

The Cross and the Kingdom

What happens when in our evangelism we shove the significance of the kingdom into the distant future? Does the cosmological restoration of all things have to wait until the kingdom is fully realized? Or, does the kingdom indicate that God is powerfully working now in the saints taking possession of them, transforming them and subduing them under the authority of Christ their King? In Acts 8:12 when Philip is preaching, is he changing the gospel by preaching the good news of the kingdom? Should the significance of the kingdom be pushed entirely into the future as a refinement of eschatology? To do so, would be to divide Christ in His three offices of Prophet, Priest and King. The gospel of the kingdom is good news because Christ's finished work has created the kingdom and made it possible. The good news of the kingdom is that the King of the kingdom is the One crucified and risen for sinners and who is now reigning with all authority in heaven and earth given to Him. Kingdom life, relationship and obedience are available now. Only those who now worship the King now, even though He is in a kind of exile, shall join Him when He installs His kingdom on earth. Those who do not bear His cross now, will not wear the crown and reign with Him in glory then. In Acts 1:8, we should not understand the word kingdom in a territorial sense. But, in the sense of kingship, royal rule and sovereignty. With the fall of Israel's monarchy and independence, there arose a new conception of the kingdom of God as an order to be established after the collapse of current world dominion. It is in the light of this later conception as foretold in Daniel chapter 2 and 7 that New Testament references of the kingdom of God are to be understood. In the New Testament, this kingdom is represented as having drawn near or arrived the ministry of Jesus (See Mark 1, Luke 10-11, Acts 8, 28). The kingdom of God is closely associated with the story of Jesus. In narrating the events of His ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, and exultation, the apostles proclaimed the same good news of the kingdom of God as had been announced earlier by Jesus, now amplified and illuminated by His passion and triumph. The teaching given by the risen Lord during the 40 days was designed to make clear to the disciples the bearing of His crucifixion, resurrection on the message of the kingdom. The kingdom of God is conceived as coming in the events on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and to proclaim these facts in their proper setting is to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God (C.H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments*, [London, 1944]). The heavens rule, the most high rules, See Daniel 4:25-26. With the drawing near of the kingdom, the age to come has invaded the present age and those who now receive the kingdom by faith, belong spiritually to the coming age and share its resurrection life even while temporarily they still belong to this age (F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*,) p. 100. When Philip preached the good news of the kingdom of God in Acts 8:12, he understood that the rule of God and the name of the person of Jesus are linked together (See also Acts 20:24-25, Acts 28:31). This is not a different gospel from that which our Lord and his apostles have preached. It's key notes were still repentance, faith, the forgiveness of sins accompanied by baptism, the gift of the Spirit and evidential works. The

change since Christ's resurrection was a new emphasis occasioned by the saving events of Jesus passion and exultation and the coming of the Spirit. But, it was the same gospel he foretold would be proclaimed to all the nations, the gospel of the kingdom. But, now because of His redemptive work, it is proclaimed in His name (Bruce p. 220). In Acts 14:22, Luke records the triumph of the gospel, but he does not do so in a triumphalist spirit, for the believer is identified with the sufferings of Christ. No cross, no crown (Bruce p. 326). The preaching of the kingdom and the preaching of Christ are one, the original proclamation has not ceased. But, in Christ Jesus, the proclamation of the kingdom is no longer a vague and future hope, but a distinct and present fact. The Jewish expectation of a kingdom of God is now explained as fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ, and the account of the kingdom's realization consists in the unfolding of the truth concerning Christ. The manifestation of Christ being finished in His first advent, the kingdom is already begun. Those who receive Him enter into the kingdom. Having overcome the sharpness of death, Christ has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers (T.D. Bernard, *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament* [1864, London, 1900], pg 112). (Bruce pp 542-543). Paul and Barnabas tried to strengthen their converts personally and corporately. They encouraged them to remain in the faith, telling them that many persecutions must necessarily be the lot of Christians in order to enter the kingdom of God. For that is the same pattern of suffering and glory exemplified in Jesus life. That pattern must be theirs as well if they are to know the full measure of the reign of God in their lives (Mark 8-10, Romans 8, Philippians 3:10-11, Colossians 1:24 (Longnecker NIV Bible commentary page 461).