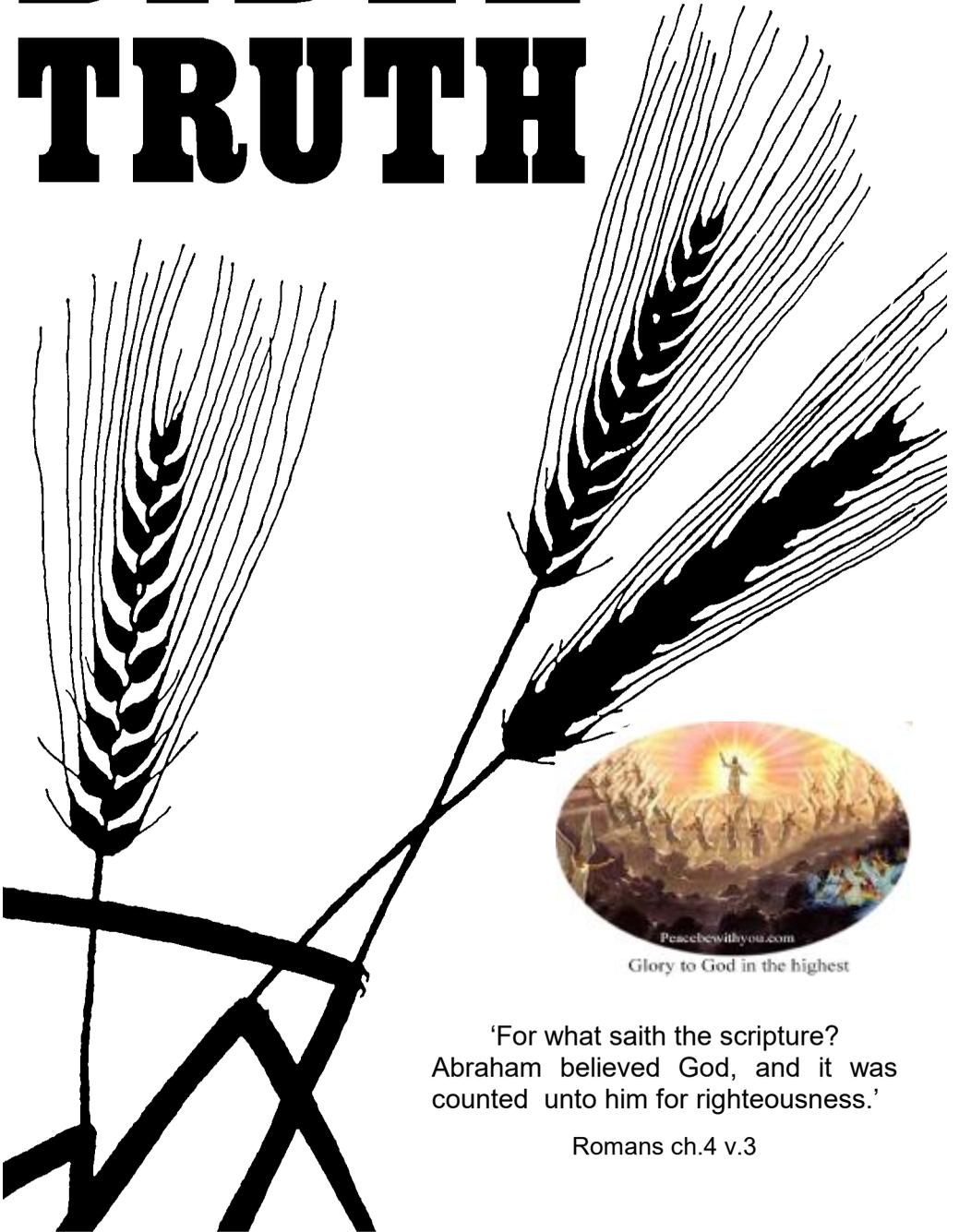


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'For what saith the scripture?
Abraham believed God, and it was
counted unto him for righteousness.'

Romans ch.4 v.3



Glory to God in the highest

God's Kingdom is Developing

by the late Robert T. Woodworth

Jesus taught many parables about God's Kingdom which someday would come on earth. One parable about a sower who planted seeds is unique to Mark's Gospel and tells about the gradual development of the Kingdom. It is a thrilling prophecy of what will some day come to earth.

In Mark ch.4 vv 26-29, the Lord used this story about a man who planted seed and reaped a harvest. It is different from the parable of the sower in the same chapter vv 3-20, who spread some seed which fell by the wayside and which the birds ate and some which fell on stony ground, others among thistles, but some took root in fertile soil. It is also found in Matthew ch.13 vv 1-15 and Luke ch.8 vv 4-10.

