

The Gospel of The Kingdom of God

"The apostles have preached the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ from God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ. ... they went forth proclaiming the kingdom of God was at hand." Clement of Rome, AD 97

"Since Christ said at the very outset of the preaching of the Gospel: 'the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' it is most absurd to say that the Gospel of Christ is not the Gospel of the kingdom." Thomas Aquinas 1274

According to my deeply sincere "dispensational" background (for decades), the "kingdom/king" vocabulary of the four gospels was outdated doctrine, purely for ancient Israelites, but it had nothing to do with Christians. How terribly wrong I was!

"The lord said [to Saul of Tarsus], 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up on your feet. I have appeared to you for this purpose: to appoint you a servant and a witness, both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I **will reveal to you**. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the domain of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'" Acts 26:15b-18 (OGF – emphasis mine)

Among other realities ("the things which I **will reveal to you**") which Jesus himself eventually communicated to Saul [or Paul] must have been the one authentic Gospel of the Kingdom of God: "... that the Gospel I preached is not from men. I did not receive it from men, nor was it taught to me, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Messiah." Galatians 1:11b-12 (OGF)

Modern theologians tend to separate "the Gospel of the grace of God" from "the Gospel of the Kingdom" but Paul strongly united such phrases as mutually reflective of the one true Gospel! (Acts 20:24-25) The genuine Gospel is **one**, and forceful curses are pronounced on those who would distort or pervert "the Gospel as the Messiah preached it." (Galatians 1:6-9)

There is no Scriptural doubt whatsoever that Paul avidly preached the same Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Acts 14:22 / 19:8 / 20:24-25 / 28:23, 31.) which his lord Jesus, the Anointed One, had been the forerunner in proclaiming (Hebrews 2:3 / Mark 1:14-15.) Far from being a dusty relic from a previous "dispensation", the Gospel of the Kingdom of God was extremely vital and pertinent (something of which to be urgently **persuasive** – Acts 19:8) for the thirty years or so which span the book of Acts. It is still **the vital standard** for true preaching!

Furthermore, it is this very Gospel which **must** be preached until the end of this current age: "This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached around the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:14 (OGF) If dubious, defective theologies have currently permeated all corners of the world, it is time to replace them with the **Gospel!**

Even though it is popular nowadays to sharply distinguish traditional interpretations of Pauline theology from Jesus' own teachings, Paul himself never contrasted his understanding of the Gospel from the sound, wholesome words of our lord Jesus Messiah: "If anyone teaches other doctrines and does not agree with the health-giving words, namely the teaching of our lord Jesus Messiah, and thus with the teaching which promotes godliness, he is conceited, understanding nothing, ..." 1st Timothy 6:3-4a (OGF)

The word "anointed" or "Messiah" (in Hebrew: *Meshiach* / in Greek: *Christos*) is used in the Old Testament of consecrated priests or, also, of **anointed kings** (like Saul and David.) **Only three times** is it used prophetically of a special "Messiah" to come, or an "Anointed One" to come!

After Hannah wrestled in anguished prayers (and finally got pregnant) and began raising Samuel, her firstborn son, whom she dedicated to the service of YHWH, she poured out a heartfelt prayer of thanksgiving in 1st Samuel 2:1-10. A dynamic, prophetic picture emerges at the end of her powerful prayer!

"He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and on them he has set the world. He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might does one prevail. The LORD! His adversaries shall be shattered; the Most High will thunder in heaven. The LORD [YHWH] will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to **his king**, and exalt the power of **his anointed.**" 1st Samuel 2:8-10 (NRSV – emphasis mine.)

So, at a time of future judgment when YHWH's enemies "shall be shattered", "he will give strength to **his king** and exalt the power of **his anointed.**" This vivid picture, including the shattering of Yahweh's adversaries, is later developed in much greater depth in the first Messianic Psalm, Psalm 2, which paints a wonderful portrait of who the Messiah would be:

"Why have nations crowded together, and people murmur about something empty, Earth's kings take a stand, leaders make plans together, against Yahweh and against his **anointed** – 'We'll break off their means of discipline, throw off their ropes from us'? The one who sits in the heavens makes fun; the Lord ridicules them. Then he speaks to them in his anger, terrifies them with his rage. 'But I myself installed **my king** on Tsiyyon [Zion], my sacred mountain!' I shall recount Yahweh's decree: he said to me, 'You're **my son; today I myself have fathered you.** Ask of me and I'll make nations **your domain**, earth's ends your holding. You'll smash them with an iron club, shatter them like an object made by a potter.' So now, show some insight you kings, accept discipline, you people who exercise authority in the earth. Serve Yahweh with awe, rejoice with trembling, surrender sincerely, So that he doesn't get angry and you perish as regards the way, Because his anger will soon burn up; the blessings of all who take shelter with him!" Psalm 2:1-12 (The First Testament – emphasis mine)

