

The Great Controversy Series

Sermon 30: Light Through Darkness

Mark 1:14 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

When Jesus said, "The time is fulfilled" what "time" was He talking about. Jesus was preaching about this prophecy in the book of Daniel:

Daniel 9:25 "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.

Messiah would appear sixty nine weeks, applying the day for a year principle, 483 years after the commandment in 457 B.C. to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. In A.D. 27 the Holy Spirit anointed Jesus as the Messiah. The time, that is the 69 weeks was fulfilled. Jesus preached that the kingdom of God was at hand. Jesus' disciples also were proclaiming this message correctly.

What did it mean that the kingdom of God was at hand? Although Jesus' disciples were preaching the right message they did not understand the message properly. Jesus' disciples believed that the Messiah would rule the world from its capital Jerusalem. This was wrong. Because the prophecy in Daniel said:

Daniel 9:26 "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.

Daniel 9:27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.

Jesus would be cut off. In the middle of the week, that is, after 3 and one half years, Jesus ended the sacrificial system with His death on the cross. Jesus' disciples did not comprehend one aspect of the prophecy. According to popular theory and their own cherished hopes, Jesus came to the world to set up an earthly kingdom. Just when His disciples expected Jesus to take the throne He was crucified. However seriously we express their disappointment it is insufficient. Jesus' disciples were distraught. O.K. Jesus told them many times that He would die. Where was the mistake? The disciples misunderstood the message they were preaching.

As we preached before, Jesus first came to establish the kingdom of grace.

The expression in the Bible “Kingdom of God” refers to both the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory. Paul, in the letter to the Hebrews speaks about the kingdom of grace. The apostle, after pointing to Jesus as a merciful intercessor who is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” said:

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The throne of grace represents the kingdom of grace because the presence of a throne implies the presence of a kingdom. Jesus used the expression “kingdom of heaven” in many parables to express the work of divine grace in people’s hearts.

The throne of glory however represents the kingdom of glory. In the following verse Jesus mentions the kingdom of glory.

Matthew 25:31 " When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.³² "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

This kingdom is yet future. This kingdom will be set up when Jesus comes the second time.

When Adam and Eve sinned, the Lord set up the kingdom of grace. God began His plan of salvation then for fallen humanity. The kingdom of grace was present in the plan and promise of God. People could become subjects of the kingdom through faith.

But the kingdom of grace was not established in its true meaning until the death of the Messiah. The Savior, even after beginning His earthly ministry, growing weary of humanity’s stubbornness and ingratitude, could have turned away from the sacrifice of Calvary. If He had done so, there would have been no salvation for lost humanity. But when our Savior Jesus was dying and with His last breath He cried, “It is finished” the plan of redemption was secured. The promise made in the garden of Eden to the guilty pair was ratified. The kingdom of grace which existed in the promise of God was then established.

Jesus’ death caused great disappointment to His disciples but His death guaranteed their salvation. The disciples were distraught but they had delivered the right message. God plan was fulfilled and the Lord blessed the disciples by giving them the gospel ministry.

Because people wrongly interpret the Bible according to their own proud ideas widespread errors exist and the people experience disappointment. In spite of the mistakes of the believers, the Lord will accomplish His purposes. After Jesus’ resurrection He appeared to His disciples and explained the Scriptures and equipped them with spiritual gifts for their work. Psalm 30:5 says, “Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning.”

In a similar way, William Miller and his associates who were announcing Jesus' second coming preached the 2300 year prophecy which is the longest and last of the time prophecies. Miller and his associates announced that the 2300 year period was about to end, that the judgment had come and that Jesus' eternal kingdom was about to be established. This message was correct. Jesus' first disciples preached the message, "The time is fulfilled" and actually that message by way of the 490 year explanation, was a part of the 2300 year prophecy.

William Miller and his associates, like Jesus' first disciples, did not completely understand the message that they preached. Why? Like the first disciples, Miller and his associates believed a popular but completely untrue idea. Daniel 8:14 says, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed." In Miller's time it was widely believed that the sanctuary represented the earth. Miller supposed that the expression "cleansing of the sanctuary" meant the purifying of the earth by fire when Jesus comes. Thus Miller thought that Daniel 8:14 pointed to the second coming. This was wrong.

The Old Testament sanctuary service with its ceremonies and sacrifices exemplified Jesus' plan of salvation. In that service, the high priest made the cleansing of the sanctuary as the last of the year's ceremonies. This service was made on the Day of Atonement and included a judgment. This service exemplified Jesus' judgment and atonement work in heaven. This work is done before Jesus comes. Judgment and atonement take place before Jesus comes. Because Jesus says in the Bible:

Revelation 22:12 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work."

That is, when Jesus comes, judgment is finished because the reward is known.

That the judgment begins before Jesus comes is shown in this verse:

Revelation 14:6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth -- to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people --⁷ saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, **for the hour of His judgment has come**; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

When Jesus' first disciples announced the message, "The time is fulfilled" they did not notice that the Messiah would be cut off in the following verses. In a similar way when Miller and his associates announced the messages in Daniel 8:14 and Revelation 14:7, in the following verses they did notice that there would be other messages. In both situations popular but wrong Bible interpretations blinded people's eyes. In both situations the message the Lord desired was preached. In both situations the believers experienced disappointment.

By permitting the message to be given as it was, the Lord was doing a merciful work. The Lord was testing the churches. Opportunity was given to church members to learn what was in their hearts and for repentance. Did they really love Jesus and want to see Him or did they love this world? The message was sent for them to see their real spiritual condition and to seek the Lord with repentance and humility.

A test came to those also who accepted the message. When they experienced disappointment did they quickly abandon their faith? Or would they investigate by prayer and humility where and how they made their mistake? When they were scoffed at because they were disappointed would they deny their faith quickly in shame?

The message would teach the believers what the results would be of trusting in the theories and ideas of men. In the end, the disappointment they suffered was good for them. Afterwards, they had a more solid and proper faith.

So how is your faith? Is it really based on the Bible or are worldly theories mixed with Bible truths? Many people have abandoned their faith when the events they expected did not materialize. So understanding the truth becomes extremely important. Many people take ideas from the television, from films, from the internet or other people and they apply them to the Bible and come to ridiculous conclusions. Don't be one of them. Let the Bible be your source of truth. It is trustworthy.