

Lesson 19**The Gospel of the Kingdom****Old Testament and New Testament**

When reading the Bible, many people draw a major dividing line between the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is common to see people carry small New Testaments rather than the entire Bible. There are many Christians who have read only the New Testament, and they consider the Old Testament unimportant today. However, this attitude does not reflect a proper understanding of God's Word.

The first verse in the New Testament is also the first time the words "Jesus Christ" are found in the Bible: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1). Jesus Christ is introduced as the son of *David* and *Abraham*. You will remember from previous lessons that God made covenants with Abraham and David in the Old Testament. Therefore, Matthew's writing is clearly linked closely to the Old Testament. The student who ignores the Old Testament will not understand the significance of even the first verse in the New Testament.

The connection between the New Testament and the Old Testament is also seen clearly in the first chapter of Luke's Gospel. "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:31-33). When Luke writes about the birth of Christ, he says that the Lord will sit on the throne of *David* ruling in an everlasting *kingdom*. This is, of course, the kingdom promised in the Old Testament.

We will begin our study of the New Testament books by considering Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in this lesson. As we have already seen, these books must be read in light of the things we have studied about the Old Testament. For example, most believers, when reading the word "salvation" will immediately think of going to heaven for eternity. But notice what Luke writes: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he swore to our father Abraham" (Luke 1:68-73). There are several things to notice in this passage: a) God is said to be the "God of Israel"; b) The nation of Israel is "his people"; c) "Salvation" in this passage is Israel being saved from her enemies; d) Luke is writing about the fulfilment of God's covenant with Abraham in the Old Testament. We continue to emphasize the connection between the Old Testament and the first four books of the New Testament because far too many Christians read the New Testament as though it stands alone. Having understood the Old Testament studies in lessons 17 and 18, we are now ready to study Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The Kingdom is "at hand"

In the Old Testament, God promised a kingdom to the nation of Israel. However, God did not tell them *when* this kingdom would come. In the book of Matthew, God has more to say about the promised kingdom. John the Baptist comes preaching "And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). The kingdom that had been promised is now declared to be "at hand" or near. [See also Matthew 4:17 and 10:7] This is, of course, because of the birth of the King.

The Law

We have seen that the nation of Israel lived under the Law of Moses during Old Testament times. They were required to offer animal sacrifices, keep the Jewish feast days, circumcise all male children, observe the Sabbath Day, etc. *Is the Law still in effect in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? Do these books match Romans 6:14 which says "ye are not under the law, but under grace"?*

It is not difficult to find an answer to the question we have posed: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17-18). Thus, Jesus Christ declares plainly that the Law must still be observed in Israel. In Matthew 5:23-24, Christ speaks about someone bringing a "gift to the altar." These verses are often interpreted as teaching that a Christian when praying or worshiping should immediately stop and go be reconciled to his brother if there is a conflict. When the conflict is resolved, he can continue his time in prayer or worship. However, these verses do not speak about interrupting your prayer or worship time. Verse 25 says "Leave there thy gift before the altar"; this concerns the Old Testament sacrifices brought to the altar. The command of Jesus Christ is not only to be reconciled to the offended brother, but also to "then come and offer thy gift" (verse 25).

In Matthew chapter eight Jesus Christ healed a leper "And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them" (Matthew 8:4). The leper was instructed to obey the commands of Moses recorded in the Old Testament. When Jesus Christ was on earth, He consistently taught the Israelites to obey the Law of Moses. Matthew 23:1-3 is a record of the Lord instructing his disciples to "observe and do" all that is written in the Law of Moses. (The Pharisees were hypocrites because they taught others to obey the Law, but did not observe it themselves.) Jesus Christ *did not* teach his disciples "ye are not under the law, but under grace"; He taught them to strictly obey every point of the Law.

