

## **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 the son of 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 forever; 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 sware 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.

We are emphasising 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 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.



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## 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 worshipping should immediately stop and go to 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." The gift spoken of in these verses refers to bringing the Old Testament sacrifice 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 obey strictly every point of the Law.

### A Kingdom on Earth

We have seen that 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. These passages speak of a kingdom on the earth.
- 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).

The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John do not promise believers that they will go to heaven. The disciples are promised a place in a kingdom on earth.

## **Review Questions Lesson 19 - The Gospel of the Kingdom**

### 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.