

# Finishing the Task

Kingdom of God Missions Conference, November, 2023

Anthony Buzzard

In order to finish the task, it is essential that we first define the task precisely, because of the massive popular confusion over what the Christian Gospel is. The **Gospel about the Kingdom of God** is based on **Acts 8:12**. That verse is in my opinion a brilliant summary text showing what it is that we must believe in order to be saved — not, I add, in order to make us appear intellectual or smart, but in order to be *saved* — that is, how to gain indestructible life or attain to the Life of the Age to Come (poorly translated in many versions as “eternal life”).

How can you believe the Gospel (as Mark 1:1, 14, 15 and Mark 4:13 say we must) if you cannot define it? Along with that critically essential text (Acts **8:12**) for defining the Gospel, goes **Luke 8:12**. I remind you of the parable of the sower, which Jesus said was the one parable essential for understanding all of the parables (Mark 4:13). Luke 8:12 goes as follows: “Whenever anyone hears [**the message about the Kingdom**, as in the parallel in Matt. 13:19], the Devil comes and snatches away that Gospel which has been sown in his or her heart or mind with this result, namely, so that a person will be unable to believe that Gospel [of the Kingdom of God] and thus be saved.”<sup>1</sup> The Devil knows what he is doing, but the public often does not! The words I just quoted are the words of Jesus, the master teacher. It is hard for me to understand how any verse could be more brilliantly significant than that statement from the master rabbi.

It is for a very good reason that the teaching of Jesus is repeated often verbatim in the three first gospel narratives. It is to me a staggeringly interesting fact that Jesus fully understood that without the Gospel message of the Kingdom, no salvation is possible. This is so **very** different from the popular idea that the Gospel is complete and sufficient, if we simply believe that Jesus died and rose again. That is the famous slogan of Billy Graham: “Jesus came to do three days’ work: to die, to be buried, and to rise again.”

That popular but very much mistaken and truncated definition of the Gospel is ubiquitous on the Internet. Here is where you can help stimulate the right conversation: Thousands of sites are very much ready to offer answers to the public’s questions. Ask them to define the Gospel, and with almost unanimous response, they will quote the words of Paul (and twist them), but not the words of Jesus. This is a serious error. It gets rid of Jesus as the Master Gospel preacher (note Hebrews 3:2: the saving Gospel “had its beginning with Jesus’ preaching”), and this needs to be corrected especially by those of us who have been privileged to understand that the Gospel has a specific label, namely the Kingdom of God, which refers firstly and predominantly to the future Kingdom of God on the earth, to be initiated when God

---

<sup>1</sup> The NET Bible notes, “The *word* of Jesus has the potential to save if it germinates in a person’s heart, something the devil is very much against.”

sends Jesus back at his future Parousia (the Greek word for second coming). So far I think, people have not effectively used the Internet marketplace to make our point about defining the Gospel of salvation correctly.

Don't forget another trick of the Devil: that several translations do not want you to know that *Jesus* preached the Gospel. They say that Jesus preached the "Good News" but Paul preached the "Gospel"! Clever and deceptive!

So I begin by calling your attention to Luke's remarkable record of the parable of the sower. It is in the eighth verse of Luke eight (easy to remember because 888 is the number of Jesus), that Jesus uttered these staggering words: Luke recorded that Jesus, having uttered parable of the sower, customarily, not just once, but repeatedly, each time he taught the parable, used to *raise his voice* or *shout* for special emphasis. This deliberate emphasis was designed by Jesus to call attention to the fact that **without an understanding of the Gospel about the Kingdom** no salvation is possible.

This reminds me immediately also of the words of Jesus in Luke 13:23, where somebody asked Jesus the fascinating question, "Will only a few people be saved?" Jesus' answer in Luke 18:8 is brutally true. He wondered whether when he came back in the future at his second coming he would in fact find the faith at all on the earth. This leads to an equally fascinating discussion by Jesus as to why that dismal and threatening state of affairs could possibly be. Jesus explained that it would be the multitude, the *many*, and not the exceptional few, who would suffer this shattering disappointment. Jesus said, "When you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God and yourselves being barred from it," there will be of course a massive disappointment (Luke 18:28). Those excluded from that future Kingdom and the banquet which will introduce the millennium, will protest that Jesus had taught in their streets, even that they had performed miracles in his name, only to find out that Jesus had never recognized them as true believers.

