
*The Church and the
Kingdom of God*

PASTORS' SCHOOL 1993

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Introductory Study

The Church and the Kingdom of God

(by Geoffrey Bingham)

A Simple Introduction to the Idea of the Kingdom

We will have various descriptions of the Kingdom of God throughout our Studies but to get a quick, practical and bird's-eye view of the Kingdom, let us note the following: (We do not include references for each aspect of the Kingdom, since these will be dealt with in later Studies.)

- (a) The Kingdom of God is, simply put, the reign and rule of God.
- (b) All creation is under the King for He has created it; everything is in the Kingdom.
- (c) All humanity is under the King. In this sense all are in the Kingdom.
- (d) Just as there are rebels in any kingdom, so through rebellion amongst celestial creatures and the fall of man in history, there are many rebels in the Kingdom of God.
- (e) In the Old Testament Israel had God as King and so was 'a kingdom of priests': it was in one sense the Kingdom of God.
- (f) John the Baptist—in conformity with the prophets—proclaimed the immediate coming of the Kingdom in Messiah, and Jesus repeated this message—the Kingdom had come in him.
- (g) The Kingdom came in him, was active in him, was secured by the atonement¹, and was to be proclaimed throughout the world until all nations came to 'the obedience of faith'.
- (h) All believers are now in the Kingdom and will inherit it in all its fullness at the end time.
- (i) The present experience of the Kingdom is 'not in word only but in power' (I Cor. 4:20) and is 'righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14:17).

¹ Of course the Kingdom has always been secured as it is 'the reign of God'. Even so, the contest between the kingdom of darkness (Col. 1:13; Luke 11:18; cf. Rev. 10–11) and the Kingdom of light had not taken place conclusively, but it was at the Cross where Satan and his powers were defeated (John 12:31; 16:11; Heb. 2:14–15; Col. 2:14–15).

The Kingdom of God and the Church of God

Confusion often occurs when we make the Kingdom and the Church to be one and the same. Whilst there are some elements of both which are identical it does not make them the one entity. We would not rightly say, 'Thy church come,' not only because it may sound strange but because the Church is not the ultimate reign of God in triumph, although it will participate in that. Also when Jesus often said, 'The kingdom of God is like unto . . .', the word 'church' could not be substituted for 'kingdom'. Note the following points.

- (a) Israel was the people of God—the *qahal* or *edah* (*ekklesia* in Acts 7:38)—yet John the Baptist spoke of the coming of the Kingdom to Israel. They had to prepare to receive it and enter into it.
- (b) The Kingdom was offered to Israel (Matt. 10:5ff.). Israelites were known—because of covenant—as 'the sons of the kingdom' (Matt. 8:12). Jesus came as the King of the Kingdom, and when they rejected him (cf. Matt. 10:5–15) they rejected the Kingdom. This was so at the event of the Cross and later at the event of Pentecost. In Matthew 21:31–44 Jesus says in the parable of the vineyard, 'The kingdom of God will be taken away from you [Israel] and given to a [Gentile] nation producing the fruits of it.'
- (c) Jesus told his disciples that it was the Father's good pleasure to give them the Kingdom (Luke 12:32), and on the night of the betrayal, 'I assign to you [a kingdom], as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom'. In Matthew 16:18–19 Jesus says (i) 'I will build my church', and (ii) 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom', so that they would have the power to bind and loose (cf. Luke 11:52 where the key is the key of knowledge, and John 20:19–23 where binding and loosing is linked with the forgiveness and retention of sins). In Luke 10:1–12 the disciples had already exercised the (delegated) use of the Kingdom. At Pentecost (Acts 2), Samaria (Acts 8), and Caesarea (Acts 10–11), the apostles used the keys to open the Kingdom to the Jews, the Samaritans and the Gentiles, respectively.
- (d) From the above it is evident that the Kingdom is not the Church. Acts 1:1–8 indicates that the apostles will witness to Christ when the Spirit has come upon them (as later at Pentecost) and that they will proclaim the Kingdom in all the world. Note that *they never proclaim the Church!*
- (e) The Church is the new fellowship of God's (New) Covenant people. In Romans chapters 9–11 Paul speaks of God's intention for Israel, for in spite of their rejection of Christ He has not abandoned them. In I Thessalonians 2:16 and Acts 28:26–28 (cf. Acts 13:46–47), Paul speaks of the same rejection. There can be no doubt that the Kingdom of God came with Christ as the King, was sealed—so to speak—in the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension, and was thus proclaimed by the apostles. See Acts 1:3–8; 8:5, 12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31.
- (f) The powers of the Kingdom such as Christ had exercised in his earthly ministry (Matt. 4:23ff.; 12:28; etc.), and such as the disciples had also known (Luke 9:1–6, 10; 10:1–12) were exercised in the Church. That is, the power of the Kingdom was present to the Church as it proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom, the gospel of salvation, for God attested to the word by signs and wonders (Acts 3:1–16; 14:3; 19:11f.; Rom. 15:19f.).

- (g) Only those who believe in Christ and are born again enter the Kingdom of heaven (John 3:1–14). In fact they are transferred by God ‘from the powers of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of his love’ (Col. 1:13). All who are true members of Christ’s body and of the New Covenant are members of the Kingdom, but warnings are given in the Epistles regarding those who presume to be in the Kingdom when they do not show its fruits (cf. I Cor. 6:9f.; Gal. 5:19–21; Eph. 5:5ff.), and Jesus said many will think they are in the Kingdom because of healings, exorcisms and works they have done, when they do not even belong to the Kingdom (Matt. 7:21; cf. 25:31ff.).

Conclusion to ‘The Church and the Kingdom of God’: Its Pastoral Power

When we properly understand the nature of the Kingdom and the nature of the Church, and also see their relationship one to the other, and their particular functions in that relationship, then we have a great key to commence our Studies on our theme *The Church and the Kingdom of God*. We will realise the power of the Church is the power of the King of the Kingdom, and in this sense its power is the Kingdom of God. Yet having received the Kingdom, the Church’s purpose, task and joy is to proclaim that Kingdom. As the fellowship of God’s people it is the new *edah* or *qahal* of the old Israel. It is the continuity of the true people of God even though a discontinuity took place at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:40–41; Gal. 6:16; Rom. 11:17–24; I Pet. 2:9–10).

The ultimate gathering of the people of God before the Father—each and all in the image of His Son—will be the time when in all fullness they will become ‘a kingdom of priests unto his God and Father’ or, ‘a kingdom, priests to his God and Father’ (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; cf. Exod. 19:5–6). This, when—in a manner of speaking—the Church and the Kingdom will be *as* one.

As to the pastoral power of the Kingdom, this is dealt with in other Studies in fullness, but if we preach what is the sovereignty of God, though not in a doctrinaire manner, nor pointing to God as One with thoughtless power, then our folk will be wonderfully comforted in all times of personal, familial, societal and national crises. Since the Kingdom of God is not (matters of) ‘eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’ then immense comfort, security, encouragement and peace will come to those who hear the word of the Kingdom.

Study One

The Kingdom of God, Yesterday, Today and Forever

(by Geoffrey Bingham)

The Creator and the Kingdom

The Mystery of the Kingdom

The use of the term ‘mystery’ by Christ to the disciples (Mark 4:11–12), shows that the Kingdom is evident only *to faith*. A mystery (*mysterion*) in the New Testament is an open secret to the initiated but closed to the uninitiated. It is almost always eschatological, speaking of something to come (cf. Rom. 16:25–26). That it is called ‘a mystery’ warns us against seeking to discover it by research or using the analogy of a secular power and authority.

The Origin of the Kingdom is God and His Heaven

The terms ‘Kingdom of God’ and ‘Kingdom of heaven’—which can be seen to be the one description—speak of a kingdom which originates with God and heaven, as against Man and the terrestrial creation, the world as *kosmos* and *aion* (cf. John 18:36; I Cor. 15:50).

- (a) God is King over all the earth as Creator (Ps. 95:3–5) and we ‘bow down to the Lord our Maker’.
- (b) He is seen as sitting on a heavenly throne (Ps. 103:19a; Ezek. 1:26–28). A celestial host serves Him (I Kings 22:19), and He watches over the whole earth¹ (Ps. 33:13f.).
- (c) He is thus ‘the King of the whole world’ (I Chron. 29:11; Ps. 103:19b). As such He is over all the kingdoms of men (II Kings 19:15; Ps. 47:2, 7) and His kingly rule is worked out and displayed in His being over all the nations (Ps. 22:28; Jer. 46:18; 48:15; 51:57).
- (d) He is the eternal King and His Kingdom is eternal (Ps. 145:13; Dan. 4:3–4) for He is ‘from everlasting’ (Ps. 74:12; 93:2) and ‘to everlasting’ (Exod. 15:18).

These Old Testament themes come from a nation which has known God as King, and sees all aspects of His Kingdom through their experience of Him as ‘the living God’.

¹ See my Essay ‘The True Worship and the Worshippers’ in *The Revelation of St John the Divine* (NCPI, 1993).

Their theology—if it may be called that—is based on God’s revelation to them of Himself, especially as the God who has acted towards them and continues to act.

God as the King of Israel His Special Creation

In the sense that God was Israel’s King (cf. Deut. 33:5; I Sam. 12:12; Judg. 8:23), it was always a theocracy, a kingdom under God. Its kings were under His Kingship. God had His throne over Israel, though uniquely and not just as though they were one of the many nations. If God by virtue of being Creator was—and is—King over all nations, then He was especially King because He had created Israel as a people and as a kingdom (Exod. 19:5–6; cf. Isa. 43:1, 15; 44:21). His throne was virtually over the cherubim on the ark of the covenant (II Kings 19:15; Isa. 6:1). He ruled from Mt Zion, and so from Jerusalem (cf. Ps. 48:2; 99:1; Jer. 8:19). The coming Messiah could address God as, ‘my God and king’ (II Sam. 7:14), but then all could address Him thus (Ps. 5:2; 44:4; 68:24; 74:12).

Idolatry invaded the covenant Kingdom, the idols being kings over their devotees. Thus the prophets of Israel looked to a time when God would have His Kingdom substantiated from every point of view. This is a subject we cannot here enlarge (cf. Isa. 24:23; 34:12; 44:6; 52:7; Zeph. 3:15; Ezek. 20:33ff.; Micah 2:12; 4:6; Obad. 21; Zech. 14:9–17; Ps. 146:10; Dan. 2:44; 7:27), but Isaiah 52:7 is the note John the Baptist took up when proclaiming the imminent Kingdom of God, ‘Thy God reigns!’

The Kingdom Coming, Come, and Yet to Come With Christ

Our two Studies (2 and 5), ‘Christ and the Kingdom—I: His Coming to Establish His Kingdom’, with ‘Christ and the Kingdom—II’, tell us of the fulfilment of the promises of the Kingdom as shown by John the Baptist and accomplished in Christ, along with Christ’s prophetic teaching concerning the *eschaton*, the *telos* and the ultimate triumph of the Kingdom.

Briefly speaking, John said the Kingdom was at hand. Christ repeated this and then showed that he himself was, in fact, the Kingdom present in action (Matt. 4:23; 12:28). He taught of the Kingdom, encouraged his disciples to believe the Father would give them the Kingdom (Luke 12:32), and at the Last Supper he assigned to them the Kingdom (Luke 22:29). Following his resurrection he spoke to them during the forty days before Pentecost of ‘the things concerning the kingdom’.

It would seem with his going that the Kingdom had come and gone with him, but such was not the case. I Corinthians 15:24–28 shows he has always been with his people, the Church, and is defeating the kingdom of darkness, whilst substantiating the Kingdom he secured through his death and resurrection, and in this sense we can say the Kingdom is always coming, that is, until its fulfilment in the *telos*.

The Book of the Revelation is a great prophecy about the Kingdom and its ultimate fulfilment. We can see the continuity of all things, especially in chapter 12.

Conclusion to Our Study: Its Pastoral Value

God has ever been King, but in the New Testament the truth comes into view that the Kingdom is ‘the kingdom of Christ and of God’ (Eph. 5:5; cf. Luke 22:29), ‘the kingdom of God and the authority of his Christ’ (Rev. 11:15), whilst I Corinthians 15:24–28

shows the Son putting down the enemies of God and Man, and establishing the Kingdom, after which he turns and gives it to the Father. It is no less his when he has given it to the Father.

We see, then, that though the Kingdom may seem to pass through various issues of reigning, yet it is always in the ascendancy, that is, the King is always reigning, whether it be the Father or the Son. Psalms 2 and 110 show us the Father and the Son together are as one in regard to the Kingdom. Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (see Study 10, 'The Law of the Kingdom—of God, the Spirit and of Christ' and Study 15, 'The Kingdom and the Father') of the Father as King, is most powerful for pastoral ministry. The fellowship of the congregation is enriched and strengthened when people know that the power of the Church is the power of the Kingdom. God rules over all, and all His people need have no fear at any time. The Kingdom never varies in its power and authority in every situation into which we come, because God—the King—never changes. His Son is King with the Father, and he is the same yesterday, today and forever. True kings were shepherd-kings, and we are under the Shepherd-King.

Study Two

Christ and the Kingdom—I

(by Ian Pennicook)

In this Study, we will be seeing that the Kingdom of God is revealed in the specific history of Jesus. All that the Old Testament demonstrated and promised with regards to the Kingdom is explicitly treated by the writers of the Gospels as finding its fulfilment in Christ.

(It goes without saying [I hope] that to examine the Scriptures in a ‘technical’ way need not at all imply that our approach should be dry and impersonal. Indeed, in the warmth and vivacity of faith we recognise that the inspired word comes to us in a particular, structured way.)

The message of the early church, ‘Jesus is Lord’, was not a message devised from a particular theological or exegetical approach to the Scriptures. Far from it; their preaching and teaching came from a direct and powerful personal knowledge of that Lordship. They were eyewitnesses of all that they declared. The documents which we read with a theological bias, they wrote with a theological bias, born of their own intense experience of Christ. Having had their minds opened to understand the Scriptures, they wrote and spoke with a clarity of vision hitherto unknown. Hence the accounts of Christ’s life and earthly ministry (i.e. his pre-ascension ministry; he is still exercising an earthly ministry) are written with a strong intention to present a clear statement of the truth of Christ in the light of all that God has previously revealed through the Old Testament Scriptures.

‘In his proclamation of the kingdom of God, Jesus was standing firmly on OT ground. At the same time he was proclaiming a subject that made every Jewish heart throb.’¹ While the latter sentence may be somewhat of an overstatement, there is no doubt that there were those in Judaism who were eager for the Kingdom and its associated blessings. Luke describes Joseph of Arimathea as ‘a good and righteous man . . . looking for the kingdom of God’ (Luke 23:50–51), and even the thief on the cross asks that Jesus should remember him when he comes in his kingdom (Luke 23:42).

The impact of Jesus’ proclamation came more than from his words; it came from himself. For example, at the commencement of his ministry he said, ‘The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel’ (Mark 1:15), and later, ‘Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God’ (Mark 10:14). Vincent Taylor comments:

Of great interest and importance is the concurrence of the statement that the kingdom belongs to children with the command *ἄφετε τὰπαιδία ἔρχεσθαι πρὸς με* (let the children come to me). The implication is not far distant that in a true sense Jesus himself is the kingdom; to use the word of Origen . . . He is *αὐτοβασιλεία*.²

¹ C. G. Caragounis, ‘Kingdom of God/Heaven’ in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, J. B. Green & S. McKnight eds, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 1992, p. 430.

