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Establishing the Kingdom of God, Part 4

The Language of Worship

In seminary I received instruction on worship. I was taught about Old Testament worship and how it applied in the New Testament. I was also instructed on practical things like these:

- Music choice and the effect of its meter on a service of worship.
- The dress of the worship leader.
- How to serve the Lord's Supper.
- Postures of prayer.
- Even Reformed architecture!

In this context my professor, Dr. Rayburn, exhorted us using the words of Dr. Paul Hoon:

“Silence also is language. The shape of a chandelier is language... the symbols on the communion table- a cross, an open Bible, a picture, flowers, the form of bread used- whether thin disc, white cubes or brown crust- are language. Sitting and standing, the tempo in which the service is conducted, the deportment of the choir, the carpeting on the floor, the vestments of the clergy, the location of the font, the illumination of the windows- all these are language. Especially the order of service (even the style of type in which it is printed), is a powerful form of language... In short, all the media of worship are

pregnant with meaning...”¹

With every decision regarding the forms and circumstances of worship there is an implied message! The question is not what message you will communicate through the forms which are involved in a worship service but what message will you communicate. And yet it is not just worship that conveys a message. A message is conveyed in

- Everything we do and say.
- How we speak.
- What we wear.
- How we comport ourselves.

There is a message that is conveyed, intended or unintended.

In fact whether you realize it or not, this is the basis often-times for understanding the intent of a specific author in Scripture. Rarely do we read such explicit words as to purpose than that of John in writing the Gospel of John.

John 20:30-31, “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

This sure makes it easy in understanding why John wrote his gospel. Yet more often than not a passage in Scripture we do not receive such specificity as to intent. Rather we are left to consider the words that have been chosen; the issues addressed the tenor and genre, etc. to discover why a certain letter was penned.

The Message of the Kingdom

Well brothers and sisters, you will be thankful to know as we approach our passage that when it comes to the kingdom which God established through Saul, much of the guess work has been removed when it comes to the message of the kingdom.

As you know our passage contains the time when after anointing and installing Saul as king, the Lord here established his kingdom. Now with the establishment we are not left to wonder with regard to the purpose or end of Saul’s Kingdom for our text spells it out quite explicitly. The message which accompanied the kingdom of Saul was a threefold message, the first part of that message is deliverance.

Deliverance

1 Samuel 11:9, “And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabeshgilead, To morrow, by that time the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed it to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad.”

This is the message which was to be conveyed to the men of Jabeshgilead, the message of Saul’s kingdom. It is a familiar message, because it was the stated purpose of God’s raising up Saul at this time.² And what an incredible message of hope! And yet to see that, consider once again the situation for the people of

¹ Robert G. Rayburn, *O Come, Let Us Worship*, Baker Book House Company, 1987, page 38

² Compare 1 Samuel 9:16

Jabesh.

First we know that the city was the last refuge for the Israelites in this region. Recall that when God's people came up through the Transjordan under Moses, the Amorites opposed them.³ The result was a battle in which the Amorites lost their territory east of the Dead Sea. Israel now possessed this territory which was given to the tribes of Reuben and Gad. And that brings us to the rest of the story.

Prior to Israel defeating the Amorites (the distant cousins of Israel via Lot), the Ammonites possessed the land. Yet sometime in their recent past, the Ammonites lost the territory which Israel acquired when they defeated the Amorites. The result is that the Ammonites expected their distant family members to give the land back to them. When Israel didn't agree to the request, the Ammonites became quite angry.⁴ And that is why Nahash the Ammonite here was not just attacking the people of God east of the Dead Sea, BUT he was endeavoring to humiliate, crush, and destroy them.⁵

Now we know that Nahash was quite successful up to this point. The entire region of the Gadites and Reubenites had been crushed; their men having had their right eye poked out. And this was NOT to keep the Israelites in this territory in check BUT, as we've seen, to humiliate them! And so the entire region had been forced into submission; all except the city of Jabesh. To this city thousands of men fled and were held up- taking refuge in what was the last stronghold in the area.

