

# Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 26 No. 6

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March, 2024

## Online Theological Conference

April 5-7, 2024

See [theologicalconference.org](http://theologicalconference.org)

## 12 Reasons Why the Millennium Will Begin After Jesus Comes Back

From *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (1879)  
by Wiley Jones

*Wiley Jones (1835-1898) was the author of several important works, including a compilation of sermons: The Gospel of the Kingdom Advocated in a Series of Ten Discourses (1879). One minister at the time valued this book so much that he gave a copy to everyone he baptized. We printed "What Must I Do to Be Saved?" from the second discourse in the October, 2020 Focus on the Kingdom (see [focusonthe kingdom.org](http://focusonthe kingdom.org)) Here is an excerpt from the tenth discourse: "The Second Advent, the Millennium, and the State Beyond."*

That the Millennium (the period of one thousand years mentioned six times in Rev. 20) does not commence until after the Lord Jesus comes, is evident from the following reasons:

**1st.** During the *entire* absence of the Bridegroom the Church is represented as in a *mourning* and *fasting* state that does not accord with millennial prosperity and glory. "Jesus said to them, Can the bridal party *mourn* as long as the Bridegroom is *with* them? but the days will come when the Bridegroom will be taken *from* them, and *then* they will fast" (Matt. 9:15). At the *return* of the Bridegroom, however, the great command goes forth, "Let us *be glad* and *rejoice*, and give honor to Him; for the *marriage* of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7). The parable of the ten virgins proves that return to be *personal*; hence the mourning and fasting period extends to the personal advent, instead of ending a thousand years *before* it (Matt. 25:1-10). This argument alone is enough to prove that we can have no millennial glory as long as the Bridegroom is away; but the glorious Millennium will most appropriately *follow* His return.

**2nd.** And, most plainly, as the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom does not find the Church in a millennial but a mourning state, so neither does it find the world in a millennial state, but as it was in the days of Noah (i.e. "filled with *violence*" instead of "knowledge of the Lord," Gen. 6:13; Isa. 11:9). It will be like Sodom and Gomorrah. The wheat and tares will be growing together, and scarcely any of "*the* faith on the earth" (Luke 17:26-30; 18:8; Matt. 13:30). The Greek definite article "*the*" here refers to the *true* faith. No doubt He will find much false or unscriptural faith, for that abounds. After such plain declarations as this, how can *anyone* doubt the pre-millennial advent?

**3rd.** The Scripture has *not* said that the gospel would *convert* all nations among whom it was preached, but the *purpose* of God in sending it to them was "to take *out of them* a people for His name." Hence we are not to expect the conversion of all nations under the gospel dispensation (Acts 15:14).

**4th.** If the gospel of the kingdom, when carried into all the world by the apostles, did not millennialize even *one* nation, though aided by the *gift of tongues* and *working of miracles*, how can it hereafter be expected to millennialize *all* nations *without* those aids? It is when the *judgments* of the Lord are "made manifest" by the conquering power of the returned Messiah, that the remnant of the inhabitants of the world "will learn righteousness," after vast numbers of them will have been destroyed (Rev. 15:4; Isa. 26: 9; Ps. 58:10, 11; Zech. 14:16). The kingdom to be established in the covenanted land, though like a mustard-seed or leaven at first, will quickly grow and spread by *miraculous conquest*, and "fill the whole earth."

**5th.** "The whole world lies in the power of the evil one," and "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (1 John 5:19; 2 Tim. 3:12). This is perfectly appropriate to a sinning world and a suffering church; and no doubt it will be appropriate until the Savior comes. But would it be at all applicable to a millennial dispensation when Satan is *bound*, the world *converted*, and persecution has *ceased*?

