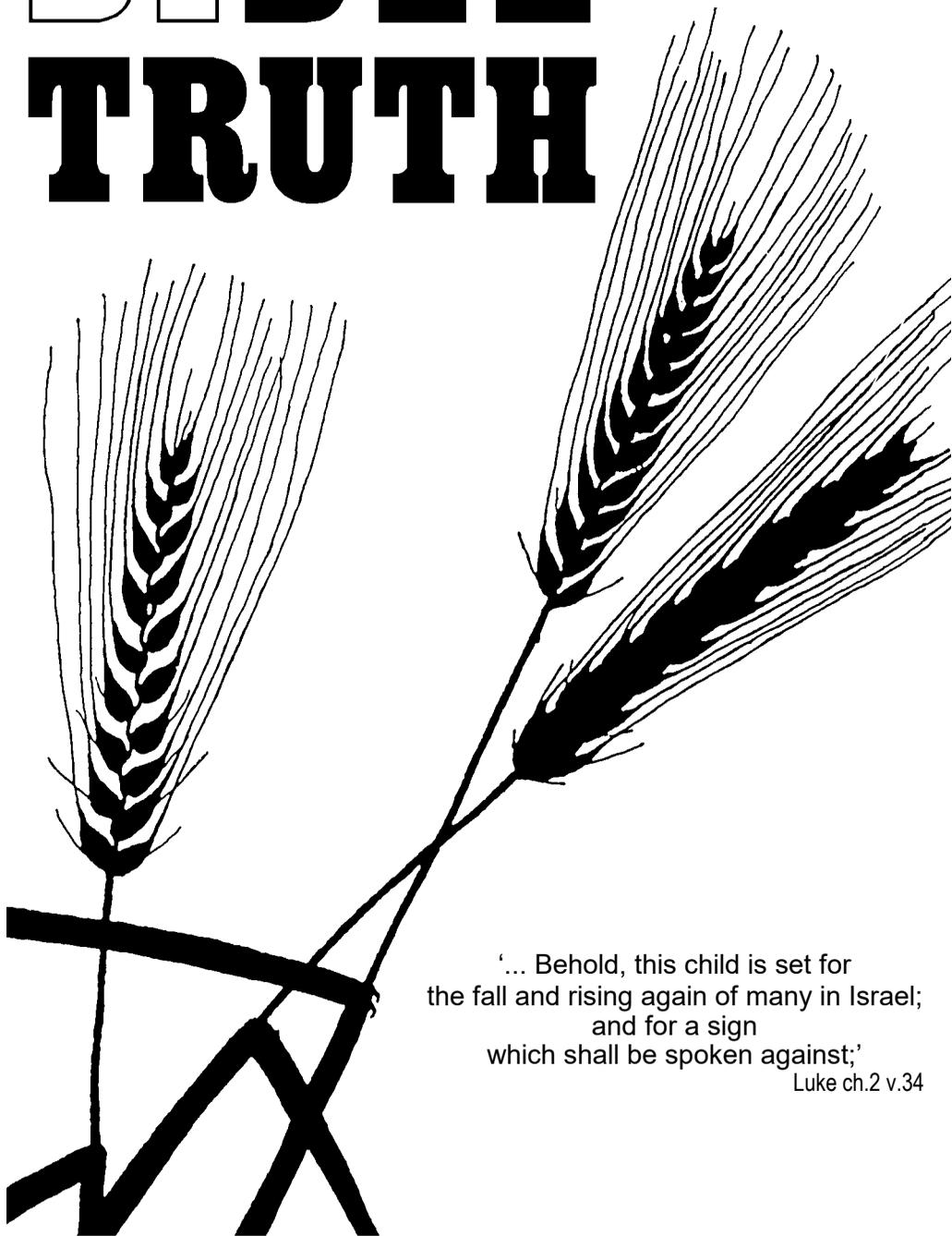


# BIBLE TRUTH

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'... Behold, this child is set for  
the fall and rising again of many in Israel;  
and for a sign  
which shall be spoken against;'

Luke ch.2 v.34

# What is this Kingdom?

by the late Robert T. Woodworth, *Ellicott City, MD, USA*

Robert first wrote this in *The Pathfinder* magazine

‘... , [Jesus] went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: ... And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: ... .’