Secondly we know that the city was at the end of its rope and therefore in a desperate situation. At the time of our passage, Nahash had placed this city under siege.⁶ That meant this:

- First: No food, water, or supplies were allowed into the city.
- Secondly: No one was allowed out of the city.

In fact in many ancient accounts of siege warfare, if a person was found trying to escape a besieged city, they would be executed. And truly siege warfare in this day was as close to terrorism as one could get.

Yet speaking on behalf of the besieged city, if you had a decent water supply, a one-week siege like this one wouldn't have been so bad. Yet that was the problem. Most cities were not like Jerusalem which had an endless supply of water. Accordingly, most would NOT have been able to last very long. And such was the case at Jabesh. Not only did they NOT have an endless supply of water, BUT recall that they were housing the 7,000 extra men (along with their families) who had fled from Nahash. Accordingly as the events of our text unfolded, the city would have been suffering through the physical and psychological trauma of a siege.

Finally, we know that the city had very little reason for hope. Nahash's assault against the territories of Reuben and Gad had been going on now for quite some time. Thus we conclude that any able-bodied Israelite with a will to fight would already have come to their aide. Accordingly the plea recorded in verse 3 was at best a last ditch effort with little hope of success.

That is why when we consider the city receiving the message of Saul, the message of the kingdom, we understand that this would not have been lightly taken! Get this: Tomorrow... by noon... they would enjoy deliverance! What a glorious message! In fact, notice the word help/deliverance.

³ Compare Numbers 21:23-24

⁴ Compare Judges 11:13

⁵ Compare 1 Samuel 11:2

⁶ Compare 1 Samuel 11:1

The term rendered help in our text comes from the Hebrew word, תִּשְׁעָה, pronounced, tesh-oo-aw'. This word comes from the same root from which *Yeshua* or *Joshua*, *Jesus* is derived. Hence we have the Old Testament word for *salvation*.

Now in its most essential form the word rendered *deliverance* simply means to make wide or sufficient. Its opposite is the word for narrow. Accordingly that which has been made wide — i.e., delivered — connotes a freedom from distress and so the ability to pursue one's own objectives.

Now while this word may simply be used in the sense of helping someone out of a bind as in Exodus 2:17 where Moses helped the daughters of Reuel, its primary meaning carries with it vast theological undertones; especially when it is used in reference to a deliverance wrought by God (which our text does, notice verse 13). When it is used in this context, the idea goes beyond physical redemption, to an emotional and possibly a spiritual deliverance.

Thus for example

- It references the “salvation” wrought by God at the Exodus- a deliverance from slavery from Pharaoh unto the service of God (Exodus 14:30).
- As such, it became a name by which Israel was called in the OT, “The People Saved by Yahweh” (Deuteronomy 33:29).
- Now amazingly, this word took on the theological meaning of “salvation from sin” in Ezekiel 37:23; Psalm 51:14; 79:9; and Jeremiah 17:14.
- As such, built into this word was the concept of a granted or imputed righteousness.

The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament put it this way:

“All of Yahweh’s saving deeds are built on righteousness, reflected by the fact that ‘righteousness’ and ‘salvation’ are often found in parallelism (e.g. Isaiah 51:8). Although every act of deliverance contains judgment, those who are judged are guilty and therefore deserve this justice (cf. Psalm 76:8f. [H 9f.]). On the other side, God is true to the covenant and to the creation of man in his own image by acting to provide man a means of deliverance from his original disobedience. In this regard God fulfills his responsibility as Redeemer through being a Savior. Yahweh is thus known as ‘a righteous God and a Savior’ (Isaiah 45:21).”⁷

From this I hope you see that we have stumbled upon a huge word in the Old Testament. A word with deep theological significance such that pages upon pages have been written about this word in theological books. Now certainly we ought not to impute all of this word’s meaning here in this text. At best we understand the deliverance of this passage in terms of a physical and emotional salvation BUT that God deigned to use THIS WORD of the “salvation” that accompanied Saul’s Kingdom once again points to the greater “deliverance” which did and does accompany the work of Christ.