**6th.** The blessed Savior, in giving an outline of events from His first until His second coming, has included a period of tribulations and wrath upon the Jews, and also the down-treading of Jerusalem "until

the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Now it must be admitted that the joyful millennium will not commence until that tribulation ends. And yet it is “IMMEDIATELY,” and not a thousand years, after that tribulation ends that the signs of the *second advent* are seen. Hence there is *no room* for the Millennium between the advent and the tribulation; the advent must therefore be *pre-millennial*. To obtain a clear view of the prophecy in a few words, read it in this order: “There shall be *great distress* in the land and *wrath* upon *this people*. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles *until* the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:23, 24). Immediately *after* the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give her light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken; and *then* will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then will all the tribes of the earth *mourn*, and they will *see* the Son of man *coming* in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:29, 30).

**7th.** And as the Savior did not predict a Millennium of rest and triumph between the first and second advent, neither did Paul predict such a season as occurring before the advent, but rather a great *apostasy* from the faith, which would last until the Lord’s coming (2 Thess. 2:1-8). The word coming in v. 8 is *parousia*, the *same* word that in v. 1 is translated “coming;” which coming (in v. 1) the *Comprehensive Commentary* says, “All the best commentators, ancient and modern, understand of Christ’s second advent.” It must therefore mean the same in v. 8 where it is combined with another word which also signifies a personal appearing. That word is *epiphaneia*, here rendered “brightness,” but in its five other occurrences it is translated “appearing”: 1 Tim. 6:4; 2 Tim. 1:10, 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13. *Parousia* also means a *personal* coming, as “the coming (*parousia*) of Stephanas, Fortunatus,” who brought substantial help to Paul (1 Cor. 16:17). Either of these words is held sufficient in other passages to prove a real and personal appearing and presence. And when both are *united* as in the case before us, how is it possible that they should mean anything less than the literal, real and personal arrival and presence of the Lord Jesus? Thus we find no room for a millennium between Paul’s day and the personal advent, but the mystery of iniquity which was already at work was to continue its desolating career until destroyed at the Lord’s coming.

**8th.** So also in John’s prophecy. The Bible does not speak of an *eighth* trumpet. Hence I conclude that the seventh trumpet of which John speaks is “the *last*

trumpet” at which time Paul says “the Lord *himself* will descend from heaven,” and the dead in Christ arise (1 Cor. 15:52 with 1 Thess. 4:16). John places the resurrection under the *seventh* trumpet which, I think, sufficiently identifies it with the last trumpet of Paul (Rev. 11:15-18). Now the argument is this, that, up to the sounding of the seventh trumpet is a scene of *wars, commotions, persecutions, and sufferings*, with no room nor space for thrusting in edgewise a thousand years of peace and prosperity...Hence that period must come *after* the seventh trumpet, and therefore after the *advent and resurrection*. Now if it would be absurd to say that the seventh trumpet is not sounded until the end of the millennium, would it not be equally so to say that the advent does not occur till the end of the millennium? I think this argument alone concerning the seventh trumpet is enough to prove the advent *pre-millennial*. ...

“To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishment upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the *judgment* written: *this honor* have *all* His saints” (Ps. 149:7-9). Kings must always conquer a hostile country before they can reign over it; and so that fearful period of conquest, rapid and miraculous, will precede the blessed and peaceful millennial reign. Thus we find no room in John’s prophecy for a thousand years of peace and triumph *before* the Lord’s coming.

**9th.** Daniel describes four great empires...and rooted in the head of the fourth is a little horn, or persecuting power, that “makes war with the saints and prevails against them *until* the Ancient of days *comes*” (Dan. 7:19-22). He does not say “until a thousand years *before* the Ancient of days comes.” Of course the little horn will have to cease making war with the saints and prevailing against them before the Millennium can begin; but it does not cease before Christ comes...In the same manner Paul too has put the destruction of the persecuting power at the *coming* of the Lord (2 Thess. 2:8). Thus I find neither in the prophecy of Daniel nor Paul any space or room for the Millennium *before* the advent.

