

The Kingdom and the Cross

“Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” Philippians 2:8-11

The word of the kingdom and the word of the cross are inseparably linked. Together, they form the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ. The word of the kingdom is the message that God the Father desires for Christ to reign as absolute King in our life. The word of the cross is the message that Christ died for us to make this possible. Coupled together, these two divine truths can be expressed as: Christ died for us and included us in His death so He might sovereignly live in us.

The kingdom and the cross are one gospel. We cannot have the kingdom without the cross nor can we have the cross without the kingdom. The kingdom of God is the Kingship of Christ. But Christ can only rule as King in our life if we embrace the transforming power of His cross. All of us were naturally born with a rebellious sinful nature which could never submit to Christ's Kingship. Therefore, when we were born again of the Spirit, God performed a divine heart transplant. When Christ died on the cross, God exchanged our sinful heart with His Son's holy heart. This divine exchange has made it possible for God to now reign in us through Jesus Christ. This was the apostle Paul's testimony: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me (Galatians 2:20)."

It is impossible for us to spiritually embrace the cross of Christ unless we also embrace His Kingship. God will not share the precious truth of the cross of His Son with us unless we are willing to submit wholeheartedly to His Son's

authority. Our heartfelt prayer is for anyone who desperately struggles with besetting sins because of spiritual ignorance concerning the divine exchange of the cross. However, we also need to be aware that there is a counterfeit Christianity that gives lip service to the kingdom and the cross. Many so-called Christians who claim that Jesus is their Lord are not even born again. And many of those who are "born again" are willful enemies of the cross of Christ because they love their soul-life too much to give it up for Christ. Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his soul-life will lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake will find it... whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple (Matthew 16:24-25; Luke 14:27)."

Anyone who professes to be a Christian but does not carry his own cross, deny himself and lose his soul-life for Christ's sake is practicing lawlessness and does not truly know Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? (Luke 6:46)."

He also said, "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness (Matthew 7:22-23).'"

There are many false teachers today who profess to know the cross of Christ. However, anyone who chooses to govern himself instead of submitting to the power of Christ's Spirit is practicing a counterfeit Christianity. Anyone who does not bear the fruit of the cross, which is sanctification, is not a true disciple. Jesus said, "You shall know them by their fruit." He did not say, "You shall know them by their gifts and ministries." Anyone who is trying to fulfill their soul-life through ministry instead of losing their soul-life for Christ's sake is walking in darkness. The Bible says, "If we say we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth (1 John 1:6)."

The Bible also says of such people, that they hold to "a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men of these (2 Timothy 3:5)" and "What fellowship can light have with darkness? ... Therefore, come out from them and be separate... and I will be a Father to you and you will be My sons and daughters (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)."

Everyone who is destined for eternal salvation as the bride of Christ will wholeheartedly embrace the gospel of the cross and the King. Every child of God that wants Jesus Christ to reign in their life will rejoice to learn that God has removed their sinful nature by Christ's death on the cross. Knowing that we have been crucified with Christ, we are now free to lose our soul-life for His sake (Galatians 6:14). We gladly submit all our attitudes, affections, associations and activities to Christ's Sovereignty so that He might rule our soul-life. We present ourselves each day as a living and holy sacrifice to God so He might transform our soul and conform us into His Son's image. We joyfully give up trying to fulfill our soul-life in this world so that we might be eternally joined to our beloved bridegroom Jesus in the age to come. "Now this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent (John 17:3)."

When we are ready to submit ourselves to Christ's Sovereignty and lose our soul-life for His sake, God will reveal to us the mystery of the cross, which is also the mystery of the gospel. Then God will be glorified since we will no longer live for ourselves but for Christ the King who lives in us. "One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)." This is the eternal gospel of Christ.

"And I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth - to every nation, tribe, language and people." Revelation 14:6