A Kingdom on Earth

Old Testament saints were not promised an eternal home in heaven. Instead they were promised an everlasting kingdom *on earth*. *In Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are believers promised a home in heaven? Or is the kingdom on earth still in view?*

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). The disciples were *not* promised an inheritance in heaven, but on earth. They were taught to pray: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). They were looking for God's kingdom to come to *earth*. We have already quoted Luke 1:31-33 in which we read that Jesus Christ would sit on "the throne of his father David." David's throne was on earth.

Some have tried to deny the clear teaching of the verses mentioned above by pointing out that Matthew writes about "the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 3:2, 4:17, 10:7). They say this teaches that the disciples would be in a kingdom in heaven. The following points should be carefully noted:

a) This interpretation would contradict Matthew 5:5; Matthew 6:10; Luke 1:31-33; etc.

b) The phrase in Matthew is not "the kingdom *in* heaven," but "the kingdom *of* heaven."

c) Daniel 2:44 promises that "the God of heaven" will set up an everlasting kingdom on the earth. This kingdom is established by the **God** of heaven and therefore is called "the kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14-15). It is established by the God of **heaven** and is therefore called "the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 3:2). Both terms refer to the same earthly kingdom promised in the Old Testament.

d) The *source* of the kingdom is heaven. It will come from heaven down to earth. It will truly be "heaven on earth" (see Deuteronomy 11:21).

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John did not promise believers that they would go to heaven. They were promised a place in the *kingdom on earth* spoken of by the Old Testament prophets.

Review Questions

True or False

1. The Old Testament and New Testament are separate and unrelated books.
2. A person who has no knowledge of the Old Testament can still understand the Gospel of Luke.
3. The Old Testament promised a kingdom, but did not tell when this kingdom would come.
4. Jesus Christ came to destroy the Law.

Multiple Choice

5. The Old Testament saints:

- a) were promised a home in heaven
- b) lived under grace, not the Law
- c) were promised a kingdom on this earth
- d) did not offer animal sacrifices

6. The book of Matthew contains the following phrase:

- a) the kingdom of heaven
- b) the kingdom in heaven
- c) the kingdom is heaven
- d) the kingdom and heaven

7. According to Matthew 1:1, Jesus Christ is:

- a) the One who came to destroy the Law
- b) the son of Adam and Abraham
- c) the son of Moses and David
- d) the son of Abraham and David

Fill in the Blanks

8. The first four books in the New Testament are _____, _____, _____, and _____.

9. The Old Testament believers lived under the _____.

10. In Matthew 8:4, Jesus Christ commanded the leper to offer the gift that _____ commanded.

Lesson 20

The Gospel of the Kingdom--Part II

In lesson 19 we learned that:

- 1) The first four books in the New Testament are closely linked with the Old Testament.
- 2) These books teach that the Law of Moses must be obeyed.
- 3) A kingdom on earth, not in heaven, is in view in these four books.
- 4) The basic message of these books is that Israel must repent because the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

We will now continue our study of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Israel: The Chosen Nation

We have previously discovered, in our Old Testament studies, that God chose Israel as His nation. They were to be blessed above all nations. Does Israel still have a special position above all nations in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? Or have Gentiles been given a position of equality with the Jews in these four books?

In Matthew chapter ten, Jesus Christ calls the twelve apostles and: "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5-6). Notice that the apostles are told *not* to go to the Gentiles. Jesus Christ told the woman of Samaria: "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). Without a doubt there is still a difference between the Jews and the Gentiles as to their spiritual status.

Matthew 15:22-28 is a very interesting passage. A woman of Canaan (a Gentile) comes to Jesus Christ and cries out, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil" (verse 22). This woman acknowledged Him as Lord and desperately pleaded for help. How did the Lord respond? "But he answered her not a word" (verse 23). Why would He treat this woman in such a manner? Then the disciples beseech Him to send her away. "But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (verse 24). This statement is very important. Jesus Christ plainly says that He did not come to minister to Gentiles; only to the Jews!