A Trail of Bread Crumbs

As we’ve seen, redemptive history, Biblical history, is like multiple trails of bread crumbs. All that God deigned to record in the Bible was given to elucidate and so prepare the child of God for the kingdom of His

⁷ Gleason L. Archer and R. Laird Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Moody Publishers; 2 Volumes edition (June 1980), ISBN-10: 0802486312

beloved Son, Jesus Christ.⁸ Thus, we have seen that from the

- Governments which God raised up in the Old Testament.
- Boundaries of the nations.
- Sacrificial system.
- The various kingdoms which oppressed the people of God.
- The language which arose in and throughout Judaism...

God was leading His people to knowledge of the salvation which someday would be provided through Christ.

In light of this, when we consider the message which accompanied the establishing of Saul's Kingdom we are surprised to discover that the word in the Old Testament which generally denoted the salvation of God's people from sin and its bondage⁹ is the word used of the *deliverance* provided for by Saul. Thus it is tempting to say that we have an anachronism here because the Hebrew word teshuwah is fraught with so much Biblical/theological significance. Yet because we know that in gazing upon Saul's deliverance we are gazing upon the type of deliverance provided for by Christ, we take this as a glorious foreshadowing of the Messianic Reign and Rule of Christ.

In light of this, we see the glorious picture contained herein! Just as the establishing of Saul's Kingdom brought with it a message of Salvation from the threatenings of a snake, Nahash, so also Christ's Kingdom brings with it the more glorious message and promise of a salvation from Satan and our sin! According to the promises of God, when the Lord acts or moves, He does so with healing in His wings¹⁰, bringing comfort to those who dwell in darkness¹¹ and giving them

- A garland instead of ashes, Isaiah 61:3a.
- The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting, Isaiah 61:3b

Thus a universal message of Scripture when it comes to the kingdom of God is this:

Isaiah 40:1-2, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins."

Family of God

- With what are you burdened?
- Is there a yoke of slavery around your neck?
- Have you found yourself bound by a certain sin?
- And has this "bondage" raised all sorts of fear, distrust, and insecurity?

Listen! You need not fear or be heavy-laden! Look to Christ! He has and will deliver you from your burdens. That is a message part and parcel of the Kingdom of God! You say, but mine is NOT simply a spiritual burden...

⁸ Compare John 5:39

⁹ תְּשׁוּבָה t@shuw'ah

¹⁰ Compare Malachi 4:2

¹¹ Compare Isaiah 42:6-7

- My problem is with my health.
- Mine is a past which continues to haunt me.
- Mine is the worry of tomorrow.
- Mine is a lack of resources.
- Mine is a lack of respect.
- Mine is a bad job.
- Mine is a difficult marriage.
- Mine is an uncertain future.
- Etc.”

Listen, by virtue of the word *deliverance* and its association with Christ’s Kingdom, I can promise you today that if you will trust Christ, He will deliver you from all these burdens and more.

You say, “That sounds like a health and wealth gospel! Aren’t you taking this a little too far?”

The “health and wealth gospel” promoted by many today has a legion of problems. But, when they say that God’s plan and will for you is that

- You no longer suffer.
- You instead know physical healing and emotional recovery.
- You and I never again should be placed under a yoke of deprivation and want.

They are right on, but their problem is that it is not in this age that these things will become a reality, it is in the age to come. You know the word of the Lord and its promises concerning our physical health, listen to the promise of God:

1Corinthians 15:51-54, “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

Truly someday we will live in an imperishable body never again subject to decay! This is “the deliverance” that accompanies the work of Christ!

Concerning sorrow, sadness, and death we read this:

Revelation 21:3-4, “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

Such was Christ’s plan for us when He delivered us from our sin!

Then there’s power:

1 Corinthians 6:2, “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?”

And don't forget the riches:

2 Corinthians 8:9, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

Do you understand that Jesus Christ came to make us rich?

