



A Prophetic People in the Kingdom of God

Birth and life in the Kingdom of God

In John 3:3, Jesus says that the Kingdom of God can be seen (noticed, perceived) when a person is reborn. In verse 5, our Lord says that the Kingdom of God cannot be entered unless one is born of water and the Spirit. The more we see of this Kingdom, the deeper we can go into it and develop a better understanding of what it's all about. So, not only does this involve a natural birth by which we come into the world, but it's also about a spiritual birth. A second, spiritual birth out of the heart of God. Jesus says that nobody can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. There is a natural birth when the water of a pregnant woman breaks. There is a spiritual birth when someone decides to accept Jesus and to follow Him. Following Jesus means moving around in the Kingdom of Jesus. Wherever s/he goes, the Kingdom can be seen. The Kingdom is wherever Jesus reigns.

*The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.
(Matthew 13:44)*

That man is Jesus, who found us as a treasure in the world. He was so glad to have found us that He bought us for a price. He gave all He had for us. 1 Corinthians 6:20 says that we have been purchased at a price. We are treasures that He has bought.

In Luke 17:20-21, Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees, who were busy with a natural kingdom and didn't realize that the Kingdom was already present. This also applies to so many people today, who keep waiting for redemption through the rapture of the church. They long for the Kingdom and its power, not now, but only in the future. However, in this passage, Jesus said that the coming of the Kingdom of God cannot be predicted based on observations, nor by saying: "Look, here it is!" This is because the Kingdom already is in our midst. Actually, it says that the Kingdom is "inside" us. We have entered the Kingdom of God, and it has entered into us.

Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in! (Psalm 24:7)

This verse uses figurative and symbolic language. Obviously, gates don't have heads. This verse is referring to people. The psalmist writes that God uses us as gates through which He, being in the spiritual world, can manifest Himself and His Kingdom in the natural, visible world. That Kingdom is larger than the church. There is a King, a Kingdom and a church. The

King and the establishment of His Kingdom are the goal. The church is the means by which God works and by which He establishes His Kingdom (Ephesians 3:8-12).

When the means becomes the goal, there's idolatry. We then become focused on everything that can enlarge the church, instead of seeing the Kingdom around us. More and better activities, more and better programs. In the end, we're only busy with church and going to church. When, however, we are focused on the Kingdom of God, then the church will grow as a result. Wherever followers of Jesus are present, whenever that lifestyle from within God's heart becomes visible, that is where the church is busy and that is where the Kingdom of God is being manifested, wherever that may be. Every day of the week, also Sunday morning. I love getting together with many believers on Sunday or any other day. However, I have to admit that I also love sitting at the table with a group of friends, eating, laughing, talking about Jesus and sharing our hearts. Those meetings very often are better than the usual Sunday morning service. That is because it, too, is a manifestation of church.

Some leaders respond, saying that they are "congregation people" – as if I were not. To be perfectly clear, it is impossible not to love what Jesus loves very much. Jesus loves the church, but the church does consist of people and God loves those people. Of course, the point in question is how one defines "church", which results in different perspectives on this issue. Fortunately, Jesus is the one building the church and consequently, much that doesn't have His heart is being broken down.

Recently, I attended a Bible school abroad. The school had approximately thirty students with much freedom in Christ. They lived in a very religious and "oppressive" area. The leader told me that he wanted to begin a congregation. I understood what he meant. He wanted to start having meetings on Sunday mornings. He wanted to create an environment for people to move away from that heavy yoke of religion and legalism.

However, I felt it necessary to respond. I said: "Here you have a building with thirty students. You all sleep under the same roof. You eat, drink and are relationally bonded with each other. You have a team, you equip and educate your students and create space for them to practice what they learn. You bring apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers from other areas to your school to equip them. You then send them out. I understand what you mean when you say that you want to start a church, but it is important to realize that you already have a church here. A group of people relating to each other, good leadership that could be called elders as far as I'm concerned, equipping of the saints, and sending them out."

Many leaders want to embed institutions such as Bible schools, youth churches and all other sorts of initiatives in the church, or make them part of the church. They are meant to be submitted to the authority of a pre-existing and structured local church, without often recognizing that those institutes are manifestations of church and that they, as a group, already are a congregation and do not even need to be "embedded in" or "submitted to" that specific local congregation.

One also sees this "submitting to authority" when members of a congregation want to organize certain activities. A few years ago, my wife starting cooking meals for the homeless.

She invited them to come and eat at our house. Just like that, out of her heart, because God had moved her to do so.

People from our church then started asking why she hadn't organized this activity from within the church. What they meant to ask was whether she had consulted with the church leadership and received their approval. Of course, my wife had shared her plans with those around her, because if you're relationally bonded together, you share your heart. But did it have to be a church program? It could be wonderful and I am not against church programs, but too many people hide themselves behind programs and hardly begin moving themselves. Daily life with Jesus, inspired from God's heart, is of much more depth and blessing than a lifestyle focused on programs.

