

In Defense of the Gospel (2)

Introduction:

Last Lord's Day we began to consider the important topic, "In Defense of the Gospel." The Scriptures speak of the need to defend the gospel, and in some cases even to recover the gospel. In fact, much we know from the Scriptures about the content and nature of the true gospel is through the efforts of the biblical writers to expose and correct errors respecting the gospel. Paul had written of his own commitment to this end:

Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: ¹⁶the former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; ¹⁷but the latter out of love, ***knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.*** (Phil. 1:15-17)

We introduced our subject by considering how vulnerable the biblical gospel is to corruption. Paul had written of his surprise that the churches of Galatia had so quickly departed from the gospel that he had proclaimed to them. He wrote, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel" (Gal 1:6). Paul also wrote to another church of his concern for them and their propensity to turn from the true gospel to another. We read in 2 Corinthians 11:1ff these words,

³But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. ⁴For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or ***a different gospel*** which you have not accepted-- you may well put up with it! (2 Cor. 11:3f)

The gospel is always in need of restating and reaffirming for it may easily be corrupted in the minds of professing Christians and even in the understanding of whole churches. And so, the Scriptures teach us, and certainly history testifies to us, that the gospel message we proclaim may need reformed from time to time, in order that we may be certain that our understanding and proclamation is conformed to the biblical gospel of salvation.

The churches of Galatia had embraced another gospel, even a "gospel" of works rather than grace. Paul wrote of the false teachers who had adversely influenced these churches to reject the true gospel for another, "which is not another" (Gal. 1:7). He declared that there were "some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ." The error into which the Galatians had fallen was legalism, which is a denial of God's grace in salvation.

When the Bible speaks of grace in salvation, it is showing forth the manifestation of the goodness of God in which He bestows His undeserved favor upon those who are deserving of His wrath. God makes it clear that all human beings, apart from the Lord Jesus, are sinners who deserve only His wrath. With no claims, no ability, and no desire to seek God or come to Him, they are lost and hopeless. But God of His own free grace bestows His goodness on sinners bringing them forgiveness of sins and new life in Christ. And so, in spite of the fact that we are sinners, God saves us through Jesus Christ. Grace is free, in that God alone chooses to bestow or withhold His grace. God is sovereign, in that He chooses the ones that are the object of His grace. For those ones, God overcomes all obstacles through His grace, to bring those guilty sinners into relationship with Himself.

But legalism is in conflict with the free grace of God in salvation. It asserts that there is some good thing that fallen man is capable of doing that will secure God's blessing. Legalism corrupts the very meaning of grace. There will be many who will be damned on the final Day of Judgment because they had embraced a false gospel of legalism rather than the gospel of God's grace that is set forth in the Holy Scriptures.

Last week we also addressed briefly the opposite error to legalism, that being licentiousness. This, too, is a perversion of grace, but it is of the opposite nature. Whereas legalism *denies* grace, licentiousness *distorts*

grace. Licentiousness promotes an understanding of grace that allows for a license to sin. Jude described it this way in the opening of his epistle.

³Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. ⁴For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, ***who turn the grace of our God into lewdness*** and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. (Jude 3-4)

And so, the gospel may be corrupted and has been corrupted repeatedly through the centuries by distorting and denying the biblical doctrine of God's grace in salvation. Grace is corrupted by both legalism and licentiousness.

But there are other ways in which the gospel is twisted and distorted so that it becomes far different from the gospel set forth in the Holy Scriptures. Aside from the corruption of grace, ***a second way that the gospel is perverted is by a redefining salvation itself***, so that the "gospel" that is claimed to bring that truncated salvation, is a distorted gospel, and in some cases a deficient gospel, that will not bring biblical salvation to the one who believes it.

