean he's never preached the Gospel!

Professor Willard goes on to say this: "Does what we have discussed in this chapter not make it clear that serious difficulties currently bar people of good intent from an effectual understanding of Jesus' gospel for life and discipleship?"

A Gospel Without the Kingdom

One could add to these quotations many others, which from various denominational quarters deplore the fact that the Gospel, as Jesus preached it, has been silenced. Jesus, in other words, has been muzzled. That's not to say that the name of "Jesus" has not been used widely. Of course it is. "Jesus" is offered for "salvation." But, you see, the Devil has really only one trick, and that is to separate Jesus from his teachings. This is the whole point then of Jesus' dire warning in

¹ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 1998, p. 57-58.

² Ibid., p. 58.

³ Ibid., p. 59.

Matthew 7 when he says that many will claim, in that future Day of Judgment, when the Kingdom is established, “Lord, haven’t we preached in your name? Haven’t we done miracles and many wonderful works in your name?” They will find that they were never even recognized as Christians. I suggest that awful situation can only arise when the Gospel as Jesus preached it, the Gospel of the Kingdom, is removed from Jesus. In other words, Jesus is separated and divorced from his own teaching. At that point, “another Jesus” steps into the foreground and that “other” Jesus, the one who died and rose only without preaching the Kingdom, is offered as the Savior.

The root of the problem was similarly diagnosed by Hugh Schonfield, a Jewish historian, a translator of the New Testament and sympathetic to Christianity: “Christians would gravely delude themselves if they were to imagine that Jews on any major scale could subscribe to the tenets of the Christian religion, which owe so much to the legacy of polytheism. Because Christians have not become Israelites but have remained essentially Gentiles, their spiritual inclinations are towards doctrines for which they have been prepared by inheritance from the pagan past.”⁴

This tragic departure of the church from the biblical message of the Kingdom as Jesus preached it, was noted also by an Archbishop of the Anglican Church, William Temple. He expressed his astonishment that the central fundamental concept of Jesus’ Gospel message, the Kingdom, has been neglected for most of church history. He says this: “Every generation finds something of the Gospel which is of special importance to itself and seems to have been overlooked in the previous age, or sometimes in all previous ages of the church. The great discovery of the age in which we live, [he was writing in 1926] is the immense prominence given in the Gospel to the Kingdom of God. To us it is quite extraordinary that it figures so little in the theology and the religious writings of almost the entire period of Christian history. Certainly in the Synoptic Gospels [Matthew, Mark and Luke] it has a prominence that could hardly be increased.”⁵

Now it’s almost impossible to exaggerate the significance of this challenge and observation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. A glance at the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ ministry will reveal to every impartial reader the simple fact that Jesus, the original herald of the Christian Gospel (Heb. 2:3), was a preacher of the Gospel of the Kingdom. There can be absolutely no doubt about this.

It’s equally clear that Jesus intended his own Kingdom message, the Gospel or Good News, to be the chief concern of those who claim to represent him for

the whole period until his promised return in the future. Giving his marching orders to the Church, Jesus commanded his followers to teach everything he had taught to those whom they were going to disciple and initiate into the faith by baptism (Matt. 28:19-20). The Great Commission, the task of the faithful as Jesus commanded it, is to preach this Gospel about the Kingdom in all the world (Matt. 24:14).

It’s a very simple matter to document the absence of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God from the church’s preaching in the past and now. As we saw in *Christianity Today* magazine, attempts to define the Gospel by leading writers — nine of them — produced *no mention* of the Kingdom of God. Now listen, for example, to the call of evangelists today to potential converts. Is the phrase “Gospel of the Kingdom” the main subject of the appeal for men and women to become Christians? Do pulpits the length and breadth of the land resound with clear expositions of what Jesus meant by the Gospel of the Kingdom? And indeed what he meant by “Repent and believe the Gospel of the Kingdom”? (Mark 1:14-15). Apparently this is not the case.

A Roman Catholic writer comes to the extraordinary admission that what he had learned in seminary did not include an explanation of Jesus’ message about the Kingdom. B.T. Viviano in his book *The Kingdom of God in History* says this: “As a teacher of New Testament literature, it early became obvious to me that the central theme of the preaching of the historical Jesus of Nazareth was the near approach of the Kingdom of God. Yet to my amazement this theme played hardly any role in the Systematic Theology I had been taught in the seminary. Upon further investigation I realized that this theme had, in many ways, been largely ignored in the theology and spirituality of liturgy of the church in the past 2000 years.” That’s exactly the same finding that we read from the Archbishop of Canterbury a moment ago. And when that theme has not been ignored, Viviano went on to say, “It has often been distorted beyond recognition. How could this be?”

