



The

# ENJOY THE BIBLE

Quarterly

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First Quarter 2001

## “Behold, The Kingdom Of God Is Within You”

<sup>20</sup> And when he (Jesus) 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:

<sup>21</sup> Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. (Luke 17:20-21)

**Y**ou could probably get rich if you were given a dime for every time someone brings up these verses in connection with questioning whether the “kingdom of God/kingdom of heaven” spoken about in God’s program with Israel is really the literal and physical establishment of God’s kingdom on this earth. And for those who do not merely question this, but are determined to deny the literal, physical reality and nature of that kingdom in favor of a spiritual ‘in-the-heart’ type reigning of God, these verses are a stronghold. Since the Lord says that “the kingdom of God is within you,” then the argument is that it cannot be a literal, physical, external kingdom, but only a spiritual one in men’s hearts.

Now though these verses from Luke 17 are commonly cited as such, it should be obvious that there is something amiss in such thinking. For if the Lord’s words here actually do call into question, or deny, the literalness and physical nature of God’s kingdom being established on this earth, then they do that at the expense of dozens upon dozens of passages in God’s word testifying to the contrary. For example,...

<sup>2</sup> And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

<sup>3</sup> And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2:2-3)

<sup>7</sup> And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.

<sup>8</sup> And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem. (Micah 4:7-8)

<sup>44</sup> And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven 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. (Daniel 2:44)

<sup>31</sup> And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

<sup>32</sup> He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

<sup>33</sup> And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. (Luke 1:31-33)

If God means what He says and says what He means, then clearly these verses, (and many others like them), describe a literal, physical kingdom of God on this earth. And again in view of the abundant testimony, if the Lord’s words in Luke 17 referred to a spiritual reigning in the heart, then they would call into question more than just the literalness of the kingdom. They would call into question the overall veracity of God’s word itself.

Amazingly with those who want to deny the literal, physical reality and nature of the kingdom, and instead only want to see a spiritual ‘in-the-heart’ type kingdom, this one passage in Luke 17 is supposed to upset and overturn these dozen upon dozens of other passages. It makes little or no difference to them that these other passages plainly and clearly testify to, promise, and prophesy about, the literal and physical establishment of God’s kingdom on this earth in the land of Israel. Yet such is the way of a man when he determines with himself (for whatever reason) to see only what he wants to see, and not to be completely honest with God’s word.

### A Common Problem

Now in truth this is also exactly what the Pharisees of Luke 17 were doing when they demanded of the Lord when the kingdom of God should come. They were not being honest with the evidence that had been set before them, nor with the testimony of God’s word. And it was their dishonesty behind their demand that made the Lord respond to them as He did.

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The fact is that the Pharisees were determined to think about the coming of "the kingdom of God" only in the way that they thought it should come and wanted to see it come. Regardless of what God's word said, and regardless of the overwhelming evidence that had been set before them concerning the fact that "the kingdom of God" really was "at hand," just like the "gospel of the kingdom" had been declaring, the Pharisees refused to deal with either the evidence or God's word honestly. Consequently they refused to believe that "the kingdom of God" was "at hand."

Now recognizing that this is just what the Pharisees did is really the key, so to speak, to understanding and appreciating the Lord's response to them. The "kingdom of God" was not "within" them as a spiritual reigning of God in their hearts. After all, these Pharisees were God's enemies and were not of God. As the Lord said later on, they hated both the Father and Him. However the "kingdom of God" was "within" them in another sense. It was "within" them in the sense of the effectual working of the abundant proofs that had been given to them, testifying that the climactic stage in Israel's program had indeed arrived and "the kingdom of God" truly was "at hand."

### The Background To The Lord's Words

It first of all needs to be noted that the things set forth in Luke 17 do not occur at the beginning of the Lord's earthly ministry. Therefore they do not take place at the beginning of the climactic stage in God's program with Israel when the "kingdom of heaven" began to be preached to Israel as being "at hand." Rather by the time the events of Luke 17 occur, the three years of the Lord's public ministry are nearing their end. Hence the truth about the arrival of the climactic stage in Israel's program, along with all of the confirming signs of the kingdom, have been saturating Israel for almost 3 and one half years.

Now this needs to be noted for 2 main reasons: 1.) to underscore the fact that if the "kingdom of God/kingdom of heaven" was to be rightly understood as only a spiritual, 'in-the-heart' type kingdom, then the Lord naturally would have been teaching about a spiritual only kingdom right from the beginning and would not allow the misconception to exist for three or more years. And 2.) the issue of the time needs to be noted to underscore the fact that the Lord's response to the Pharisees is in view of the fact that they were in possession of over 3 years worth of testimony and infallible evidence verifying the reality of the "kingdom of God" being "at hand." Yet though this was the case, they had not honestly dealt with it.