But before we speak of specific ways in which the gospel has been corrupted, perhaps it would do us well first ***to affirm what is the true gospel of salvation***. And one way that the true gospel may be recognized and distinguished from that which is defective or false is to identify the gospel message that answers the need for true salvation that God has revealed to us in His Word, the Bible. And so, we may better recognize the true gospel if we are able to answer rightly the question:

1. What is salvation?

The answer to that question may be succinctly stated. ***Biblical salvation is the work of God to save His people from their sin unto Himself through Jesus Christ***. The result of salvation is that a sinner, formerly alienated and condemned before God, is brought into an eternal, covenant relationship with God. The language that the Bible uses to describe this relationship between God and His redeemed is God's promise to them, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer. 31:33). Sin had been an impenetrable obstacle preventing man from having a relationship with God. This obstacle of sin in all its forms and effects had to be dismantled, but this could only be done by God Himself. Sin had its dire effects upon man, leaving him in a hopeless, helpless, condemned condition.

There are a number of effects of sin that God would need to remedy in order for Him to bring salvation to a sinner. We may list some of these.

(1) Due to sin man is ***ignorant*** of his condition and ignorant of God to whom he is accountable. Paul wrote, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; *nor can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). God must ***inform*** the sinner of his condition and also of God's remedy of his condition through Jesus Christ. Paul wrote of this work of illumination by which the Holy Spirit enables people to understand the nature and need for salvation.

For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? ***Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God***. ¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, ***that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God***. (1 Cor. 2:11)

(2) Due to sin man is ***averse*** to believing and submitting to the true God to whom he is accountable. Not only is he ignorant, but he is opposed to God and refuses to submit unto Him.

⁷Because the carnal mind is *enmity* against God; *for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*
⁸So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. (Rom. 8:7-9)

Man is not only guilty for the sins that he commits, but he is guilty because he is a sinner, one who desires and delights in his sin. This must change if he is to have a covenant relationship with God. And so, God must *regenerate* the sinner, that is, cause him to become born again, in order to impart to him the desire and delight in coming to know and submit to God. This is a sovereign work of God. This is declared plainly in John 1:11ff:

¹¹He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹²But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

They had “received” Jesus in that they believed on Him. But they had believed on Him because they had been born again by the sovereign grace of God. Had God not caused them to be born again, they would not have “received” Jesus Christ, just as the preponderance of Jewish people—His own—refused to believe on Him.

(3) Due to sin man is *guilty* and *condemned* before God for having transgressed God’s laws thereby incurring God’s wrath upon him. God must *pardon* the sinner of his guilt in order for God to justly receive the forgiven sinner unto Himself. Paul had indicted the entire human race as guilty before God.

¹⁰As it is written:

“There is none righteous, no, not one;

¹¹There is none who understands;

There is none who seeks after God.

¹²They have all turned aside;

They have together become unprofitable;

There is none who does good, no, not one.”

¹³Their throat is an open tomb;

With their tongues they have practiced deceit”;

“The poison of asps is under their lips”;

¹⁴“Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”

¹⁵“Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶Destruction and misery are in their ways;

¹⁷And the way of peace they have not known.”

¹⁸“There is no fear of God before their eyes.” (Rom. 3:10-18)

Sinners are in need of receiving God’s forgiveness of their sins if they are to be brought into a covenant relationship with Him.

(4) Due to sin fallen man *lacks a positive righteousness* in order to enable him to stand before God in the Day of Judgment. The sinner must be found on that day not simply pardoned, but he must be found to be righteous before the Judge of the world. This *imputed righteousness* is a gift granted to the sinner through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.

And the gift (of righteousness) is not like that which came through the one (Adam) who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. ¹⁷For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of *the gift of righteousness* will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:16f)

Paul wrote of his confidence that the Lord would give him the righteousness he needed on the Day of Judgment, just as God would for all of His people.

There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2 Tim. 4:8)

(5) Due to sin man is *alienated* from God and the people of God. Fallen man is an enemy of God. God must reconcile the sinner to himself, incorporating him into the family of God, declaring the believing sinner to be his child forever. We read of this in several places.

