

# The Message

## Chapter 1

Everything God does in our lives, He does based exclusively on what Jesus did for us at the Cross. Although there will be great emphasis on the Kingdom in this book, it will have little effect without this understanding. The cross is the only means that gains access into the power and life of Jesus and the Kingdom. We must understand that our acceptance is based on what Jesus did; not on our own merit or adherence to a set of rules. Without an understanding of the Cross this book will just be a list of rules to you. This book is a foundation and pattern for everyone who calls themselves Christian.

The cross was to gain God's acceptance; the kingdom is to gain His reward. God accepts us and loves us based on faith in what Jesus did for us at the Cross; He will Judge or reward us based on how we live in His kingdom. We believe for our acceptance; we work for our reward. When you were born again you were translated into the kingdom of God. I want to show you how to live there! Without the foundation of the cross; the kingdom will just be religion to you, void of the power of the Holy Spirit to transform your life. D.L Moody said, "Before my conversion I worked towards the cross; since my conversion I work from the cross!" Now let's look at the message the master introduced to the world.

*This is my servant whom I strengthen. He is my chosen one, and I am pleased with him. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will reveal justice to the nations. 2 He will be gentle--he will not shout or raise his voice in public. 3 He will not crush those who are weak or quench the smallest hope. He will bring full justice to all who have been wronged. 4 He will not stop until truth and righteousness prevail throughout the earth. Even distant lands beyond the sea will wait for his instruction (Isaiah 42:1-4)*

Jesus entered the world as a suffering servant. He left the world as a reigning King. Jesus spent his life on a campaign trail promoting the kingdom of God. Unlike political candidates of our day, He had no back-up plan in case things didn't work out. He didn't make promises He couldn't keep. He never promised one thing and delivered another. Popular opinion didn't sway Him; He stuck to the truth in spite of opposition. His message demanded attention. There were no grey areas. You either bought the farm or you didn't. His message of the kingdom set clear perimeters for its recipients. To pick up and move from one kingdom to the next would involve change. Citizenship would require adherence to the rules of the land. Jesus didn't just introduce another world religion, He introduced a **world reigning kingdom**, one in which He would reign as King.

Today, the message of the church is in crisis. It seems to have little relevance in the society in which we live. The message of the church has changed considerably in relation to the one Jesus and His disciples preached. If the church is going to have an

impact on the world today, as it did in the beginning, then we must go back and discover what they had - that somewhere along the line we lost.

## The Gospel of the Kingdom

*Later on, after John was arrested by Herod Antipas, Jesus went to Galilee to preach God's Good News. 15 "At last the time has come!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Turn from your sins and believe this Good News!" (Mark 1:14-15)*

Jesus preached the kingdom and passed the same message on to His disciples. (**Matthew 10**) His message wasn't to bring people happiness as much as it was to bring people righteousness. By turning to God and believing, man could escape the judgment to come and come into union with God's plan for planet earth. Judgment had to take place for God to keep His promise. He had promised through the prophets to prepare a place for those who would put their trust in Him. Judgment made perfect sense in light of the coming kingdom. (**Isaiah 65**)

The kingdom message touched all areas of society. The announcement that a kingdom was coming affected leaders as well as welfare recipients. The message demanded a decision. The kingdom had powerful affects when preached. God confirmed His message with signs and wonders on every occasion. God must have been saying; "If this seems hard to believe let me perform a few miracles to help you." God validated the ministry of Christ and the preaching of the kingdom.

Peter preached the gospel before the death of Christ and after. What changed in his message? Jesus commissioned the disciples early in His ministry to announce God's kingdom. We see Peter announcing this same message on the day of Pentecost after Christ's death on the cross and following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Peter revealed to the crowd on the day of Pentecost that the same Jesus who they had crucified, God has made both Messiah and Lord. (**Acts 2:36**) Peter not only preached Jesus the Savior, he preached Jesus the King.

What's different with the gospel we preach today? Today the gospel is preached as Christ the Savior. Come to Jesus and He will save you from your sins. This is true, yes, but still differs in part from the message we hear from the first century church. Jesus introduced God's vision for planet earth. He wasn't on the cross any more. He was alive. We've preached Jesus the Savior but not Jesus the King. ***We have succeeded in preaching a savior and failed in preaching a kingdom.*** Our message has been relevant to the down and out, but has failed to reach the majority who see no need for a savior.