<sup>MIT</sup> **Matthew 7:22** "In that future day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name expel demons, and in your name perform many miracles?" <sup>BBE</sup> **Matthew 7:22** A great number will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, were we not prophets in your name, and did we not by your name send out evil spirits, and by your name do works of power? (Matt. 7:22 BBE)

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 7:23** And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness (Matt. 7:23 ESV)

The reality and possibility of being deceived on the issue of salvation is dramatically taught by Jesus here. The point being made by Rabbi Jesus was that the road to the Kingdom was very narrow and consequently very few, certainly not the majority, would successfully find it. This statement is so unlike the popular evangelical concept that all one has to do is to recite the sinner's prayer or ask Jesus into one's heart — a statement so vague as to be almost unintelligible. In the parable of the sower, the basis for understanding all parables, as Jesus said, 75%, or three quarters of those who heard Jesus give the words of that saving parable,

that is, were exposed to the saving Gospel truth, would **fail to enter the Kingdom**. They would turn out to have been deceived! Jesus explained that “some people believe for a while and then fail by falling away” (Luke 8:13). How diametrically opposite this is to the popular myth of “once saved, always saved.” Paul of course agreed when he said that if one does not persist to the end one “will be cut off” (Rom. 11:22).

Salvation in Scripture is in three tenses of the verb — past, present, and mainly future. No one wins the race when the starting gun goes off — only when one crosses the finishing line, which is the future arrival of Jesus to rule the world with the saints (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27: “all people will serve and obey **the saints**.”

Now that we have defined the Gospel biblically, the task we are assigned is indeed to “preach **this** [i.e. well known to the Bible writers] **Gospel about the Kingdom** in all the world” (Matt. 24:14). Those are the words of Jesus, and it is not only information about his *work*, i.e. his death and resurrection, but his *words* — firstly about the Kingdom coming. It seems to me that the Internet is today’s marketplace, and we must make our presence known there. I recently asked the Billy Graham association to define the Gospel and found them apparently keen to know what the Kingdom of God has to do with the Gospel! Our style of dialogue of course should always be conciliatory and non-critical. We should point out that **the words** (John 6:63) of Jesus are indispensable for our salvation, not only his atoning death and resurrection.

The public has even been told by some Dispensationalists that the Gospel of the Kingdom is only for Jews! A greater error is hardly imaginable, and is refuted at once by Acts 28:23, 30, 31, where Paul “welcomed the people and began preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom.” (Paul was faithfully copying Jesus who in Luke 9:11 “welcomed the people and spoke to them about the Kingdom of God.”) When some Jews refused to believe Paul, he left them with these words ringing in their ears: “**This salvation** of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen to it!” (Acts 28:28). Note that the activity of Paul as a tireless preacher of the Gospel of the Kingdom, copying Jesus, is the final word of Luke at the end of his second volume, the Book of Acts. Yet that phrase **Gospel of the Kingdom** is very oddly absent from public discourse about how to be saved!

Currently some unitarians have abandoned the glorious and ultimate climax to the Kingdom Gospel plan, namely the millennium, which will mark the end of the Devil’s current all- pervasive deceptive work. I make the point very simply. Revelation 12:9 informs us that currently the Devil is “**deceiving the entire world**.” The point is repeated in 1 John 5:19. John wrote his letters to prevent the very real threat from those “who are trying to deceive you” (1 John 2:26; 3:7). I stress this fact then: when the millennium arrives, at the future second coming of Jesus, the Devil will be arrested by a powerful angel, bound and locked up in an underground abyss, so that, as we read, “he **can no longer deceive the nations**” (Rev. 20:3). *It is a matter of simple logic*: The Devil cannot possibly now be deceiving the whole world and *at the same time* be unable to deceive the whole world! To imagine, as

amillennialism proposes, that the Devil has *already* been bound is to fall for a huge falsehood, and is indeed to play fast and loose with the simple words of Scripture. It is really one of the Devil's greatest lies! It also interferes with the straightforward prophecy of Rev. 20.

John added a further warning that anyone tampering with his words, either subtracting from them or adding to them, will receive a dreadful curse (Rev. 22:18-19). The millennial prophecy is the grand end point of the whole of Scripture. It is the reversal of the disaster which happened in Genesis, when Adam and Eve failed in regard to their appointed destiny. The Devil deceived them. Revelation 20 which mentions the thousand years 6 times is the happy ending of the whole Bible.

The people who will be privileged to rule and reign in the thousand years are those who have had their heads chopped off (a rare and completely unambiguous word meaning *beheaded*). That is to say, martyred people will be among those who will be rewarded for their faithful loyalty to the Gospel of the Kingdom, by being privileged to rule as kings with Jesus for a thousand years. It is an egregious refusal to believe these words of Scripture, if one maintains that being "beheaded" points to one's personal conversion! It was that totally unwarranted, so-called **amillennial** view of Revelation 20 which called forth from the celebrated Henry Alford some of the strongest and most rightly indignant reactions in all of Bible commentary. Alford said that if one cannot understand the yet future period of one thousand years (premillennialism), "There is an end of all meaning in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything." It is completely foreign to the unitarian work of nearly 200 years to espouse so-called amillennialism. It deals a blow to the Gospel about the Kingdom, of which Revelation 20 is the grand and glorious climax, and the amazing resolution of human history in favor of God's triumph over the Devil! Revelation 20 means the resolution of the human predicament described in Genesis.