² *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1966, p. 423. *αὐτοβασιλεία* ‘kingdom itself’, translated

The Birth of the King

Matthew introduces his Gospel with the statement, ‘The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham’ (Matt. 1:1). It should be stressed that Matthew does not limit himself to a single theme; however, there can be little doubt that the title ‘son of David’ is intended to convey the notion of royalty, with the implications of David’s kingship prominent. Jesus is to be understood, then, both in terms of the promises made to Abraham and of the initial fulfilment of those promises in David’s reign. Significantly, Mark records the adulation of the crowds on Palm Sunday in these terms, ‘Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!’ (Mark 11:10; contrast Matt. 21:9).

After providing an abbreviated genealogy, Matthew describes the birth of Jesus entirely in terms of Joseph’s dilemma and the angelic appearance. He then turns to the visit of the ‘wise men from the east’. Their question, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?’ (Matt. 2:2) does not explain how they came to use those terms. To ancient minds the birth of great men was accompanied by astral phenomena, however we may discern a more precise reason for their request in the prophecy of Balaam in Numbers 24:17:

I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near —
a star shall come out of Jacob,
and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel;
it shall crush the borderlands of Moab,
and the territory of all the Shethites.

Interestingly, this prophecy was far from obscure in the ancient world. Josephus³, Suetonius⁴ and Tacitus⁵ all, almost certainly independently, refer to it, in particular as referring to the accession of Vespasian to the imperial throne. But some seventy years prior to that event astrologers in the east saw ‘his star at its rising’ and so came to ‘Jacob’ to find the new-born king. The rising of the star coincided with the birth of the king of the Jews. There could be no accident that Matthew 2:1, 3 calls Herod ‘the king’. Morris writes:

There is an article with *King Herod*, perhaps to distance this king from ‘the King of the Jews’. Herod was troubled; he was an Edomite, not a Jew, and he had been made king by the Romans. The news that the Magi were bringing sounded suspiciously like the emergence of a genuine descendant from the royal line of David as a claimant to the throne . . . And if Herod was troubled, the whole city was troubled with him. When Herod the Great trembled the whole city shook.⁶

The climactic nature of the birth of Jesus can hardly be overstated.

by J. Patrick in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. X, p. 498 as ‘absolute Kingdom’.

³ B. J. 6:312–313.

⁴ *Vespasian* 4, ‘An ancient superstition was current in the east . . .’

⁵ *The Histories*, 1.10; 5.13.

⁶ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992, p. 37.

Preparation For the King

The emergence of John the Baptist caused an extraordinary stir among the whole population. ‘The people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan’ (Matt. 3:5). His message gripped the people who quite openly responded by being baptised, an action otherwise restricted to Gentiles wishing to adopt Judaism.⁷ The thrust of his preaching was that ‘the kingdom of heaven has come near’ (Matt. 3:2). That this was no mere ethical preaching is seen by the fact that he linked his role with that of the ‘one more powerful than’ he who was coming. In other words the Kingdom which he preached was (intimately associated with) a person! Also, this person would carry out the great eschatological purification of Israel (Matt. 3:11–12). Caragounis defined ‘“the kingdom of God” or “kingdom of heaven” [as] God’s sovereign, dynamic and eschatological rule’.⁸ Within the framework of early first century Israel, this proclamation of the Kingdom in terms (if I may put it this way) of the coming king, was nothing short of dramatic.

The Institution of the King

The dramatic nature of the proclamation was confirmed by the events associated with the baptism of Jesus. Again it must be stressed that the description of Jesus, while carefully presented in terms of the Old Testament promises and patterns, was and is nonetheless meant to be seen as the powerful reality of the Kingdom in action. So the baptism of Jesus by John was the occasion of the anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit, with the whole action of the Kingdom in view.

Jesus’ response to John’s initial reluctance, ‘it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness’ (Matt. 3:15), highlights the moral dynamic of the Kingdom. When God then spoke the words from Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1 to Jesus, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased’ (Matt. 3:17), it meant that the Son, the (Holy Spirit) anointed king of Psalm 2 (vv. 2, 6; cf. Acts 10:38) who would rule the nations given to him by God, would do so not by physical but by moral power. He would and must conquer the nations by the action of righteousness (justification). This, too, is the message of Isaiah 42:1–9.

The moral nature of the Kingdom is further seen in the temptation of Jesus (Matt. 4:1–11). Immediately consequent to his baptism, Jesus was ‘led up by the Spirit [whom he had just received] into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil’ (Matt. 4:1). The devil’s insinuation, ‘If you are the Son of God,’ is surely reminiscent of the insinuation of Genesis 3:1, ‘Did God say . . .?’ Jesus was led by the Spirit *in order* to be tempted⁹, since he was now to accomplish all that Adam had failed to do and to be. As Adam had received the Spirit (Gen. 2:7; cf. Job. 27:3; etc.) and had received the commission to exercise a dominion in the image of God (Gen. 1:26–28), so now the Son (cf. Luke 3:38), also having received the Spirit, will stand where Adam fell.

The Action of the King

Perhaps surprisingly, most studies that deal with the subject of the Kingdom in the

⁷ See my booklet, *The Baptism of John, Its Significance for the Understanding of Christian Baptism*, NCPI, Blackwood, 1987.

⁸ p. 417.

⁹ The infinitive probably has purposive force here.

Gospels tend to concentrate on the spoken teaching of Jesus. However, it is plain to me that teaching involves the action of the Kingdom and is not separate or distinct from it.

When Jesus healed the demon-possessed man in the synagogue at Capernaum, the people who witnessed the event asked, ‘What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him’ (Mark 1:27). Again, when Jesus cast out demons by means of the Spirit (whom he had received at his baptism) he concluded that ‘if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you’ (Matt. 12:28). Luke’s account of the event at Capernaum records the people as observing that ‘his *word* was with authority’ and asking ‘What is this *word*?’ (Luke 4:32, 36). The action of the Kingdom is the action of the *word* of God. Matthew records the centurion in Capernaum as saying, ‘. . . only say the word and my servant will be healed’ (Matt. 8:8; cf. also such occasions as the stilling of the storm in Matt. 8:23–27. It is fascinating to see Matthew’s account of the liberation of the two Gadarene demoniacs in the following paragraph. Whereas Mark and Luke record Jesus as having a conversation with the demons, the only occasions when he does, Matthew records him as only uttering one word, ‘Go’—8:32).

From this we can see something of the nature of the teaching of Jesus. So Matthew records (in 4:23; cf. 9:35):

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news [kai; khruvsswn to; eujaggevliion] of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

While to; eujaggevliion is ‘the good news’¹⁰, the overall picture in the New Testament leads us to see that it is more than simply a message with intellectual content. Jesus’ word actually accomplishes his purpose.

Isaiah indicated that the great work of restoration of Israel was due to the word of God:

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it (55:10–11).

Hence he continued, in words read and appropriated by Jesus (Luke 4:18–19):

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,

¹⁰ While the debate about the value of etymology continues (see, e.g. Moises Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning—An Introduction to Lexical Semantics*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1983, pp. 33–51), some insist that both etymologically and in practice τὸ εὐαγγέλιον means the ‘appropriate proclamation’ (so, D. W. B. Robinson, *Faith’s Framework*, Albatross, Sutherland NSW, 1985, p. 53f.).

and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory (61:1–3).

Jesus' teaching is never merely *about*; it is, of necessity *of* the Kingdom.

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Matthew follows his statement concerning Jesus preaching the gospel of the Kingdom with what is known as the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7). He records the opening statement of Jesus, the first 'beatitude' as 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven' (5:3).¹¹

The details of the Sermon on the Mount are not for ethical instruction *per se*. They are concerned to declare the reality of living in the Kingdom, in particular as such living stands in contrast with the mere moralism of the Pharisees.¹² Hence Jesus said, 'For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. 5:20).

To turn to another part of Jesus' teaching, the use of parables, we see that Matthew has grouped a large number together in chapter 13. The first, the parable of the sower (vv. 1–19), describes the way the Kingdom functions. 'The word of the kingdom' (v. 19) is sown and the various responses to what is said are more than intellectual. They include inability through the activity of 'the evil one' (v. 19), avoidance of persecutions etc., and an idolatry of money (vv. 20–22). Over all this is the fact that the teaching by Jesus is primarily intended not to instruct in, but actually to hide, the truth of the Kingdom. Jesus is actually speaking so that judgment may result (vv. 10–15). If anyone is to know 'the secrets [τὰ μυστήρια] of the kingdom' it must be 'given' (v. 11).

The final teaching section in the Gospel of Matthew (chs 24–25) continues with the subject of the Kingdom. In chapter 25 Jesus again says 'the kingdom of heaven will be like this . . .' (25:1), but this time the thrust of the parables is the consummation of the Kingdom; the eschatological marriage feast, the rewarding of the faithful servants and the judgement of the others (vv. 1–46). The point is explicitly that Jesus is the one who

¹¹ See also; Matt. 5:10: 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'.

Matt. 5:19: 'Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven'.

Matt. 5:20: 'For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven'.

Matt. 6:10: 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'.

Matt. 6:33: 'But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well'.

Matt. 7:21: 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven'.

¹² See my booklet, *Living in the Kingdom, Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, NCPI, Blackwood, 1985, for a simple introduction to the Sermon from this position.

will both reward and judge. He is ‘the Son of man [who will come] in his glory, and all the angels with him, [who] will sit on his glorious throne’ (v. 31). As such he is ‘the King’ (v. 34). However, before that time comes there will be terrible trials for the believers, and indeed for all the world. But the consummation of history comes when the word has done its appointed work.

And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come (Matt. 24:14).

Study Three

The Church of God and Christ Built on the Proclamation

(by Deane Meatheringham)

Introduction

The insistence in the title of this Study that the Church is built upon the proclamation of God's Word may appear too strong. The call for more liturgy in our churches has been replaced with a desire for more entertainment. In some instances the *kerugma* has been made into a form of a participatory human encounter session. And where the sermon does remain (if it is not tucked into the residue of the service), then we may have trouble believing the preaching of God's Word *is* God's Word. Is this not a very loud admission that with its loss or forgetting of God's Word, Israel is conceding the victory (I Sam. 4:10f.).

Where there is a demise in the influence of the Church in society, then the technique of church growth may become an appealing reductionist approach to recruit members. But will the preachers then have confidence to place before the 'I' of their hearers a 'Thou' whom they cannot overlook, or dissolve, or transcend? Will this 'Thou' confront the 'I' in the proclamation of the Word?

We will endeavour to see that it is not the Church which builds, or grows the Church, but the Church grows from proclamation of the Word.

Messiah Builds His Church Upon the Apostolic Confession

From the crucial passage of Matthew 16:13–20 (cf. Mark 8:27–30; Luke 9:18–21) we can make the following points:

- (a) Peter's confession comes by a revelation of the Spirit of the Father. This is God making himself known, and God interpreting himself to man.
- (b) Jesus' Messiahship and Sonship are joined, making him the *King* of the Kingdom of God. This is in accord with the prophets (e.g. Ps. 2; 110; II Sam. 12–17; Isa. 9:6–7; 11:1–9; etc.). It is through the presence of the incarnate Son and through his Word that the Gospels portray Jesus' Kingdom deeds.
- (c) The building of the Church first relates to Israel which is built by God as his people. Such is covenantal, so that Jesus is also speaking of the Church as the people of God who are the people of Messiah. Those who confess Messiah are the new Israel.

- (d) As representative of the people of God the twelve apostles are the remnant, or the flock which inherits the Kingdom and becomes the custodian of the Kingdom. Thus the Church is built upon the apostolic confession. This confession is Jesus as King and the salvation which the Kingdom brings. As earlier Studies will have shown, the Kingdom of God is the divine rule of God over all of his creation. The Gospel of the kingdom is the assertion of God's gracious rule in the defeat of his enemies and the salvation of his people through Messiah. The church is built upon this proclamation, and is entrusted with the proclamation of the Kingdom (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).
- (e) Through the triumph of Messiah the Church will be stronger than the powers of death, for death and its fear will no longer be able to hold its slaves. Men and women have been brought into the salvation of the Kingdom of God through the proclamation of the Church. The powers of evil will not prevail in their effort to swallow up the Church, but rather the Church will prevail over the evil powers.

The Church and the Kingdom are not Synonymous

The Church prays 'Your Kingdom Come' and 'Maranatha' but it does not pray this for itself.

The Kingdom of God creates the Church. The Church comes to be by the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. The Church proclaims the Kingdom of God. The Church is given the keys of the Kingdom, and by its proclamation has authority to bring others into God's saving power by a revelation such as Peter received. The Church is the very fellowship of the Messiah she proclaims. Expulsion from the Kingdom implies expulsion from the Church.

The Church Has the Power of the Apostolic Gospel

The events of Pentecost as described in Acts 2 show us that the coming of the Spirit is the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:1-8). Jesus is Lord of all through his victorious passion and session. The Kingdom of God has been sealed forever against the powers of darkness and death.

Peter with the apostles, testified to what Christ has done and given them (Acts 2:14ff.). The keys of the Kingdom give apostolic authority. By proclamation of their mouths the King's rule is effectual and men and women are added to the Church.

As the last Study shows, the coming of the Kingdom is always linked with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Hence, on the day of Pentecost the apostles knew themselves to be in the life of the Kingdom. In Acts 2 there is a substantial amount of material which is a direct quote from the Old Testament Scriptures. Here their Word has the authority of the prophets. Yet it is not 'mere exegesis'. The prophetic Scriptures are understood in the light of the Kingdom action of Christ which is internalised through the Holy Spirit. A crystallising has taken place. Through this action the proclaimers are also driven to the Scriptures where they know God has spoken. Preaching is the witness of the truth. Preaching relates not to the Scriptures in themselves, but to revelation given in the Scriptures. As Scripture is the Word of God in time and history, preaching Christ through the presence of the Spirit makes this a revelatory act. Revelation is the saving action of the eternal Word of God and the Spirit

makes this revelation present now.

The apostolic *kerugma* can be summarised from the sermons in Acts:

- (a) The prophecies have been fulfilled in the coming Messiah.
- (b) This Messiah has been attested to by signs, wonders and mighty works.
- (c) His crucifixion and resurrection is in accord with the prophecies.
- (d) God's people have erred in crucifying him.
- (e) God has made him to be Lord and Messiah.
- (f) In the light of this Lordship men must repent and believe.
- (g) In so responding they will receive the gifts of salvation, forgiveness, and the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 10:36–38 we find that the Proclaimer is God himself. Perhaps the best survey of the *kerugma* or *euaggelion* is in Acts 26:16–18. In Romans 10:9 we see how the Gospel draws its Kingdom response. The powerful element of justification is included in Acts 13:38.

The Birth of the Church

The birth of the Church is the practical result of the proclamation. This comes about with the gift of the Spirit, the revelation of the Son and the Father, the gifts of love and the new people of God (Acts 2). Out of this new community of the Spirit spontaneous testimony is given to Christ, the Word of God grows and multiplies, the Church is irrepressible in the face of hostility and the Lord keeps on adding to the Church those who are being saved.

