

Do You Understand The Kingdom of God?

FINGER POST No. 10

JESUS went through every city and village of Galilee preaching ... What was it that he preached? Surely his subject must have been the truth which above all others he most wanted men to know! The Gospels supply the answer: he was "preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1), or "the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:23; 9:35). He was telling good about God's Kingdom; and what this meant was so well understood by early readers that Matthew refers to it simply as "the kingdom" without defining what kingdom. When Jesus sent forth his disciples to teach, it was with the same message (Luke 9:2).

All men profess to admire Jesus; many claim to love and follow him as Christians. But can either claim be sincere if we have no desire to know what he meant by the central theme of his message?

What is this Kingdom? Is it only a figure of speech for the influence Jesus wields over men's minds? Does it mean the community of believers who acknowledge his leadership? Does it exist now, without disturbing the political structure of nations and empires? Or, on the other hand, ought we to understand this "kingdom" to have as precise a meaning as the Kingdom of Great Britain, or the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics?

On the answer to these questions will depend what Jesus meant by his commands, the purposes for which he gave them, and the people to whom they were intended to apply.

But we can go further than this. Paul says that the good about Christ -- that is, about his Kingdom, and forgiveness of sins through him -- is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). Jesus himself says: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: and he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16 ; see also 1 Cor. 15:2, etc.). According to Jesus and his apostles, the difference between believing and not believing is the difference between life and death.

We cannot believe what we do not know; and we can know what the Kingdom of God is only by learning from the Old and New Testaments -- for the teaching of the New Testament is based on the Old. Let us look at the evidence.

1. We are told through Daniel, that in the latter days --

"The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44.)

2. The Kingdom will be upon earth, and will take possession of all the kingdoms of the World.

"The Lord shall be king over all the earth" (Zech. 14:9).

"The kingdoms of this world ... become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15).

3. The Kingdom so to be set up will be the ancient kingdom of Israel restored.

"Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

"In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen" (Amos 9:11).

"The kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem" (Micah 4:8).

"I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me ... ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29, 30).

4. In the setting up of the Kingdom, the Jews will be gathered from their present dispersion in all the earth, and restored to their own land, which will be the seat or headquarters of the kingdom of God.

"He that scattered Israel will gather him" (Jer. 31:10).

"He shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:12).

"I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land" (Ezek. 37:21).

5. Ancient Jerusalem will become the capital city of the whole earth.

"At that time shall they call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord" (Jer. 3:17).

"The Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem" (Isa. 24:23).

"Then shall Jerusalem be holy" (Joel 3:17).

6. Christ's accepted people will reign with him, and inherit the kingdom when these glorious things are fulfilled.

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12).

"He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them" (Rev. 2:26).

"The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever" (Dan. 7:18, 27).

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom" (Matt. 25:34).