**GOSPEL AND KINGDOM SERIES**

**Part 10 PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION**

The study of the Kingdom of God concept has shown that each stratum of Kingdom revelation has the same essential ingredients relating to the saving acts of God and the goal to which they lead. Each stratum prefigures the realities of the gospel. Each step is not only a movement in the chronological sequence of revelation, but is a movement in the process of making clearer the nature of God’s Kingdom until the full light of the gospel is revealed.

The Kingdom is promised to Abraham and foreshadowed with David. The prophets renew the promise of the Kingdom which is declared to be ‘*at hand’* with the coming of Christ. At the second coming of Christ the Kingdom will be fully revealed and consummated.

From man’s point of view the Scriptures unfold a step-by-step process until the gospel is reached as the goal. But from God’s point of view, the coming of Christ to live and to die for sinners was a pre-determined factor, even before God made the world. God did not try one plan first and then another until He came up with the perfect way of salvation. The gospel was pre-ordained so that at the exact and perfect time, God sent forth His Son into the world.

Until that perfect fulness of time should be reached, God graciously provided a progressive revelation of the Christ event. These pre-figurements of the gospel had two purposes. First, this progressive revelation led searching humanity gently to the light of truth. Secondly, it provided the means whereby the Old Testament believer embraced the gospel before it was fully revealed. The Old Testament Jew who believed the promises of God concerning the shadow was enabled to grasp the reality. In this way it was by Christ that the saints of Israel were saved. Such is the unity of the successive stages that by embracing the shadow, the man or woman embraced the reality.

Only in this way can the ‘unity expressions’ of the New Testament which speak of Old Testament believers as hearing the gospel, seeing Christ, or hoping for a heavenly Kingdom, make perfect sense:

* *Abraham rejoiced to see my day* (John 8:56)
* *They drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ* (1 Corinthians 10:4)
* *The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham* (Galatians 3:8)
* *Instead they were longing for a better country – a heavenly one* (Hebrews 11:16)

Every Old Testament text relates in some way to the basic structure of the kingdom revelation and is therefore capable of being related to the New Testament at the corresponding point. A saving event in the Old Testament relates to the one great saving event of the gospel. A priestly mediator of the saving event in the Old relates to the one great priestly mediator of salvation in the gospel.

**The method in practice**

(1) identify the way the text functions in the wider context of the kingdom stratum in which it occurs

(2) proceed to the same point in each succeeding stratum until the final reality in the gospel is reached

(3) show how the gospel reality interprets the meaning of the text, at the same time showing how the gospel reality is illuminated by the text

The lesson of biblical theology is that no text stands alone and the whole of scripture is the ultimate context.

This study is essentially a summary of ‘Principles of Interpretation’ by Graeme Goldsworthy in ‘*Gospel and Kingdom’* (The Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1987)