Preaching the Apostolic Gospel Today

- (a) When everything is cleared away all we have is the Word of God. There cannot be any substitute for the Word of God.
- (b) Our authority is the Gospel of the Kingdom. The authority is not in our personal ableness or ability to communicate. It is the absolute right of Christ over those he has redeemed through his cross. He who saves will judge the world.
- (c) The Scriptures are our canon. Here is where the apostles and the Church found its marching orders and working directions in these writings. During times when there is a lot of talking, religious experimentation and psychologised spirituality, those who know the life of the Kingdom find a passion within to listen to those prophets and apostles who spoke of God as those who had been met by God.
- (d) The supreme proof of Scripture is that God speaks in it personally. Preaching the Word is not recitation of biblical verses. The preacher has a revelation from God through his personal salvation in Christ. The Bible can only be understood

through Jesus Christ, the Word becomes flesh, the justifying Word of the cross. Paul, quoting Psalm 116, says 'I believed and so I spoke'. The salvation we have in the Kingdom means that in the depths of our own being we find that we know God and we can preach because we know this really and surely.

- (e) We do not speak *about* God, but *from* God. To speak *about* God is to lose God, the subject, as soon as speaking takes place, because he, God, determines all else. We can only speak from God inasmuch as God has spoken to us and acted upon our lives. The Word we speak is an objective Word yet we know no other Word than the Word made flesh. We abide in the incarnate Word, Christ. I mean that through the Spirit we participate in Christ's communion with the Father. In Christ we speak from God.

- (f) For us, we begin our ministry where we are within the Church as servants of the Word, called by Christ, and appointed by the Church. The Churches are in various states of life, or inertia, or activism. But essentially it is not the Church which builds the Church. It is the work of the King. We are called upon to work with the people God has given us, not with the people whom we wish we had. We are not first called to change the Church, but to be servants of God's world. Therefore, preaching is Kingdom preaching that begins with the rule of God and that relates to our present place in history. Preaching is not taking our people back to a past era but proclaiming the Kingdom in the present era as we look to the future.

Study Four

Christ Head Over all Things For the Church

(by Grant Thorpe)

Old Testament

Christ's kingship has its roots in Israel (Rom. 1:3–4). Their king represented the kingship of God over His people, but also His kingship over all creation and all nations with a view to securing the future of His people. This could never have been so in its own right but in view of Him whose right it was to rule (Ezek. 21:26–27).

To oppose him whom God had established, or to oppose this purpose, was of no avail (Ps. 2). David knew this in its practical ramifications and for his own time (I Sam. 17:26).

Acts 2 and 10

God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ—he whom we crucified (Acts 2:36–39). This is announced in terms of prophecies given to David—that Messiah would not be held by death, and that he would sit at God's right hand as Lord. That is, Messiah must triumph over death and as Lord must sit at God's right hand.

Angels had announced that Jesus was 'Christ the Lord' (Luke 2:11), and Jesus himself commented on this, showing that the Christ must be David's Lord—again, sitting at God's right hand (Luke 20:41–44; Ps. 110).

The specific victory gained—over death—qualified Jesus to announce forgiveness in his name, good news of peace—he is Lord of all, but also to be judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:36, 42–43; also 17:31; Rom. 2:16; cf. John 5:22–23). It is as if God says that because His Son could not be held by death, we likewise will not be held by death.

Therefore, if Christ the Lord does not condemn us, what other power can do so (Rom. 8:34–39)? This acquittal means that the power of Christ on our behalf is not that of a sectarian hero (our man is stronger than yours) but the just defence and vindication of those he calls righteous.

Christ would have nothing to offer sinners if he did not have victory over our accuser, sovereignty over the entail of our sin, restorative powers to make good our broken humanity and to clear creation of its curse.

Colossians

Paul wrote to the Colossian church against the background of a heresy which gave credence to false powers by looking to them for fullness of life and by their requiring legal service (2:8, 16–23).

Our being transferred to the kingdom of the beloved Son, with forgiveness and redemption in him, is followed by the statement of Christ's priority in the creation and his headship over the church, his supremacy over all things and with a view to the reconciliation of all things (1:12–20). This is a supremacy gained through the cross (2:13–15). Therefore, the church should not look to any other power or dominion or source of knowledge but rest in Christ.

Ephesians

The Ephesian 'circular letter' broadens this theme to show the complete supremacy of Christ over all other powers (1:19–23), and consequently the unfettered and full life of love to be lived by Christians (4:1–6).

A Prayer For Revelation

It is important to remember that this passage is a prayer—that we may know Christ, and, with him, the hope to which we are called and the power exerted on our behalf and in us. We must not reduce this to a mere 'understanding' as if we could know this by clear thinking. It is the eyes of our heart needing to be opened. Only God can reveal His Christ (Matt. 11:27; 16:17), and so, the gifts we have in him (I Cor. 2:8–13).

This revelation was promised by Christ (John 14:26; 16:13). Paul refers to his experience of this (Eph. 3:3).

Revelation of . . . the Power

The revelation is to do with the objective hope before us, the riches of our inheritance (as in v. 14 and Col. 1:12; or of God's inheritance as in Deut 32:9), and the power exerted on our behalf (towards us—*εις*).

Our concern here is with God's great power exerted in Christ's headship. It is a power exerted towards us (for us—*NIV* and *NRSV*; exercised for us—*JSM*; in us—*RSV*). It is clearly over us also but has taken into account all other authorities, powers, dominions and names—in both this and the future ages.

Markus Barth (*Ephesians*, 1974), translates vv. 19f.: 'and how exceedingly great is his power over us believers. For that mighty strength is at work (v. 20) which God has exerted in the Messiah when . . .' (1/145). Lit. it is 'what is the exceeding greatness of his power . . . in accordance with the energy of the force of his strength' (1/152).

Armitage Robinson says: 'St. Paul heaps word upon word (*δυναμις, ενεργεια, κρατος, ισχυς*) in his determination to emphasise the power of God that is at work in the lives of "them that believe"' (*Ephesians*, p. 40).

God's power in regard to us is revealed in the resurrection of Christ (so Rom. 8:11) and in his installation at the seat of power at God's right hand. All the potency of the cross lies behind the resurrection (Col. 2:14–15).

‘... sit at his right hand’ is an allusion to Ps. 110:1. ‘... all things under his feet’ recalls Ps. 8:6.

He gained authority over all other powers. These are not identified, but, from the later application for Christian living (6:10–20), it is clear that evil spiritual powers are in view, enemies which may only be overcome by the weapons of the gospel.

The Power is the Love of God

Power—in God’s exercise of it—is not regarded as evil; rather, God’s power is the expression of his love (1:4–6; 2:4–6). His power is the executive hand of love.

The power of God in us has its effect in strengthening us to comprehend and be filled with the love of God in Christ—so that God is glorified in Christ and in the church (3:14–21).

Head Over All For the Church

All this is ‘to the church’ (v. 22—a dative—*τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ*).

That Christ is head over all things for the church and fills all things shows that in the church God is doing what He has in view for all creation, and what He has in view for all creation is that it all be filled with love.

The Church—His Body, and the Recipient of Christ’s Fullness

The church is ‘full of him who fills all things totally’ (Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, 1/145).

Markus Barth, who spends 11 pages looking at the passive (as in Col. 1:24—fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ) and active senses (1/200–210), says both senses have much to commend them and concludes in favour of the active.

G. Bingham (*Ephesians*): ‘Christ is the fullness of God, and that fullness He has chosen to give to His church, and by it He is fulfilling, or “filling up” all things’ (p. 21f.). He adds: ‘The opposite to “full” is “empty” (or vain). To *fill* anything (cf. Eph. 4:9–10) is to give it reality. For all things to be “filled up” is much the same as saying “headed up” (1:10) or “reconciled” (Col. 1:21). One conclusion we may come to is that Christ, by his body the church, is filling all things’.

Application

In practical terms, the church has been directed to seek her whole life and love and fullness in Christ. She does not live out of the uncertainties and impotence of her own piety or resourcefulness, but in and from the Headship/Lordship of Christ over all powers—especially over guilt and death which otherwise would cripple everything at its genesis. She has been shown that among all powers and agencies, the church stands unassailable—simply because of her union with Christ.

In an earlier letter, Paul said that the life he now lived in the flesh he lived by faith in the Son of God (Gal. 2:20). He needed no other life, or fullness, or knowledge, or power than this.

Christ Head Over All Things for the Church

Later, the strength of the Lord's might is to be the basis of our strength in combating all evil powers (6:10–20). The power of God in Christ is the source and potency of all future and present life for the Christian and he or she needs to be made cognisant of it by revelation.

Study Five

Christ and the Kingdom—II

(by Ian Pennicook)

When Jesus was before Pilate, he was accused of ‘saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king’. Pilate then asked Jesus if the charge was correct, to which Luke records Jesus’ non-committal reply, ‘You say so’ (Luke 23:2–3). Luke is the only Gospel explaining why Pilate asked such a question, but it is John’s Gospel which describes Jesus as giving a full answer to Pilate.

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ Jesus answered, ‘Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?’ Pilate replied, ‘I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?’ Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.’ Pilate asked him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.’ Pilate asked him, ‘What is truth?’ (John 18:33–38).

However political the accusation may have been, Jesus’ reply declares that his Kingdom has nothing to do with human politics. Jesus does not reject the title ‘king’ but he makes it clear that, as king, he is concerned with testimony to the truth. Pilate’s final question to Jesus on this occasion, ‘What is truth?’, whatever its implications for Pilate, demonstrates that the Kingdom and the truth are incomprehensible to him. In contrast, Jesus has suggested that his followers do not fight for his release because they somehow know the true nature of the Kingdom.

This would not mean that the followers of Jesus at that point understood in the same way as they would when they later received the Spirit, but it still fits with the comment of Jesus in Mark 4:11, ‘To you has been given [perfect tense—devdotai] the mystery of the kingdom of God’. In his ministry to the disciples, Jesus had been expounding the reality of the Kingdom, and not merely in an intellectual way. The truth of the Kingdom is the truth of the Father and at every point the revelation of the Father was personal and powerful. That means that in order for people to see the Kingdom as it was being revealed required the powerful intervention of God (so John 3:1ff.).

This is the final point being made by the account of the disciples at Caesarea Philippi:

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on

this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it' (Matt. 16:13–18).

Peter's recognition of the truth of Jesus was utterly dependent on revelation and the building of the church will no doubt take place on the rock of revelation. The reason for this need lies in the nature of fallen man, and the nature of the revelatory work must be found in the atonement. That is, revelation does not merely break through the resistance of rebellious wills; it must first change the will. Or, in another way, it is the nature of the Kingdom to make the rebels reign (Rev. 1:6).

In Adam

In Romans 5:12–21, Paul writes:

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Up to this point in the Letter, Paul has been describing the effects of the wrath of God and the consequent nature of justification (see 3:25—*ἰλαστήριον*, 'propitiation'; 5:9; etc.) as salvation 'from the wrath'. The nature of Romans 5:1–12¹ within the framework of the Letter has been vigorously debated and it does not seem unreasonable that it should refer not only to a conclusion about to be drawn (so, 'therefore'), but also to an explanation of all that has preceded it. How is it that men and women come under wrath and how does the atonement actually release them?

In answering the first question, verse 12 replies that sin and death entered through 'one man' and that 'death spread to all men'. However, the construction of the final clause ('because all have sinned') is not simple.² We may reduce the range of suggestions to two; either (i) Paul is saying that death spread to all men 'because (ἐφ' ᾧ may carry this meaning or refer back to some antecedent) all men sinned *in Adam's act of*

¹ In this context, it is the difficulty posed by the phrase translated as 'therefore', *δια*; *τοῦτο* which demands attention.

² See C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1975, Vol. 1, pp. 274–281.

disobedience, or (ii) the argument is that death spread to all men because all men sinned in their own persons, each volitionally repeating Adam's act of disobedience (this would help to explain the use of the Aorist ἡμαρτον³). Whichever was Paul's intention, the conclusion is plain: since Adam, death has exercised a dominion (vv. 14, 17).

It is not the law but sin which works death (7:13) and to have 'the mind of the flesh' (8:6) is death. Elsewhere Paul expands this view of the mind and its capacity to see the Kingdom. Romans 1:18ff. insists that those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness have futile thinking and darkened minds. This itself was the judgement of God (1:29). I Corinthians 2:14–15 compares the 'unspiritual' (ψυχικοῦ ἀνθρώπου) with the 'spiritual' (πνευματικοῦ) man as regards the capacity to know the things of the Spirit (ταῖς τοῦ πνεύματος). Interestingly, it is these two adjectives which Paul later uses in I Corinthians 15:44 to distinguish the body which is mortal ('physical') from that which belongs to the resurrection ('spiritual').

Death, then, is more than the cessation of life. It is the judgement of God which holds men in bondage so that they cannot and will not see the truth of the Kingdom. To this we could add II Corinthians 4:3–4:

even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Here, it is Satan who has power to stop unbelievers seeing the light. It is no doubt well known that to 'death' and 'Satan' could be added the names of other elements which hold men and women in bondage. But the basis is clear. It is as men and women draw their life juices from fallen Adam that they are held by death. 'All die *in Adam*.'

In Christ

From verse 15 of Romans 5, Paul argues that death's dominion (v. 17), which was sin's dominion (v. 21), was broken when 'one man Jesus Christ' came and was obedient. The free gift (τὸ χάρισμα), later defined as 'eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord' (6:23), stands in rich contrast to all that the 'one man' Adam did. It is in verse 18 that Paul finally tells how Adam was undone:

as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all.

One man's act of righteousness brought justification and life to all. Although we can see that at every point Jesus was obedient to the Father, his 'act of righteousness' refers specifically to his death on the cross. This is stated explicitly in Philippians 2:8, 'he became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross'. His death was an act of obedience as the Father commanded him to lay down his life (John 10:18) and an act of righteousness as he fulfils all righteousness in the judgement of guilt. 'Acts of righteousness' is the Greek δικαιοσύνη, the same word is later used in Romans 8:3–4, where we read that God, in sending his Son for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, so that the dikaiwma of the law worked by the Son may be fulfilled in us. That is why there is no condemnation to those who are *in Christ Jesus*. Just as to be *in Adam* was

³ Cf. the use of Aorist ἡμαρτον in Rom. 2:12 and 3:23.

to carry Adam's condemnation, so to be *in Christ* is to carry his righteousness.

The Adam–Christ contrast is significant in I Corinthians 15 as regards the hope of resurrection. Verses 21–22, 45 and 47 are important:

For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.

Thus it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit . . . The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.

The use of gender neutral language in verse 21 obscures the point that it was not just a human being who brought death, but the head of the race. Likewise it is the head of the race who brings resurrection. Hence in verses 45 and 47 Jesus is called 'the last Adam, the second man'. Justification comes through our being incorporated into 'the last Adam, the second man', so his victory over the powers of darkness and death on the cross is in stark contrast to the effect of the transgression of 'the first man, Adam'.

More than that, justification is the total defeat of 'the first man'. In Romans 6:6 Paul writes that 'our old man⁴ was crucified with him'. In the light of all that has preceded it, it is unlikely that the usual modern translations, 'our old self' etc., are at all adequate. Paul's meaning is that it was 'Adam' who was crucified with Christ. Christ took Adam into the cross and judged him. That is why he can continue the sentence of verse 6 with:

so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

The body of sin has been rendered powerless. It may be present, with all its passions (Rom. 6:12), but it may no longer exercise dominion. Sin can no longer enslave because the guilt of sin has gone.