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, *having been reconciled*, we shall be saved by His life. (Rom 5:10)

¹²But as many as received Him, to them He gave *the right to become children of God*, to those who believe in His name: ¹³who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)

(6) The sinner needs to have *the power of sin* broken in his life so that he becomes compliant, obedient to God, ordering his life according to the righteousness of God's law revealed in His Word. God accomplishes this aspect of salvation, the believer's *sanctification*, working progressively through the life of every true believer through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. We may read Romans 8:3ff that speaks to this:

³For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴that *the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit*. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷Because *the carnal mind* (of the unconverted person) *is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God*, nor indeed can be. ⁸So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. ¹⁰And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

¹²Therefore, brethren, we are debtors-- not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Rom. 8:3-14)

(7) The sinner is in need of *deliverance from the very presence of sin* that dwells within him. God will one day deliver all of His people totally from the presence of sin upon their death and the ascension of their souls to be with the Lord. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism rightly answers question 37: **What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?** Answer: **The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory.**

(8) The sinner is in need of his *corruptible body* to be replaced with an *incorruptible body*, whereby he is enabled to dwell with the Lord in eternity. This will take place at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when He will raise His people from the dead unto resurrection life. This is also declared in the Westminster Shorter Catechism in answer to question 38, which reads, **“What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?** Answer, **“At the resurrection, believers, being raised up in glory.**

(9) If God is to save sinners onto Himself, He must enable them to stand *exonerated on the Day of Judgment*, when Jesus Christ will judge the entire world according to their works. On that Day He will sentence the

damned to everlasting punishment and He will grant entrance into eternal life unto His people. All of those who are redeemed by Jesus Christ will be *acquitted* before the judgment bar of Jesus Christ; they will “stand” in the judgment through Jesus Christ.

We see that the work of God in bringing salvation to His people is quite an extensive matter, which encompasses a number of critically important aspects and issues. The gospel, or the good news, is the message that God brings us His salvation by His grace. The gospel we proclaim must lead to and result in all of what we have just considered.

Now, having considered the biblical nature of salvation, let us consider more precisely the biblical content of the Gospel that answers to this great problem of sin in all of its manifestations in the fallen human race.

2. What is the gospel?

Having understanding of salvation, our understanding of the gospel must speak to these ends. This is why I think it is best to *define* the gospel in this rather simple and straightforward way:

The gospel is the good news that God brings sinners salvation from sin through Jesus Christ.

But having provided a statement of *definition* of the gospel, there is the need for us to give some detail of the *content* of the gospel. Let us do so by first considering some of the ways in which the gospel is identified and described for us in the Scriptures. The gospel is called:

- “the gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thess. 2:2, 8, 9; 1 Pet. 4:17)
- “the glorious gospel of the blessed God” (1 Tim. 1:11)
- “the gospel of Christ” (Rom. 1:16; 15:19, 29; 1 Cor. 9:12, 18; 2 Cor. 9:13, 10:14; Gal. 1:7; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 3:2)
- “the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Mark 1:1)
- “the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:8)
- “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4)
- “the gospel of His Son” (Rom. 1:9)
- “the gospel of peace” (Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15)
- “the gospel of your salvation” (Eph 1:13)
- “the gospel of the kingdom” (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:24; Mark 1:14)

Of all of these references to the gospel, many of them have to do with the biblical theme of the Kingdom of God. Now granted, the expression, “the gospel of the kingdom”, is found precisely only in 4 places, all being in the Gospels. But the references to the “Christ” also speak to the matter of the kingdom of God. Jesus is shown forth as “the Christ”, that is, He is the promised anointed King of Israel. ***The gospel of the New Testament through which God brings salvation to sinners has to do with the good news that God has inaugurated His Kingdom through His Son Jesus Christ.*** It is this message that addresses all of the conditions to which sin has plunged the human race. The way of salvation is to come into the Kingdom of God, even the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. This involves coming to an understanding of, and submission to, Jesus Christ as Lord, even the King of kings and Lord of lords.