### The Pharisees' Dishonesty

As verse 20 relates, near the end of His ministry the Lord "was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come." Notice that the Holy Ghost has Luke say that the Lord "was demanded" of them. This is something the Pharisees did out of dishonesty of heart and not with sincerity of inquiry at all. They did not make this demand as ones who genuinely believed "the gospel of the kingdom." They did not believe that it was truly "at hand," having been persuaded by both the preaching and the evidential signs of the kingdom and "signs of the times" that had been given. Honesty was not what was behind their "demand." Instead, their "demand" was part and parcel of their continuing scorn, ridicule, and denial that the climactic stage in Israel's program actually had arrived and that the "kingdom of God" therefore really was "at hand."

The Pharisees made this demand in the same scornful and scoffing vein as when they tempted the Lord and "desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven." And they did this in the same vein as when they had earlier on denounced John the Baptist.

It was therefore a hypocritical and scornful "demand" based primarily upon their firm refusal to honestly deal with the evidence that had been set before them. However it was also based upon their own preferred ideas as to how they thought the "kingdom of God" should come. And these preferred ideas carried more weight with them than the testimony of God's word. In fact, what they preferred to think caused them to reject the overwhelming testimony that God gave to them.

In connection with this the Pharisees thought that the "kingdom of God" should come with great pomp and circumstance, and with great fanfare, and that they would be able to observe it as such. The Lord, however, was well aware of this. In fact, He took their misconception to task earlier on when He reproved the people for not responding properly to John the Baptist.

<sup>24</sup> And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

<sup>25</sup> But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously appavelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. (Luke 7:24-25)

It was the contrary teachings of Israel's apostate leadership, headed up by the Pharisees, that taught the people that if John was the true herald

of the kingdom he would have been “gorgeously appalled.” To their way of thinking God’s herald of the kingdom should naturally ‘look the part.’ That is, he should look like a royal emissary in dress, conduct, and ministry. He should at least rival, if not outdo, those in “kings’ courts.” This, however, was only the imaginative and preferred ideas of the Pharisees. The prophets described the herald of the kingdom and his ministry in no such terms.

Again, the Lord was well aware of the Pharisees’ preferred ideas. He knew with whom He was dealing and what was behind their “demand.”

## The Lord’s Response

Now the Lord’s response to the Pharisees’ “demand” takes all of this into account and is also consistent with all of it. Hence the Lord responded by first of all saying, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.” In so doing He reproveth their misconception of how they thought the kingdom should be coming, which was based upon their own imagined and preferred ideas.

Therefore the kingdom wasn’t coming with the “observation” and the prestigious sorts of signs the Pharisees looked for. Likewise when the Lord went on to say, “Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there!” He reproveth any idea that it would be the way they imagined in the future either. No one was going to come to them in the future and tell them to ‘Look here’ or ‘Look there’ and so have them observe the kingdom coming with the pomp and circumstance with which they thought it should come.

Again, what the Pharisees imagined about the way in which God would announce and bring His kingdom to the earth was all wrong. None of what they imagined was what God had set forth in the prophets. Instead the “signs of the times” and the mechanics of the kingdom’s coming described by God in the prophets was entirely different from what they imagined and preferred to believe; including the dress, conduct, and message, of the herald of the kingdom.

Nevertheless what God had set forth in the prophets was true. And in connection with this, when the climactic stage in Israel’s program arrived God began to fulfill exactly what He had set forth in the prophets. The promised “word of the kingdom” began to be preached in the very manner specified, and all of the prophesied signs that verified the reality of the kingdom of heaven being “at hand” began to transpire.

The “kingdom of God” began coming upon Israel just as had been foretold. And the proof of it had been abundantly given to all Israel, including the Pharisees, over the course of the previous 3 plus years. Hence, these Pharisees were not without legitimate proofs by any means. In fact the exact opposite was the case. The proofs were in abundance. It was their “demand” that was without legitimate foundation.

## The Proof Actually Was In Their Hearts

In view of the way in which God described the effectual working of both “the gospel of the kingdom” and the signs of the kingdom, the proof of the reality that the kingdom of God had come upon Israel was actually in the hearts and minds of these

Pharisees themselves. For God had put it there. Again, they just refused to believe it.

The proof was there because the “gospel of the kingdom” and its accompanying signs effectually worked within the people of Israel in the same way that the pronouncing of the Law did back in Moses’ day. As is recorded in Deuteronomy 30, Moses said to the people of Israel in his day,...