The Gentile woman, however, is persistent in her request for help. She worships him and further pleads, "Lord, help me" (verse 25). Surely the Lord will now yield to this poor woman's cries for mercy! "But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs" (verse 26). The Lord replies that it is not proper or right to take Israel's blessing (bread) and give it to Gentiles (dogs). Thus He again refuses her request and calls her a dog! However, the woman is not at all offended. "And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table" (verse 27). The Gentile woman professes faith in the Lord's statement to her by saying, "Truth, Lord." She acknowledges that, as a Gentile, she is a dog, and Israel is the master. Her plea is that she might be given some crumbs (blessings) from Israel's table.

First the Lord did not even respond to the Gentile woman. Then he said that He was sent only to Israel, not to Gentiles such as this woman. Upon the third request, He said it would not be fitting to give Israel's blessing to a Gentile. However, after the woman takes her position as a Gentile dog and acknowledges Israel's superior position, the Lord's response changes suddenly. He commends the woman for her faith (believing God's Word about Israel and the Gentiles). Then he heals her daughter (verse 28). Again, we emphasize that he refuses her request until she acknowledges Israel's special position. As in the Old Testament, Gentiles can only be blessed through Israel.

Another account of this woman's encounter with the Lord is given in Mark chapter seven. We now quote verse 27 from this account: "But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs." Why did Jesus Christ command His apostles *not* to go to the Gentiles? Why did He three times refuse to minister to the woman of Canaan? Was He prejudiced against Gentiles? Was He lacking in concern and love for the Gentiles? Of course, not! He was merely following the plan that God had revealed in the Old Testament. Israel must first be saved and established in her kingdom. *Then* salvation would flow to the Gentiles through Israel. The children must *first* be filled!

Many people believe that Jesus Christ, while on earth, would freely minister to anyone who came to him - - - Jew or Gentile. We have seen that this is simply not true. The only other definite account of the Lord ministering to a Gentile, while He was on earth, is found in Luke chapter seven. A Gentile centurion had a servant, whom he dearly loved, and this servant was sick to the point of death (verse 2). The centurion knew that he, as a Gentile, was unworthy to make a request of the Lord. Therefore, he sent "the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant" (verse 3). The Jews come to Jesus and declare that this Gentile man is worthy to be ministered unto. How could a Gentile be worthy of the Lord's blessing!?! Verse five gives us the reason: "For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue." *Then* Jesus went with them and healed the servant (verses 6-10). As with the woman of Canaan, the Lord ministers to this Gentile man only after knowing that the man acknowledges Israel's special position of favor with God; and his own unworthiness as a lowly Gentile.

The evidence is clear and plentiful in showing that Jews and Gentiles were *not* equal in the sight of God during the time that Jesus Christ ministered on earth. Paul, the apostle, confirms this: "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Romans 15:8). Jesus Christ was sent to minister to the lost sheep of the house of *Israel* (the circumcision); not to the Gentiles. Knowing (and believing) this is vitally important in gaining a correct understanding of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The Gospel of the Kingdom

What gospel was preached during the time written of in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? Did the twelve apostles preach the same gospel that we are to preach today?

We have already mentioned that, according to Matthew chapter ten, Jesus Christ chose twelve apostles and sent them out to preach (verses 5-7). Did they go forth and proclaim salvation by faith through the death of Jesus Christ? "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matthew 16:21). The disciples were sent out to preach in chapter ten, but the Lord did not even *begin* to tell them about His coming death and resurrection until chapter sixteen! They could not possibly have preached salvation through the Cross in chapter ten! And how did they respond after hearing that their Master would die? "Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far

from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (verse 22). Peter wished to prevent Jesus Christ from dying on the Cross! Had Peter known the gospel that we preach today, he would have bowed down and worshiped the Lord with deep thankfulness for going to the Cross. What, then, was Peter preaching in chapter ten?