Do your work as for the Lord in the Kingdom of God

Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. (Colossians 3:22-24)

In modern language, this passage deals with a work relationship. Just do what your employer tells you to do, because that's what you're hired to do. You aren't hired to kiss up, but to work with a humble heart and with fear for the Lord. Other than that, it doesn't matter whether you're working in your household or have a job elsewhere. At all times, do your work as for the Lord. For example, if your job is cleaning toilets, you should do your work in such a way that if Jesus were to suddenly return, they'd be fit enough for Him to go and use them right away. Moreover, the Bible clearly states that our reward is our inheritance, because we serve Christ. It doesn't really matter what you do when living in God's Kingdom, as long as you go and move from within His heart!

Revelation 22:12 says that when Jesus returns, He will reward us according to what we have done – in general, not just in the church. Some people think we will only receive a reward for the work we did in relation to the institution called church. Such thinking causes us to be too focused on the church altar/stage and on the church. As a result, we are often overly concerned with functioning within the church and insufficiently focused on the Kingdom of God. People go home after a hard day's work, take a quick shower, grab their Bible and go to Bible study, because that's where they can get everything they need. They fail to realize that they've been busy in the Kingdom of God all day long. Or they get lost in all sorts of church activities. Of course, I am not opposed to church activities, but the focus should be on all the work one does in the Kingdom of God.

In 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, Paul says that he has laid the foundation upon which another will continue to build. The foundation is a revelation of Jesus. One can build all sorts of things on that foundation, but everyone's work will be brought to the light because there is a

day that comes with fire (verse 13). Many think that this refers to the future. Yes, that's true, but the revelation of that day can also be today or tomorrow. The word "day" has a literal and figurative meaning. A natural day between dawn and sunset, a day according to the Jewish calendar from sunset to sunset, but also in general terms, as one would say: "He is having the day of his life."

That fire from God's heart will determine which works will stand fast and which will be destroyed. This isn't about salvation, because there already is a foundation, a specific revelation of Jesus. Hence, this passage deals with whether or not one is to receive a reward.

If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:14-15)

God's fire will burn that which isn't in agreement with His heart and His thoughts. Everything, in other words, all works resulting from our fleshly thinking and a fleshly attitude, will be burnt. I do not believe that this will only happen in the future, but this is also a process which is already occurring in our hearts today. God's fire is already in the process of consuming.

This can be noticed around us and in our own lives. God purifies His church. Our reward is based on obedience to God for our labor that results from His heart, which comes from the fruit of the Spirit within us. According to this understanding, a homemaker who does her work for the Lord for 95 percent would receive a greater reward than a prophet working for the Lord for 85 percent, even if the prophet's work is perceived as more spectacular and important. Such a "church-only" way of thinking is a problem for many Christians. A yoke laid upon them throughout church history. It's about everything you do, not just about what you do within the institution called church. In this way, we influence the world around us and will eventually see Habakkuk 2:14 fulfilled:

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy in the Kingdom of God

According to the Amplified Bible, the substance, the essence of the truth revealed by Jesus is the spirit of all prophecy (the vital breath, the inspiration of all inspired preaching and interpretation of the divine will and purpose; Revelation 19:10b). It is a breath of life. In the natural world we talk about substance. Something that can be held, dropped, and that is subject to gravity. Likewise, one can also speak of substance in the spiritual world. Faith is such a substance (Hebrews 11:1). I also believe that this applies to love, joy, healing, grace, power, victory, etc. These are all things that are "tangible", i.e. that can be grabbed hold of. It is spiritual substance.

We know from the Bible that Jesus always wanted to do the Father's will. Jesus reflected the Father's heart and did His will everywhere He went. He made that testimony "tangible" to people. The revelation of that testimony always created an atmosphere of life. He always did and always knew the Father's will. He first had to see what the Father did (John 5:19). Of course, this doesn't mean that He looked into heaven, saw the Father raising the dead, and subsequently raised the dead on earth as well. This passage should be taken figuratively, as there obviously aren't any dead in heaven. Also, Jesus couldn't have seen the Father feeding crowds in heaven, as there is no hunger in heaven. Jesus knew the Father's will, because He simply was one with Him.

We can also see this, at least to some extent, in our own lives. You wrote someone a letter and they thanked you because it was just what they needed. You made a phone call that was just on time. You didn't hear a voice telling you to write a letter or to make a phone call. You just "did" it. We're already experiencing this, but it will increase even more, if only because we're aware of it and because of an increase in our understanding of this matter.