***We have lost our influence in society because we haven't preached the whole message.***

To preach the kingdom means to preach the Lordship of Christ as well as his cross. Christ the risen King draws a line in the sand to all who hear. *The fact that He is coming again to earth to reign as King is enough to change anyone's world view!* It no longer just touches the desperate; it touches every aspect of society and reveals God's

idea to the earth. Is the gospel relevant in a democratic government, a secular educational system, and the current liberal media? Absolutely. Regardless of the response, when the church begins to preach it as it was intended, it will draw attention. Jesus said He would draw all men to Himself if He be lifted up. George Bush may be the president of the United States, but God has made Jesus the president of the universe! I would say this is pretty relevant to society today. Jesus said the end would not come until the gospel of the kingdom was preached to all nations. (**Matt. 24:14**) The nations haven't believed the message of the kingdom because the kingdom hasn't been preached! Is it any wonder eighty-three percent of Americans today claim to be Christian and yet the nation continues in moral decline?

## Repentance

*In those days John the Baptist began preaching in the Judean wilderness. His message was, "Turn from your sins and turn to God, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near. (Matthew 3:1-2)*

*From then on, Jesus began to preach, "Turn from your sins and turn to God, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near." (Matthew 4:17)*

The word repentance in the Greek is translated, "*Metanoeo*" which means to think differently or afterwards, reconsider. Repent, God's kingdom has showed up. How incredible is that! Jesus and John were telling the crowds to think about this. Try to understand what we are telling you. They were revealing God's idea. Understanding was key to their preaching. They shared the message in a way that made sense to the people. It was relevant. Multitudes were coming to be baptized. We see people preaching repentance today and nothing happening. Why? Telling men to repent and not giving them an explanation why, brings them into a religious experience without any true change taking place. The issue was that man had broken God's Holy Law which brought separation, and yet God in His mercy was announcing a way of escape as well as a re-entry into the kingdom that had for so long been out of reach. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their evangelistic attempts. He said to them, you travel across the country side looking for one convert and make him twice as much a son of hell as you yourselves are! (**Matthew 23:15**) Jesus wasn't coming to start a religious culture club; He was coming to make and recruit citizens in His kingdom. They weren't preaching 'repent because you look bad', they were saying 'repent because the kingdom was at hand'. I have been discouraged to see many people come through the church only to see them leave within a month because all the happiness and peace they were promised didn't happen right away. When we preach the kingdom from an eternal perspective and not for selfish gain, we lay the right foundation and see lasting fruit in the ones who receive it.

Repentance was the only prerequisite to the kingdom. Many came to ask John what they should do when he was in the wilderness preaching. To a tax collector he said to quite stealing people's money. He told a soldier to quit wrongfully accusing people. After he called the religious leaders a bunch of snakes, he told them to show signs of their repentance by the way they lived. (**Luke 3:7-14**) Action was the buzz word. How would

you like to go out in the woods one day and find some wild looking man calling people snakes? Well, that's exactly what happened.

When the Holy Spirit started showing me things about the kingdom, it really changed my life. I had been discouraged and frustrated for so long and wanted to know why. Out of my frustration God started showing me things in the gospels that began to make sense. When we begin to see the kingdom it opens up our eyes to see things that we never saw before. The pieces start to fall into place. Before an architect begins his design, he has a picture in his mind's eye of what it will look like. If he starts with the details his work will eventually end up in chaos. It's no different in the lives of believers. God has a design in mind. Once we see the design we can begin building according to His pattern. It's the same in the church and toward the world we are called to reach. Jesus used pictures to convey His idea. Once he compared Himself to a door. (**John 10:1-9**) He said that He was the door to the sheep. If Jesus was the door into the kingdom, then repentance was the Key.