What is the gospel? What is it we are to proclaim and teach to our world? Yes, it is the good news of salvation from sin through faith in Jesus Christ secured for us through His life, crucifixion, and resurrection. But the gospel of salvation is set forth frequently, and perhaps even chiefly, in terms of ***the arrival of the Kingdom of God***, promised and prophesied through the Old Testament Scriptures and realized through Jesus Christ, who is presently the sovereign Lord over all history. ***The gospel is the gospel of the arrival of the promised kingdom of God through Jesus Christ.*** To believe the gospel is to believe all that Jesus Christ is revealed to be. He is the promised Son of David, who was crucified, buried, and risen, who ascended into heaven and was enthroned. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. When people believe the gospel, they are

to embrace Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. To do so brings all of the benefits of His person and work to bear upon them.

Let us consider some passages of Scripture that speak to this matter.¹

Early in the Gospel of Luke we read of the initial announcement that the days of expectation had arrived, the Kingdom of God was at hand. In **Luke 1:29ff** we read of the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary, announcing the birth of the King.

²⁹But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. ³⁰Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and *the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.* ³³*And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.*”

We read also in the opening verses of the Gospel of Mark of “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Mark then quoted from **Isaiah 40:3** a prophecy of the messenger who would precede the promised Messiah

“Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,
Who will prepare Your way before You.”
“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the LORD;
Make His paths straight.’”

Mark ties the gospel of Jesus Christ with the realization of the long-anticipated Kingdom of God.

At the onset of the ministry of **John the Baptist** we read in **Matthew 3:1ff** that John quoted this passage in Isaiah, announcing the need to prepare for the onset of the Kingdom of God.

“In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ²and saying, ‘Repent, for *the kingdom of heaven is at hand!*’ ³For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight.”’”

Later in **Mark 1** we read of the beginning of the ministry of our Lord, identifying His central message:

¹⁴Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching *the gospel of the kingdom of God*, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and *the kingdom of God is at hand*. Repent, and believe *in the gospel*.”

Here the gospel is defined as “the gospel of the kingdom.”

This was the message that our Lord proclaimed throughout His Galilean ministry. We read in **Matthew 4:23** at the beginning of His Galilean ministry:

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching *the gospel of the kingdom*, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.”

The main theme of our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount was the kingdom of God, with particular emphasis on the ethics for kingdom citizens. The word, “kingdom” is mentioned 9 times in the three chapters of

¹ Some of you may recognize the following section as having been delivered by me in October of 2015 at the Bolton Conference.

Matthew 5, 6, and 7. The entire sermon could be understood as delineating the meaning of our Lord's words, "*seek first the kingdom of God* and His righteousness" (Mat 6:33 NKJ)

In **Matthew 8** our Lord promised that many *gentiles* would be seated along with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God.

And then in **Matthew 9:35** a summary of His preaching ministry, which is almost identical to the description of His ministry at its beginning:

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, *preaching the gospel of the kingdom*, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. (Matt. 9:35)

Our Lord declared in **Matthew 12:28** that the Kingdom of God had been realized: "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, *surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.*"

All of the parables of Matthew 13 addressed the nature of the Kingdom of God. In contrast to the expectation of the Jewish people, who envisioned the promised Son of David to reign over a political kingdom with physical borders, in which the Jewish people would be pre-eminent, our Lord taught that the promised kingdom of God was of a much different nature. It was spiritual in nature. It would encompass and permeate the entire world. There would be unconverted people in the world under the authority of this King in His kingdom, even alongside the citizens of this kingdom.² But the Day would come when the King would judge the world, separating "the wicked from among the just."

Our Lord continued to teach regarding the kingdom of God throughout Galilee, and throughout His final journey to Jerusalem from Galilee. This travel narrative encompasses a large section of Luke's Gospel, from **Luke 9:1-19:28**. He taught of the present realization of the kingdom, the kingdom as manifested upon His ascension from the dead and through this present age, and of its full and final manifestation at His Second Coming.

The Lord Jesus taught that experiencing salvation was entering His kingdom. He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it" (Luke 18:17).

Eternal life was a benefit of possessing the kingdom. We read, "So He said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, *for the sake of the kingdom of God*, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and *in the age to come eternal life*'" (Luke 18:30).