**10th.** If you will study the 14th chapter of Zechariah, I think that you will find that chapter to be an invulnerable fortress of proof that the Lord Jesus will come *before* the Millennium. Verses 4 and 5 plainly describe the second advent, in saying, “*The Lord my God will COME, and all his holy ones with him.*” Notice too the marginal references on that sentence: in my Bible they are Matt. 16:27; 24:30, 31; 25:31; Jude 14. All these references relate to the second coming. The first (Matt. 16:27) shows it to be the time of *rewarding* the righteous, and this identifies it with

the seventh trumpet period in Rev. 11:15-18. Then, after describing several wonderful changes in the mount of Olives and adjacent country which have never *yet* occurred, and the mere naming of which proves that the prophet is not referring to any *past* coming, he proceeds in verses 12-15 to describe the great overthrow of wicked persons that will occur in the vicinity of Jerusalem at the advent. Neither does history record any such overthrow as this at any time in the past; it must be *future*. And then, AFTER the advent and AFTER that conquest of nations, the prophet goes on in verses 16-21 to describe the *glorious millennial age of peace and blessedness* when the “left” or spared remnant of the nations shall flock to Jerusalem “from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.” This implies the deliverance of Jerusalem and the establishment of the kingdom of God over the entire earth, two events which the prophet had merely glanced at in verses 9 and 11...

I believe that the Savior’s feet will as literally and truly stand on the Mount of Olives at His return (verse 4) as they did when He was formerly here. Certainly He literally *ascended* from that mountain, and will come in the same way (Acts 1:11). To say that verse 4 was fulfilled at the Roman invasion by the standing of the feet of *Titus* on the Mount of Olives would be a monstrous torture and perversion of this prophecy. And besides, the great earthquake, rending the mountain and forming a “very great valley” between, did not occur when Titus invaded Jerusalem; it is an undivided mountain to this day, and will remain so till the Lord comes. Notice, too, that no such perennial streams are *now* flowing out east and west from Jerusalem as verse 8 describes; and this also shows the prophecy remains to be accomplished. It proves, too, that the earth will not be blotted out of existence when He comes, for “*summer and winter*” will still go on, during which those two rivers will run, the one to the Mediterranean and the other to the Dead Sea. The going of “all nations” to Jerusalem *once* a year (verse 16) was not fulfilled under the Mosaic dispensation, for that required the Jews *alone* to go there for worship; and *they* had to go *three times* a year (Deut. 16:16). Nor does the compelling of all nations to go to Jerusalem to worship, and the withholding of rain from the wicked, apply to the *present* dispensation, for the Lord *now* “sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45), and no nation is required to go to Jerusalem to worship. These predictions, therefore, *must* belong to a dispensation yet to come, the Millennium, after the [second] advent.

**11th.** How can the resurrected saints reign *during* the Millennium (Rev. 20:4), unless those two inseparable events — the advent and resurrection —

take place *before* it? One of the classes to be resurrected will be “those who were *beheaded*.” Now if the beheading is literal, why not the rising also? If there were any doubt about the literalness of the rising from the dead, that doubt ought to be set aside by the explanation which the Spirit here gives of the vision: “This is the first *resurrection*.” I conclude that the word resurrection (*anastasis*) is twice used here in its most literal sense; for, if there be any enigma in the preceding verses, it is certainly not customary to explain an enigma in language that is itself enigmatical, or to explain one figurative expression by another equally figurative. That the first resurrection includes *all* the righteous dead, we learn from other and supplementary portions of Scripture: 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 4:16. “The resurrection of *the just*” is a “resurrection *from among the dead* (*ek nekron*)” as the Greek implies, and hence it is a *first* resurrection, for it leaves other dead remaining in the grave till the end of the Millennium (Luke 14:14; 20:35). Those who shall rise first are *firstborns*, *prototokoi* (Heb. 12:23). How could the first resurrection be only the reviving of a martyr-like disposition, seeing that Satan will then be bound, and no one left to act the part of persecutor; martyrdom implies severe persecution...

