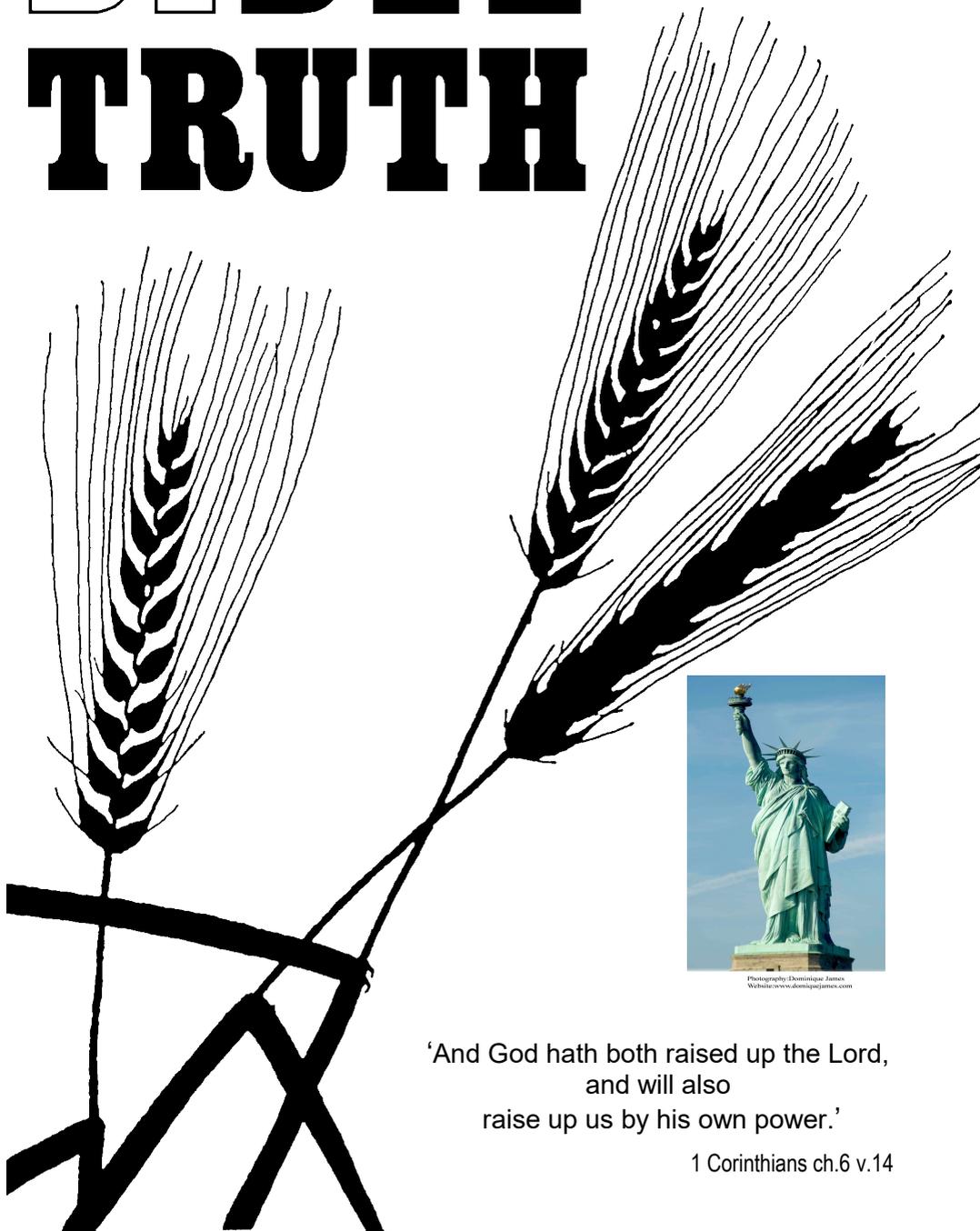


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'And God hath both raised up the Lord,
and will also
raise up us by his own power.'

1 Corinthians ch.6 v.14

JUST PREACH THE WORD!

by Pastor Robert Phillips

'I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.'

2 Timothy ch.4 vv 1-5

As time moves rapidly on, events seem to be hurtling towards a climax. Most Christians recognise these are 'signs of the times', though they have different interpretations. For many reasons it is evident that these days are what the Bible calls the 'end of the days' (see Daniel ch.12 vv 7&13). We are living, therefore, in a transitional period, phasing out the day of man and ushering in the 'day of the Lord'.

Paul exhorted Timothy to preach the Word, without compromise, in season and out of season, warning that the time would come when the Gospel would be 'out of season' as far as many were concerned, and they would not tolerate the truth of God's Word. Timothy was to continue to do the work of an evangelist - in other words, to preach the Gospel, with full proof - evidently with signs following!

'And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.'