Luke ch.8 vv 1 & 10

To most Christians this kingdom that Jesus preached is still a mystery. In spite of the fact that Jesus explained in many ways the meaning of His kingdom, even His disciples failed to recognize its full significance. Actually, it was John, the forerunner of Christ who began preaching about this kingdom.

‘In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, And saying, Repent ye: for the **kingdom of heaven** is at hand.’

Matthew ch.3 vv 1-2

When John was cast into prison for preaching about this kingdom, it certainly was not because this strangely dressed wilderness man was teaching some new innocuous religion, for the Romans could not care less. It was this kingdom which John preached that posed a threat to the Roman Empire. It was this kingdom Jesus preached when he heard John was jailed.

‘From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the **kingdom of heaven** is at hand ... And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.’

Matthew ch.4 vv 17 & 23

Here we have Jesus’ threefold ministry — teaching, preaching, healing. To do only part and not all three is to do injustice to the whole Gospel. The Bible tells us many times that Jesus’ ministry and gospel consisted of teaching, preaching and healing (see Matthew ch.9 v.35). Teaching what? The only Scriptures Christ had — the law and the prophets of the Old Testament. Jesus said,

‘Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil’.

Matthew ch.5 v.17

All through His life's ministry Jesus taught the Old Scriptures, the only Scriptures existent. Even after His resurrection when the disciples were distraught over the crucifixion, when they had thought that Jesus would redeem His people Israel and restore this kingdom to Israel (Luke ch.24 v.21 & Acts ch.1 v.6), Jesus,

‘... beginning at Moses and all the prophets ... expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself’.

Luke ch.24 v.27

This was on the road to Emmaus. Later, at Jerusalem, Christ appeared again with His disciples and confirmed His testimony.

‘And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.’

Luke ch.24 v.44

The great neglect of the Christian church is the teaching of the Old Scriptures — the law and the prophets and this kingdom of God.

The second phase of Jesus' ministry is the part I want to concentrate on. What is this kingdom Jesus preached and told His disciples to preach?

‘And as ye go, preach, saying, The **kingdom of heaven** is at hand.’

Matthew ch.10 v.7

Notice the constant and consistent emphasis on this gospel of the kingdom Jesus preached. Beginning with His sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes indicate the reward of the righteous is this kingdom.

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the **kingdom of heaven**. ... Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the **kingdom of heaven**.’

Matthew ch.5 vv 3 & 10

When He taught His disciples to pray, He instructed them to say,

‘Thy **kingdom** come ... For thine is **the kingdom**, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen’.

Matthew ch.6 vv 10 & 13

‘But seek ye first the kingdom of God, ...’

Matthew ch.6 v.33

‘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

‘And he said unto them, I must preach the **kingdom of God** to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.’

Luke ch.4 v.43

‘And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the **kingdom of God**: and the twelve were with him, ... And he sent them to preach the **kingdom of God**, ... .’

Luke chs 8 v.1 & 9 v.2

### What is this kingdom?

One way to define a thing is to tell what it is not, specially since there are so many errors in interpreting the kingdom of God. First of all, the kingdom is not just an illustration of personal salvation. This is all that many good evangelicals can see in Jesus’ teaching about His kingdom. They see everything in terms of how persons are saved, and claim that this is all Christ came to do and all His church is charged to preach. But personal salvation, as all my evangelical colleagues will readily acknowledge, is only possible through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. No one is saved by his own personal works, only by the works of Christ on Calvary. It is only by His shed blood that any individual has salvation and eternal life.

Not so, this kingdom. We are saved without works (see Ephesians ch.2 v.9), but we may gain the kingdom by works. Read the Beatitudes again.

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their’s is **the kingdom** ... .  
Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. ... Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for their’s is **the kingdom** ... .’

Matthew ch.5 vv 3,5, 9 -10

Would anyone claim that a man may be saved by being persecuted? No, but he may enter the kingdom, according to Jesus.

Second, the kingdom is not the church, in spite of the old hymn which goes,

‘I love Thy kingdom, Lord, The house of Thine abode, The Church our blest Redeemer saved, With His own precious blood’.

Unfortunately too many people have a Hymn book theology.

Jesus said to his disciples,

‘And I appoint unto you **a kingdom**, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in **my kingdom**, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel’.