As to the word “souls,” the Commentary of Jamieson, Faussett and Brown very truly says, “*Souls* is often used in general for *persons*, and even for *dead bodies*.” In Numbers 9:6, 7, where the English has “dead body of a man,” the Greek has *psyche anthropou*, “soul of a man.” Balaam said, “Let *me* (Greek: ‘the *soul* of me,’ margin ‘my soul’) die the death of the righteous” (Num. 23:10). If then “the soul of me” means “me” in that place, why should not “the souls of them” mean “them” in this place? When we read that “eight *souls*” were saved in the ark, does anybody imagine that their *bodies* were *not* saved? Here let me quote what one or two modern writers have to say as to the manner of interpreting these verses (Rev. 20:4-6). Bishop Newton, an Episcopalian, born 1704, says, “This prophecy remains to be fulfilled, even though the resurrection be taken only for an *allegory*, which yet the text cannot admit without the greatest *torture* and *violence*.” Dean Alford, probably the greatest scholar which the Episcopal Church has had in its communion for a long time, says, “Those who lived next to the apostles, and the *WHOLE* church for *three hundred years* understood these verses in the *PLAIN* and *LITERAL* sense. As regards the text itself, no legitimate treatment of it will extort what is known as the spiritual interpretation now in fashion. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second, which I suppose none will be hardy enough to maintain; but if the second is *literal*, then so is the *first*, which, in common with the *whole primitive church* and many of

the *best modern* expositors, I do maintain and receive as an article of faith and hope.”

**12th.** To affirm that Christ will not come till the end of the Millennium is daring to affirm that He will not come for a thousand years yet, inasmuch as we know the Millennium has not begun. This putting off the advent a thousand years is contrary to the *watching, waiting* and *expectant* attitude which Christians are required to maintain. “Watch therefore, for you do not know when the Master of the house is coming, in the evening, or at midnight, or at dawn, or in the morning; lest *coming suddenly* He find you *sleeping*. Get dressed, and keep your *lights burning*; and be like people who wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; so that when he comes and knocks, they may open the door to him *immediately*. Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he comes will find *watching*” (Mark 13:35, 36; Luke 12:35, 36, 37).

These twelve overwhelming reasons are but a fragment of the evidence which might be brought in proof that the personal coming of the Lord Jesus will occur *before* the Millennium. ✧

“Salvation now in the NT concerns, not only this life, but also the life of the age to come. Indeed, **salvation and the ‘life of the age to come’ are synonymous terms**; the Fourth Gospel for example uses *soteria* (‘salvation’) only once (John 4:22: ‘Salvation is from the Jews’), but the conception is **identical** with that of *zoe* (‘life’) or *zoe aionios* (‘life of the age’), which in biblical Greek **does not mean ‘eternal life’ in any Platonic sense, or even ‘everlasting life’** (as if the emphasis were upon duration), **but the life of the Aeon — i.e. the age to come...**

“The Johannine conception of ‘life’ largely replaces the Synoptic ‘kingdom of God,’ with which it is **synonymous**; to **enter into the Kingdom of God and to enter into life are identical expressions, and both have reference to an eschatological salvation**, as a study of Mark 9:43-48 will make clear.”

“Salvation,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 1962, p. 181

<sup>1</sup> Jesus spoke about gathering the elect Christians *after* (i.e., post) the tribulation (Matt. 24:29-31; the elect, of course, are the Christians: see Matt. 22:14, where “chosen” represents the same Greek word “elect”). He also urged his followers to expect their redemption *after* the cataclysmic events leading to the end of the age (Luke 21:28). Since Jesus instructed his followers to “flee to the hills” at the onset of the tribulation, it should be obvious that he had no departure to heaven in mind! Paul expected Christians to