## **New Birth**

*Jesus replied, "The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. 6 Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven. 7 So don't be surprised at my statement that you must be born again. 8 Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit." (John 3:5-8)*

Every thing reproduces after its own kind. This is the way God set it up. The Gospel is a seed, traced back from the heart of God. When Jesus became flesh the seed became life in bodily form. (**John 1:1**) No longer would it reproduce and die, it would bring life forever. The seed is the word of the kingdom, and the soil is the hearts of men. The condition of the soil depends on understanding. Jesus describes the process in the parable of the sower. (**Mark 4**) One of the four soils produced a huge harvest of up to one hundred fold. The major characteristic of the good soil was that it had understanding. Jesus said the one who heard the word and UNDERSTOOD or accepted it, produced a huge harvest.

We are God's vehicle. If we can see this, it can really bring liberation. Most of us think that salvation depends on us. Salvation is God's part, the message is our part. If we spread it, God will multiply it. I used to get so discouraged when witnessing, like it depended on me or something. I remember a period of about a year, where it seemed like nothing was happening; it was as though I was having crop failure. God would open the doors and I would walk through them, but that seemed to be it. One day God gave me a vision. It appeared as though I was in heaven, in a future state, when all of the sudden a man came running up to me. I could feel this tremendous love coming out of him. He started thanking me for talking to him. I didn't even know who he was! The guy went on

to explain how I had talked to him one day when he was down and out, and shortly after that he got born again. Wow! I about fell over. A couple days later, (I was selling shoes at the time), the Lord sent three different people my way and all three of them got saved. I learned a valuable lesson. The Gospel is supernatural. Understanding opens up our hearts to believe, and as a result God opens up the doors. Laborers are what is needed, God controls the harvest.

Today, due to various manmade methods, people are scared to death to share the gospel because of this certain identity that has been attached to it. It kills faith and puts the entire burden on the individual, thus producing another non-witnessing Christian. Jesus said of the Pharisees that they would put heavy burdens on the people, but wouldn't lift one finger to help fulfill the demand. (**Matt. 23:4**) Jesus said His burden was easy and His yoke was light. What is wrong with this picture? When we understand the gospel, the supernatural will flow out of us. God knows your address, He knows your personality and He will use you within that framework. Faith opens the door.

In a later chapter we will talk about how to operate in the power of God. I'm not introducing some self help idea; I'm introducing God's idea and God's pattern for the Gospel. It works. If God can use a guy who could barely have a conversation before coming to Him, then He can use you! Not by might, not by power, but by My spirit says the Lord. (**Zech. 4:8**) If you are willing, but feel unable, God can work the impossible on your behalf. The problem is in the origin. It doesn't come through your effort, *it comes through your faith*. If you don't have a heart for those around you, ask God and He will give you one.

Nicodemus is a prime example as to where most believers are today. The root of his problem was that he just didn't believe. Liberty comes through understanding that salvation belongs to the Lord, it is His ability, not ours. Jesus explains to Nicodemus that the flesh can do nothing. Flesh produces flesh, just like spirit produces spirit.

<p><b>If you have been born again, you have a full grown Jesus on the inside of you waiting to work in the lives of those around you.</b></p>
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Understanding is our part; the new birth is God's part.

## **Present Kingdom**

*Here is another story Jesus told: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. 25 But that night as everyone slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat. 26 When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew. 27 The farmer's servants came and told him, 'Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds!' 28 " 'An enemy has done it!' the farmer exclaimed." 'Shall we pull out the weeds?' they asked. 29 "He replied, 'No, you'll hurt the wheat if you do. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds and burn them and to put the wheat in the barn.' "* (**Matthew 13:24-30**)

One of the greatest realities in a believer's life is that Jesus reigns now. (**Psalms 110:1**) The truth is, the world has already been judged, God has already chosen His President, and the world is waiting for His return. Why hasn't He come back yet? Peter says the reason is so others can be saved and have part in the promised good news. (**2 Peter 3:9**) I believe the other reason is because the church hasn't carried the good news to the entire world yet. (**Matt. 24:14**) Listen, if Coca Cola can fill every land with a label, then we can fill every land with the gospel! The present kingdom is now, where God is restoring man's lost relationship with Himself and establishing His reign over their lives. The future kingdom is Christ's coming reign in the earth.