This is the power of justification. Those in Christ Jesus are dead to sin and alive to God. They are now in the position not to let sin exercise dominion in their mortal bodies. What is more, even the sin which appears in the mortal body (7:15–25) cannot bring back the wrath for those who are in Christ Jesus (8:1). It is in this way that the Kingdom makes the rebels reign.

This triumph of justification through Christ is the Kingdom of God. At the cross the Kingdom was 'established' in so far as we are concerned (although, of course, the truth of the reign of God was never in question). That is why Paul later said that 'the Kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14:17). But it should be noted that 'righteousness' and 'justification' both are translations of the same Greek word, *dikaiousvnh*, so that we may well translate this verse as 'the kingdom of God . . . is justification and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit'.

⁴ ὁ παλαιός ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος.

Study Six

The Local Church and the Kingdom of God

(by Rod James)

The Church Scene in Australia

Research tells us that generally Australians say: God—‘Yes’, Church—‘No’.
Some of the ways that the Church in Australia is seen by those outside it:

- quaint Gothic buildings
- religious clubs
- bunch of hypocrites
- competing denominations
- doctrinal squabbling
- empire building by congregations and pastors
- proselytising

These perceptions have some truth in them when we consider:

- how easily we get lost in the task of paddling our own canoe, and keeping our own ship afloat.
- how unconsciously we equate the mission of Christ in our area with the expansion of our own congregation and work.
- how prone we are to ‘sheep stealing’ and other forms of competitiveness.
- how unattractive ecumenical events and programs appear compared to our own church’s events and programs.

The Kingdom and Purpose of God in Our Community

The following two passages of Scripture give us insight into the reign and purpose of God in our own local community:

Ephesians 4:1–16

St Paul emphasises the oneness and unity of God, Christ, the Spirit and the Church.

Questions For Reflection

(a) How will God be glorified in your community?

by Christian congregations competing, like sporting clubs,
for supremacy and community patronage?

OR

by a revelation of the Kingdom of God in the community,
e.g. Philip in Samaria (Acts 8:1–8)?

(b) Where will we find the power of the Kingdom of God for our community?

in pursuing our kingdom within our congregation?

OR

in earnestly seeking God's Kingdom over the whole community,
e.g. the believer's prayer (Acts 4:23–31)?

Study Seven

The Clash of the Kingdoms

(by Deane Meatheringham)

Introduction

There would be very few Pastors, if any, who are not engaged in a battle. John Wesley once said that if we preach and there is no trouble which arises from it then we are either not preaching the Gospel, or the devil is no longer in the world.

Yet we need to discriminate in understanding our battles. Peter says it is no credit to suffer because we have acted wrongly. It is wrong to rationalise this as suffering for the Gospel (I Pet. 2:20). Some of our battles are of our own foolish making!

On the other hand we may have been wounded in the battle and decided to go AWL, or arranged our ministries to avoid all strife in the future. But the suffering which will come from this sell-out to the enemy will be incomparable with the suffering which comes from the Gospel.

In this Study we build on that given by Ian Pennicook, 'Christ and the Kingdom', Studies 2 and 5. As he has shown the securing of the Kingdom through the incarnate and atoning work of the Son of God, so now I hope to show the practical outworking of this for the life of the Pastor and the Church.

Knowing and Facing the Enemy

Ephesians 6:12 is a key verse for understanding the ongoing clash of the kingdoms. We may be deceived into thinking that our battle is with people as such. If this is the case then our strategy could be to set up stratagems to fight them with their own system of psychology, politics and cleverness. We certainly are often confronted by wicked people but the battle is with the powers which deceive and enslave them.

The battle is with the vast unseen forces and powers which are headed up by the ruler of the whole world system (I John 5:19; I Pet. 5:8; James 4:7; II Cor. 2:11; 4:4; 11:1; I Cor. 2:8; Rom. 8:38; 16:19–20; Col. 1:13; Eph. 2:2; 3:10; Rev. 12:10).

This battle, or clash, is constant, unremitting and constantly changing its style and strategy (Eph. 6:12). But it is *IN CHRIST* that we wrestle—not on our own, out of our resources (Eph. 6:10; Phil. 4:13; John 15:1ff.). As the enemy is beyond our natural power then it is the strengthening which comes from our reigning Messiah that enables us to be defended and which enables us to join the offensive. It is Christ who has won the battle, who subdues his enemies, and who enables us to press through the defeated powers of evil (I Cor. 15:57; Rev. 19:11–16).

Apocalyptic Comfort in the Continuing Battle

Already we have seen in previous studies that Jesus Christ is Lord over all the powers of evil (Col. 1:13; 2:13–15; Eph. 1:17–23; I John 3:8; etc.). The victory of Christ stands. Satan and his powers were defeated for ever by Jesus, the Son of God (Heb. 2:14f.). Defeat does not mean annihilation of the enemy but that the power of the world system has been broken at the cross.

Like us, the early Church lived in the authority of Christ's Lordship. Yet she faced suffering, defeat, martyrdom, intimidation, accusation, etc. *Revelation 20:1–10* tells us what is going on behind history in terms of the Kingdom of God and the Church. It shows us the breaking in of the Kingdom, into the reign of politics, ecclesiastical and civil, and into this present evil age.

Exegetically the 'then' of 20:1 is not a chronological sequence of events in history, but rather the sequence of John's seeing. The picture is one of action power which depicts Satan as bound. The thousand years of verse 2 should be compared with the 'little while' of verse 3 as showing that Satan has limited power in the light of the full power of Christ (cf. Rev. 20:3, 7; 12:12). There will be conflict between the two kingdoms but the 'thousand years' will prevail over the 'little while'. The 'thousand years' does not *terminate*. The 'little while' is the time when 'Satan will be loosed from his prison', i.e. he will seek to destroy, he will raise up Gog and Magog, but they cannot undo the victory of Christ. The enemy looms large in the media. The people of God are tempted to think the Beast, the Dragon, the False Prophet and Babylon rule the world, when in truth it comes to nothing ultimately (Rev. 20:9; cf. 18:10, 17; 16:16).

Meanwhile, and simultaneously, the Church reigns in life (Rev. 4–6). Here Daniel 7:1–7 is an important interpretive key for it shows the saints reigning. See also Luke 12:32; 22:28–30; Romans 5:12–21; 8:35–39; Ephesians 2:4–7; Revelation 2:26f.; John 5:29; 11:25; Hebrews 12:22–24.

To engage in the battle it is necessary to see that Christ *has* bound Satan, that the battle which we have is with a conquered enemy, that one of Satan's devices is to attempt to mesmerise the people of God with the power of evil, that this will cause the people of God to withdraw into a ghetto. Christ's victory is the major power in comparison to Satan's—not the other way around.

Thus when we come back to Ephesians 6:10ff. the battle is seen as a constant engagement for the people of God, but we are expected to stand and prevail in the strength of our union with Christ, and in the armour which is really Christ himself.

The Day-to-Day Conflicts

Under this heading (which we could call spiritual warfare), I want to look at some of the most vulnerable areas of our ministry and church life where we face not the momentous engagements, but the domestic everyday struggles.

- (a) *The first is the battle of faith.* In Ephesians 6:14 faith is the shield which protects us from Satan's accusation. The faith is not faith in ourselves but in the finished work of Christ and in his victorious reign over all of our affairs. It means ministering and preaching from the vantage point that Satan has been bound. To sight it may not appear that such is the case. In *Pilgrim's Progress* John Bunyan recounts Christian's fear when he saw two lions in the way—a sight which

sufficed to make Timorous and Mistrust turn back from their pilgrimage. ‘The lions were chained’ wrote Bunyan, ‘but he saw not the chains’.

We are told that the victory which overcomes the world is our faith (I John 5:4f.). But this is the faith which believes Jesus is the Son of God.

- (b) The second is linked with the first but has to do with *our worthiness to be servants of the Word of God*. Satan accuses us of our actual faults, our inconsistencies, and from this uses his various media to drum up guilt from past sin (Eph. 6:14; Rev. 12:10; Zech. 3:1ff.; Jude 9). Whether the accusation is true or false the battle of faith is to insist that we are in the justifying Christ. We are shabby sinners with death before us. We must go through it. The devil threatens us with all kinds of trouble and danger. Because of sin dwelling in our mortal bodies we feel that sin clings to us, which makes us feel weak in faith, cold in love, impotent in virtue and stymied to preach. But rather than drive us from Christ, sin drives us to the friend of sinners to learn again Romans 8:1ff., 33–39. Luther’s advice in this situation was that we should ‘sin bravely’. Sin and grace do not have equal weight, therefore we can have courage.

We overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony, for death has lost its power (Rev. 12:11; I John 4:18; Heb. 2:14f.). I reiterate again that it is in Christ that we have been washed, are new creatures—it is in him that we have all things—for all that he has bestowed upon us.

- (c) *The third area is the conflict of the flesh and the Spirit* (Gal. 5:17; Rom. 8:9). There are situations, encounters, meetings, solitudes and provocations where we ‘feel’ an undercurrent begin to surge, which will be to give way, to pander to passion, to let anger, resentment, lust, etc. rise. But we have learned to put on Christ (Eph. 4:17–24), and in Christ we live no more out of our own centre, but out of his action and obedience.
- (d) *The fourth area is legalism*. I don’t mean true obedience in Christ to the law of God, which is the obligation of being members of God’s gracious covenant. But the seduction is to make the Gospel, the Bible and the commandments ‘user friendly’. Here we think we are in control, and we will begin to control the life of the Church, perhaps lording it over the faith of others. Satanic division and hypocrisy arise from such systems. True ‘spirituality’ is that through the Spirit we participate in Christ’s communion with the Father. The grace of God in Christ defeats sin (Rom. 7:4). ‘The letter kills but the Spirit gives life.’
- (e) *The fifth area is the desire for the big time*. Satanic ambition is allowed to infect us. Again we are seeing the clash of two kingdoms (I Pet. 5:6–11). Only that which is built by Christ lasts into eternity (I Cor. 13:13). Ambition will lead the Church into a Babylonian captivity.

It’s the magician’s bargain: give up your souls, get power in return. But once our souls, that is ourselves, have been given up, the power conferred will not belong to us. We shall be slaves and puppets to that which we have given our souls (C. S. Lewis).

Conclusion

The whole armour of God as in Ephesians 6:10ff. is God's own armour which we have in Christ (Isa. 59:17). To put it on is to come against the enemy in God's saving righteousness. The armour is all of a piece—it is to be clothed with Christ. The battle is first his and not ours.

Romans 16:19–20 shows that our victory is a moral victory. The darkness is defeated by walking in the light.

Study Eight

The Gospel of the Kingdom— Justification

(by Geoffrey Bingham)

The Gospel of the Kingdom and Salvation

There are not two gospels, one of the Kingdom (Matt. 3:2ff.; Mark 1:14) and one of salvation (Rom. 10:9; Acts 16:31; 20:24; cf. Matt. 24:14). The gospel is mostly called ‘the gospel of God’ and this term was given to John’s preaching, to Jesus’ preaching and to the later preaching of the apostles.¹

What concerns us in this paper and in our ministry is that we proclaim properly what was the apostolic message. However much we may—and ought to—present the gospel in terms of our age and culture, we must not proclaim what was not proclaimed by the apostles. We therefore ask the question whether the teaching of justification was contained in the *kerugma*.² The following formal presentation should be compared with that we call ‘preaching the gospel’ today.

The Formal Presentation of the Kerugma

- (a) Jesus is the Messiah predicted in the O.T. prophecies. His ministry of teaching, his actions, his death, resurrection and ascension all comport with the prophecies and affirm him to be Messiah.
- (b) His death was God’s act to deal with sin. His resurrection attested to the effective power of the Cross, and affirmed Jesus as Lord over life, death, creation and all history.
- (c) Men and women must, therefore, believe his Lordship, believe on him, repent of their sins and receive forgiveness from their Saviour, Jesus.

¹ It is called ‘the gospel of God’ and ‘the gospel of the kingdom’ prior to Pentecost. After that the terms ‘gospel of God’, ‘gospel of Christ’, ‘gospel of our Lord’ and the ‘gospel of grace’, never literally the ‘gospel of the kingdom’, but by association it is certainly the latter, as in Acts 8:4, 5, 12; 20:21, 24, 25; cf. 28:23, 31. Of course the atonement did not change the gospel of the Kingdom, but rather changed its content, for what was once proleptic became established as the *kerugma*.

² The matter of the *kerugma* is barely covered in its formal presentation above. Even a study of the apostolic sermons in Acts does not convey it fully; for example, see I Corinthians 1:17—2:5 where the preaching of the Cross seems to go beyond the preaching of the resurrection, and then the Lordship of Christ.

Justification and the Kingdom of God

Acts 2:38–39 is part of the original *kerugma*:

Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

Forgiveness and justification cannot be separated as Paul shows us in Romans 4:1–8, 25. Nor can they be separated from the Kingdom of God as I Corinthians 6:9–11 shows us:

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

The Kingdom of God is entered only by washing, justification and sanctification which come ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God’. We have thus established that justification is part of the *kerugma*, part of the ‘gospel of the kingdom’. What then is the nature of justification?

The Nature of Justification

We have seen from Acts 13:38–39 that forgiveness of sins and justification are linked. Justification from the manward point of view is proving oneself right, being righteous or just and this generally by one’s actions. In the case of some Jews it was being justified by works of the law, but Psalm 143:2 says of this manward effort, ‘in thy sight shall no man living be justified’, and Paul quotes this partially in Galatians 2:16b. From the Godward point of view, God through the atonement of Christ justifies sinners and the ungodly by grace. The response to this grace is the faith of the one who is being justified.

Justification and the Law

One must be a sinner or justification has no point. It is not for the righteous but sinners that Jesus came (Luke 5:32; I Tim. 1:15), and the Cross has no significance if the law does not condemn Man, for the gospel is a ‘law and grace’ matter. Paul’s argument in Romans, Galatians, Philippians and Titus is that it is impossible for one to be justified before the law (Gal. 2:16) for the reasons that law:

- (a) Arouses the sinful passions which bring the outcome of death (Rom. 7:5).
- (b) Sin uses the law to increase sin (Rom. 7:7–11; cf. Gal. 3:19).
- (c) The law works wrath in the sinner (Rom. 4:15).
- (d) The law never promised to ‘make alive’ (Gal. 3:21). Instead it brings death (Rom. 7:8–9).
- (e) The law outlines and delineates sin, and in so doing increases sin (Gal. 3:19).

- (f) By the law is the knowledge of sin. This is not merely formal but existential. In fact it is frightening.
- (g) All of the above elements of law add up to showing the sinner that he/she cannot effect self-justification, thus shutting them up to faith, and so being a schoolmaster (pedagogue) to lead them to Christ. In this sense the law is good.