## Dispensationalism: Canceling the Teaching of Jesus

by Anthony Buzzard

**F**or schools of theology committed to believing the authoritative word of Scripture, there are other ways of circumventing the Gospel of the Kingdom. One popular Gospel tradition has erected a scheme by which the Gospel of the Kingdom is specifically *not* the Gospel of salvation now to be offered to potential believers. It is a system known as “dispensationalism.” All students of the Bible recognize that God appointed different “dispensations” or arrangements for different periods of history. The Mosaic dispensation, for example, made demands on the faithful different from those required under the New Testament Gospel. But “dispensationalism” goes much further. It maintains that the Gospel of the Kingdom was preached by Jesus *to Jews only*, until they refused the offer of the Kingdom; whereupon a *different* Gospel, the Gospel of grace, was introduced by Paul. The theory then holds that the Gospel of the Kingdom will be reinstated seven years before the return of Christ, a time when, according also to dispensationalism, the Church will have been removed from the earth by a so-called “pre-tribulation rapture.”<sup>1</sup>

The dispensationalist system has been forced upon the text of Scripture in the interests of a theory alien to the Bible. As we have pointed out, Luke went to great lengths to show that Paul’s Gospel was not different from that of Jesus. Both men preached the Gospel about the Kingdom.<sup>2</sup> Paul, contrary to dispensationalism, knew nothing about a difference between “the Gospel of grace” (Acts 20:24) and “preaching the Kingdom” (Acts 20:25). He deliberately equates them. As F.F. Bruce says: “It is evident from a comparison of this verse [Acts 20:24] with the next that the preaching of this Gospel [of grace] is identical with the proclamation of the Kingdom...The proclaiming of the Kingdom is the same as testifying to the good news of God’s grace.”<sup>3</sup>

This incontrovertible evidence is flatly contradicted by contemporary dispensationalism. Dr. Erwin Lutzer, of Moody Church Radio Ministries, states: “I believe that the gospel of the kingdom is different from the gospel of the grace of God...The

have to survive until the public manifestation of Jesus in power and glory (2 Thess. 1:7-9). He expressly warned against any system which taught that Christians would be gathered together before the appearance of the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:1-4).

<sup>2</sup> Luke 4:43, etc.; Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31.

<sup>3</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Eerdmans, 1975, p. 379-380.

gospel of the grace of God has nothing to do with the Kingdom per se.”<sup>4</sup> But Lutzer’s confusing of the one saving Gospel was learned from tradition unexamined, not from the Bible. By positing “two forms of the Gospel,” dispensationalists have invented a most unfortunate distinction which does not exist in the scriptural text.

Dispensationalism formally cancels the Gospel as Jesus preached it. Could the Church have suffered a greater disaster than this systematic curtailing of Jesus’ own Gospel preaching? A.C. Gaebelein was a leading exponent of the “divided Gospel” theory. Referring to Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:14, “This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world to all the nations,” he wrote:

“The preaching which is mentioned [in Matt. 24:14] is that of the Gospel of the Kingdom, but that Gospel is not now preached, for we preach the Gospel of Grace...With that event [the stoning of Stephen] the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom ceased. Another Gospel was preached. The Lord gave it to the great Apostle, whom He called Himself, Paul. And Paul calls this Gospel “my Gospel.” It is the Gospel of God’s free Grace to all who believe, the gospel of the Glory of God, the Gospel of a risen and glorified Lord...Now during the time that the Kingdom was preached to be at hand the Gospel of Grace was not heard, and during the time the Gospel of Grace is preached *the Gospel of the Kingdom is not preached*.”<sup>5</sup>

By this astonishing exegetical blunder, Jesus’ Christian Gospel of the Kingdom was ruled out of court — dismissed as suspended, and decreed impermissible for the present time. The situation would seem to call for a profound repentance and the reinstatement of Jesus’ full Gospel at the heart of evangelism. Can there be such a thing as evangelism which does not hold in highest honor and emphasis the very Gospel heralded by Jesus and mandated by the Great Commission until the end of the age? If Paul had in fact preached, as Gaebelein says, “another Gospel,” he would have put himself under his own curse (Gal. 1:8-9). He would have been in violation of Jesus’ instructions that *his* teachings were to go to the entire world.