Do we realize what’s being said here? Not only has the Gospel not been preached, but on the rare occasion when the Kingdom of God has been mentioned it’s been distorted beyond recognition. Mainly, I should say, by collapsing the whole future vision of worldwide peace in a coming new theocracy into some vague “rule of Christ in your heart” now. Certainly the spirit must rule in the heart of Christians, but that’s not the principal and determinative meaning of the phrase “Kingdom of God” in the gospels.

⁴ Hugh Schonfield, *The Politics of God*, p. 98.

⁵ *Personal Religion and the Life of Fellowship*

In the journal *Missiology* Arthur F. Glasser wrote: “Let me ask: When is the last time you heard a sermon on the Kingdom of God? Frankly, I’d be hard put to recall ever having heard a solid exposition of this theme. How do we square this silence with the widely accepted fact that the Kingdom of God dominated our Lord’s thought and ministry? My experience is not uncommon. I’ve checked this out with my colleagues. Of course, they readily agree they’ve often heard sermons on bits and pieces of Jesus’ parables. But as for a solid sermon on the nature of the Kingdom of God as Jesus taught it — upon reflection, they too began to express surprise that it is the rare pastor who tackles the subject.”

This has to be a disaster because the Gospel is to do with the Kingdom, and so no salvation, no conversion can take place in the absence of the preaching of that Gospel. Then it must follow that since the Gospel of the Kingdom is not being preached, invitations to salvation, in the Biblical sense, are not being clearly put to the public. One needs no special theological training to conclude that something is drastically askew here, when leading exponents of the faith in our day confess that Jesus’ Gospel message is unfamiliar to them. At the level of popular evangelism it’s evident that the critical Kingdom element is missing entirely from presentations of the saving message.

Billy Graham said that one half of the Gospel is the death of Jesus, and the other half is his resurrection. Similarly, Tim Keller writes in *Shaped by the Gospel*, “The gospel is news about what has been done by Jesus Christ to put right our relationship with God” (p. 29). But this definition of the Gospel omits the basis of the Gospel Message. Jesus announced the Kingdom of God as the heart of the Gospel long before he said a word about his death and resurrection. Luke reports that the disciples went out proclaiming the Gospel even before they had any knowledge about the death and resurrection of Jesus (Luke 9:1-2; 18:31-34). It follows logically therefore that there is more to the Gospel than the death and resurrection of the Messiah — essential, of course, as these things also are.

We don’t sound like Jesus. Our words are not the words of Jesus. We don’t speak of the Gospel of the Kingdom as Jesus and the New Testament Apostles always do.

The point is clear: the Kingdom of God Gospel has been dropped; the Gospel as Jesus preached it has been dropped; the Gospel, the words of Jesus Christ himself have been ignored and suppressed. What’s been put in its place is a “half gospel” based on isolated texts from

Paul, quoted out of context. What’s necessary then is a return to Romans 10:17, where faith is said to arise from hearing the message of Christ — *Christ’s own Gospel*. That’s the *saving word* in the parable of the sower. It’s the seed of immortality, the germ of the new life which is going to blossom finally, at the resurrection when Christ comes back, into immortality.

We suggest then that a major reform is required. We must give up our Protestant heritage which has terribly obscured the teaching of Jesus. Luther wrote that “Paul’s epistles are more a Gospel than Matthew, Mark, or Luke”! And C.S. Lewis made the same mistake. He said, “The Gospels are not ‘the gospel,’ the statement of the Christian belief.”⁶ It’s time for us to accept the challenge of those who point out that the Kingdom of God needs to be restored to the center and the heart of Gospel and salvation preaching. Only then will Christians sound like Jesus, the Jesus they claim to be following. ✧

The Kingdom of God is not the Church of God!

“Have you ever seriously pondered the fact that Jesus Christ **was always preaching ‘the kingdom,’** and that in the model prayer which He gave us He taught us to pray always that His ‘kingdom’ might come (Matt. 6:10)? In the present day men are always talking about ‘the Church.’...So far as the record goes, Christ referred to the Church only twice...On the other hand, he speaks of the Kingdom not less than one hundred and twelve times.

“One of the most mischievous and fatal mistakes ever made in Christian history was the mistake of St. Augustine, who identified the Kingdom of God with the Church of God...But the Church is no more the Kingdom than the British army is the British Empire. It is high time for all Christians to ponder the long-lost teaching of Christ with respect to the Kingdom of God.”