***Justified From all Things From Which We Could Not be Justified by the Law
(of Moses)***

The passage of Romans 3:21–31 is most important. It shows:

- (a) That whilst God’s righteousness is generally shown by the law, yet His righteousness is such that it justifies sinners. This surprising—even shocking—truth is witnessed to by the law and prophets to which it *seems* to be diametrically opposed.
- (b) Being a Jew is no advantage, for Jews—like Gentile sinners—have all sinned (Rom. 3:23; Gal. 2:17; cf. Rom. 10:1–4; I Tim. 1:15).
- (c) Those who believe are justified by God’s grace as a gift.
- (d) This gift has been achieved through the sin-bearing work of the Cross, so justification is by faith in the redemption God has wrought through His Son.
- (e) Such justification is not immoral. It is God’s plan. By it the law has been satisfied (cf. Col. 2:14–15; Rom. 6:7). Man dies, in the Cross, to law (Gal. 2:19–20; Rom. 6:1–7).
- (f) Grace is the giving of God of the gift of justification, and faith the receiving of it, but that faith is in God, Christ and the Cross and is not itself a work. Both Jews and Gentiles must have faith in order to be justified. See Philippians 3:8–9; Titus 3:1–7; Romans 4:1–8, 25; 5:1.

**The Evangelical and Pastoral Value of the Teaching
of Justification**

Romans 5:1–11 shows us something of the fruits of justification. So does I Corinthians 6:9–11. The pastor must teach this doctrine so that his people do not set about going over their past, trying to be free from sins from which they have already been justified.

Principally, a justified congregation is one which does not live in a welter of guilt, of self-proving, of competition, and of the unease that guilt brings before God and Man and consequently in all of those relationships. A justified person can proceed calmly with life and be free in regard to the past, the present and the future, especially in regard to ‘hidden agendas’. A justified person has an open door to true relationships with God and other human beings.

Being free from justifying oneself by works of the law, one can now fulfil the just requirement (*dikaïoma*) of the law, that is, by walking in the Spirit can have Christ fulfil in him/her that just requirement of the law.

This truth has led us into the heart of sanctification (see Study 12, ‘The Gospel of the Kingdom—Sanctification’).

Study Nine

The Power of Weakness in the Kingdom of God

(by Deane Meatheringham)

Introduction

The thesis of our Study is that as God's power is demonstrated in the weakness of the cross, so our true power will be found in the crucified Son of God.

The Divine Power of Weakness

This is most clearly expressed in I Corinthians 1:25 (cf. II Cor. 13:3, 4). The context shows that the Corinthians did not come to know God through the power of human wisdom. Rather it was the reverse, God exposed human wisdom as a delusion and at the place where human power thought to exorcise God from the world, God's self-emptying power triumphed in the cross.

Power is an everyday reality and experienced as a fact of life. Rather than power being understood as the authority to effectively serve, power is grasped to effectively preserve and expand ourselves (Matt. 20:25–28).

Since the fall of Man was in fact an upward ascent for autonomy and power over God, it elevated him to a position of giddiness. Man scrambles ceaselessly to maintain, assert and extend his power. He does this personally and invents ideologies for collective power. 'The voice of the people has become the voice of God.' The truth developed by man must become all inclusive and the political believer must have a monopoly on truth. The truth moves into ideological mode which can never be separated from political power (e.g. Daniel 3).

Hegel (1770–1831) said 'Reason is the Sovereign of the world' and reason 'is *substance*, as well as Infinite Power.' Out of this the State became the incarnation of humanism's god. Hegel was an enthusiastic observer of the French Revolution, believing the State to be the product of reason and the unbending forces of history. 'The Universal is to be found in the State', he wrote, '... the State is the Divine Idea as it exists on earth ... We must therefore worship the State as the manifestation of the Divine on earth and consider that, if it is difficult to comprehend Nature, it is harder to grasp the Essence of the State ... The State is the march of God through the world'.

The drive for power is the drive for self-justification and really the cry for forgiveness. Guilty Man must have a place of security, and it must be higher than that of his neighbour.

He must silence accusation and insulate himself from the fear of death. Hence the intense rivalry endemic to the human race and the constant struggle for ownership of the earth.

God has no such struggle. The Triune God loves freely. His love is His Power. I Corinthians 1:17—2:5 shows that the wisdom and the power of God are revealed in the incarnate Son whose triumph was manifested in the cross. This is the power which chooses to become poor, the love which regards others as better than itself, the love which gives, holding nothing in reserve, the love which serves. This is the peaceable love which reconciles through providing propitiation for sin—a love which captures and renews the heart of Man (II Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:4ff.; Rom. 8:32; 5:8; I John 4:10; II Cor. 5:14f., 19). Here is the wisdom and power of God—a wisdom which will not let the creature, whom he loves, to deceive himself or remain incarcerated in the lie of rebellion (Rom. 1:16f.).

The Triumph of Weakness

We have already been emphasising the triumph of God's reign, and previous Studies have dealt with the securing of the Kingdom against the Kingdom of Man. However, we need to assert that the Kingdom was secured through the weakness of God's power manifested in the cross.

In his temptations Jesus refuses to fall in with Adam and accept the Devil's power strategy (Matt. 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13; Heb. 2:18; 4:15). Perhaps the chief reason for the 'Messianic secret' was to prevent those who quickly became 'groupies' making Jesus into a demigod. Jesus warns about a wrong use of his Kingdom signs (Luke 11:29–32). Here is a 'poor man' amongst the socially poor, one who does not turn to political or ecclesiastical power to save himself (Matt. 26:51–54; John 18:36). Jesus' power is expressed in the giving up of his life (John 10:17f.).

To free us from the powers to which we have enslaved ourselves it must be by other than political power, or the wisdom of Man. Jesus defeats these powers by the power of the Kingdom of God—by a holy love which takes and exhausts the enmity of the powers in his suffering love. Christ did not meet force with force. God in Christ stripped himself of power (Phil. 2:1–11). 'God does not hold onto the booty like a robber, but God parts with Himself' (Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, SCM, 1960, p. 116). This does not lessen the battle which Christ has with the powers on the cross, but it shows us the nature of the battle where love conquers hate, truth exposes the illusion and deception of power, forgiveness frees the insecure, grace judges evil and holiness reconciles the polluted.

The Power of the Church is Its Weakness

As the Church has been born crucified God has made it weak. Weakness is a gift of grace (Gal. 2:19–20; Acts 22:6–16). The source of our life is *in* Christ (I Cor. 1:30f.). This means that we are able to boast of our weakness (II Cor. 12:9f.; 13:4). In Christ the Church does not need to resort to 'means of power' (i.e. the flesh), for she has the power of her Lord imparted to her through the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 10:1–6; I Pet. 3:8–22).

The Church has always faced the power dangers (Acts 5:1–11; 8:9–24;

I Cor. 1:10ff.; 3:18–22; Rev. 3:1–6, 15–22). Some of the ways the Church does this are noted:

- (a) The Church mistakes itself for the Kingdom of God, instead of being a handmaid of the Kingdom.
- (b) Techniques, methodologies and psychologies become the means the Church uses to gain results.
- (c) The Church seeks the power support of the politicians and the State. C. S. Lewis warned: ‘The demon inherent in every [political] party is at all times ready enough to disguise himself as the Holy Ghost’ (*God in the Dock*, Eerdmans, 1970, p. 198).
- (d) The Church may turn to the use money and possessions to gain influence—power.
- (e) Luther warned of the dangers of a Church which has a theology and practice of glory, rather than of the cross where God justifies sinners. The cross is in fact the revelation of God’s glory.

The Church which receives the gift of weakness will be dependent upon the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and will find that she will hope in God, believing that his Gospel is the power of salvation (Matt. 5:5).

The Weakness of Preaching

The foolishness and weakness of God is contemporised in preaching the word of the cross (I Cor. 1:17—2:5). The gospel pastor should not have another alien power beyond the word which he preaches or else he will deflect people away from the power of God. ‘. . . that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God’ (I Cor. 2:5).

The word which we preach is the Eternal Word which became the fleshy Word. The word still speaks but the preached word is the *kenosis* word (Phil. 2:6). The word of the cross is the word of suffering and death, and is still regarded as an offensive, outmoded medium. The task of preaching is likewise given to those who are empty of self-importance, whose delivery is not in language of plausibility, but comes in words of trembling and fear.

We have to reassert what has already been said, viz. that through the Holy Spirit the Church and its pastors are in union with the Son. Thus we are taken into the very *activity* of God himself. The word proclaimed is God’s own word. The Voice of God interprets Scripture, and by mundane words God ‘bears us up as if in chariots to his heavenly glory’ (Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, i. 5; cf. IV, xvii. 15, 16).

Now the very persons who used their words to crucify Christ use their words in Christ to effect reconciliation and to tell the truth, thus overcoming the falsity and enmity in which the wisdom and words of Man had become deeply bogged.

If our preaching the word of the cross is mere abstract forensic statements and theological transactions, then our strength may be in our factual reportage. But if we

publicly portray the crucified Messiah as those preachers who are in the reign of the one who is 'glorified with his suppurating wounds', then Christ will be the one true Preacher (Gal. 3:1; Rom. 10:14–17). I mean that while Christ's death for sin was *hapax* 'once for all', he continues as our great High Priest to bring broken humanity into God's presence (Heb. 7:24f.).

The knowledge that Paul was preaching nothing except 'Jesus Christ and him crucified' ('crucified', part. perf. pass.), made him tremble because the word spoken was the effectual word of the crucified one working powerfully in the weakness of preaching.

It is only in a crucified Redeemer that sinful preachers could dare speak the word of God. Outside of him the word would destroy us. But in him our congregation hears the Redeemer through weak men. And the 'word of the cross' liberates the community of faith from compulsive worldly models of success. Such preaching lifts from the Church the crushing burdens of 'relevance' and 'popularity' (see K. Runia, *The Sermon Under Attack*, ch. 5).

Study Ten

The Law of the Kingdom—of God, the Spirit and of Christ

(by Martin Bleby)

The Law of God

Romans 8:7, ‘the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to *God*; it does not submit to *God’s law*, indeed it cannot’. God and His law are one. ‘The law of *God*’ could be ‘the law which *is God Himself*’. This is not to deify the legal code, but to show the true nature of law.

Exodus 19:16–25 (NB: v. 17). The giving and receiving of the commandments are a *meeting with God*. So also Exodus 34:5–9—the revelation of God’s glory (see Exod. 33:18–23) is the verbal declaration of His moral nature. *The law of God is the revelation of God Himself in direct and dynamic relationship with us*.

See how this applies to each of the ten commandments (Anglican numbering):

- (a) The living God who acts, mighty to save. His uniqueness.
- (b) God’s incomparability, and His insistence upon full and direct relationship in love and truth.
- (c) God is personal, not a manipulable, mechanistic force. He can be offended against, and He will take action to vindicate His holy name (cf. Ezek. 36:16–32).
- (d) God is not ceaseless, restless activity. He has a plan, a purpose and a goal, which He accomplishes and is satisfied (Exodus version).
God redeems from slavery—He has mercy on those who labour and are heavy-laden and gives them rest (Deuteronomy version).
- (e) God is Father from whom all fatherhood-motherhood/family relationships derive (Eph. 3:15), as set out fontally in the relationship between the Father and the Son (e.g. John 5:17–20).
- (f) God is the one who has power over life and death (Deut. 32:39).
- (g) God is utterly faithful to Himself and to us in covenant (see Prov. 2:16–17).
- (h) God does not have to steal glory from anyone else. His are all the riches of glory and grace. He *gives* to all His creation, and fully equips us with everything we need. Receive from Him and we shall never have to steal (Eph. 4:28), but rather will have so much to give (II Cor. 9:8).

- (i) God is true, and the truth is God in all His actions of holy love by which we are brought together as one (see John 3:33; Eph. 4:15, 25, 29).
- (j) God is the sole, all-sufficient, dependable source and distributor of all that is, according to our true needs (I Tim. 6:6–10; Heb. 13:5).

No wonder the psalmist cries ‘Lord how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day long’ (Ps. 119:97—see the whole of Ps. 1, 19, 119).

The Law of Christ

I Corinthians 9:21, Galatians 6:1–2. It is clear that in apostolic times there was an identifiable and authoritative deposit of the Lord’s teaching, instructions and commandments (see John 14:15–23; Matt. 28:20; Acts 1:2; I Cor. 7:10; 14:37; I Tim. 6:3; I Thess. 4:2, 15; Col. 3:16. As set out in e.g. the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5–7; and the Gospels, *passim*).

It is naively claimed that Christ set aside the Old Testament law of wrath and established the new law of love (thus opening the way for ‘situational ethics’, by which we ourselves pick and choose and decide the ‘most loving’ thing appropriate at the time). But is the law of Christ any different from the law of God? Not according to Christ Himself—Matthew 5:17–20; John 3:34; 5:19, 30; 6:45; 8:28–29; 12:44, 49 (see also John 13:34; 15:12; cf. I John 2:7–11). Nor according to the apostles—see I Corinthians 14:37, cf. 34; Acts 24:14–15; 26:22–23 (not just apologetic—ontological).

Yet circumcision, food laws, the sacrifices, and for example the death penalty for adultery are all set aside in the New Testament. We need to be aware of the total plan and goal of God, and the different stages involved, particularly as set out in the Letter to the Hebrews, and view the Old Testament formulations of the law accordingly. Anglican Article VII makes a helpful distinction between ceremonial, civic and moral requirements:

VII. Of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New: for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to Mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and Man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the Law given from God by Moses, as touching Ceremonies and Rites, do not bind Christian men, nor the Civil precepts thereof ought of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral.

(Confusion on this score leads to confusion in practice. For example, Calvin thought the death penalty for adultery should still be in force, and on that basis allowed remarriage after divorce on the grounds of adultery.)

What does it mean to say ‘Christ is the *end* of the law’? (Rom. 10:4; see also Gal. 3:24–29). The word is *telos*, goal—the end towards which the law points, the one in whom the law comes to its true fulfilment (see Matt. 5:17–18; Rom. 8:3–4. It also means that Christ is the end of the law as a means of justifying oneself to God—but the law was never meant to be that anyway).

Thus we can say that Jesus is the law of God incarnated, living and active among us as

a human being in relationship with the Father. In Psalm 119 ‘testimonies’, ‘commandments’, ‘judgements’, ‘precepts’, ‘statutes’, ‘ordinances’, ‘promise’—all appellations for God’s ‘law’—are interchangeable with God’s ‘word’. In Psalm 119:105 that ‘word’ is ‘light’ (cf. John 1:4–5, 9), and in John 1:14 that Word, previously rejected in the world at large, and in Israel in particular (John 1:10–11), becomes flesh.

Thus we could say ‘the law of Christ’ is the law which *is* Christ, which is God’s action towards us in Christ.

The Sermon on the Mount, then, is not a ‘challenging ideal’—good to aim at but not something we could ever hope fully to achieve (see how this still smacks of law as something *we* do for God?)—but Christ bringing God’s law near to us in Himself, so we can keep it and do it (see Deut. 30:11–14; cf. Rom. 10:5–9).

The Law of the Spirit

Romans 8:2 makes reference to ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’. Is this yet another law? (Some misuse II Cor. 3:6 to oppose the Spirit to the law of God—again in the interests of ‘freeing’ us to do what we like ‘as the Spirit moves us’.) But this verse is speaking of how the Spirit frees us from the law’s *condemnation*, through the cross of Christ, who there has taken that condemnation in us and for us.)