While giving His Olivet Discourse, Jesus said these words to His disciples:" And *this gospel of the kingdom* will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." They were to be preaching the gospel of the kingdom, for when the gospel of the kingdom had been proclaimed in all the world, then the end would come.

On **Palm Sunday** our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem was *the arrival of the Davidic King to Jerusalem*. Matthew wrote the inspired words, "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

"Tell the daughter of Zion,
'Behold, *your King is coming to you*,
Lowly, and sitting on a donkey,
A colt, the foal of a donkey.'" (Matt. 21:4)

² The parable of the tares and wheat is often said to teach that there will be both saved and unsaved in the church throughout this age until the Lord Jesus returns. But our Lord was not speaking of the church, but of the world. He said, "The field is the world" (Matt. 13:38). Jesus Christ is King over the world, in which there are both wheat and tares, that is, true citizens of the kingdom (Christians) and those who are not (all unbelievers). When He returns He will root out all tares from His Kingdom, which will then usher in eternity in which His kingdom will be populated only by true kingdom citizens.

This event was a fulfilment of the prophecy of **Isaiah 62:11**. The multitude in Jerusalem knew this and acknowledged it was so. All anticipated the appearance of the Kingdom of God. We read, “Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying:

“Hosanna to the Son of David!

‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’
Hosanna in the highest!’ (Matt. 21:9)

While in Jerusalem during His Passion Week, our Lord continued to teach about the kingdom of God. He declared that though He was as a capstone rejected by the builders, alluding to His crucifixion, He would, nevertheless, be made the capstone, that is, the Ruler, the King, over the Kingdom of God. “This was the Lord’s doing” (Matt. 21:42). At the same time He declared that the Jewish leadership of Israel would not serve as leaders in His kingdom, rather, the Kingdom of God would be taken from them, “Therefore I say to you, **the kingdom of God** will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it” (Matt. 21:43).

In Luke’s Gospel we read of Him telling His apostles: “But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you **a kingdom**, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:28-30). And even when our Lord was crucified, the one thief asked Him, “Lord, remember me when You come into **Your kingdom**” (Luke 23:42).

Thus we see that through the Gospels, that the Kingdom of God is a major theme. It is central to our Lord’s teaching. It is associated with, yes, even identified with the gospel. **The gospel of Jesus Christ is the gospel of the Kingdom of God**. Biblical scholars have recognized and acknowledged this reality. As **George Ladd** expressed it in his classic biblical theology, **A Theology of the New Testament**: “Modern scholarship is quite unanimous in the opinion that the Kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus.”

We read of our Lord’s post resurrection teaching to His apostles that it was with regard to the Kingdom of God. We read in **Luke 24:25ff**:

Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and **to enter into His glory?**” ²⁷And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Here, “His glory” is a reference to His rule as King over the Kingdom of God.

We read in **Acts 1** that during the 40 days of His instruction to His disciples, He taught them concerning the Kingdom of God. In fact, Luke speaks of this in the introduction to this second volume as being the central issue at hand. We read,

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, ²until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, ³to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and **speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God**. (Acts 1:1-3)

What is the substance of Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost? It was His declaration and explanation of what had transpired. He declared that wicked men, including Jews and Gentiles, conspired to put to death Jesus, because they would not yield to whom He claimed to be, even the Promised Messiah. He was the King, the Son of David. God had demonstrated this truth as to His true identity in so many different ways. But they rejected Him, crucifying Him. But God vindicated His Son by raising Him from the dead and when He enthroned Him over all of creation. Jesus Christ is Lord. Peter declared, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

Later in Acts, when the Lord would send forth the Gospel into Samaria, we read of Philip’s preaching the gospel to them.

Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. ⁵Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. ⁶And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. ⁷For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. ⁸And there was great joy in that city. ⁹But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, ¹⁰to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." ¹¹And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. ¹²But when they believed Philip *as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God* and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. (Acts 8:4-12)

Much later, we read of the Apostle Paul was exhorting and encouraging new Christians. In Acts 14 we have this recorded,

And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "*We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.*" (Acts 14:21f)

Here the final and full realization of the Kingdom of God is set before these believers. There will be difficulty, even many tribulations experienced for the people of God with respect to entering the kingdom of God.

