

CHAPTER FIVE

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

Historically, it may be argued that religion has created far more problems than it has solved. In fact, religious zealots continue to perpetrate one of the greatest threats facing society today. So, how can the Christian gospel be a part of the solution, instead of a part of the problem? Essentially, the message of the New Covenant is not so much about a religion, as it is about a governmental order. The word ‘gospel’ is simply defined as good news. Many of us have heard the ‘gospel of salvation,’ the gospel of the church,’ or the gospel of some particular aspect of God’s grace, such as healing. When we speak of the gospel of the Kingdom of God, we are talking about the good news of God’s governmental order. Another way to refer to the gospel of the Kingdom of God is to call it ‘the good news of the monarchy of Jesus Christ, who is the absolute monarch.’ The word *monarch* is formed from the prefix *mono* meaning one, and *arch* meaning eminent; that is one who is distinguished as being above all others, whether by birth, high station, merit, talent or virtue. While the individual, the family, and the church are very important themes of the Bible, we best understand each of these in the context of God’s Kingdom.

In the Old Covenant, we find that the prophet Daniel spoke of a succession of worldly kingdoms destined to be destroyed by a kingdom set in place by God. ¹ This kingdom, which will last forever, will be ruled by the Son of Man. ² These passages illustrate God’s intention that Israel was to be governed by laws that were derived directly from heaven. When the people of Israel demanded a king like every other nation, Samuel rebuked them for desiring any king but God Himself. ³ The monarchies of Israel were at best a compromise, allowing the reigning monarch to pass for God’s representative on the earth. Samuel warned the people that earthly kings would take from them. Notice that the first two things these monarchs would take for themselves were “their sons and daughters.” ⁴ That is exactly what Saul began to do, even taking David from the house of Jesse his father. With the majority of the kings of both Judah and Israel, their reigns were dismal and disastrous failures. Little wonder that the Old Covenant saints cried out that God would take back for Himself His great power and reign. The prophets predicted the

¹ Daniel 2:44

² Daniel 7:13-14

³ 1 Samuel 8:5-7

⁴ 1 Samuel 8:11&13

coming of a ruler who would overcome all earthly rulers. Messianic hopes and language fueled the lives of these saints.

The first of the New Covenant prophets broke onto the scene in the person of John the Baptist. His message reiterated this Messianic hope: *“Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*⁵ The commencement of Jesus’ ministry is described in these words, *“And Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom...”*⁶ Note that in the gospels the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God are terms used interchangeably. Luke recorded, *“...soon afterwards, He went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the Kingdom of God, and with Him were the twelve.”*⁷ When the twelve were sent forth, their mission is given in these words, *“And He sent them forth to preach the Kingdom of God...”*⁸ The parables of Jesus, which formed a large and dominant portion of His teaching, are collectively referred to as *“the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven.”*⁹ In fact, many of these parables commence with the phrase, *“The Kingdom of heaven [or Kingdom of God] is like...”*¹⁰ The gospel preached by John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter and Paul is the gospel of the monarchial order of God. Therefore, the gospel of the New Covenant is as much a governmental message as it is a religious message.

Concerning our salvation Paul wrote, *“For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*¹¹ He continued, *“For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created by Him and for Him.”*¹² Words in these passages such as domain and dominions, kingdoms and thrones, rulers and authorities are terms that are more governmental than they are religious. In addition, these verses use the analogy of citizenship not membership. The gospel message is not primarily about the birth of a religious leader named Jesus, but rather of a King and His Kingdom. In truth, reducing Christianity simply to be another religion results in making

⁵ Matthew 3:1

⁶ Matthew 4:23

⁷ Luke 8:1

⁸ Luke 9:2

⁹ Matthew 13:11

¹⁰ Matthew 13:31-52; 20:1

¹¹ Colossians 1:13-14

¹² Colossians 1:16

it less potent and less relevant. It allows Christianity to be marginalized and compared to such religions as Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism – which is a travesty of the highest order.