Luke ch.22 vv 29-30

Some may say this refers to the Lord’s Supper taken in a church setting, but wait — let Him finish. Jesus continues,

‘... and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel’.

Third, neither is the kingdom heaven itself, although many commentaries on the Bible would have us believe that it is. In the first place, Jesus said that many would ‘see the kingdom of God’ before they tasted of death. Whereas we know heaven is the spiritual abode of those who are in Christ, redeemed by His blood. It is certainly not a place where material things count, but Christ said of this kingdom,

‘But seek ye first the **kingdom of God**, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you’.

Matthew ch.6 v.33

What things? The things that many seek, such as food, clothing and shelter are not elements of heaven. They are necessities that believers can look to receive when giving priority to seeking the Kingdom of God.

What then is this kingdom, if it is not personal salvation, the Church or heaven? This kingdom of God that Jesus preached is nothing more or less than the righteous government promised by an unconditional covenant to David, to be fulfilled on earth in the righteous reign of Jesus Christ.

Almighty God gave a unilateral unconditional covenant of an everlasting kingdom to David and his seed. Read it in 2 Samuel ch.7 vv 8-16. Here God took a shepherd and made him a king. From this tribe of Judah were to come an endless succession of kings.

‘The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, ...’.

Genesis ch.49 v.10

God’s prophetic promise was,

‘And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever’.

2 Samuel ch.7 v.16

It was confirmed as follows.

'I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.'

Psalm 89 vv 3-4

Ultimately this royal lineage is to be inherited by Christ, born of the seed of David and Son of God, and whose throne would be established over the whole earth.

This kingdom shall be comprised of a place, a people and a plan. The place is on earth on David's throne. The great Messianic prophecy fulfilled in Christ includes these kingdom provisions.

'... the government shall be upon his shoulder ... Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. ... .'

Isaiah ch.9 vv 6-7

Right from His birth, wise men recognized that Christ was to be a King who would rule God's people Israel (see Matthew ch.2 v.6). The angel Gabriel told the virgin Mary that her son,

'... 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 for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end'.

Luke ch.1 vv 32-33

Jesus Himself announced that,

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

Matthew ch.21 v.43

Here marks the transfer of the Kingdom from the confines of religious idealism to the broad expanse of political reality. Now the kingdom will be a nation, a nation under the control of David's throne, a Christian nation, composed of Christian people who rule and reign with Christ, with laws like God's laws. Eventually it culminates in the total subjugation of all nations under its regency (see Revelation chs 11 v.15 & 5 v.10). God's kingdom comes when His will is done in earth as it is in heaven (see Matthew ch.6 v.10).

Second, God's kingdom is composed of God's people. As Daniel prophesied,

'But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. ... Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. ... . And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him'.

Daniel ch.7 vv 18, 22 & 27

In the New Testament Jesus asks,

'... Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love Him?'

James ch.2 v.5

At the separation of the nations in the end time, Jesus says to His sheep nations,

'... Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;'

Matthew ch.25 v.34

In Luke ch.12 v.32 Jesus the Shepherd comforts His sheep people, saying,

'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom'.

Again Jesus promises His kingdom people,

'And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel'.

Luke ch.22 vv 29 - 30

Finally, this kingdom consists of a plan, a bold magnificent scheme, bringing all people and nations under the righteous administration of divine government with holy laws and just judgment. Its scope encompasses the earth with a positive plan for peace and prosperity for all people, but administered by God's people who are ambassadors for Christ.

The Bible tells us of this transcending triumph over human failure and error and tells of the magnificence and majesty of God's government.

'They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.'

Psalm 145 vv 11-13

This kingdom is everlasting, having no end, and transcending, having no equal. It will surely come as Christians have been taught to pray 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven' (Matthew ch.6 v.10). God's will on earth, for His people, from His throne, over all nations, for ever! This is the kingdom,

'... thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.  
Amen'.

Matthew ch.6 v.13

To some it was given to know the mysteries of this kingdom. To others, it was not (see Luke ch.8 v.10). So Jesus spoke in parables that seeing, they might see or be blind, depending upon their heart and understanding (see Matthew ch.13 vv 10-17). Blessed are your eyes and ears and heart if you see and hear and understand His parables and promises regarding this kingdom.

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