

10



The Gospel of the Kingdom

Review

Chapter 9 explored how our deepest human aspirations will be fulfilled when we are resurrected to live again during Christ's reign over the restored earth. Christ's promise of an abundant life is not just a metaphor for our life in the Spirit today. As the Good Shepherd, he will lead us to an abundant life on this earth. The prophets described the messianic kingdom as an Edenic paradise for the restored human beings. Nature will be restored, and human health will be restored. The Holy Spirit will play a key role in implementing this age of joyful humanity.

The Olivet Discourse

The Olivet Discourse found in the Gospels is a lecture by Jesus to the disciples on the signs leading up to his second coming on the last day. Jesus insisted that the “gospel of the kingdom” be preached and realized on this earth *before* the end of the world and the beginning of the eternal kingdom of heaven:

But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this *gospel of the kingdom* will be proclaimed throughout the whole world *as a testimony to all nations*, and then the end will come [of the Genesis age]. (Matt. 24:13–14)

Many theologians interpret these verses to mean we must complete the Great Commission before Christ comes again. But that is not what Christ was referring to. Christ was likely quoting from Isaiah when he referenced the “gospel of the kingdom.” Isaiah equated the gospel or the good news not only with the preaching of the gospel, but also with the full realization and implementation of the Messiah’s kingdom. Isaiah described the messianic kingdom that the whole world will experience on this earth:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “**Your God reigns**” [the gospel realized when Christ exercises his reign as Lord]. The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and **all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.** (Isa. 52:7–10)

The following psalm also envisions the reign of the Messiah:

The LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. . . . All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. . . . let the hills sing for joy together before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity. (Ps. 98:2–9)

The “good news” is not only the preaching of peace and salvation for sinners, but also the messianic kingdom being realized on this earth when the Messiah rules the world, establishing his righteous reign over redeemed sinners. There will be peace, joy, and comfort in the world. The messianic kingdom will begin in Israel, but it will extend throughout the world as “all the ends of the earth . . . see the salvation of our God.”

Notice the striking similarities between Christ's prophecy in the Olivet Discourse and Isaiah's prophecy:

And this gospel of the kingdom ["Your God reigns"] **will be proclaimed throughout the whole world** [to "the ends of the earth"] **as a testimony to all nations** [when "The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God"], **and then the end will come.** (Matt. 24:14)

All the earth shall see and experience God's salvation of this Genesis creation. His reign of peace, justice, and prosperity will indeed serve as a testimony that Christ is the true loving God of this world.

If part of the good news is the reign of Christ fully implemented before the eyes of all the nations, then the messianic kingdom that the prophets describe is indeed the "gospel of the kingdom" that Jesus alluded to. It will be realized on this earth after the Great Tribulation during the millennium when the Son sits on his throne in heaven and finally establishes his earthly kingdom. After the world has experienced Christ's 1,000-year messianic kingdom, he will come again at the end of the world.

We may not see his reign today because of Satan's continuous rule. But when this regime change takes place, his Lordship will be fully revealed during the restoration. As Christ told the disciples, these extraordinary prophecies of the messianic kingdom being seen and experienced all over the world must be fulfilled on this Genesis earth *before* he comes again to take us to heaven.

Some of Paul's subtle and sometimes vague references to Christ's messianic kingdom begin to make sense in light of these teachings of Isaiah and Christ. Paul portrayed the heavenly kingdom as the Father's kingdom. Christ is responsible for coming again to take us to his Father's kingdom *after* he has completed his mission of restoring this Genesis creation to himself through the messianic kingdom. Paul taught:

But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits [the first man to be resurrected into an eternal body and to ascend to heaven], then at his coming those who belong to Christ [the rapture of the succeeding sons of God]. *Then comes the end*, when he delivers the

kingdom to God the Father *after* destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign [“Your God reigns”] until he has put all his enemies under his feet [during his messianic kingdom]. The last enemy to be destroyed is death [through the resurrection of an eternal body when he comes again]. (1 Cor. 15:23–26)

Let’s compare the teachings of Isaiah, Jesus, and Paul:

Isaiah: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, . . . ‘Your God reigns.’ . . . all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”

Jesus: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and *then the end will come.*”

Paul: “For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.” And, “*Then comes the end*, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father.”

Paul does not provide specific details about the earthly kingdom of Christ in his letters to the Corinthians. He alludes to it, but he seems to avoid the subject. The messianic kingdom is rather stealthy in the New Testament. After carefully reading the book of Revelation, one realizes that God may have wanted to keep the truth about Christ’s future reign over the nations obscure. This topic will be addressed in chapter 20, “The Stealthy Restoration.”

Once we understand these two kingdoms of the triune God, many other teachings of Christ begin to make more sense. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus promised that his meek followers will inherit the earth *and* the kingdom of heaven:

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth [the Son’s earthly kingdom]. . . . Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven [the Father’s eternal kingdom]. (Matt. 5:5–10)

It is amazing how many of the Scriptures come alive with meaning after we understand God’s endgame.

Summary

Jesus Christ is the Lord of this creation, even if we do not see it today and the world does not receive him. In the restoration, however, this creation will be restored to him. The “good news” includes the preaching of the gospel that Jesus is the Savior and true Lord of this world, and that one day he will exercise his reign over this world. At that time, there will be a regime change from Satan to Christ. This creation will be regenerated to its Edenic condition, and an age of righteous humanity will dawn as God’s will is done on earth as it is in heaven. This is the redemption of humanity that the prophets envisioned. As Isaiah proclaimed:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, . . . “Your God reigns.” . . . all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. (52:7–10)

This is the “gospel of the kingdom” that must be realized on this earth as a testimony to all nations that Christ is the true God of this creation. After he has put “all his enemies under his feet” during his messianic kingdom “as a testimony to all nations,” *“then comes the end*, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father.”