One can notice easily in Psalm 2 that Yahweh's **anointed** is also his designated **king** on Zion, parallel to how Yahweh's **king** is his exalted **anointed** in 1st Samuel 2:10. In addition, Psalm 2 clarifies that this **king / anointed** one would be Yahweh's **son** – “**fathered**” by Yahweh “today.”

The third (and last) passage in which the prophesied **anointed** or the **Messiah** (who is also called “**the Prince**” here) is specifically designated as such is Daniel 9:24-27. The prophecy here includes the timing factor of seventy sevens (490 years) and past events involving the first 69 of those “weeks” or **sevens** (483 years.) After seven “sevens” plus sixty-two “sevens” the Messiah would be “cut off” – after a long time starting with a certain point of **restoring** and **rebuilding Jerusalem** (after its destruction by the ancient Babylonians.) Anyway, with proper historical data, one could determine Messiah as having been “cut off” in the first century AD (or CE.)

Of course, many other O.T. prophetic passages correspond to this same Messianic picture (like Isaiah, chapter 11) **without** the specific vocabulary of “anointed” or “Messiah” (or *Christos* [Christ] in the Greek Septuagint.)

A brief note on vocabulary emphasis might be in order. The word “Christ” itself has become too commonplace in modern speech, so to mentally translate it as **the Christ, Messiah, or the Anointed One** is quite appropriate! Since it prophetically refers to an upcoming **anointed king**, one could even translate the term as “**King**” (as sometimes done in *The Kingdom New Testament*.) Also, the term “fathered” or “begotten” used in Psalm 2:7 must be carefully understood. It means being **engendered** or produced biologically. One is not truly welcome to give into the nonsensical jargon that Jesus was “begotten” but not made! To be begotten **is to be made!** It is to be brought into existence! In the case of Jesus being “fathered”, it was through God's miraculous intervention, not natural, sexual activity.

When Jesus himself spoke frequently of the “Kingdom of God” (or “Kingdom of Heaven” – at times in Matthew [only]), to what was he referring? He stipulated that it was a Kingdom to **come**, in which God's **will** would be done perfectly on earth (as it is currently done in heaven – Matthew 6:10.) He clearly pointed to a time when the meek (or gentle) **shall inherit the earth** (Matthew 5:5, a quote from Psalm 37.) He even spoke directly to his murderous accusers about “the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven” – Matthew 26:64 – citing Daniel 7:13.) The powerful, futuristic emphasis on God's coming Kingdom and the glorious **return** of the “Son of Man” boldly permeates Jesus' Kingdom focus in the records of the gospels (Matthew 25:31, Luke 18:8, etc.) It is very probable that Jesus' very phrase “Kingdom of God” is a direct allusion to Daniel 2:44:

“In the days of those kings [the statue's feet], the **God of heaven** will set up a **kingdom** that will never be destroyed, and this **kingdom** will not be left to another people. It will crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, but will itself endure forever. You saw a stone break off from the mountain without a hand touching it, and it crushed the iron, bronze, fired clay, silver and gold. The **great God** has told the king [Nebuchadnezzar] what will happen in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation certain.” Daniel 2:44-45 – (HCSB - emphasis mine)

One should read Daniel 2:27-45 to grasp and appreciate the whole context of the details of the dream and its prophetic interpretation. The statue's head of gold represents the kingdom of Babylonia, the chest and arms of silver represent the later kingdom of Media and Persia, and stomach and thighs of bronze represent the even later kingdom of Greece (at the time of Alexander the Great.) The legs of iron represent a further undesignated kingdom in the Middle East (not Europe.) Perhaps, the Ottoman Empire fits the picture. The feet and toes (which would mean 10 toes), partly of iron and partly of fired clay, give a picture of the future situation right before the kingdoms of this world are crushed and the **Kingdom of God** arrives. It is interesting that there are **ten** hostile people groups of the Middle East (including Assyria) listed in Psalm 83:6-8 who are bent on wiping out Israel (Psalm 83:4.) It is also interesting that in the outline of future events in the book of Revelation, there are **ten** horns (**ten** kings), seeming to correspond to the **ten** toes of the dreamed statue (Daniel 2:33-34, 41-43), who are to make a solid but temporary alliance with the beast (i.e. the future antichrist: Revelation 17:12-13.)