When the Apostle Paul came to Ephesus and began to evangelize the city, we read of his ministry and message. "And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading *concerning the things of the kingdom of God*" (Acts 19:8).

When Paul was on his third missionary journey, when returning to Jerusalem, he stopped in Asia Minor in order to meet with the elders of the church at Ephesus, who joined him in Miletus. We read Paul's words to them:

"You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, ¹⁹servicing the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; ²⁰how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, ²¹testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. ²²And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, ²³except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. ²⁴But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to *the gospel of the grace of God*. ²⁵"And indeed, now I know that you all, *among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God*, will see my face no more. ²⁶Therefore I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all men. ²⁷For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. (Acts 20:18-27)

There we read that He testified of *the gospel of the grace of God*, which involved his preaching *the kingdom of God*.

Let us look at the last few verses of the Book of Acts. The Apostle Paul is in Rome under house arrest. But the Lord had brought him there. And we read of the ministry he had among them in Rome.

²³So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, *to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God*, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. ²⁴And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. ²⁵So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, ²⁶saying, 'Go to this people and say:

“Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand;
And seeing you will see, and not perceive;
²⁷For the hearts of this people have grown dull.
Their ears are hard of hearing,
And their eyes they have closed,
Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears,
Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,
So that I should heal them.”

²⁸“Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!” ²⁹ And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.

³⁰Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him,
³¹***preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ*** with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (Acts 28:23-31).

We read in the Book of Acts that the Lord Jesus as the risen and enthroned King over the Kingdom of God continued to be a primary emphasis of teaching respecting the gospel and its expansion into the Romans world.

Let us look at one more passage of Scripture. Revelation 5 records the coronation of Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords. After John had been caught up to heave and beheld the glory of God as Creator in Revelation 4, we read of this event in Revelation 5.

And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ²Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” ³And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.

⁴So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. ⁵But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.”

⁶And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

⁸Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹And they sang a new song, saying:

“You are worthy to take the scroll,
And to open its seals;
For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
¹⁰And have made us kings and priests to our God;
And we shall reign on the earth.”

¹¹Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,

And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

¹³And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

“Blessing and honor and glory and power
Be to Him who sits on the throne,
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

¹⁴Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

This chapter records the fulfilment of the first passage we considered in Daniel 7:6 and 7. Here we see Jesus Christ, coming from His recent death, for He was as a Lamb as though it had been slain.” Here He comes to the Ancient of Days, even God the Father. From Him Jesus received authority to execute the decrees of God in history. All authority had been given unto Him. He has since that time been executing the will of God in history. And what is He doing? He is saving His people and He is judging His enemies.

Now we have recited numerous Scripture references. But in doing so it should be abundantly clear to all of us, that *the gospel of Jesus Christ is vitally connected with the promised Kingdom of God*. Jesus Christ is Lord. The Old Testament Scriptures show forth that our fallen race is in need of a King, One who will come to rule over us, to deliver us from the power and condemnation of our sin. We are in need of a King, to do for us and enable us to do what God has commanded of us. Jesus Christ is that promised King. He is the long-awaited Son of David, foretold in the prophets, who inaugurated the Kingdom of God in which its citizens dwell in joy, peace, and righteousness. We enter into this kingdom through the new birth (John 3) which enables us to put our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. And we must underscore that saving faith is manifest in believing on Jesus as Lord, submitting to His command to repent of sin and ordering one’s life according to His will. And God has entrusted to Him authority over all flesh. He has “gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him” (1 Pet. 3:22). The Father has entrusted to the Son of Man the authority to forgive sins. As the enthroned King He gives gifts to His people, principally the gift of the Holy Spirit whereby His people may walk in fellowship with Him and one another and progress in the holy walk unto the day when they gather to meet Him. For God has appointed a day “on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

Next Lord’s Day we will address further how this biblical gospel has been stripped of its meaning and power, having been reduced to something far less than what we have seen in the Scriptures before us.

“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus,
after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.
To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Pet. 5:10-11)