### Suppressing the Gospel That Jesus Preached

The article on “Gospel” in *Unger’s Dictionary of the Bible* represents the same common dispensationalist error, which bypasses the Gospel as Jesus preached it. This kind of thinking about the Gospel and salvation has had an immense influence

particularly in America, but its effects are felt throughout the evangelical world:

“Forms of the Gospel to be differentiated. Many Bible teachers make a distinction in the following:

“(1) *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. The Good News that God’s purpose is to establish an earthly mediatorial kingdom in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:16). Two proclamations of the gospel of the kingdom are mentioned, one already past, beginning with the ministry of John the Baptist, carried on by our Lord and His disciples and *ending with the Jewish rejection of the Messiah*. The other preaching is yet future (Matt. 24:14), during the Great Tribulation, and heralding the second advent of the King...

“(2) *The Gospel of God’s Grace*...The good news of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ as provided by our Lord and preached by His disciples (1 Cor. 15:1-4).”<sup>6</sup>

This tragic suppression of the Gospel of the Kingdom is evident in the Scofield Study Bible at Revelation 14:6. The system of Gospel definition described in this note has affected the entirety of evangelical presentation of salvation, even where Scofield is not specifically recognized. Scofield begins by defining the saving Gospel as the Gospel of the grace of God which, he maintains, is confined to facts about the death and resurrection of Jesus. Scofield then goes on to say that “another aspect of the good news is the gospel ‘of the Kingdom’...The good news of this kingdom was announced...by Christ in His first coming (Matt. 9:35), and will be proclaimed during the great tribulation” (Matt. 24:14). Scofield thus banishes the Gospel of the Kingdom from the present message of salvation by stating that the Christian Gospel *now is only about Jesus’ atoning death and his resurrection*. In this way Jesus is cut off from his own Gospel preaching. We may well observe that Satan’s master trick is to separate Jesus from his teaching. One may proclaim “Jesus” with all earnestness, but is the real Jesus made known apart from his complete Gospel and teaching? Jesus well knew the danger of preaching “faith in Jesus” without actually telling the public about the “words of Jesus.” Only those whose faith is founded on the rock foundation of the teachings/Gospel of Jesus are on solid ground (Matt. 7:24-27; Mark 8:35-38; and see the whole Gospel of John with its constant insistence on the word/words/teachings of Jesus).

Uncertainty about the Christian Gospel is not surprising when such evident misreading of the Bible

<sup>4</sup> From correspondence, Oct., 1996.

<sup>5</sup> *The Olivet Discourse*, Baker Book House, 1969, pp. 9, 39, 40, emphasis added.

<sup>6</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, Moody Bible Institute, 1988, p. 420, emphasis added.

is built into a system with a massive influence in pulpits and Christian literature. Surely the words of Paul in Acts 20:24-25 should banish the artificial distinction proposed by the Unger's Bible Dictionary and the Scofield Bible. Paul looked back on his career and noted that he had "finished his course, the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus to testify solemnly of **the Gospel of the grace of God...** to all of you among whom I went about **preaching the Kingdom.**" *Clearly there is no difference between the Gospel of grace and the Gospel of the Kingdom.* It is true, of course, that Jesus did not initially preach his death and resurrection as part of the Gospel. The death and resurrection of Jesus were later critical elements in the proclamation of Paul. They did not, however, replace the preaching of the Kingdom, which remained as much the heart of Paul's Gospel as it had been the center of Jesus' own Message (Acts 28:23, 30, 31).