Now, the primary focus of this is being “rich toward God” on account of the righteousness which has been granted us in Christ. However in the New Heavens and New Earth we also will enjoy the wealth of the ages as we walk on streets paved with gold! In light of this we understand that the body of Christ today lives in light of the fact that though in Christ's first advent we have received deliverance from

- The fear of death, Hebrews 2:14-15.
- Our sin, Romans 6:23.
- The wrath of God, Romans 5:9.
- Slavery, Romans 6.

Nevertheless today we still remain a city under siege awaiting our final and full redemption when Christ Jesus returns! Until then, we know the sorrow and suffering of this life; yet we are never undone. For as much as “The Snake” might threaten us, malign us, harass us, and discomfort us, nevertheless we understand his threatenings all to be impotent and vain. For just as those in Jabeshgilead knew that tomorrow their deliverance would come, so also we have the same expectation and confidence! In the words of Paul we understand that the “night is almost gone, and the day is at hand” (Romans 13:12). Christ put it this way, “your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28).

A Message of Gladness

So the message of the kingdom of God's anointed is one of deliverance. Notice secondly that it also is a message of gladness.

1 Samuel 11:9, “And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabeshgilead, To morrow, by that time the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed it to the men of Jabesh; **and they were glad**¹².”

The word for *glad* in this text is the word used throughout Scripture for *joy*. Accordingly, the second message which emanated from Saul's kingdom was one of rejoicing and gladness. Now once again I hope you see that this is a very important term in the context of redemption; it goes way beyond our text. While there are many occasions and objects which are said to give man joy in the Bible

- Wine (Psalm 104:15; Judges 9:13; Ecclesiastics 10:19).
- Ointment and perfume (Proverbs 27:9).
- A wise son (Proverbs 15:20; 10:1; 27:11).
- A kind word (Proverbs 12:25).
- Meeting a loved one (Exodus 4:14).

¹² שמח samach

From this we see that given the right stimuli, you can fake Biblical joy, at least for a while! It is the Lord and His salvation which are cited as the ultimate reason for joy.¹³

Nehemiah 8:10, “Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; **for the joy of the LORD is your strength.**”

Well what is this joy which emanates from the Lord? How is it that we can have this in our lives?

First off know that the *joy of the Lord* can and often-times results in an emotion. Yet it is far more than an emotion. The *joy of the Lord* is defined as the mindset that results from the deep seeded conviction that it is well with your soul. As such, the *joy of the Lord* begins with the knowledge that, on account of your sin, the wrath of Almighty God is directed against you! Paul said that on account of our sin we “are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Romans 2:5 NASB).

The person who lacks joy typically lacks this conviction! This probably is why the church today is said to lack joy. For the past century pressure has been exerted upon pulpits near and far NOT to share the negative message of sin. Church growth advocates have found that people want to feel good about themselves. Accordingly, if you want to be an effective preacher where people come back in droves, don’t tell the people that they are sinful. Tell them how wonderful they are. If you doubt this, just ask Joel Osteen.

Now it may surprise you, but the result of this message has been a universal decline of real joy on the part of the body of Christ. Truly! You cannot know Biblical Joy/Real Joy unless you begin with the knowledge of what your sin deserves! And so it begins with this very negative message; felt, believed, understood, and accepted by the believer. Yet it doesn’t end there.

Secondly, joy is conceived the moment we understand that the full force of God’s wrath resting against us has been directed at Christ!

Romans 5:1-2, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

Our justification by faith results in our rejoicing. Herein is the basis and root of all Biblical joy...

- Knowledge of the wrath of God on account of our sin? Yes!
- But also knowledge...
 - Of the forgiveness granted us in Christ.
 - That henceforth we are at peace with God.
 - Today and forevermore God calls us, “Friend” (John 15:15)!
 - That in Christ Jesus, you are the apple of God’s eye, and so most beautiful to Him!