Neither is Mark's illustration the same as found in Matthew ch.13 vv 24-30 and vv 36-43, which tells of tares or weeds which grew up in the midst of the wheat. But all these are parables of the Kingdom of God which was to be planted, then would grow until it developed into a ruling dominion over the whole earth. While there are spiritual implications and applications to these parables of the Kingdom, never should we concede that the Lord was merely talking of a kingdom but really meant a church or something within the heart of the believers. All the parables of the Kingdom describe a real, literal, political government of people with God. The parables of the Kingdom contain all the elements of a government over a nation: a king, some people, good and bad, a land and some laws. These are not

elements of a church or a single believer, but only of a country, a country whose builder and maker is God (see Hebrews ch.11 v.10).

Abraham was to be a father of nations (Genesis ch.17 v.4), not of synagogues or churches. Moses, Joseph, Daniel and David were political and civil leaders, not heads of churches. So Jesus Christ must not only be Lord of Lords, but King of Kings. Christ is not only the head of the church (Ephesians ch.1 v.22, ch.4 v.15 & ch.5 v.23) but the Governor of Israel (Matthew ch.2 v.6). Jesus must not only be the Saviour of souls, but the Ruler of cities. Not only will Christ rule over the nations of this earth, but those who are His will reign with Him.

Listen to Revelation ch.2 vv 26-27. 'And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron' Again in Revelation ch.5 v.10 it says of the saints that He has, 'made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth'. Note that God's people are to be both kings (over states) as well as priests (over churches).

Having this basic understanding of the plan and purpose of God's Kingdom, we can begin to interpret the parable about how the Kingdom develops as seed grows in the ground.

Jesus taught this parable.

'And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.'

Mark ch.4 vv 26-29

As said earlier, this parable is different from the other two that deal with the same subject. The parable of the 'Sower' (Mark ch.4 vv 3-20) shows the effect of the Gospel of the Kingdom on individual hearers throughout the ages, and especially today. How few have the fertile minds and spirits to receive it! The parable of the 'tares' (Matthew ch.13 vv 24-30) shows the effect of the enemy in undermining the Kingdom, and also of God's judgment and cleansing coming in the Kingdom to take out His enemies.

But this parable of the 'seed' development shows the stages of growth of God's Kingdom on earth. Dr Herbert Lockyer in *All the Parables* (p. 252) outlines these stages of the Kingdom.

1. Blade - Kingdom mystery, the church age.
2. Ear - Kingdom manifestation, during the millennium.
3. Corn - Kingdom majestic perfection, in the fullness of time, with new heavens and new earth.

Who is the sower in this parable? Not Christ, but men. Men who sleep, who lie down at night and rise at day, but who do not know just how the seed grows. The sowers are all people who scatter seeds, who teach and preach, who love and serve, who administer and oversee, who apply and practice God's Word.

What is the seed? As in the other parables, it is the Word of God, the principles of His Kingdom love and law. It is the life-giving element which produces the blade, the ear, and the kernel. Peter says it is the Word of God which produces new life by a new birth (see I Peter ch.1 v.23).

What is the ground? It is the soil, the earth, and not the same as the sower or the seed, but the literal physical world in which we live. Jesus says in the 'sower' parable, 'The field is the world' (Matthew ch.13 v.38). 'It is the earth' (Mark ch.4 v.28). The concept of the Kingdom comes from the heart of God, is given to men, but grows in the world. Just as the life in the seed is a spiritual or living principle, it is made manifest in the material realm.

Now all this does not happen in a day or in an instant. It is a gradual growing process over many generations. Men rise and sleep; days are ages, so the Kingdom grows imperceptibly.

The growth of the seed and the development of the Kingdom are not of man's doing, except in co-operation with God. No man (or woman) can grow a seed. We can only plant. The seed grows itself. So the earth develops by itself. Natural laws cause the earth to bring forth fruit of itself (v.28). This term is used only here and in Acts ch.12 v.10, where it mentions an opening of its own accord. The Greek word for this is 'automate', which we understand easily in this day of automatic doors.

So we have seen from the interpretation of this parable of the seed growing that the stages of the seed's development are ages in history.

First was the Blade Age, the budding and building of the church, from the first to the twentieth century. Next is the Ear Age, the blossoming and blooming of the great Christian nations Europe, America, and parts of Asia and Africa over the last two centuries. Now comes the Kernel Age, the coming of Christ to claim His Kingdom, with His reaping angels, purging His people and cleansing His Kingdom. It is the consummation of the ages of which our Lord spoke many times.

'... the harvest is the end of the world (or as the margin says, "consummation of the age"); and the reapers are the angels.' (Matthew ch.13 v.39). The tares are gathered and burned by fire in the end of this world age (v.40). Christ commands the angels to remove all offensive people and wicked things (v.41).

'Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.'

v.43

'So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,' .

v.49

'And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. ... for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.'

Revelation ch.14 vv 14-15

We are now living in this time, just before the glorious Kingdom Age. It is the time of harvest. It took a long time to bring us to this age, but now the time is short. It is time for the Lord to send forth His reapers, to thrash, to burn, to gather into His house. It is time to be ready and right for His coming. God's Kingdom is developing rapidly and ready to be brought into power and authority!

'When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.'

Acts ch.1 vv 6-7