Hugh Price Hughes, *Essential Christianity: A Series of Explanatory Sermons*, 1894, p. 57-59

Thy Kingdom Come!

“The meaning is not ‘may thy Kingdom grow,’ ‘may thy Kingdom be perfected,’ but rather, ‘may thy Kingdom come.’ For the disciples, the kingdom is not yet here...Either the kingdom is here, or it is not yet here. For the disciples and for the early church it is not yet here.”

Johannes Weiss, *Jesus’ Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, p. 73-74.

⁶ Introduction to J.B. Phillips’ *Letters to Young Churches*, p. 9-10.

Which Message Is Being Corroborated?⁷

by Kenneth LaPrade, Texas

I certainly have great, empathetic compassion for all who have had profound experiences with “tongues” and other modern “manifestations,” while feeling that such personal events have made God more “real” to their lives! I have truly been in their shoes, since late June of 1972, about a week after I had responded to a Billy Graham altar call — in which I had heartily accepted his dynamic plea to embrace his presentation of John 3:16. About a week later, after hearing a group of about 500 Charismatic folks singing (or chanting) in “tongues” as a group (without my yet knowing what was written in 1 Cor. 14:23), I privately sought out and embraced a “tongues” experience. At some level I was mesmerized by private “speaking in tongues” for the next 45 years, while zealously assuming that I was “building myself up” *spiritually*, and that I was praying perfectly to God in a real (but unknown) language that was not limited by my lack of knowledge about what to ask for in prayer. I deeply know what it is to be **mesmerized** by my avid practice of speaking in tongues! Also I was enthusiastically involved for decades in helping others to supposedly sharpen their efforts to present interpreted “tongues” in meetings.

Without going into details, I was intimately familiar with Pentecostal/Charismatic thinking and actions common to Charismatic Catholics, Charismatic Protestants, folks from traditional Pentecostal denominations, and a smaller sectarian group known as “The Way International.”

Since finally coming to grips with my dire need to heed certain Scriptures about being keenly aware of the “**fruit**” of false prophets who come in sheep’s clothing, inducing gullible people to enter the “broad way which leads to destruction” (Matt. 7:13-27 in context), I have wrestled to learn a great deal more about “examining” or “proving” **all things**, in order to be able to “hold firmly to what is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). Along these lines, Proverbs 14:15 exhorts us: “The naive believes everything, but the sensible man considers his steps.” Regarding truth vs. falsehood in things commonly attributed to “holy spirit,” I now ask the following question (in light of Heb. 2:1-4), while **comparing** first-century practices to the modern “tongues” movement of 120 years: **Which message is being corroborated?**

Hebrews 2:1-4: “Therefore we ought to pay closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift

away. For if the word spoken through angels [in reference to the old, Mosaic covenant] proved firm, and every violation and act of disobedience received its just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? This salvation had its beginning when spoken through the lord [Jesus, himself], and was confirmed to us by those who heard him [directly, as eyewitnesses]. **God corroborated their witness** [of the same message of salvation which Jesus had taught them] by **signs** and **wonders**, various **miracles** and **gifts of holy spirit** distributed according to His own will.”

It is without a doubt that Jesus’ original message, the beginning of the announcement of **our salvation**, was none other than the foundational Good News, the heralding of the seed-word of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God: Mark 1:1, 14-15; Matthew 13:19; Luke 4:43; 8:11-12. “Those who heard him” (including Paul — in a unique, special way) then obeyed Jesus by teaching the same commands (i.e., the same Gospel of the Kingdom which Jesus had taught them: Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 8:12; 19:8, 20:24-25, 28:23, 30-31). Thus the bona fide message of **salvation**, which was **corroborated** (according to Heb. 2:4), with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of holy spirit, **had to be** Jesus’ own Gospel of the Kingdom which was then faithfully transmitted by “those (faithful witnesses) who heard him.”

Notice how “gifts of holy spirit” are “distributed according to His [God’s] own will,” a truth which is in complete harmony with a solid, untwisted rendering of **all** of chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians. The records in Acts 2, 10, 19 and 1 Corinthians 12-14 all fit this simple pattern! Among other things, speaking in genuine languages (previously unknown to the speakers) was a powerful sign to unbelieving Jews (including some Jewish Christians) that God had really opened the doors of authentic faith to Gentiles. God gave Gentiles this entrance to faith — and demonstrated His open acceptance of them through miraculous uses of real languages — in such a way to show that these Gentile people were no longer required to become Jewish proselytes (through circumcision, etc.)