Everything is in the kingdom for the kingdom. Think of it this way. God's kingdom showed up through Jesus, and now operates through us. What we have today is a world full of spiritual criminals. Everything is already under the Lords control, yet in His mercy He gives more time to those who have not yet submitted to His rule. As the scripture states, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord. (**Romans 14:11**) The Law hasn't come to manifest its justice yet, but justice will soon be served. God fills the earth of this knowledge through us. We have access every day to the kingdom of God. What caused demons to flee by the mere presence of Jesus? He didn't have to say anything to announce He was in the house. Jesus understood the power that had come upon Him. The kingdom in Jesus demanded attention. The kingdom is unlocked through us. Why are people healed, and devils cast out? Is it because you fasted 40 days and read your Bible six hours? No, it's because the kingdom has come to earth through you. This is Gods confirmation. Can sickness and disease live in the kingdom? No.

I believe there are two major reasons God confirms the Gospel with signs and wonders. Number one is *compassion*. Jesus was moved with compassion and healed the sick, and cast out demons, etc. I believe the second reason was to show us what the kingdom looks like. Since God was now invading time and space, He was saying in essence that there is no sickness in the kingdom, there are no devils in the kingdom, there is no disease in the kingdom, there is no death in the kingdom and so on and so on. This reality lives within us today. We carry it every where we go. Circumstances may look one way, but the kingdom looks another. God was giving us a new perspective and confirming it with power. The apostle Paul said that while on earth the kingdom is manifest in our lives in the form of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. (**Romans 14:17**) We may live on earth but the kingdoms reality is to live in our hearts and manifest itself around us everyday. So we can see that Jesus was giving us understanding about the operation of the kingdoms present reality on planet earth through the parable of the tares.

## Future Kingdom

*"But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate them as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. 34 Then*

*the King will say to those on the right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. 36 I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.' 37 "Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? 39 When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?' 40 And the King will tell them, 'I assure you, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!' 41 "Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his demons! 42 For I was hungry, and you didn't feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn't give me anything to drink. 43 I was a stranger, and you didn't invite me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me no clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me.' 44 "Then they will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?' 45 And he will answer, 'I assure you, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.' 46 And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.'" (Matthew 25:31-46)*

This is the time period where God's promises will be fulfilled. The first and foremost promise is that which is promised in relation to Jesus. God promised that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ. God will hand over the restored kingdom to Jesus who will in return reign forever. The most quoted scripture in the New Testament is that of **Psalms 110:1**, where the Lord said to my Lord come and sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.

Why does there seem to be so little change in the lives of those who profess to be believers today? Where is the fear of God we read so much about in the Bible? I believe the reason there is such little change is because people don't believe there will be consequences in the way they live their lives here on earth. Ultimately, the finality of the gospel is judgment. He will judge the earth in righteousness. Jesus, as stated above in Matthew, will judge the nations and bring separation. When Jesus returns He will repay each according to his or hers deeds. (**Rev. 22:12**) This is the judgment. *To know the judgment of God is to know the fear of God.* The truth of God's judgment conveyed has a profound affect upon the way one lives their life. It is a parameter, not to hurt us but to help us. In Psalms we read that the law or standard of the Lord is perfect converting the soul. (**Psalm 19:7**) Jesus said do not fear those who can kill the body, but rather fear Him who can destroy both the body and the soul forever. (**Matthew 10:28**) When I began to see the judgment of God it motivated me to live right. The law of love all the more compelled me in light of this truth. So ultimately we know now that God will rid the world of all injustice and fulfill His promise to His Son and to those who belong to Him. Jesus will finally take the place of highest honor, and receive the glory due His name.

The prophet Zechariah speaks of Christ's coming reign in the earth. (**Zechariah 14**) This is the reality of the gospel. We don't hear much about the coming kingdom in the church today. A gospel without a future is like a car without an engine. This was the place that the prophets and patriarchs saw afar off and were looking forward to.

**(Hebrews 11)** The prophet Isaiah saw the future kingdom afar off. He described it as a place so wonderful that the old world would not even be remembered. **(Isaiah 65:17-25)** He goes on to prophesy that babies would no longer die, that people would enjoy the fruit of their labors, that children would not be doomed to misfortune, that the snake would no longer bite, and that the lion would lay down with the lamb, just to name a few. This was the promise of God. God would create a world where everyone was right with Him and where total justice would reign through the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the promise of God's good news. What has happened? The first century church hinged everything on these promises. What are we hoping for and waiting for today?