Let us consider Luke's Gospel regarding this matter. We have another account of the choosing of the twelve: "And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where" (Luke 9:6). Notice that we are specifically told that they preached the gospel when sent out in chapter nine. Later, in chapter eighteen, Jesus Christ tells the disciples that He will go to Jerusalem, be put to death, and rise on the third day (verses 31-33). Read very carefully the following verse: "And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them neither knew they the things which were spoken" (verse 34). The disciples preached the gospel in chapter nine, but later when they were told about the death and resurrection they could not understand what the Lord was talking about! How could they possibly have preached salvation through Christ's death on the Cross? They didn't even know about it; and when told they didn't understand! What, then, were they preaching?

It is common to hear people say that there is only one gospel in the Bible. We have seen that this is not true! There are several gospels in the Bible. When God said to Abraham, "In thee shall all nations be blessed," this was a gospel (Galatians 3:8). But it was not the same gospel by which we are saved today! Revelation chapter fourteen tells of a time when "the everlasting gospel" will be preached. The message in this gospel is that "the hour of his judgment is come" (verses 6-7). That is not the gospel message by which we can now be saved!

During the time of Christ's ministry on earth, the disciples were sent out to preach "the gospel of the kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14). This was a message to Israel to repent because their long-promised kingdom was now at hand. It was this gospel that God required Israel to believe then, but no one can be saved through faith in the gospel of the kingdom today. That gospel was preached without mention of the death and resurrection of Christ; the very center of our gospel today!

Summary statement concerning Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

The Scriptures studied in lessons nineteen and twenty should cause many Christians to do some serious thinking. We have learned that in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John:

- 1) It was required that God's people live under the law.
- 2) The hope of the disciples was that God's kingdom would come to earth.
- 3) Israel was God's chosen nation; favored above all nations.
- 4) The disciples were instructed to preach the gospel of the kingdom. They preached this gospel before even knowing that Christ would be crucified and rise again.

However, in this present dispensation of grace:

- 1) We are not under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14).
- 2) We are promised an eternal home in heaven, not a place in a kingdom on earth (Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 3:20; I Thessalonians 4:13-18).
- 3) Israel is not favored above any other nation today. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile today as far as spiritual standing or blessing (Romans 3:9; 10:12).
- 4) We are to preach the gospel of grace which proclaims Christ's death for our sins and His resurrection on the third day. The gospel of the kingdom does not contain God's message of salvation for us at this time.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are a continuation of the Old Testament account of "**time past**" (Ephesians 2:11). They give further information about the time from **Moses to Christ (law to grace)** [See Romans 5:13-16]. The focus is still on "**the promise**" given to Abraham (Galatians 3:17). The believers are still living under "**the law**" (Galatians 3:17).

Review Questions

True or False

1. The first four books of the New Testament can be understood without knowledge of the Old Testament.
2. In Matthew chapter ten, Jesus Christ sent the apostles out to preach to the Gentiles.
3. The Gentile woman gave up all hope after the Lord told her that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
4. When Jesus Christ said, "Let the children first be filled," He was speaking of the nation of Israel.

Multiple Choice

5. During the time of Jesus Christ's ministry on earth:
 - a) the Gentile nations were favored by God
 - b) there was no difference between Jews and Gentiles
 - c) He never ministered to a Gentile

d) Israel was God's chosen nation, above all nations

6. When Jesus Christ sent the twelve apostles out to preach in Matthew chapter ten:

a) they preached the gospel of grace

b) they did not yet know about the death and resurrection of Christ

c) they refused to obey Him

d) they proclaimed the death of Jesus Christ for all men's sins

7. Which of the following statements is true?

a) There is only one gospel in the Bible.

b) The gospel that we preach today is found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

c) There are several gospels in the Bible. The gospel of the kingdom is different from the gospel we preach today.

d) The gospel of the kingdom could not be preached until Jesus Christ died on the Cross.

Fill in the Blanks

8. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John teach that disciples must live under _____.

9. The first four books in the New Testament, like the Old Testament, are telling about "time _____."

10. The Old Testament and Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, teach that _____ is God's chosen nation.

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