Matthew ch.24 v.14

If the preaching of this 'Gospel of the Kingdom' is the specific sign of the Coming of Christ, even above other signs, then it evidently differs from either traditional or contemporary theology. Whilst Christians preach the message of personal Salvation, which is absolutely vital, yet the Kingdom aspect of the Gospel is sadly neglected, and the Gospel is only being partially preached. The fact that it will be fully preached just before the end of the age, is an indication that the Gospel is to be fully restored. However, this places a tremendous responsibility on those who do understand the Gospel of the Kingdom in its fullness.

That responsibility has to be taken very seriously, as it is essential that this message be preached as part of God's plan to prepare for the Coming of Jesus Christ, and the ushering in of His kingdom. And the Gospel of the Kingdom must be proclaimed in a way people will understand.

Sadly, many Christians are confused as to what is the Kingdom of God. Many think it is a message of social reform. Others recognise God's kingdom is present, in a spiritual sense, here and now, but fail to see its progressive nature. Whilst it is true that the Kingdom of God is already impacting lives, through the influence of Christianity, the Gospel, and the power of the Holy Spirit, this does not take away from the future fulfilment of the coming of Christ as the 'desire of all nations', to fulfil the promise of peace on earth and goodwill to all mankind, and also fulfil the prayer that God's Kingdom come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Along with that, many have been taught an 'escape-to-heaven' theology, which distorts both the truth of the coming of Jesus Christ, and of His Kingdom on earth, which is the central theme and emphasis of the Gospel! A 'heavenly vision' in a rightful sense is good, but a Gospel which focuses on a heavenly destiny, yet fails to teach the 'things concerning the Kingdom of God' to be established on earth, is **not** the Gospel of the Kingdom!

God's Plan — Doom or Dominion?

Salvation is essential to the Gospel, but it is about more than being saved from judgment. It is about being saved from sin, and its effects. God delegated dominion of the earth to mankind, who forfeited it, as a result of sin. Those who reject 'Kingdom Truth' and what some refer to as 'Dominion Theology', seem to believe God has written off His plan as a failure, and that Salvation has failed to fully deal with the effects of sin, including its effects on God's plan for the dominion of the earth! But, thank God, the Gospel is not a salvage operation for escape from a doomed world, rather it is the reclaiming of planet earth for God and His kingdom, when God's dominion of earth will be fully restored.

God gave His Covenant, His Law and His Kingdom, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as the people of Israel. However, as a result of breaking God's law, the bulk of Israel were taken into captivity in Assyria, and never returned. The remaining part (the people of Judah as distinct from the northern people of Israel) were taken into Babylon

and only a very small remnant (of Judeans or 'Jews' as some called them) returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.

The Good News of the Kingdom announced by Jesus Christ, was a message proclaiming liberty to the captives! This was manifested in a ministry of healing and deliverance for spirit, soul and body. Christ's message was,

'... The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.'

Mark ch.1 v.15

However, the Kingdom mandate was taken from the Jews who rejected and crucified Christ, and was transferred to a people.

'Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.'

Matthew ch.21 v.43

The parable of the 'two sons' in Matthew ch.21 vv 28-32 illustrates the fact that 'backsliding Israel' is more justified than 'treacherous Judah' (Jeremiah ch.3 v.11). Amazingly, both the Bible and history reveals the Gospel was fruitful primarily in places where there were settlements of Israelites, also confirming their dispersion and re-establishment in the West, as Christian nations, through whom the Gospel would be published. Amazingly, through the impact of the Gospel amongst the Christian nations, God is fulfilling His promise to make a New Covenant with His people Israel. However, the Gospel was given to Israel, not exclusively, but as a means of blessing to all.

Although the visible coming of Christ and His kingdom is still future, His kingdom is already being ushered in, 'not with observation', but by writing His law within the hearts and minds of those responding to the Gospel and dwelling within them by His Holy Spirit.

'And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.'

Luke ch.17 vv 20-21

'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.'

Ezekiel ch.36 vv 26-27

Through Jesus' death and resurrection the Holy Spirit was poured out, making possible the fulfilment of the New Covenant, whereby God's kingdom would be first established within His people with the Spirit of the living God: not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

'Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.'

2 Corinthians ch.3 vv 3-6

'For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.'

Hebrews ch.8 vv 8-10

God came in human form, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, not only to redeem His people, but so that, as a result of His death and resurrection, He would dwell within them, by His Holy Spirit. Jesus was the Son of God, born of a virgin by the operation of God's Spirit. He was also the very God, who expressed Himself by His Word in Creation. In Jesus Christ, the Word, the Self-expression of God, became flesh, and God was manifest in the flesh, to be revealed in us! According to Paul this great Kingdom promise is already in progress.

'... I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'

2 Corinthians ch.6 v.16

To enter into the Kingdom of God, it is essential to be 'born again' or 'born from above' through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal saviour, and the operation of His Holy Spirit. We also enter

into a fuller appropriation of that New Birth experience, and all it initiates in our lives, by a baptism of water and of the Spirit.