<sup>11</sup> For this commandment which I command thee this day, it *is* not hidden from thee, neither *is* it far off.

<sup>12</sup> It *is* not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

<sup>13</sup> Neither *is* it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

<sup>14</sup> But the word *is* very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. (Deuteronomy 30:11-14)

In view of what Moses said here, the people of Israel were without excuse when it came to being held accountable by God for the commandment Moses gave to them. The commandment, along with the very works of the Lord that they saw through

Moses’ ministry, effectually worked within them, (in their mouth and in their heart), and by so doing placed them in the position of full accountability to God. They had no excuse for thinking that the commandment was “hidden” from them, or that it was “far off.” Rather, being “in thy mouth, and in thy heart,” it was indeed within every one of them.

Now in similar manner was this the case with the people of Israel at the time of the arrival of the climactic stage of their program. God designed “the gospel of the kingdom” and its accompanying signs from Him to effectually work in them the same way, and in view of it for full accountability to be brought to bear upon each Israelite, including the Pharisees.

This *heart-set accountability factor* is a very big issue during the climactic stage in Israel’s program, and as such it has a bearing upon a great many things. Consequently the Lord says a number of things in His ministry to Israel that directly make reference to this accountability factor and that enforce it. For example, with respect to the impact made by Him casting out devils He said, ...

<sup>20</sup> But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. (Luke 11:20)

Notice in particular that the Lord said this to the Pharisees. The kingdom of God truly had “come upon” them in connection with this. And, as the Lord emphasized, there was “no doubt” about it. However the Pharisees simply refused to believe it. Nevertheless and notwithstanding “the kingdom of God” indeed had “come upon” them, as the Lord pointed out. The proof was there. And with that being the case their experience of the prophesied signs of the kingdom held them accountable to it.

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In like manner when the Lord spoke about the people of Israel hearing “the word of the kingdom” He said that it was effectually “sown in the heart” of an Israelite when he heard it.

<sup>19</sup> When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. (Matthew 13:19)

Whether the man believed “the word of the kingdom” or not was up to him. But it was effectually “sown in his heart,” just like the Lord said. And as such he was held fully accountable for it.

These are just a couple of examples of the heart-set accountability factor that was strongly and purposefully in effect during the climactic stage in Israel’s program. And it affected the Pharisees too.

In view of this, therefore, all the proofs for the reality of the coming of “the kingdom of God,” (if the Pharisees of Luke 17 had honestly sought any proofs), were in their own hearts. They had been placed there over the course of the previous 3 plus years by the effectual working of both “the gospel of the kingdom” and the signs of it. That therefore is the place where they needed to be looking to see the reality of the kingdom being “at hand.” They needed to honestly deal with what had been placed in their hearts by “the gospel of the kingdom” and its signs. Hence, the Lord said to them, “for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” — K. R. Blades

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## Gospel Clichés

A cliché is a word, expression, or even an idea, which through repeated use has become one of two things: it has either become trite, losing its freshness or force of meaning; or it has become popularly accepted as a statement of some truth, when in reality it may not be an accurate statement or presentation of the truth at all.

Now in many cases a cliché is harmless, especially when it is merely trite. However when a cliché is of the second kind, it can be harmful. When it actually is the misstatement of some truth, the erroneous cliché by its inaccuracy deceives and misleads people. In addition, by its popular use the cliché actually strengthens its capacity to masquerade as the truth, even to the point of often being able to successfully oppose the truth in people’s minds when they are confronted with it.

Now at no time is an erroneous cliché more harmful than when it affects God’s word, and in particular when it is a Gospel cliché.

Unfortunately there are a number of erroneous Gospel clichés. And as such they actually pervert “the gospel of Christ” by misstating God’s requirement for being justified in His sight. In view of the importance of the clarity of the gospel in the face of these perversions, beginning in this issue, (and for the next few issues), we will examine some of these Gospel clichés. For a fuller examination of this matter, see the author’s booklet, *The Gospel of God’s Grace: Make It Clear! Make It Plain!*, from which these articles are taken.

### Perverting The Gospel Of Christ by Telling Someone to “Give Your Heart And Life To The Lord”

First of all, note God’s clear declaration of the fact that faith, and faith alone, is His requirement for justification in His sight.