## **Eternal Perspective**

*All these faithful ones died without receiving what God had promised them, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed the promises of God. They agreed that they were no more than foreigners and nomads here on earth. 14 And obviously people who talk like that are looking forward to a country they can call their own. 15 If they had meant the country they came from, they would have found a way to go back. 16 But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a heavenly city for them. Hebrews 11:13-16*

Today, we have taken the main ingredient out of the Gospel. We, the Church, have lost our eternal perspective. We have seemed to make it more about our agendas, our destinies, our prophecies and the like. The Apostle Paul said that if, in this life, we only have the hope of Christ then we are of all men most pitiful. **(I Corinthians 15:19)** What Paul was saying was that if there is no future, no resurrection, and no promise of the Gospel then we are in bad shape. They, as with their contemporaries, were living for that day. It is so important that we see this. This was the realization that the first century church laid their lives down for! Of course, they didn't have it quite as comfortable as we in America have it today, considering the fact that they were martyred and lived in caves awaiting the promise. What are we waiting for? Have we grown to like the society we live in today more than God's promised society? Have we finally arrived at creating an instrument of pleasure that we are satisfied with? Regardless of man's efforts, the most valiant efforts will never arrive at the comparison of what God is preparing for those who love Him. This world is not our home. Peter warned to live holy lives while in this world. He called us to look forward to the day that God would burn away the elements and bring about the new heaven and new earth. **(2Peter 3:13)** Wow! Can you imagine that? God is going to destroy the old and bring in the new; just like He intended from the beginning. I believe one of the keys to a life lived as radical as the first century church was the realization of the day and place God has promised. These men and women didn't live for this life, they lived for the next.

## **The Kingdom Within You**

*One day the Pharisees asked Jesus, "When will the Kingdom of God come?" Jesus replied, "The Kingdom of God isn't ushered in with visible signs. 21 You won't be able to say, 'Here it is!' or 'It's over there!' For the Kingdom of God is among you." (Luke 17:20-21)*

The Jews confined God to a building; sounds a lot like America today. They wanted a sign, faith wasn't enough. I was thinking about this one day and the Lord began to show me how America today is in a similar place as the Jewish people were then. Institutional Christianity seems to be the theme. Well, God's not in a building, He's in the hearts of sons and daughters. God is building a house. The question is whether you're a slave or a son? If God wants Sons, then institutions won't do. Our local churches need to resemble houses where sons and daughters can have the liberty to mess up and grow up, so that they can become who God designed them to be. Should we all run around the country looking for the next move of God? No. ***You are the move of God!*** If God is moving in a place, it's not because of the location, it's because there are people that letting Him. He wants to do the same thing through you and me. The religious leaders of Jesus' day had the same mindset.

It's time to take God at His word. He said we would receive power to be His witnesses. Do you believe that? If we believe it, we will do it. It's not about our feelings and emotions. Our emotions are fickle and they change, God hasn't called us to obey our emotions and feelings, He has called us to obey His word, and His word says Go! Take it with you; allow the word of God to have preeminence in your life. God says that the Gospel is in your DNA; it's a part of you. Going to the bathroom is not something you have to give a whole lot of thought to. The last time I checked, I wasn't standing around petrified wondering how I was going to go. Remember what goes in must come out. If you eat the Gospel, but don't share the Gospel you will end up constipated. ***God didn't intend the Gospel to stop with you; He intended it to flow through you.*** I don't know about you, but being constipated doesn't feel very good. It's not the way it was intended to be. So give away what God has given you and I promise you will feel better.

In closing this chapter I just want to say that understanding the kingdom is the key to the gospel in our generation. It serves as the container to the precious commodity that we carry. The kingdom brings definition and sets the perimeters from which we work. It worked in the first century and it will work in the twenty first century. Defining our message brings the relevance of our message into all walks of society. Understanding our inheritance gives us the courage and boldness to pay the price no matter how great the cost. In the last several years we have seen God restoring His church to a biblical pattern in the house. God is now giving us the pattern for the gospel to take into all the earth and see the largest harvest of soul the earth has ever known. I want to be a part in touching the heart of God by touching those He is seeking; the lost in the earth.