‘... Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ... Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’

John ch.3 vv 3 & 5

‘Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.’

Acts ch.2 v.38

See also Romans ch.14 v.17 and Colossians ch.1 v.13

God's kingdom is not yet visible, but is being ushered in within His people by the power and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, until the day when Jesus reigns on the throne of David over a truly Christian Israel.

‘But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.’

Numbers ch.14 v.21

‘For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.’

Habakkuk ch.2 v.14

Great and Terrible Days Ahead

Without doubt things will ‘wax worse and worse’ (see 2 Timothy ch.3 v.13), and whilst men in their arrogance, spend billions on conferences and projects to ‘save the planet’, we are reminded that planet earth and mankind will be saved from annihilation by nothing less than divine intervention.

‘And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.’

Matthew ch.24 v.22

‘And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.’

Mark ch.13 v.20

Yet, the Word of God assures us that it is when things in the world appear to be at their worst, that God does intervene. For instance, right in the midst of one of the greatest of earth's ‘woes’, God gave the great assurance.

‘...The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.’

Revelation ch.11 v.15

When Satan is pictured as coming with great wrath against the inhabitants of the earth, and to make war with God's remnant people, we are told this is because he knows his time is short and ‘Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ’ (Revelation ch.12 v.10).

The Bible refers to the ‘great and terrible’ or ‘great and dreadful day of the LORD’ (see Joel ch.2 v.31 & Malachi ch.4 v.5). These scriptures make it clear that two kinds of things happen at the same time. Evil and its consequences come to a head, on the one hand, and the demonstration of God's kingdom power on the other. To a persecuted church and remnant people, God's Word says,

‘... Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death’.

Revelation ch.12 vv 10-11

The Raising of the Standard

‘So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.’

Isaiah ch.59 v.19

The Overcomers are undoubtedly the standard that God's Holy Spirit is raising up at this time! This is no time for complacency, it is time to rise up in the power of God's Spirit and engage in spiritual warfare with the adversary!

The standard of the unadulterated Gospel of the Kingdom, proclaimed in the name of Jesus, and the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit, with authoritative faith that God will honour and confirm His Word with signs following, is now essential. The standard that is to be raised is more than words, lectures, seminars, discourses. It is more than worship rituals of either traditional or contemporary format. It is time for God's Church to worship and minister in spirit and in truth! The standard is being raised by nothing less than the Spirit of the Lord.

‘For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.’ Ephesians ch.6 v.12

Frankly, there is now no time for the scepticism of liberal theology, as to the identity or existence of the adversary. Far from denying their existence, the Bible gives a graphic account of Jesus’ encounter with Satan and demonic forces, presented as historical fact, in the Gospels, along with the virgin birth, miracles, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If we question one, then we may as well question them all. We must see beyond the flesh and blood agencies used in the process and recognise the underlying forces, which we are only equipped to deal with, if we discern their true, diabolical nature, whilst exercising the necessary authority, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Unfulfilled Commission

‘And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.’

Matthew ch.24 v.14

At no time has the Great Commission of Jesus Christ been revoked! Therefore, if we allow any other activity or message to supplant the proclaiming of the Gospel of the Kingdom, with the Lord confirming His Word with signs following, we are disobedient to the most basic commission. And I have to emphasise the point, as stated, that there is a vast difference between what many call the Gospel, and the real Gospel of the Kingdom.

The Bible tells us,

‘How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him’.

Acts ch.10 v.38

When Jesus Commissioned His Church He said this to them.

‘... Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.’

Mark ch.16 vv 15-18

Later there is this account in the early church.

‘Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.’ Acts ch.8 vv 5-7

Each of the above references makes it clear that the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom involves exercising spiritual authority over the forces of evil, and healing those who are ‘oppressed of the devil’! Now, don't get me wrong, believers need encouraging and teaching. But we are not fulfilling Christ's Commission by merely trying to educate Christians, or spending our time lecturing those already enlightened, in aspects of kingdom truth.

If the Gospel of the Kingdom is declared in the demonstration and power of the Holy Spirit, both Christians and non-Christians will have their eyes opened to the truth! Surely, our commission is no different from that given by the Lord Jesus Christ to the Apostle Paul.

‘To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.’

Acts ch.26 v.18

Friends, if we believe we have the true Gospel message, then we must take seriously the responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom, turning men and women of our nation from darkness to light, from sin to salvation, and from the power of Satan to God. We need to pray as never before. We need God's Holy Spirit as never before.

While many ‘contemporary churches’ are playing down the activity of the Holy Spirit. We must not compromise on the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit. We must have the same empowerment and endowment of the Spirit that they received on the day of Pentecost. It is the promise of the Father.

We may have experienced His anointing in the past, but I believe God is challenging us to seek for an unprecedented realisation of His power. In the final days of this age of apostasy, let us preach the Word proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom in the full authority of the Word, in the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and in the power of the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.