One of the main purposes for the promise of the Spirit in the Old Testament is so that God’s people would then walk in God’s statutes and observe His ordinances (see Ezek. 11:19–20; 36:24–28). This is the whole thrust of the promised new covenant—a return and advance to life in direct and dynamic relationship with God, undergirded by total and everlasting forgiveness (Jer. 31:31–34). *The Spirit is given so that we might keep the law.* The heart of the law is dynamic love-relationship with God (Deut. 6:4–9) and the flowing out of that in our relationships with others (Lev. 19:18—hence Mark 12:28–34). The Spirit brings us through to that by applying to us the work of Christ on the cross in cleansing, sanctification and justification (Rom. 5:5–6; I Cor. 6:11). Thereby we walk by the Spirit in the Spirit’s fruit, and live by the flesh no longer (Gal. 5:16–26).

The Spirit and the word are one—in creation (Ps. 33:6), in the giving of instruction (Prov. 1:23), in the work of redemption (Isa. 42:1; 61:1–4), and in the going out of the gospel/law word (Isa. 59:21).

The Law of the Life of the Trinity

Having seen that the law of God is the action of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in direct and dynamic love-relationship with us, and having seen the law as being identified with each of the Persons in their action towards us, can we see the law as nothing more nor less than the revelation of the very life of the Trinity, opening out towards us, and drawing us into itself? Hence Matthew 28:19–20. This is the royal law of love (James 2:8).

Study Eleven

Christ, the Kingdom and the Eschaton

(by Ian Pennicook)

In my previous Study, I concluded that Christ established the Kingdom through the work of the cross, by completely absorbing the disobedience of Adam into himself, and by the overwhelming flood of grace, forming a new humanity in himself. Elsewhere, Paul treats this as the liberation of believers from ‘the present evil age’ (Gal. 1:4) and he speaks to the Corinthians as those ‘on whom the ends of the ages have come’ (I Cor. 10:11). In this latter statement, there is almost no possibility that Paul was simply referring to the point where the old and the new were meeting, since *τεαλοῦ* always has the meaning of the end as the consummation or goal.¹ Hence the meaning may be that the Corinthians are standing at the goal of all the ages which have gone before.²

In Galatians 4:4 he speaks of God sending his Son, ‘when the fulness of time had come’. Again here, the language implies that time has been fulfilled or completed by the coming of Christ at his incarnation (i.e. ‘born of a woman’, etc.).

The overwhelming picture is of Christ coming as the climax of history. Hence Mark’s description of Jesus’ initial proclamation, ‘The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near’ (Mark 1:15).³ But there is more. Hendrikus Berkhof, referring to Jesus’ testimony before the Sanhedrin, when he said, ‘From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven’ (Matt. 26:64), observes that the addition of ‘from now on’ adds an extra dimension to the quotation from Daniel 7 which is recorded in Mark’s version. Here in Matthew, as also in Luke 22:69:

Jesus knew that he had come to bring the close of history. Man’s evil and the superhuman adversaries come to their zenith, and surround him as though they are messengers from God. He knows that he has come to lead the world to its crisis, but also to overcome that crisis.⁴

He adds:

More and more Jesus comes to stand alone. The adversaries will summon together all their power. There can be no other way, for by his appearance and work Jesus called them to life.

¹ See Arndt and Gingrich, *tevloß*, 1a–1c for the full range of meanings.

² Or it may be that Paul’s phrase, while using the plural, ‘ends of the ages’, *τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων*, is essentially equivalent to the singular; see A & G, *αἰών*, 2b.

³ *Πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ.*

⁴ *Christ the Meaning of History*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1966, p. 60.

The activities of the demons around Jesus must also be viewed in this light. The manner in which they enslaved men during the life of Jesus is, for those who recognise the time, the omen that the last round has started. The great hour in which the power of darkness triumphs over the work of God now breaks over the whole world (Luke 22:53; Matt. 26:45; John 7:30; 8:20).⁵

However, the triumph of the powers of darkness was also their defeat, for it was Adam who was put to death on the cross. Their hold on Adam's race was ended. And out of the tomb walked the new race in 'the last Adam', οJ e[s c a t o" □Αδo;μ—'Adam at last'!

Understanding the Kingdom

Within this framework of the victory of Christ, and there are others, there is also a question. If he is truly *Christus Victor*, how are we to understand our present experience? For example, how could Paul say that:

... our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places? (Eph. 6:12).

Over against this, John wrote twice in two verses that the young people 'have conquered the evil one' (I John 2:13–14), and there are ample references to support both sides. The aim is not to provide some sort of a synthesis of apparently opposing views but to ask whether the writers of the New Testament themselves saw any conflict or, on the contrary, whether they also provided the key to understanding the apparent tension. The significance of this must not be overlooked, since this is the area where many Christians find great difficulty. If Christ is Lord and if he has removed all guilt then why do we continue to struggle against personal sinfulness and against the deceitful attacks of the devil?

While some answers to these questions will already be obvious from earlier sessions, our focus here first needs to be on the principle that it is in Christ in his person that the goal is reached. One schematic approach to this is Adrio König's, *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology*.⁶ In that work König argues that the end is not a point of chronology but Christ himself. He is 'the first and the last, the beginning and the end' (οφ πρωτοo και; οφ ε[σχατοo, ηφ ασρχη; και; το; τεαλοo, Rev. 22:13). While it is certainly true that the New Testament refers to 'the last day[s]' etc., these designations of Jesus, along with the whole focus of Old Testament hope, make it plain that in the person of Jesus all the purpose of God is accomplished (see II Cor. 1:20). It is for this reason that Karl Barth calls Jesus 'God's faithful covenant partner'.⁷ All that Israel was called to be, Christ was that (see Matt. 2:15). Where Christ is, there the goal is reached. Eschatology must be first the study of 'the last man' (οφ ε[σχατοo) and only then the study of 'the last things' (ta; e[scata).⁸ This has given rise to König's division of eschatology into the three units of (i) Christ realises the goal *for* us; (ii) Christ realises the goal *in* us; and (iii) Christ realises the goal *with* us. The first unit refers to the work

⁵ op. cit., p. 61.

⁶ Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1989.

⁷ Compare with C. D. III. 442 202ff., etc.

⁸ Surprisingly, the phrase ta; e[scata occurs only four times in the New Testament, Matt. 12:45; Luke 11:26; II Pet. 2:20; and Rev. 2:19; and never with the sense of 'the last things' of eschatology.

of the cross, the second to elements of the earthly ministry of Jesus prior to the cross and the present work of Christ in the world today and the third refers to the consummation of history.

The Cross and the Promise

Romans 4:13–25 links Abraham and his faith righteousness with ours. However, Paul is quite clear that the faith of Abraham was at all times faith in the promise of God. Thus:

For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void (4:13–14).

For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants (4:16).

No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised (4:20–21).

This element of ‘the promise’ is carried through into the present experience of those who believe in Christ. Being justified by faith, as Abraham was, we rejoice in hope (Rom. 5:2). Furthermore, this hope is not illusory; the reality of it is constantly sustained by the present experience⁹ of the love of God (Rom. 5:5).¹⁰

Justification does not, therefore, bring immediate perfection. Rather, ‘in hope we were saved’ (Rom. 8:24). Likewise, Galatians 5:5 says ‘through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness’, which may also be translated as ‘the hope of justification’. The action of the Kingdom which brought justification, has brought it by faith and not by sight which, of course, does not mean that it is not present (cf. Rom. 14:17). But at present Paul says that ‘we *believe* that we will also live with him’ (Rom. 6:8). ‘Will also live’ is not rhetorical for ‘do live now’; it is the hope of resurrection which is ours through faith. Likewise, the statement of Romans 6:14, ‘sin will have no dominion over you’, is not saying that it has no dominion now. If that were the case the command of verse 12 would be pointless. Rather, the exhortation is that in the light of the present victory *of Christ*, and of the promise of our resurrection as a direct result of his, believers are to live by faith in *his* death and resurrection (Rom. 6:11).

This immediately makes the structure of Romans 7–8 more simple. Sin is still horribly and exhaustingly present.¹¹ Hence Paul cries:

Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? (7:24).

and concludes:

⁹ The verb *ejkkevcutai* is in the perfect tense, indicating that the initial outpouring of the love of God through the Spirit has present consequences. The gift of the Spirit is described by the aorist tense, *doqevnto*, in contrast with Gal. 3:5 where Paul uses the present tense of *ejpicorhgev* (to furnish or provide at one’s own expense, give, grant, etc. A. & G. p. 305).

¹⁰ For the conjunction of faith and hope, see also I Cor. 13:13; 15:17, 19; Gal. 5:5–6; Eph. 4:4–5; Col. 1:4–5; 1:23; I Thess. 1:3; 5:8; Titus 1:1–2; Heb. 6:11–12; 10:22–23; 11:1; I Pet. 1:3, 5; 21.

¹¹ Could this be included in the ‘things present’ of Rom. 8:38?

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin (7:25).¹²

But the thought does not finish there. He continues that ‘there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus’ (8:1). The difference is that those in Christ are now under no *obligation* to sin (Rom. 8:12). But at present we suffer with Christ *in order that* we may be glorified with him. ‘That we may be glorified’ uses the expected aorist tense because the goal is the great climactic event of resurrection. That is why Paul continues in Romans 8:18ff. with the explanation:

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

The Kingdom and the Hope

In I Corinthians 15 Paul’s subject is resurrection. Again he stresses that the resurrection of believers has not yet taken place (cf. II Thess. 2:1–2) but will most certainly do so, for Christ has been raised as the guarantee. He is ‘the first fruits of those who have died’. Pastorally, in this chapter the main issue is the strengthening of those who have been told there is no resurrection and who are no doubt distressed by the *hopeless* situation of those who have died before the return of Christ (cf. I Thess. 4:13—5:11). In dealing with this issue, the whole nature of the Kingdom must be mentioned, and this is done in verses 20 to 28:

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For ‘God has put all things in subjection under his feet’. But when it says, ‘All things are put in subjection’, it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.

The resurrection of Christ establishes his reign and it is necessary for him to go on reigning (δεῖα γὰρ αὐτοῦ βασιλευσθαι) until all his enemies have been brought to submission (v. 25). The words ‘under his feet’ no doubt reflect Psalm 8:6, where this language of rule is applied to ‘man’. The later language of ‘the second man’ (v. 47) bears this out.

‘The last enemy to be destroyed is death’ (v. 26); in other words, death will be the

¹² Literally, ‘So then, *I* in mind serve [douleuvw][the] law of God, but in flesh [the] law of sin’.

experience of believers until the goal is reached. But in the meantime, Christ as Lord is actively reigning. Matthew 28:18–20 highlights this. ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to’ Christ; as a result the eleven disciples are to go and make the nations his disciples.¹³ But the background in Psalm 2:8 makes it plain that the winning of the nations is not dependent on the labour of the disciples; in the final analysis this is a transaction between the LORD and his anointed Son/King, which is why Jesus concludes with the statement, ‘And remember, *I* am with you always, to the end [συντελειᾶν, “completion, close end, consummation”—the idea of goal is not absent] of the age’ (v. 20). Just as ‘all authority’ was *given*, so the nations are the gift of God and in the present ministry of the disciples the Son is moving out to receive what is his.

It is for this reason that the Book of the Revelation calls for ‘the endurance of the saints’ (Rev. 14:12). In the face of the apparent victory of the Dragon, the beast and the false prophet, the saints may be assured that Christ is Lord. The Lamb has conquered and now he stands:

on Mount Zion! And with him were one hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads (Rev. 14:1).

In the light of the victory of the Lamb, the saints are to persevere, even though it is in the face of terrible suffering (see Rev. 13:7–10).

The way the Lamb goes about exercising his dominion in the Book of the Revelation is by means of the judgements which he administers. Having been slain, and so having conquered, he is worthy to bring the whole of history to the appointed end. Revelation 5:9–10 shows how the believers ‘fit in’ with all this:

You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals,
for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God
saints from every tribe and language and people and nation;
you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God,
and they will reign on earth.

They *are* a kingdom and priests (they have been made that, εἰποὶν ἵνα ἴσθαι is the aorist tense) and they *will* reign (βασιλεύσουσιν is future tense; cf. Rom. 5:17).

The final section of the Book of the Revelation (chs 21–22) shows us the great climax of history in anticipation. John sees:

And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away’.
And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new . . .’
(Rev. 21:2–5).

The bride has ‘been prepared’; she has been clothed in the gifts of righteous deeds and only now are her tears wiped away and death removed. It is in this context that Jesus declares:

¹³ In the light of the current interest in ‘discipling’ as a long term project, Jesus used the aorist tense, indicating a single decisive action. We must assume that the expectation is of an immediate change in those who hear the word.

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See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone's work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Rev. 22:12–13).

The goal will be reached, the enemies destroyed, because the goal is Christ himself. The Kingdom is not some entity of itself. There is no kingdom which is not Christ the true man in his glory reigning over all creation. On that day, that which he has realised *for* us and is presently bringing to his people by means of their faith, he will realise *with* us, as the reality of our participation in him is fully revealed.

Study Twelve

The Gospel of the Kingdom— Sanctification

(by Geoffrey Bingham)

Sanctification by Faith

It has always been agreed by theologians that justification and sanctification are inseparable. Some see sanctification as being built upon justification, which means that in the *ordo salutis* sanctification follows justification, but this is not scripturally tenable. The human heart needs the forgiveness of sins and justification from the guilt of having violated the law, and that is why it is part of the *kerugma* (cf. Acts 13:38–39). At the same time the human heart needs purifying, and the power to live a holy life for this is the renewal of the heart and true way of life, which alone satisfies the human heart. That it is part of the *kerugma* can be seen from what Jesus told Paul at the time of his experience of the vision on the road to Damascus (Acts 26:16–18):

But rise and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles—to whom I send you to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

The phrase, ‘sanctified by faith in me’ is important, and can be claimed as part of the *kerugma*. It links with Acts 20:32, ‘And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are *sanctified*’. Here the ‘by faith’ is missing but Acts 15:8–9 seems to supply this, ‘And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts *by faith*’. As much as justification is the gift of grace received by faith, so is sanctification, as we now see in the quotations just given.¹ In one sense justification is freedom from the guilt of sin before God and His law with establishment in righteousness and sanctification, is cleansing from the impurity of sin with establishment in holiness.² Jeremiah 33:8 (cf. Ps. 32:5) speaks of cleansing from

¹ Of course we are not dependent only upon verses which speak of sanctification by faith. Faith follows the grace of God and that grace of God’s intention and effecting action—both of His elective purpose and accomplishment—regarding sanctification, is shown in Ephesians 1:4; Romans 1:7; I Corinthians 1:2; Colossians 1:22; I Thessalonians 4:1–7; II Thessalonians 2:14; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 10:10–44; cf. 9:14.

² This may not be strictly correct when we look at I Corinthians 6:11, ‘But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and in the Spirit of our God’. Is there an *ordo salutis* here? It would appear that cleansing from sin (Ezek. 36:24–28), sanctification and justification are all in one. Justification is declaratory, based upon the work of the Cross, and so is sanctification declaratory since it incorporates the justified in the holy people of God (cf. Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:2; I Pet. 1:2; 2:9–10).

guilt which we would call justification and forgiveness, so that we cannot really disentangle justification from sanctification, ‘I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me’. In I Corinthians 6:11 cleansing and sanctification are mentioned before justification and yet are not apart one from the other and may be simultaneous in the *ordo salutis*. So when we speak (as above) of justification being acquittal from the guilt of sin and establishment in righteousness, and sanctification cleansing from the impurity of sin and establishment in holiness, we must see the two as separate entities, yet both as essential to the *ordo salutis*, essential to complete salvation, yet we do not mean we are justified by being sanctified, or we are sanctified by being justified. The work of both is of God’s grace and to be received by faith.