The gospel of the Kingdom of God is about a king, actually The King, who came to earth to redeem, reclaim, restore and extend His domain – His legitimate authority to rule and reign over His creation. God’s answer to the chaos of the world system was not to spread a religion, but to reorder the governmental structure that rules it. **The focus of the gospel was not primarily to ‘get us to heaven’ when we die, but get ‘heaven into us’ while we live.**

As incredible as it might seem, our God is our Father, and our Father is our King. Amazingly, our King has chosen to rule through delegated authority. Let us once again apply the law of first mention. *“God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, over the cattle, over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”*¹³ It is important to note that the name Adam can be translated as man, humanity or mankind. We have here the first mention of humankind (male and female). God created humanity in His image and likeness, and then He blessed *them*, and told *them* to “...be fruitful and multiply.” This is an obvious reference to male and female reproduction. Then God said, *“Let them rule...”*¹⁴ He did not say, “Let him rule.” Those He told to reproduce, he also told to rule. Neither did He say, “Let Us rule.” He said, “Let them rule.” This passage alone has tremendous ramifications and implications. Since God said, “Let them rule...,” God designated and delegated the rule of earth to humankind, flesh and blood. This we know as the ‘dominion mandate.’ The purpose and destiny of humanity was to rule over the visible world that God had created. **We must remember, however, rulership is not ownership.** The Psalmist writes, *“The heavens are the heavens of the Lord; But the earth He has given to the sons of men.”*¹⁵

In the above passages from Genesis God lists four things over which man is to rule: 1) the fish, 2) the birds, 3) the cattle or beasts and 4) the creeping things. Notice here that there is no reference to humanity subduing and ruling over humanity. God repeats this dominion mandate to

¹³ Genesis 1:26-28

¹⁴ Genesis 1:26

¹⁵ Psalm 115:16

Noah after the flood. *“And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. And the fear of you and the terror of you shall be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given.’”*¹⁶ The four identical biological groups are mentioned to Noah as they were to Adam.

God chose to rule the earth using flesh and blood, and Adam (mankind) was His delegated ruler. When Adam sinned, he did not lose a religion, he lost his legal right to represent God’s government on the earth. Adam had committed high treason, punishable by death. Since God had committed rulership of the earth to flesh and blood, He needed a Second Adam. *“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*¹⁷ He, who eternally is the Son of God, became the Son of Man. What was lost by flesh and blood would be redeemed by flesh and blood.

More than seven hundred years before the birth of Christ, Isaiah wrote, *“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom...”*¹⁸ Reiterating and reinforcing our theme that the gospel is primarily a message regarding governmental reorder, the verses above mention government twice, prince once, throne once, and kingdom twice. These are governmental words, not religious words.

One distinguishing feature of a kingdom or a monarchy is nepotism. Webster’s Dictionary defines ‘nepotism’ as *“Favoritism shown to relatives or bestowal of patronage by reason of relationship rather than merit.”* In a kingdom (or monarchy), rulership is passed down through hereditary lines. Normally, the first-born son of the king would be in line to be the next monarch. For this reason, genealogy played a significant role in who was to rule. According to the genealogical record in Matthew’s gospel, Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, was of the royal line of David. With this in mind, one writer suggests that, had it not been for the sin of Jeconiah, Joseph, the stepfather of Jesus, might have been in line to become the King of Israel.¹⁹

¹⁶ Genesis 9:1

¹⁷ John 1:14-15

¹⁸ Isaiah 9:6-7

¹⁹ Jeremiah 22:28-30; Matthew 1:11

Jesus received the Kingdom from His Father. One might call this an act of nepotism. He inherited the Kingdom, because He was the only Son. Luke recorded that Mary asked Jesus why He had stayed behind after the Passover in Jerusalem. Jesus' response gives us insight into His life's purpose. Clearly, Jesus understood that the Kingdom was His Father's business.²⁰ Jesus assumed that Joseph and Mary would understand His priorities. As a son, Jesus considered His Father's business was His primary concern. God's vocation is running His kingdom. Jesus was and is the co-ruler of that Kingdom.²¹ In our search for relevance, purpose and destiny the Kingdom message must be paramount. Jesus said, "*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God...*"²² First means first.

²⁰ Luke 2:49

²¹ John 5:36

²² Matthew 6:33