Some people ask me whether it's their spirit or God's Spirit prophesying. My response is: "Both." He lives in us. His Spirit and my spirit have become one. This affects every area of our lives and all we do.

Everything that God wants to do through us already is in His heart. The substance in the unseen, spiritual world, is already there. We already discussed Psalm 24:7, which says that we are gates and that the King of glory passes through us and that God uses us as a gate, in order to reveal Himself in the natural world.

Suppose you're in the middle of the desert and on the verge of dying of thirst. You cry out to God for water. Of course, God could let a water source emerge in the sand, but He usually uses people instead. A camel approaches on the horizon, someone jumps off its back and gives you a drink of water. That water already was substance in God's heart. He wanted to give it, but He was looking for someone, for hands, feet, eyes, for Him to come through as if passing through a gate. When you're the one giving someone else a drink of water, then that is the testimony of Jesus, God's will. You create a breath of life, the moment you appear and hand over the water. This is the basis for a prophetic lifestyle, and then I am not referring to the gift of prophecy, prophetic intercession, prophetic warfare or prophets. This is about living with God, a lifestyle.

I recall walking with my wife in our hometown's shopping area. We saw a married couple having a cup of coffee. They were in a season of restoration and were experiencing difficulties. We stopped and talked with them for a while. My wife and I then left, because we wanted to get a grilled chicken for dinner. Suddenly, I had the idea to buy two chickens so that we could give one of them to the couple we had just spoken to. Was that God? Why not? We read in Galatians 6:9-10 that we should not lose heart in doing good, because in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

The Bible says that "doing good" is sowing. Galatians continues by saying that, if we have the opportunity, we should do good to all, and especially to those who are of the household of

the faith. Doing good for non-Christians therefore also is sowing. Some Christians only give to believers and/or ministries and/or churches and/or Christian organizations. There is nothing wrong with giving to these people and/or organizations, but as far as sowing is concerned, it could be very limiting, as sowing doesn't just involve Christians alone, but all of mankind. God loves people. I dare say: even Christians!

Besides, most people enjoy eating chicken, so there's absolutely nothing wrong with taking action. We bought two grilled chickens and went back to the married couple. I snuck behind his back, put the chicken in his lap, and said: "Here's your dinner." Their response was spectacular. Apart from the fact that I later realized that the grilled chicken still was rather hot when I put it in the man's lap, I still noticed "too much" happiness about them seeing the chicken appear out of thin air. What had happened? Just before we had arrived to give them the chicken, she had put her hand on his shoulder and said: "Don't worry, God will provide for us, He can even bring us quail," referring to God feeding His people in the desert with quail. She had hardly finished saying the word "quail", and a grilled chicken "flew" into his lap. We didn't have any intention to be "prophetic", but we just were. We just "did", we just lived. In doing so, we prophesied about provision, that God provides, that He answers, that He encourages and that He builds us. This becomes apparent through what we do and through what we say.

Some time ago, I was teaching this lesson to a group of people and said to a young lady in front: "God says: 'I love you.'" She burst out in tears, so I wondered what was going on. Such simple words. When we use our words to encourage, build and to induce fervor, then it is virtually impossible to make mistakes. I asked her what was going on. She told me that just before the meeting had started, she was a bit down, and had said: "Lord, I know You love me, but I really need to hear You say it." Of course, I didn't know any of this, but to her, those words had been very special and encouraging. Some people think that you need to do spectacular things to get a spectacular result. That is not true. You can just "do" and live, and be very spectacular as a result. Zechariah 4:10 says not to despise the day of small things.

The future in the Kingdom of God

Many people are curious about their future and long for a prophetic word about it. What many don't realize is that the future actually cannot be found in the future. If the future were in the future, we'd be diviners, and that is something that we definitely aren't. We have a great future with Jesus. The emphasis is on our faith, and therefore the certainty, that our future is in the heart of God.

In the book of Jonah, we read how God tells Jonah to go preach in the city of Nineveh. God wanted to warn the people of Nineveh that their city would be overthrown (Jonah 3:4). Jonah didn't want to go and fled, but God ensured that in the end, he would preach the message. In Jonah 4:2, we read why Jonah didn't want to go. When the inhabitants of Nineveh accepted God's message and repented, God saved the city, but Jonah said:

Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. (Jonah 4:2)

Jonah knew that God would change His mind and wouldn't do what He had told Jonah to tell the inhabitants of Nineveh. Of course, it is a pity if the word of a prophet is not fulfilled. However, sometimes an unfulfilled prophetic word is a wonderful thing. It is God's heart to save, not to condemn. That is the intention of a prophetic people, a people that looks at the depths of God's heart with regard to nations, where they live, their families, friends, church, and every aspect of society. Such people have a desire to bring all they see around them into alignment with the purposes of God's heart. That is the expression of church. A people through which God can work, to show His glory.

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