In all that we have said we must see sanctification is a Trinitarian work, the Father electing to holiness, the Son saving us into holiness by the work of the Cross, and the Spirit working that sanctification in us. This work of the Triune Godhead has its power in that we are indwelt by the three Persons of the Godhead, and we dwell in them. Sanctification—like justification—is not a gift given as an entity, but the life lived in the Godhead with the Godhead indwelling us.

We may now proceed to look at sanctification in its various elements.

The Elements of Sanctification

Sanctification has three parts of God’s work for and in us:

- (a) God’s purification (I Cor. 6:11; Heb. 9:14; 10:22; I Pet. 1:22).
- (b) God’s incorporation—by consecration—of us into His holy people (I Cor. 1:2, 9; 6:11; Eph. 1:3–4; I Pet. 2:9–10; II Thess. 2:13–14).
- (c) God’s effective working in us by His power to enable us to live holy lives, that is, we are dependent upon God for the practical life of holiness (cf. Rom. 8:1–4; II Cor. 3:5–6; Phil. 1:6, 10–11; 2:12–13; I Thess. 5:23–24) for all this.

The indicative of God’s acts demands His imperative be followed by practical exercises of holiness in godly living. Sanctification is part of salvation and indispensable to it. When Jesus said, ‘Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God’, he was surely implying the obverse also. The writer of Hebrews exhorted, ‘Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord’. Revelation 21:27 says of the ultimate Holy City that ‘nothing unclean shall enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood’, and 22:11–12 speaks of the intractable will of evil-doers, ‘Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy . . . Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay everyone for what he has done’.

The Indicatives and Imperatives of Sanctification

We will briefly look at three passages relating to practical holiness. Before looking at these we must be sure we are operating always in *faith*, depending upon God’s

covenantal promises which for us are gospel promises, and are not going back into a holiness that is not monergistic. That is, we are not going back into a law as a way of self-justification and sanctification, but we are working in *faith* that is dependent upon *grace* (cf. I Cor. 15:10; II Cor. 12:8–10), the grace of God working in us.

Passage 1: Romans Chapter 6

In this chapter Paul first gives the indicatives of our death, burial and resurrection with Christ by baptism showing in verse 7 that by that action we are ‘justified from sin’. He then shows that the outcome is our ‘walking in newness of life’ which is the holy life. The power of sin is broken where guilt has been erased. In verse 11 the imperative is that we must consider all this to be so, and walk in that newness. This will require us yielding our members (bodies, faculties, etc.) to God and to righteousness. Becoming slaves to righteousness we will ‘yield our members to righteousness for sanctification. Isaiah 5:16 gives us a clue as to the nature or action of holiness. It says, ‘But the Lord of hosts is exalted in justice, and the holy God shows himself holy in righteousness’. When, then, we would exercise holy living it must be on the same principle of being ‘holy in righteousness’. It is important that we note this is all ‘in Christ Jesus’ (vv. 11, 23) none of it being monergistic or synergistic but simple ‘God working in us to do his good will and pleasure’.

Passage 2: Romans Chapter 8, Verses 1–13

In this passage Paul is showing that all condemnation of the law is finished because of Christ’s work on the Cross. This freedom is brought to us by ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’. This ‘law of the Spirit of life’ operates only ‘in Christ Jesus’ in which case it is dynamic since its aim is that ‘the just [righteous] requirement of the law’³ might be fulfilled in us. The just requirement of the law being fulfilled in us is really the life of holiness. This is not so much what we fulfil as what is fulfilled in us, and this because of the life of the Spirit. The *dikaioma* does not appear as an onerous work we must accomplish. We now see the law as Christ saw it, and as the Spirit reveals it (cf. Psalms 1, 19, and 119), in which case ‘his commandments are not burdensome (I John 5:3; cf. 2:3–6; 5:2; John 14:15; James 1:25; Rom. 13:8–10; Gal. 5:13–14; Rev.12:17; 14:12). Of course, what we must understand is that there is no law which is an entity in itself, apart from God seeking to exact obedience and punishing if there is none. It is the law of God, internal—so to speak—to the Triune God. It is the law of love, and as such conveys to humanity the life and relationships of the Triune God, so that obedience is a glorious thing, a participating in the nature of God for the law is love—serving God and serving one’s neighbour in and through love. Only where there is sin and so resistance to His law does that law seem tyrannous and grim. But, of course, so does God in that situation. As Isaiah 5:16 has it, ‘But the Lord of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness’. So the person in Christ does the same, through the power of the Triune God.

³ An examination of ‘the just requirement of the law’ brings a great harvest. This *dikaioma* as in Romans 1:32 is God’s moral decree, in 2:26 the divine ordinances of the law, in 5:18 of Christ’s act of obedience which justifies believing Man, and in 8:4 (as in 1:32) the whole law of God. In Revelation 15:4 it is God’s righteous acts of judgement. Romans 5:18 ‘one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men’. That is, the obedience of Christ as the second Adam is vicariously for us, so that in him, we have fulfilled the *dikaioma*. Thus in Romans 8:4 the fulfilment of the *dikaioma* in us is by our being in Christ (8:1) and walking in the Spirit (8:4, 13).

In Romans 8:5–8 those in the flesh cannot submit to God’s law and so cannot please God. The alternative and the true way is that those in the Spirit are not hostile to God and do not submit to the law. In 8:13 Paul is saying that *by the Spirit* the believer puts to death the deeds of the body. This is true experimental holiness.

Passage 3: Colossians Chapter 3

We must not spend time and space on this chapter. Its summary is that—as in Romans 6—the believer has been crucified with Christ, buried and risen, and now his/her life is ‘hid with Christ in God’. There could be nothing more intimate, personal, and dynamic than this. Paul shows that in the light of these facts two practical holiness activities are possible and indeed mandatory, (i) *Mortification* which is the ‘putting to death’ (as in Romans 8:13) of all things fleshly and evil—this can also be called ‘putting them off’; and (ii) *Vivification* which is putting on that which is wholly desirable. This extends to worship and to familial and social living. This is true practical holiness.

Conclusion to Sanctification in the Gospel of the Kingdom: Its Pastoral Significance

A gospel which does not include the sanctification of the hearer does not meet the deepest (ontological) needs of that one. Justification without sanctification is unthinkable, as like wise sanctification without justification. Our people can be greatly liberated by the grace of the gospel of justification to be then free to live in the holiness given by the Lord and always energised by him in its actions—Christ and the Spirit in us motivating and enabling us to live the law as it has come to us anew. Nomism and antinomianism are repugnant to the gospel, and folk can live without these in obedience to the God Who has redeemed them. This makes for good pastoral teaching and living.

Study Thirteen

The Kingdom and the Pastoral Offices of the Church

(by Martin Bleby)

‘Pastoral Offices’ relate to the church’s ministry in Baptism and Holy Communion, marriage, sickness and death.

A sharing of experience: St Andrew’s Church, Walkerville—a moderately-sized, well-proportioned, nineteenth century Gothic building with a fine organ—attractive for weddings and infant baptisms—with a large number of continuing loose family associations with the Church. Result: most contacts for these ministries show some evidence of residual Christianity (e.g. early Sunday School attendance), but have been scarcely evangelised.

(Churches with a different tradition or doctrine may not be in the same situation, but all of us face the same issues in our interfacing with a largely secular community.)

The issue of the Kingdom of God in each of these ministries centres on making them *ministries of the word of God*. For example, at funerals.

This means we immediately come up against powerful deep-seated idols, especially in family life—the modern equivalents, invisible but no less real, of the ancient Roman *lares* and *penates*—gods of household, community and state. Standard expectations and ways of going about things are not open to question, especially at times like these.

See Matthew 10:37–39 (cf. Luke 14:25–27), Luke 17:26–33. When the ancestral spirits of the sacred sites are stirred up, they can be surprisingly fierce and stubborn. But we do not serve people well if we do not ‘tell them about the banquet’—the true Home, the true Family, the so-much-more that God has prepared for all who belong to His Kingdom (see Mark 10:29–30). To leave them content with what they think they have, and pander to them in that, is to shut them out of the kingdom (Matt. 23:13), and to connive at their destruction, with their blood on our hands (Ezek. 3:16–21; Acts 20:26–27).

So how do we conduct ourselves as responsible pastors? Refuse them ministry until they meet with our requirements? (most notably church attendance and involvement). There may be cases where we must say ‘no’—these must be fully, responsibly and carefully thought through before they arise, and we must be able to give a clear account of ourselves and of the issues involved. But in other cases this may be a refusal to engage and a lapse in love. It may also be giving a false witness to the gospel of grace (see Matt. 23:4; cf. 11:28–30).

If we do engage, then we must be gentle, firm and ready to ‘tease’ and ‘woo’ people away from their ignorance and attachment to idols and into the arms of the Lord. See the variety of approaches that are necessary and appropriate in II Timothy 4:1–5; 2:24–26; I Timothy 4:11–16; Isaiah 28:23–29. You don’t use a sledge hammer to crack a peanut, but the word of God will crack the hardest rock (Jer. 23:28b–29).

So it must be a ministry of the word of God, but made available in a way that is accessible. For example, adult baptism preparation: it is good to see the renewal of the catechumenate taken seriously in these days, but we must guard against presenting baptism as achievement rather than gift (see Acts 2:41–42; 8:36–37; 9:18; 10:47–48).

One of the hard things is getting people's agendas to match the church's agenda according to Kingdom priorities. For example, marriage preparation: we need to state our perspectives clearly in advance so people are not taking on something they have not asked for. We also need to present the gospel in a way that begins from their perceived point of need (even if it doesn't stop there). The same with baptism of infants, to get the focus onto *God's* dealing with the child, and with them in their family life.

What about administering Holy Communion? Again, full and careful teaching of, for example, Matthew 26:26–29 and I Corinthians 11:17–34 needs to be given, to stop people coming to Communion just to 'do their own thing'.

Caring for the sick can become a sacred cow. We must be willing to see and declare the action of God in a person's life. See *Book of Common Prayer*, 1662, Visitation of the Sick. Also G. Bingham, *The Wounding and the Healing*.

Finally, some words of Martin Luther:

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are attacking at that moment, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all battle-fields besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.

(Quoted in Charles Colson's *Who Speaks For God?*, Crossway Books, Westchester, Illinois, 1985, p. 11.) A personal testimony with regard to marriages involving a divorced person.

Study Fourteen

The Local Church and the Universal Kingdom

(by Grant Thorpe)

Local Churches and the Growth of the Word

When Christ rose from the dead, he appeared to his disciples during 40 days and talked to them about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). The remainder of Acts describes the growth of the word, or the church—in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and then Rome, and occasionally provides glimpses of the churches that were formed. These glimpses reveal a people consciously aware that they were caught up in the purpose of God and the fulfilment of his promises (e.g. Acts 4:25–31). Prayer was an obvious means of involvement in the work of the universal kingdom (see also, Eph. 6:18–20).

The Holy Spirit himself first preached the gospel to different language groups on the day of Pentecost. While these people were all Jews, they would have quickly disseminated the gospel to many areas.

The growth of the word then happened by the enthusiasm of people to reach their own peoples (e.g. Acts 11:19–24), and where new peoples were to be reached, it happened under divine initiative (Acts 8:26–29; 10:9–23; 13:1–3; 16:6–10). All the while, it was the kingdom that was being proclaimed (Acts 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

The shared life of the early church was as much characterised by their worship of God and service to one another as it was by the task of proclaiming: they learned, shared their lives, partook of the Lord's supper and prayed (e.g. Acts 2:41–42). The instruction of the very mobile Paul to the Ephesian elders shows how concerned he was that the life of local congregations be centred around 'the word of his grace' and the loving service which was an expression of it (Acts 20:17–38).

Love as the Source and Goal of Mission

Jesus himself moved about considerably, and his reason was compassion for those with no Shepherd/King. His call to pray that the Father would send out labourers suggests that the labourers would need to be moved with a like compassion (Matt. 9:35–38).

Some see in Acts, a deliberate parallel being made between the life of Christ and the life of the church and its missionaries: ' . . . Luke saw a pattern for the life of the church and its missionaries in the life of its earthly Master' (I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, p. 34).

Paul delighted in the coming of the gospel to the Colossians and did so in the context of appreciating its fruitfulness in ‘the whole world’ (Col. 1:6). His travelling would help to develop this wide view, but more especially, his understanding of the reign of Christ and the love of Christ which constrained him (II Cor. 5:14).

In the Ephesian letter, Paul speaks of his personal commission to proclaim this gospel to the nations (Gentiles), and shows that this was not an incidental fact but integral to the kingdom itself—that it is universal (3:7–13). It is because it is universal that it had already encompassed the Gentile converts who read the letter. It is this grand and still wonderfully personal purpose of God which moved Paul to pray that his readers would be wholly established in love, know the love of Christ and be filled with all the fullness of God (3:14–21).

The mission of the church cannot be accomplished by determining that it is biblical and organising to enlist the services of volunteers. Nothing that the church is ever to do can be done apart from the personal love of the Father moving those involved.

This can be seen also in the appeal for a generous gift for famine relief in II Corinthians 8–9. God loves an hilarious giver—whose giving is the overspill of God’s grace in them.

Note Paul’s comment concerning the unavailability of people who truly cared for the interests of Christ and of others (Phil. 2:20–21). In fact, there will always be personal interest linked with service rendered by sinners. Paul resolved not to let this trouble him but to keep his mind focussed on the benefit to the kingdom of each person’s service (Phil. 1:15–18).

Christ showed that servants of the kingdom could slip into personal agendas (Matt. 24:45–51).

The objective of our charge is love (I Tim. 1:5). Paul recognised a work as a true work of the kingdom when he could rejoice over the faith and hope and love of those to whom the word had come (e.g. I Thess. 1:3).

The Unity of the Work ‘Here’ and ‘There’

What must occur in the most far flung proclamation of the gospel is to be essentially the same as is done in the home church. It is all the work of one Christ and of one kingdom. It may be that by emphasising culture differences between work at home and away that a certain cultishness has been given to ‘missionary work’—as though the chief quality of a missionary is ability in cross-cultural communication.

I suggest that we ought to ‘play down’ cultural differences and emphasise the oneness of work being done. This would recognise the need for people at home to have regard for the variety of cultures around them (in and out of the church), and for missionaries to trust the gospel and not their skill in jumping cultural boundaries.

The reporting done to the churches when new moves had been made was with a view to establishing the validity of the new work. This validity consisted in its identity with what was already known—the Spirit came to ‘them’ as to ‘us’ (Acts 10:47; 11:15–16; 15:8); they ‘saw the grace of God’ (Acts 11:23).

The Power is the Gospel

If the sending church has lost its confidence in the gospel to save (Rom. 1:16) and reconcile (II Cor. 5:16–21) and establish in every good word and work (Titus 2:11–14), and if it has moved to other expedients to accomplish what appear to be biblical goals, then the same expedients will be resorted to in other places. The starting point for mission is a healthy confidence in, and experience of, the power of the gospel working in one's own culture and circle of contacts.