Paul expressed his alarm and concern about the very false notion that the saints are *currently* ruling the world with Christ. With a biting irony, he said to the Corinthians that "some of you are satisfied and wealthy **already**. You have become kings without us!" Then Paul said, "Would to God that you really were ruling so that we might be ruling with you!" (1 Cor. 4:8). This truth was central to Paul's Gospel learned from Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 6:2 he said, in horror at the church's incompetence to settle disputes, "Don't you know that the saints are going to administer the world, and if the world is going to be under your jurisdiction..." That is, in the future millennial Kingdom of God.

The amillennial error not only embraces the illusion that the Devil has *already* been bound, "so that he can no longer deceive the nations" (Rev. 20:3). It adds to that the illusory and fanciful idea that Christians are now *currently* ruling the world with Christ! Such a concept indicates a complete failure to grasp the economy and plan of God, by which only in the future at the Parousia of Jesus will the Devil be imprisoned and confined, and his lying methods completely banished from society. The Devil will be put out of commission worldwide. Amillennialism wipes out that Christian hope! The glorious future day when the

Devil will be bound will be the day when the nations beat their tanks into tractors and their guns into garden tools. That is the day when the Sandhursts and West Points of the present violent system will be viewed as curio museums. That is the day for which we pray as our first concern: “May Your Kingdom come; may Your will be done on earth.” It is an extraordinary insult to the Gospel to suppose that that glorious freedom from Satan’s deception has already occurred in the lives of the faithful!

The Kingdom of God Gospel beautifully summarizes the grand Kingdom plan of God from Genesis to Revelation. It was in the garden of Eden that human beings fell prey to the enticing lies of the Devil. Jesus Messiah well understood his task as God’s true world ruler, as that of reversing that human catastrophe and restoring the garden of Eden and the promised fruit of the tree. God had said in Jeremiah 27:5, “I have made the earth and the people and animals on it...and I will give all this to the one who is pleasing in My sight.” Jesus beautifully reflects that purpose when he promises the faithful with these words: “Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom” (Luke 12:32), or as we might say colloquially, “Your Father is delighted to give you the Kingdom and rulership over the world with Jesus.” That grand and splendid goal became swamped by the false notion of immortal souls disappearing to heaven to strum harps in advance of the future resurrection and millennium. Our task, as Tracy calls it, is to complete the commission to announce the Gospel of the Kingdom to all the nations (Matt 24:14), so that the end of the age may come. Woe to us if we fall short of that marvelous commission. Woe to us if we explain it all away into nonsense with so called amillennialism, which is a denial of the goal of the Gospel of the Kingdom, a denial of the Christian hope and “promise to Abraham and his descendants that they will inherit the world” (Rom. 4:13).

Consider this fact about human destiny and purpose. In Exodus 19:5-6 the commission and career was given by God to Israel, the nation. They were to function as priests and kings for God. They were to set the standard of law and order for the world. That verse appears in 1 Peter 2:9 where the international church of true believers receive that status as kings and priests. The international church are now “the Israel of God” described by Paul in Galatians 6:16. That royal, priestly status is repeated several times in Revelation 2:26; 5:10, and then in the millennial passage in Revelation 20:4-10. The true believers will successfully take on that promised career of Exodus 19:6. The saints will rule as kings and priests for 1000 years. There will be no Devil then to confuse and deceive. The promise is finally repeated in Revelation 22 which speaks of the new heaven and earth predicted by Peter as “a day which is an age” (2 Pet. 3:13, 18) and thereafter they will reign forever and ever in Revelation 22:5.

I hope you can grasp how devastating is the attempt to explain away the millennium. It is an attack on the saving Gospel of the Kingdom and its glorious climax.