I love how A. W. Tozer put this concept:

“The man who comes to a right belief about God is relieved of ten thousand temporal problems, for he

¹³ Compare. 2 Chronicles 20:27; Psalm 5:11; 9:2; 16:9; 32:11; 40:16; 63:11; 64:10; 86:4; 90:15; 92:4

sees at once that these have to do with matters which at the most cannot concern him for very long; but even if the multiple burdens of time may be lifted from him, the one mighty single burden of eternity begins to press down upon him with a weight more crushing than all the woes of the world piled one upon another. That mighty burden is his obligation to God..."

"The gospel can lift this destroying burden from the mind, giving beauty for ashes, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."¹⁴

Joy is fostered as you live out the Christian life, fail again and again, and there discover that God's grace not only was sufficient to save you, but is in fact greater than all your sin!

Romans 5:20-21, "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Truly as we live out our Christian life and thereby see how miserable we fail, we are brought once again to a point of despair. Even though I am saved, still I can't live so as to earn God's good pleasure. Yet we never enter into despair... for the gospel won't permit it. Rather through our failed law-keeping we behold the grace of God whereby we know we are sons of God!

Now brothers and sisters, when a person comes to this understanding, then regardless of their outward circumstances, inwardly they will be filled with joy!

Now is this the nuance of the "gladness" that the men and women experienced in our passage when they received Saul's message?

Again, to suppose this is to read too much into this text. However this we do know that when the knowledge circulated amongst the citizens of Jabesh that the evil intent of Nahash was going to be crushed and destroyed the result was an intense rejoicing and gladness which was aroused on account of the promise of deliverance.

And that brings us to the second message which emanated from the kingdom of God's anointed: Gladness and great Joy! And again as Saul's Kingdom was but a shadow of Christ's, by application we note that this too is part and parcel of the kingdom of Christ: Joy and rejoicing.

Isaiah 61:1-3, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified."

And yet I want you to notice something very important about the "joy and rejoicing" experienced by the people of God in Jabeshgilead.

When did the inhabitants of the city come to know joy: after their deliverance was effected or before?

¹⁴ A. W. Tozer, [*The Knowledge of the Holy*](#), HarperOne (February 11, 1998), ISBN-10: 0060684127, Pages 10-11

Look at the text one more time:

1 Samuel 11:9, “And they [Saul and his army] said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabeshgilead, To morrow, by that time the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed it to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad.”

So when did the inhabitants come to know joy?

They knew joy BEFORE the deliverance was provided! This is crucial to our understanding of joy for herein we see that one’s experiencing of joy or rejoicing is intimately linked to one’s faith. See though you and I might be assured that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ, nevertheless it is something we take by faith for you can’t physically see this deliverance!

Paul said in Colossians 3:3 that our “lives are hidden with Christ in God.” As such, though in the courts of heaven you are forgiven, nevertheless no man on earth has seen the law court, actually heard the word of God pronouncing you forgiven, and therefore simply can look at you and say, “There’s a forgiven individual!”

So though our salvation is a reality and something concerning which we can be fully assured of, nevertheless on this side of the grave it will always be taken by faith!

1 Peter 1:8, “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

This means that to the degree you trust the character of God and so rely upon the cross of Christ, you will know joy. Yet if we doubt the message or take the cross lightly, so also our joy will dissolve.

I close with the words of the Hebrew writer, “I am convinced of better things concerning you” (Hebrews 6:9). Listen, if the men of Jabeshgilead could rejoice exceedingly at the message of SAUL one who would be a wicked and evil king, a man who lacked a relationship with God, an individual who would do so much harm against the covenant, the Kingdom, and the people of God despite Saul’s passivity and weakness; if these men held up in Jabesh could know joy at this man’s word how much more so ought we who have received NOT the words of a sinful, changing man, BUT the word of Almighty God?

Christian behold the message of the kingdom of God’s anointed

- It is one of Deliverance.
- It is one of Gladness and joy!

About Bethel Presbyterian Church

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Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10th Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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About the Preacher

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on November 25, 2007. Greg is the preacher at Bethel Presbyterian Church