Now, in contrast with what we have seen about the biblical picture, let’s briefly consider what is supposedly **corroborated** by the modern concept (since 1901) of “tongues for all” as “initial evidence” of “holy spirit baptism” (**not** at all a biblical paradigm). Does this “new” idea corroborate an end-time revival (the “latter rain” theology) in which God would pour out holy spirit “signs” again — after 1,800 years basically **without** signs like tongues? That is what

⁷ This is a follow-up article to Kenneth’s presentation, “Vital Holy Spirit Connections” at the 2022 Theological

Conference, which can be found at theologicalconference.org/papers

Charles F. Parham and others believed about the initial event in Topeka in 1901. Nevertheless, the Bible predicts very clearly (in Matt. 24) that latter times (near Messiah's return) involve a dramatic rise in **false** signs and wonders, while genuine faith, sadly, diminishes!

Did events in 1901 corroborate that "tongues" are a "missionary tool" which were given so that folks could quickly witness in foreign areas, speaking the Gospel in those faraway places — without having to learn the languages of distant lands? Parham and his followers really expected this miraculous result, but when they later tried it, it didn't work; it was gibberish!

Nowadays, among a half a billion adherents of Pentecostal-Charismatic excitement around the whole world, is speaking in tongues a **corroboration** of ecumenism (a falsely based idea of superficial unity) by which specific beliefs are less and less important? According to this hazy thinking, what is important is uninhibited acceptance of everyone as full-fledged fellow believers, despite doctrinal differences, etc. Does this vagueness fit Jesus' call to obedient faith and his stark warnings (Luke 6:46-49; John 12:44-50) about failure to heed his own words?

We could continue listing false belief systems which have been tightly linked nowadays to modern practices of "tongues" for over 120 years, but the point is already quite clear. ✧

Comments

• "I started on this path when a friend of mine who I grew up with told me he didn't believe Jesus was God. I started some research and stumbled on the debate between Anthony Buzzard and Michael Brown. I found that Michael was emotional but Anthony seemed calm and his answers were compelling. I was licensed with the Assemblies of God. I believed in all those things, but have changed my views on evidence of being spirit filled. I don't believe that speaking in tongues is the evidence that one is filled with the holy Spirit." — *New Jersey*

• "We are retired ministers of the Church of England. Over time we have come to be affirmed in our belief that there is one God, YHWH who is One — and that there is one Lord, Yeshua the Messiah. This has caused us consternation when meeting for worship here as the liturgy of the Church of England begins with 'We meet in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, one God.' Throughout the service the words 'Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end' are recited by the congregation. The Nicene Creed is repeated." — *England*

• "I am thankful for your pointing out to me the message of the Kingdom. I was amillennial before and quite a dedicated one. I studied eschatology a lot, but now I know I was not faithful to the biblical text. Your message about the Kingdom revitalized my faith, gave me a wonderful hope and the Kingdom to look forward to. I am very grateful for that. I have also been more dedicated in my walk with Christ and being obedient to His words." — *Poland*

• "I want to thank you once again for sending me for another year *Focus on the Kingdom*. I have been a 'Christian' now for 72 years but have only understood the Gospel of the Kingdom and the fallacy of the Trinity in the last 15 years after reading *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound*." — *England*

• "We listen to you often in your Sunday morning Church and Q & A programs, and also your lovely short sessions with Tracy Z! And we are amazed how your love for God's Scriptures, your answers and teaching just flow from you!" — *New Zealand*

Inventing New Language

"Together the three Cappadocians [the 'architects of the Trinity' in the 4th century] developed the ideas that would make it possible for conservative Arians and Nicene Christians eventually to fuse. Oddly, what triggered this burst of **creative thinking** was the appearance of a new issue that threatened to make divisions within the Christian community even more contentious and complex: the nature of the Holy Spirit...Even leading Nicenes, Basil admitted, were uncertain or divided:

"Of the wise men among ourselves, some have conceived of him [the Holy Spirit] as an activity, some as a creature, some as God; and some have been uncertain which to call him...And therefore they neither worship him nor treat him with dishonor, but take up a neutral position.

"What was needed to clear up this confusion was something that the Nicene Creed alone could not supply...And the development of this doctrine, Basil recognized, could not take place without **new language**. It was necessary to create a **new theological vocabulary** capable of going beyond the bare statement that the Father and Son were of the same essence (*homoousios*)...

"The answer was to clarify or **redefine keywords**. Even great theologians like Athanasius used 'essence' (*ousia*) and 'being' (*hypostasis*) interchangeably, sometimes exchanging these words with other terms like 'person' (*prosopon*)."

Richard Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, p. 205-206