To close our cursory overview of "the Gospel of the Kingdom of God", we will observe the prophetic words of the angel Gabriel in chapter one of Luke. Without really exaggerating at all, one could say that Gabriel preached to Mary: **the Gospel of the Kingdom of God!**

"And listen: you [Mary] will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great, and he will be called the **Son of the Most High**. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David, and he will be **king** over the house of Jacob forever; **his Kingdom will never come to an end.**" ..."Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you [two ways of referring to God's miraculous, creative action]. For that reason precisely the holy child to be **fathered** will be called the **Son of God.**" Luke 1:31-33, 35 (OGF – emphasis mine)

The "today" of the **fathering** (begetting) of the **Son of God** (in Psalm 2:7) is thus precisely designated as being on the day of God's miraculous **fathering** activity in Mary!

A very brief bonus study: **Sufferings and Glory (From a Kingdom Perspective)** - follows the suggested readings here.

For further reading on this topic, periodically reread three of Anthony Buzzard's books:

The Amazing Aims and Claims of Jesus (What you didn't learn in church)

The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah (A Solution to the Riddle of the New Testament)

Our Fathers Who Aren't in Heaven (The Forgotten Christianity of Jesus, the Jew)

The Gospel of the Kingdom by Wiley Jones (available free in electronic form)

The Kingdom of God by John Bright

Forgotten Gospel: The original Message of a Conquering King by Matthew Bryan (making many valuable points despite some theological inaccuracies)

Sufferings and Glory (From a Kingdom Perspective)

"For I am convinced that the **sufferings** of this present time are not worth comparing with the coming **glory** which is going to be revealed in us." Romans 8:18 (OGF – emphasis mine)

"But we have this treasure [the light of the knowledge of the glory of God] in clay jars, so that the supreme greatness of the power will be from God and not from ourselves. We are afflicted from every side, but not crushed. We are perplexed, but not in despair. We are persecuted, but not forsaken. We are struck down, but not destroyed. In our bodies we always carry the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our bodies. For we who are living are constantly being delivered to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our mortal bodies. ... So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer selves are decaying, our inner selves are being renewed day by day. These **light afflictions** last for a little while, but they are producing for us an incomparable **weight of glory** for the age to come. We do not look at the things which are seen now but at the things which are not seen, because the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen belong to the age to come."

2nd Corinthians 4:7-11, 16-18 (OGF – emphasis mine)

Quite clearly, to the degree to which we embrace the Kingdom hope of **glory** which will be revealed in us in the age to come, we are preparing to mature now in our attitude towards present **sufferings**: "It is through many trials that we enter the Kingdom of God." Acts 14:22b

"My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the **fellowship of his sufferings**, being conformed to his death, in the **hope** of attaining to the **advance resurrection** from among the dead persons." Philippians 3:10-11 (OGF – emphasis mine)

Our identity with the Messiah Jesus involves suffering with him temporarily in the present while waiting patiently for the glorious, everlasting hope of the age to come!

"For it is better that you **suffer** for doing what is right, if it is God's will, than for doing what is wrong." **1st Peter 3:17 (OGF – emphasis mine)**

One can slowly peruse all of **1st Peter** to see how suffering for doing what is right (like Jesus) is a major theme throughout the whole letter. Jesus' supreme model is magnificently highlighted, for he suffered greatly without an ounce of threats or retaliation ever coming out of his mouth!

"In fact, all who desire to live in a godly way in Messiah Jesus are bound to **suffer persecution**."
2nd Timothy 3:12 (OGF – emphasis mine)

In a way, this entire issue of unjust suffering boils down to cleaving to Jesus' early instructions in the sermon on the mount. It might be tempting at times to react to personal attacks with an edge of defensive pride, but if we are God-fearing toward Jesus' teaching and example, we suffer with dignity and forgiveness (without bitter, sarcastic comments, etc.) while placing our sights squarely on his glorious return and the future resurrection of the age to come!

"Blessed are those who make peace, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for what is right, because the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and tell all kinds of evil lies against you because of me. Be happy and full of joy, because your reward in heaven is great, because they persecuted the prophets who came before you in the same way." Matthew 5:9-12 (OGF)