When Jesus embarked on his intensive evangelistic campaign in Galilee in about 27 AD, he summoned his audience to a radical change of heart based on the national belief that God was going to usher in the worldwide Kingdom promised by Daniel and all the prophets. Intelligent belief in the promise of the Kingdom is to be the disciple's first step, coupled with a major U-turn in lifestyle. In this way men and women can align themselves with God's great Kingdom purpose for the earth.

The nature of Jesus' activity was that of a herald making a public announcement on behalf of the one God of Israel. The thrust of the Message was that each individual should undertake a radical redirection of his life in face of the certainty of the coming Kingdom of God. This was, and still is, the essence of the Christian Gospel. How can it be otherwise, when it is the Gospel Message which comes from the lips of the Messiah himself?

It is a matter of common sense to recognize that by using the term "Kingdom of God," Jesus would have evoked in the minds of his audience, steeped as they were in the national hope of Israel, a divine worldwide government on earth, with its capital at Jerusalem. This is what the Kingdom of God would certainly have meant to his contemporaries. The writings of the prophets, which Jesus as a Jew recognized as the divinely authorized word of God, had unanimously promised the arrival of a new era of peace and prosperity. The ideal Kingdom would rule forever. God's people would be victorious on a renewed earth. Peace would extend across the globe.

Thus to announce the coming of the Kingdom involved both a threat and a promise. To those who

responded to the Message by believing and obeying it and reordering their lives accordingly, there was a promise of a place in the glories of the future divine rule. To the rest the Kingdom would threaten destruction, as God executed judgment upon any not found worthy of entering the Kingdom when it came. This theme governs the whole New Testament. In the light of this primary concept the teaching of Jesus becomes comprehensible. It is an exhortation to win immortality in the future Kingdom and to escape destruction and exclusion from the Kingdom.

Traditional systems of Gospel preaching are saddled with the unbiblical destiny of the believer described as "heaven." The Abrahamic covenant which underlies the Christian Gospel of the Kingdom is then applied to Jews only! But it is the *Christians* who according to Jesus are destined to "inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5) and the Kingdom.

### The Sermon on the Mount

Christians should awake to the fact that their various traditional systems, claiming to be based on Scripture, have not served them well. Scripture nowhere says that Jesus preached a Jewish message up to the cross; whereupon Paul then took a message of grace to the Gentiles. A false distinction and division is being created by the so-called "dispensationalist" school. The teachings of Jesus do not remain at the center of the scheme of salvation proposed by dispensationalists. John Walvoord says that the Sermon on the Mount: "treats not of salvation, but of the character and conduct of those who belong to Christ...Its intent is clearly not to delineate the gospel that Jesus Christ died and rose again, or present justification by faith. Nor is its purpose to point an unbeliever to salvation in Christ...The Sermon on the Mount, as a whole, is not church truth precisely."<sup>7</sup> Rather ambiguously he adds that it should not be "relegated to unimportant truth."<sup>8</sup>

The words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount could hardly express more clearly that obedience to his teachings *are* in fact the basis of salvation: "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the religious teachers and Pharisees, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven [i.e., be saved]" (Matt. 5:20). "Not everyone who says to me, 'lord, lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven; rather it is those who do the will of my Father" (Matt. 7:21). Jesus goes on to say that those who fail to gain salvation are those who fail to obey his words (Matt. 7:24-27).<sup>9</sup> And this is, in the words of Walvoord, "not church truth precisely"?

<sup>7</sup> *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come*, Moody Press, 1984, pp. 44, 45.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> Cp. John 3:36; 8:51; 12:44-50.