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

<sup>22</sup> Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

<sup>23</sup> For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

<sup>24</sup> Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

<sup>25</sup> Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

<sup>26</sup> To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

<sup>27</sup> Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. (Romans 3:21-27)

<sup>4</sup> Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

<sup>5</sup> But to him the worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. (Romans 4:4-5)

<sup>8</sup> For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

<sup>9</sup> Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

As these verses (along with upwards of 150 others) clearly state, God’s requirement for justification unto eternal life; for salvation from the

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debt and penalty of one's sins; is the sole issue of placing one's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

Faith by nature is non-meritorious and excludes the issue of one's works. Faith in someone is the issue of placing your trust, confidence, or reliance in that person and not in yourself. Believing in someone is the issue of being fully persuaded regarding the sufficiency of his merits and strength, and depending upon him and his merits instead of yourself and your own merits.

Therefore in believing in someone, you trust that person and depend upon him and his doings for what you need, and you don't offer any efforts of your own. Hence, having faith in someone by its very nature excludes one's own works in any manner or form. Faith places full confidence and dependence upon the works of another for you.

Wherefore, when God declares in the gospel of Christ that He is "the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus," this is what He is talking about. "Believing in Jesus" is the issue of placing one's complete trust, confidence, or dependence upon Jesus Christ and His redemptive work on the cross for one's salvation, and not trusting in any works one can do. It is the issue of having "faith in his blood." That is, having complete confidence and dependence upon the merits of Christ's shed blood to provide for and effect your salvation. It is the issue of being fully persuaded that when He died for you as your substitute Redeemer He did all the work necessary to accomplish your salvation. This is what "believing in Jesus" means. This is what faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as one's Savior means.

Unfortunately, though, this issue of faith in Jesus Christ as God's sole requirement for salvation all too often is not made plain and clear. Rather, it is muddled up by terminology and phraseology that not only does not accurately convey what faith in Christ is, but that actually perverts the issue and turns faith into works.

The following example falls into this category. By using such an expression God's requirement for salvation is misstated, and "another gospel" is preached instead of the gospel of justification by grace through faith without works.

**"GIVE YOUR HEART AND LIFE TO THE LORD" —**

This is a very popular expression used by Christians and evangelists today when they appeal to people to respond to the gospel. After telling them that they are sinners who need to be saved, and that Christ died for them, they tell the unsaved that what they need to do in order to be saved is to "give their heart and life to the Lord." If they do this, they are told, God will save them. But this is not God's requirement for salvation. God doesn't use this terminology in His gospel of justification unto life.

Giving one's heart and life to the Lord isn't what faith in Christ is all about. Salvation is not the issue of giving God anything. Rather, it is the issue of receiving a gift from God. The gift of salvation is not received by giving God anything in exchange. It is received solely on the basis of one's trust being placed in the merits of Christ's redemptive work on the cross.

In truth, giving one's heart and life to the Lord is an activity of service to the Lord. It is something that describes dedication. Such activity of service and dedication is something the Lord wants, but only from those who have become His own. Serving the Lord by giving Him one's heart and life in dedication is something that the Lord appeals to Christians to do. Notice this, for example, in Romans 12:1-2 and Ephesians 2:10.

<sup>1</sup> I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.*

<sup>2</sup> And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:1-2)

<sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

Giving one's heart and life to the Lord, therefore, is the work of service to the Lord that God can accept and be well pleased with only *after* He has first justified and sanctified a person. But it is not the means by which one gets justified and so becomes a Christian.

What this expression of God's requirement actually does, along with so many other similar expressions, is to confuse the issue of salvation with that of Christian service. It takes terminology appropriate to statements God makes regarding the service of His people, and applies it to the issue of being saved and becoming one of God's people. But salvation and service are two completely different things. A person cannot serve the Lord until he is saved. This is because it isn't until a person is saved that he possesses anything from God by which he can serve the Lord. A person must be justified and sanctified first before any service is even possible. Hence, it is absurd to make serving the Lord a requirement for salvation.

However, it isn't only absurd, it is downright false. Serving the Lord and dedication to Him is not God's requirement for justification. Giving one's heart and life to the Lord is not the issue of faith in Christ. Therefore, instead of accurately stating the response God wants, this expression misstates it. And, as such, it perverts "the gospel of Christ."

Once again, God's sole requirement for justification unto eternal life is faith alone in Christ alone as one's all-sufficient Savior. Works cannot be, and will not be, counted for righteousness. As Romans 3:26 says, in view of "the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" God is "the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Have you honestly believed in Jesus as your all-sufficient Savior? If not, why not do so right now. God will see your faith, and He will do just what "the gospel of Christ" says; He will justify you unto eternal life, counting your faith for righteousness. — K. R. Blades

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***"Believing in Jesus" is the issue of placing one's complete trust, confidence, or dependence upon Jesus Christ and His redemptive work on the cross for one's salvation, and not trusting in any works one can do.***

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