Let me now introduce you to a verse in Luke which has been hiding in many of your translations. It was at the last supper which commemorates not only the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus. but also serves as a shadow of the great future Messianic banquet to be

held when the Kingdom arrives. Jesus speaks of the “new” or “better” or “second covenant” which has replaced the Old Covenant. It is entirely appropriate for Jesus then to say to the Apostles and to us: “Just as my Father has **covenanted** [so the Greek reads] to give me the Kingdom, so I now **covenant** with you to give you the Kingdom. You will sit on thrones to administer the 12 tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29-30). This is the Christian destiny. This is the central covenantal theme which holds the whole Bible together. It is indeed the fulfillment of “the promise to Abraham and his descendants that they would be heirs of the world” (Rom. 4:13), inheritors, with Jesus as co-inheritor, of the future Kingdom. It would be a tragedy to think of us allowing this Bible doctrine to slip through our fingers through lack of attention and failure to love the truth, which as Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2:10 is a condition of being **saved**. I give you his exact words: “Because they did not welcome a love for the truth in order to be saved, God gave them over to a spirit of delusion,” which is the equivalent of wickedness and loss of salvation. No wonder then that Jesus made his words and teachings the critical factor in salvation which we dare not overlook. Jesus said in John 6 63: “the words that I speak to you are spirit and life.” It is understanding those words which imparts life and energy to us. Failure to grasp them is the road to death and disaster.

The one major misunderstanding which afflicts much of modern evangelicalism is the notion that Jesus had to keep the **Law of Moses** perfectly, while still teaching the New Covenant. Such a thing would be a logical impossibility. It is true of course that Jesus was born under the Law of Moses and was circumcised on the eighth day. It is equally true that he altered the Law of Moses in regard to divorce, that he said that his disciples were not bound to follow the Law in paying the temple tax. He was also free on that occasion to pay the Temple tax, “**so that we do not offend them**” (Matt. 17:27). Paul was equally free to carry out the physical circumcision of Timothy, “**because of the Jews** in that region” (Acts 16:3). Paul was also explicitly clear in 1 Corinthians 9:20 that he himself, a Jew and a Christian, was not under the law of Moses in the letter. The attempts to avoid that truth in some commentary and even some Jewish Christian translations, are a testimony to human stubbornness to cling to the Law of Moses in the letter, which is, as Paul said, bondage rather than freedom. It is like Hagar the servant, as distinct from Sarah our mother who is free under the new covenant Law of Messiah. We Christians of all nations are to be subject to the Law of Messiah, not the Law of Moses which is bondage (see the whole book of Galatians!)

It is our duty to labor to free our colleagues, even unitarians, who have never understood with clarity that the Law of Moses is not the same as the Law of Messiah. This would be a significant part of the task to which we have committed ourselves, in propagating the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

We remember too that Jesus said that only when that task is complete will he come again (Matt 24:14ff.) We are living certainly in end-time days. The words Gaza and Negev are found in the minor prophets of Scripture. It is true that Israel the nation has been given a land but it returned in 1948 in unbelief and is not now the Kingdom of God. It will not be the

Kingdom of God until Jesus the Messiah is seen to be sitting on the throne of David in Jerusalem, the city of the Great King. The future “great tribulation” will be a mighty wake-up call to the people of Israel. They once killed their own Messiah and continue largely not to accept him by believing his Gospel of the Kingdom.

Following that great future time of tribulation, “the time of Jacob’s trouble” as Jeremiah calls it (Jer 30:7), the Messiah will return in great glory to rule in the future millennium. He will rule with the saints and faithful of all the ages. There will be no imagined “pre-tribulation” rapture. All of the saints including Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the prophets will be caught up to meet the descending Messiah at his one spectacular Second Coming. Luke 17:23-24 tells us that the second coming will be like lightning flashing from East to West. It will be universal and visible everywhere. Many years ago I inquired of Salvation Army people, as I went to teach French and German in the American School in London, and asked them, “What do you understand by the Kingdom of God?” The invariable reply was from a seriously mistaken mistranslation of the King James Version of Luke 17:21: “The kingdom of God is within you,” in your heart. This of course as we now know is a horrible mistranslation. What Jesus in fact said there is that the Kingdom of God, when it comes, will not be local or out in the wilderness, etc. It will be all over like lightning flashing from East to West.

That Kingdom remains the ultimate destiny of us as followers of Messiah. To ensure entry by the narrow road we must “struggle to enter” and we must throw off all Laodicean tendencies, and muddles over eschatology and the millennium. We should be alarmed at the blindness of Calvin who when confronted with Acts 1:6 said of the disciples’ question, “Is this the time that you are going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?” that there were as many errors in that question as words! This shows that Calvin did not understand the Gospel of the Kingdom, any more than Augustine who likewise confused the church and the kingdom. Only a “passion for the truth in order to be saved” (2 Thess. 2:10) will drive us to correct these catastrophic misunderstandings. “Narrow indeed is the way” that leads to the Kingdom, and “it is through much tribulation that we must expect to enter the Kingdom” (Matt. 7:14; Acts 14:22). Let us encourage each other as we complete the task God and Jesus have given us.

I thoroughly recommend that you take time to read a book which conveys what I have attempted to pass on to you. The book is entitled *The Gospel of the Kingdom* and it was written by Wiley Jones in 1879. Its clarity on the millennium is admirable as well as its support for the one Gospel about the Kingdom.