Ezekiel was called to speak to dry bones—to command them to life (Ezek. 37). This message was given to encourage faith in the working of God and to implicate Ezekiel in it.

Church Sending and Church Planting

For obvious reasons, institutions have arisen to facilitate the work of taking the gospel to all peoples, but if the work is done as one institution (a church or denomination) sending people and resources to another institution (a society) which does the missionary task, and if this becomes the way things are essentially, the truth of love and of communion could be lost and the end result may not be truly 'church'.

What we are here is reproduced by those we send to other places. If 'at home' we are submissive under the Father, lovers of the grace of Christ and patient in hope, we will see the ways and times to take what we have to others—whether through existing agencies or through 'chance encounters' with people, or because the Spirit of God moves one or another to a new venture. But those who go will not be about something different from those who remain at home.

It seems significant that Barnabas encouraged Paul to come to Antioch and that they served there for some twelve months prior to the Spirit sending them out on a new mission. The things they would need in their outgoing had already begun to be worked out in a local congregation. When their first tour was completed, the travellers needed to return and tell what God had done. What had happened abroad was of one piece with what was happening in the local congregation.

To this end, teaching and practice at the local level need to show what Christ is about—not marginally but wholistically—'the whole counsel of God' (Acts 20:17–36).

I am doubtful of the need for a self-consciously Australian or aboriginal theology. What we need to hear is not how an Australian looks at Christ but how Christ looks at Australia. The former will make a sectarian church which will have to unlearn much of its theology when it travels to another place. The latter will yield a church accustomed to having its culture subdued by Christ and be living closer to the centre of the faith rather than at its perimeter.

The question needing to be answered by local leadership in a church is not 'What will make a strong church?', but 'What is a local expression of the universal kingdom?'

Study Fifteen

The Kingdom and the Father

(by Deane Meatheringham)

The King of the Kingdom is the Father

The Kingdom of God is the reign of God over all of his creation, and the King is the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. Thus the Church prays to the Holy Father for his Kingdom to be established (Matt. 6:9–11). The Father delights to give his flock the Kingdom (Luke 12:32). The heirs of the Father inherit the Kingdom (Matt. 25:34).

Israel was the theocratic Kingdom under Yahweh their King. The King was also their covenant Father (Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:19; 31:9; II Sam. 7:14).

The point is that it is the Father who rules his creation. The Father is the Almighty who purposively creates and sustains all that he has made. While our God is transcendent in his being and in his rule, we can make his Sovereignty so remote from the creation and the creatures which he has made that we may invent a variety of intermediaries between ourselves and the absolute otherness of God. Israel knew the King as the Shepherd who cared for his flock—who dwelt amongst his people—and Jesus showed us that the Father ceaselessly provides for his children in the creation (Matt. 5–7, where the Father is spoken of in 13 significant places relating to life in the kingdom of heaven).

Paul Tillich's statement is apt: 'The Lord who is not the Father is demonic; the Father who is not Lord is sentimental'. He adds, 'Theology has erred in both directions' (quoted in *I Love the Father*, Geoffrey Bingham, NCPI, 1990, p. 158).

The Father's creation is purposive, relating to the bringing of many sons to glory. Such is the work of the Kingdom (Heb. 2:10; Eph. 1:3–10; etc.). The ultimate goal of creation is familial, and as we cannot understand the beginning except from the end, then we can also say that the process of history has to do with the revelation of the Father in the redemption of his sons (John 11:52).

Luther in his *Large Catechism* says: 'this is my God, firstly the Father who made the heavens and the earth. Other than this one God I hold none to be God, *for* there is none other who could make the heavens and the earth' (emphasis mine).

The Father is Known Only Through the Son

Matthew 11:25–30 (cf. Luke 11:25–27), is the basis for the statement that 'no one can know God but God himself', and that our understanding, or revelation of the nature of God, comes from within the Godhead itself. We cannot come to a knowledge of God from

some point outside of himself, for if we do we become the measure of God. This is not to deny that God proves himself in our experience of life, but this experience can be the prejudicial view of the prodigal in the far country, and the unity of God corresponds only to the totality of reality.

Athanasius gives us the cue: 'It would be more godly and true to signify God from the Son and call him Father than to name God from his works alone and call him Unoriginate'. The Nicean fathers stressed we can only know God from within himself, that is, in the Son who is the fullness of the Godhead. If we only think of God as Creator in relation to the creature, and not as the Father of the Son, then we will inevitably come to think of the Son himself as one of God's created works. This was the problem for Arius, and will be a problem for modern Arian statements such as 'In the Name of the Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter'.

Hilary says: 'The very centre of a saving faith is the belief not merely in God, but in God as Father, and not merely in Christ, but in Christ as the Son of God, in him, not as creature, but as God the Creator born of God'. Thus in the Son we know the Father from the very centre of his being.

Pastorally, if there is behind Christ another being whom we call the King, or Lord, or God, he will be a dark and terrifying God. But we know no other God except the babe who suckled on Mary's breast and he has revealed the Father.

Through the Holy Spirit we participate in Christ's own intimate relationship with the Father. We enter the communion of the divine love. Our experience, then, corresponds with the totality of life. All experience of humankind, even the negative experiences of alienation, absurdity, guilt and suffering, goes beyond what is already in existence. The guarantee of our experience is that the Father is the Creator of the world. Our communion with the Father corresponds with the reality of the world (cf. Luther's statement above).

There Can Be No Substitute For the Son

Arius substituted a creature in the place of the only begotten Son. As the Father has given his incarnate Son to be our substitute, we must not exchange him for sexist mythologies, political ideologies, or our own religious work.

In the preaching as well as in the worship, no other man except Jesus should 'be seen'. To replace God's true substitute with our own, obscures the Father and perverts the reality of the Father's Kingdom (Matt. 23:8-10; John 8:44-47; I Cor. 8:4-6).

If we replace Christ with a programme or technique which we have devised, we not only run contrary to the church of the N. T. where it is led by Christ and the Spirit, but we obscure the Father and cheat people of their relationship with him.

There is nothing more dangerous and destructive than for the Church to substitute its humanity for the humanity of Christ. Not only does Church history become preoccupied with ecclesiastical politics, but we devise ethics which are not flowing from the intimacy of the Father, known through our participation in Christ and the Spirit.

'When the humanity of the church claims divine providence and historical priority for its prerogatives and power of self-preservation it dehumanises both Christ and persons in the world' (Ray Anderson in *Christ In Our Place*, Paternoster, 1989, p. 11f.). The Church finds its true humanity in Jesus Christ as she serves in the reconciling ministry of bringing men and women home to the Father.

In the Son We Participate in the Father's Work

Our sonship is in the Son (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15f.). The Son has always been working to fulfil the work of the Father (John 5:17, 19–32). Through the Spirit we have been brought into union with Christ and the union he has with the Father (John 17:20–26). This is Kingdom work. To pray 'Our Father' is to ask for his Kingdom to come, and the Father makes his sons co-workers in the destiny which he has planned for creation (II Cor. 5:17–20). Christ is working to subdue all the authorities which are opposed to the reign of the Father, so that in the end he will deliver the Kingdom of God to the Father (I Cor. 15:24f.).

What this means in terms of the Kingdom is that through the Church the true nature of God, the creation and redemption is made known (Eph. 1:19–23; 3:7–13). The Church is the new humanity in the new Man, the community of sinners who have been made immaculate in Christ (Eph. 5:1–7; 5:27). In Christ she shares in the perichoretic movement of the Kingdom which is the ultimate sharing in the glorious liberty of the sons of God (Rom. 8:18–24). Progressively all are shaped up into the glory of the Son (Rom. 8:29f.). Now in the sons of the Father, the Father's true glory is ultimately revealed (Eph. 1:17f.; II Pet. 1:3; John 14:13). The sons will also have the glory of the Father.

This will be the climax of history, the coming of the Father's Kingdom, the regeneration of the creation, and the triumph of grace.

Study Sixteen

The Kingdom of God and the Spirit

(by Geoffrey Bingham)

The Spirit, Creation and the Kingdom¹

From Creation to the New Creation: a Survey

If we understand the Triune work of God in creation then we will recognise that in addition to the Father and the Son, the Spirit was present in that creation (Gen. 1:2f.; Job 33:4; Ps. 33:6; 104; 30). As God is King by creation, so the Spirit is deeply involved in the Kingdom. He continues to be the Spirit of life to all the creation as well as the Spirit of judgement (cf. Isa. 4:2–4; 11:4; Ps. 104:29–30; cf. Rev. 2:16; II Thess. 2:8).

He is also the Spirit of the kingdom of Israel for it is the Spirit who leads Israel through the wilderness (Isa. 63), and comes upon the leaders and some artisans of the nation. He is also the Spirit of prophecy and brings the word of God to the people. It is he who predicts the eventual outpouring of himself upon all nations. Indeed it is difficult to conceive of the Old Testament without the theme of the Spirit. From Pentecost onwards he is the Spirit of the Church, enabling the people of God to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom, and to live the life of the Kingdom (Rom. 14:17). Ultimately he is the eschatological Spirit, judging as the breath of the mouth of God (Rev. 2:16; II Thess. 2:8).

The New Testament, the Spirit and the Kingdom

John the Baptist proclaimed three universal elements which are inseparable, (i) the immediate coming of the King, (ii) the forgiveness of sins—linked with the baptism of repentance, and (iii) Christ's baptising of men and women in/through the Holy Spirit. Jesus came preaching the Kingdom's imminence, and enjoining repentance and faith in the gospel of the Kingdom. Jesus affirmed these things, and in addition, gave quite an amount of teaching on the Spirit and the Kingdom.

Jesus' Teaching on the Spirit and the Kingdom

- (a) He taught that without being born of the Spirit no one can see or enter the Kingdom (John 3:3–14).
- (b) He taught that the Father will give the Holy Spirit to them who ask Him (Luke 11:13).

¹ See my *The Day of the Spirit* (NCPI, 1985) and its 'Contents' for the various phases of the work of the Spirit, all of which are ultimately related to the Kingdom of God. In particular see Section 17, 'The Spirit and the Kingdom of God'.

- (c) He taught that the disciples were not to fear, for the Father would yet give them the Kingdom (Luke 12:32). Later he assigned that Kingdom to them at the Last Supper (Luke 22:28–29).
- (d) Baptised as the King, he himself ministered *only* in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:1f., 14; 16ff.; cf. Isa. 61:1; Matt. 12:28; Acts 10:36ff.), and this ministry was to do with the Kingdom of God.
- (e) On the last night of his ministry he taught much about the Holy Spirit who would be remembrancer of all his—Jesus’—teaching, would be teacher, Paraclete, convictor and the like. He would be sent by the Father and the Son to the disciples.
- (f) At and after Pentecost he taught the disciples the things of the Kingdom (Acts 1:3–5) linking these with the Spirit-baptising action of God. Acts 1:6–8 indicates that the message of the Kingdom would be for all the world—Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles.

The Apostolic Teaching of the Spirit and the Kingdom

- (a) The message in Acts is ‘the gospel of the kingdom’ presented as the truth of Jesus—the gospel of salvation. In Acts 8:5 it is ‘the Christ’ and in 8:12 the ‘good news about the kingdom of God’. In Acts 20:20–27 it is various things including ‘the preaching of the kingdom’ (v. 25). This is so also in Acts 28:23, 31.
- (b) As Jesus had opened for the disciples ‘the mystery of the kingdom’ (Mark 4:11–12), so the Spirit would open all mysteries to the believer (I Cor. 2:9–15; cf. 13:2; 14:2; Eph. 3:3ff. Note: I Cor. 4:1 shows the apostles were ‘stewards of the mysteries of God’). This opening of the mysteries is also seen to be through the Spirit in the Book of the Revelation (1:1, 10; 4:1–2; 17:3; 21:10; cf. chs 2–3, ‘what the Spirit says to the churches’).
- (c) The Kingdom of God is not (matters of) ‘eating and drinking’ but ‘righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’ (Rom. 14:17). This is the equivalent of Galatians 5:19–21 where the works of the flesh prevent entrance into the Kingdom, whilst (5:22–23) the fruit of the Spirit are the fruit of the Spirit in the Kingdom.
- (d) The power of the Kingdom—as in Matthew 12:28, Luke 4:17f., and Acts 10:38—is the Holy Spirit.² Preaching by the power of the Spirit brings men and women into the Kingdom (I Cor. 2:4; I Thess. 1:5–6; I Pet. 1:12), and so the Kingdom of God is not merely words but power in the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 4:20).
- (e) The apostolic teaching related to the Spirit being the eschatological and teleological Spirit in regard to the Kingdom. In Romans 8:17ff. he is the Spirit of hope. In II Thessalonians 2:8 he is the Spirit of judgement. This is borne out wholly by the Book of the Revelation.

² We recognise of course that the gospel is, itself, the power of God. Likewise ‘the word of the cross’ which is the same thing. We see that the Father is over the Kingdom, and the Son is the delegated King of the Kingdom, and so the power of the Kingdom is that of the Triune God. The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the Father and the Son is the One through whom the Godhead works in the Kingdom.

The Teaching on the Spirit and the Kingdom for Today and its Pastoral Value

The points itemised above are mainly those that relate directly to the Kingdom of God. Other Studies have shown the work of the Spirit in the Church and the world and also the Kingdom. The teachings of John, Jesus and the apostles are not merely for information but for action. Paul speaks of a continual infilling of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Rom. 12:11), and of being led by the Spirit, walking in the Spirit and living in the Spirit (Rom. 8:4, 14; Gal. 5:16, 18, 25, 26), all of which are within the life of the Kingdom.

The prime question is whether we—as Pastors and Elders—are being filled with the Spirit or not. The items mentioned above are a dead letter to us if we are not actively, and actionally, living and working in the Spirit. The great power of the Kingdom will seem as nothing in preaching and life if we have drifted from the life and law of the Spirit into empty preachings of grace and the Kingdom’s gospel. The rich revelation of God is dependent upon this continuing life in the Spirit. Likewise with our congregations: the flock that is not filled with the Spirit will be without effective life and action, though it may well be very busy about what it calls and believes to be ‘the things of God’. As with the churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, the people of God must always be listening to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. This speaking will be practical and not just a subjective ‘still small voice’ which could easily be our pietistic imaginings. When the Spirit is ‘the Spirit of the Kingdom’ then it is to do with the great eternities, the great things of history, the great things of the Father and the Son in the present affairs of the world God has created.

A General Conclusion to the Church and the Kingdom of God

In fact, the above paragraph covers the substance of our Studies in the Church and the Kingdom of God, but each Study is of immense importance. The life of the whole Church as well as the personal life of congregations and persons is covered by the various topics. Much as we may react against a subjective insistence on experiences it is nevertheless true that we need the continuing perichoretic movement of the Triune Godhead—the Three Persons—in our lives. This is the meaning of the Church and this is the perpetual action of the Kingdom. We need to give much contemplation, much study and much time to the things we have discussed. By so doing we will become increasingly apostolic and so will our flocks. This will give substance—so to speak—to the life of faith, hope and love, and in turn will have immense effect in the history of the world in our time.