Until churches renounce the disparagement of the teaching of Jesus implied in their various systems, we cannot hope for unity. We must rally around the great central theme of the Gospel of the Kingdom, which expresses the genius of the Christian faith and brings us close to the heart of Jesus. L.S. Chafer's distinction drawn between what some label the "legal" teachings of Jesus and the grace message of Paul seems to us to be entirely mistaken:

"Under the conditions laid down in the kingdom teachings, life is entered into by a personal faithfulness (Matt. 5:28-29; 18:8-9; Luke 10:25-28). When this same exhortation is stated in the Gospel by Luke (13:24), it opens with the words, 'Strive to enter in at the narrow gate.' The word *strive* is a translation of *agonizomai*, which means 'agonize.' It suggests the uttermost expenditure of the athlete's strength in the contest. Such is the human condition that characterizes all the kingdom passages which offer entrance into life. An abrupt change is met after turning to the Gospel by John, which was written to announce the new message of grace, which is, that eternal life may be had through *believing*. No two words of Scripture more vividly express the great characterizing relationships in law and grace than *agonize*, and *believe*. Grace is the unfolding of the fact that One has agonized in our stead, and life is 'through his name,' and not by any degree of human faithfulness or merit."<sup>10</sup>

Dispensationalism proceeds to divide the Apostles against each other, making John and Paul rivals of Jesus. It makes the Kingdom Gospel of Jesus, by which salvation is to be sought,<sup>11</sup> of historical interest only, since the message was changed, according to the false theory, at the cross. It is simply not true that "believing" is a new idea in the Gospel of John and in Paul. Believing the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is the platform of Jesus' presentation of the saving message in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (John refers constantly to the "word" and "words" of Jesus), and Paul likewise traces all sound faith to belief in the "message of Messiah" (Rom. 10:17). ✧

## "Justification"

Justification for Paul is much more than simply forgiveness. It reinstates a person as a son of God and heir of the promise of a place in the land/Kingdom. The *Pulpit Commentary* notes:

"We must not restrict justification to deliverance from deserved penalty, but must attach it to the further idea of *inheritance*. As one writer has well remarked, 'Justification is a term applicable to something more

than the discharge of an accused person...As in our courts of law there are civil as well as criminal cases, so it was in old time; and a large number of the passages adduced seem to refer to trials of the former description, in which some question of property, right, or inheritance was under discussion between two parties. The judge, by **justifying** one of the parties, decided that **the property in question was to be regarded as his**. Applying this aspect of the matter to the justification of man in the sight of God, we gather from Scripture that while through sin man has forfeited legal claim to any right or inheritance which God might have to bestow upon His creatures, so **through justification he is restored to his high position and regarded as an heir of God**" (*Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 121, 122, citing Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 161, emphasis added).

## Comments

• "The January *Focus on the Kingdom* is, as always, very good. George N.H. Peters' *Theocratic Kingdom* should be a go-to work for all. I was reading this morning Proposition 154: 'This Theocratic Kingdom includes the visible reign of the risen and glorified saints here on the earth,' and I was greatly encouraged at our involvement with Jesus to restore this world." — *Canada*

• "Thank you so much for the bit about Constantine's 'In this sign conquer' being what made it acceptable for the 'Christian' church to go to war physically ('Church Suicide Must Stop,' February). The whole thing is now clear to me at last." — *Australia*

• "Our ministry here [in prison] has not slowed up, even though this is a ministry always in transition due to transfers and people going home. We now have 4 different yard ministries, plus Sunday. We do our best with what God has given us to work with. We do have a one-sided shed to meet in if it is not raining too hard, but if it is raining and the wind is blowing, we get wet, but we still come together. I remind each of our people of truth. What is rain compared to what the only begotten Son went through for us? We have 5 people now who hold a leadership role in ministry, training and one on one sharing truth from Scriptures." — *North Carolina*

• "I haven't responded to your *Focus on the Kingdom* writings for some time. I read them all and appreciate them. The Theocratic Kingdom message is such a hope! Thank you for staying true. I'm also very grateful for the Bible studies you and Dan Gill do together (see **21stcr.org**)." — *Canada*

<sup>10</sup> L.S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Dallas Seminary Press, 1947-48, Vol. IV, p. 224.

<sup>11</sup> Mark 1:14, 15; Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:12; Acts 8:12; 19:8; 28:23, 31.