

Lesson 20

The Gospel of the Kingdom--Part 2

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 was 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, was persistent in her request for help. She worshiped him and further pleaded, "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 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 concern and love for the Gentiles? Of course, not! He was merely following the plan 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, freely ministered 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 came to Jesus and declared that this Gentile man was 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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