

Study 22 - Kingdom Expansion by Spiritual Force

“Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” (Ephesians 6:10)

Introduction

The early church proclaimed the gospel with remarkable results. However, most of the believers stayed within a limited sphere for the first few years. Many of them were situated in Jerusalem. I believe the early Christians remained where they were for a period of time because, at first, they lacked the revelation to go to the whole world with the gospel – the revelation that the Great Commission is global. (See, for example, Matthew 28:18-20.) It was to start in Jerusalem, but then it was to extend to *“all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1:8).

A similar lack of revelation is hindering the church from fulfilling its mandate today. Many believers are merely remaining where they are. Apparently, they do not feel spiritually ready or “mature” enough to go out to their communities and beyond, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom with visible manifestations. In the meantime, the world remains lost, and people are dying and going to hell. If we wait until we are “mature” enough before we demonstrate the kingdom, we will never be ready, because there will always be one more thing in our lives that needs to change. Yet, if we are in the place spiritually where we can receive God’s revelation, power, and glory and demonstrate them with visible manifestations, our lives will surely change. For the most part, character, and the exercise of spiritual power grow together. What we really need is a revelation of Jesus’ commandment of global kingdom expansion. God baptises us in His Spirit for the purpose of receiving His power – and we receive His power to enable us to go and demonstrate His kingdom to the world in the now!

Study Questions

Part I: We Must Have a Revelation to Go into All the World

1. What global vision and command did Jesus give His disciples? (Mark 16:15)

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2. As we learned in the introduction to this study, many of the early Christians remained in Jerusalem for some years after Christ ascended to heaven. What caused most of these believers to move beyond Jerusalem into Judea and Samaria with the gospel message, in fulfilment of Jesus’ command? Complete the following:

Acts 8:1,4: *“At that time _____ arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Therefore, those who were scattered _____.”*

3. (a) In one of His parables, to what did Jesus compare the kingdom of heaven? (Matthew 25:14b)

(b) What did the man in the parable entrust to each of his servants, and by what criteria did he do so? (Verse 15a)

(c) What did this man immediately after entrusting these things to his servants, thus leaving the servants to use their own initiative with what they had been given? (Verse 15b)

Every kingdom principle is rooted in the law of increase and multiplication.

(d) When the man returned, what did he say to the servants who had gained additional talents by investing what they had been given? (Matthew 25:21,23)

(e) What did the man say should be done with the talent of the servant who had been wicked and lazy and had not gained any return or interest on what he had been given? (Verse 28)

(f) How did Jesus sum up His parable of the talents? Complete the following:

Verse 29: "For to everyone who has, _____, and _____; but from him who does not have, _____."

We must multiply what God gives us. Otherwise, we will lose it.

REFLECTIONS ON KINGDOM EXPANSION

In the Old Testament, God decided to give the Promised Land to the Israelites all at once, because if He had, the people could not have fed and taken care of it. (See Deuteronomy 7:22; Joshua 11:23) This is how He positioned them for kingdom expansion. He will do the same for us.

God gives each of us kingdom "territory," grace, anointing, favour, a measure of faith, authority, power, gifts, talents, finances, influence, and more that we are called to exercise and expand. Depending on our faithfulness, and our stewardship of what He has given us, He will increase our blessings or take them away. If we are continually on the offensive in terms of spiritual growth and movement, God will give us the increase and supply all our needs. His responsibility as a Father is to give us what we need. When He gives us more than that, it is for the purpose of blessing others with it. Those who operate according to a kingdom mentality invest and multiply everything God gives them.

Increase comes while we are in the process of expanding the kingdom.

Part II: The Enemy's Plan to Contain the Kingdom

Even as we endeavour to be faithful to God and to extend His rule on earth, the enemy tries to contain the expansion of the kingdom, and he uses human beings in his schemes to derail God's purposes.

4. (a) When Jesus spoke to His disciples about His forthcoming death and resurrection, what did Satan apparently prompt Peter to say in rebuke to Jesus? (Matthew 16:22b)
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(b) Recall what Jesus said when resisting Satan's temptation to avoid the cross (Verse 23b)

5. (a) At a later time, Jesus told Peter that Satan has "asked" for him so that he could "sift [him] as wheat" (Luke 22:31). This was apparently the enemy's attempt to contain and perhaps destroy the future leader of the church. What did Jesus assure Peter that He had done for him, and why? (Verse 32a)
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(b) What did Jesus tell Peter that he should do once he had returned to Jesus? (Luke 22:32b)

REFLECTIONS ON SATAN'S PLAN OF CONTAINMENT

Satan is always implementing his plan of containment to stop the advancement of God's kingdom. This means that we are in continuous war against a spirit of suppression. We should not be surprised when every forward movement we make for the kingdom is countered by difficulties, obstacles, and persecution. The enemy will try to bind us and hold us back. He will confine us to one place, situation, or circumstance – in our personal lives, our ministry, our business, or any other arena where we are actively involved in extending the kingdom. Primarily, the enemy tries to confine us by tempting us to succumb to complacency and passivity. *Complacency* refers to self-gratification – pleasing the desires of the flesh or seeking personal gain with egocentrism and selfishness. *Passivity* refers to the state of being totally indifferent when evil takes over. It is an attitude of tolerance in which we allow the enemy to gain ground for his kingdom of darkness, never doing anything about it. (See, for example, Revelation 3:16.) The only solutions to such attitudes and behaviour are spiritual breakthroughs in the power of the Holy Spirit. A breakthrough is a sudden intervention of God that takes us through – and beyond – whatever is preventing us from crossing over into new territory for God's kingdom and pushing out the kingdom of darkness. God will empower us to defeat the enemy and to remove and destroy the walls of sickness, poverty, and oppression that try to contain us!

Part III: Steps to Receiving a Spiritual Breakthrough

6. Just before Paul listed the elements of the “*armour of God*,” with which we can “*stand against the wiles of the devil*” (Ephesians 6:11), what did he urge believers to be? (Verse 10)

The power of God in the area of spiritual warfare is called “might.”

KEY DEFINITION: The word “*might*” in Ephesians 6:10 is translated from the Greek word *ischys*, meaning “forcefulness.” In addition to “*might*,” *ischys* indicates “ability,” “power,” and “strength” (STRONG, G2479). This concept of might can be compared to the military strength and resources of a great nation. A “*spirit of might*,” or “*breakthrough anointing*,” uses the strength of the kingdom of heaven and its almighty God, whose arsenal, strategies, and advance forces are deployed to destroy the enemy's plan of containment and to extend the territory of God's kingdom on earth. A breakthrough anointing enables us to increase, multiply, expand, or enlarge what God has given us.

REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUAL BREAKTHROUGH

If we are to possess everything that Jesus won for us, we must fight the enemy in the power of God's might, expanding His kingdom by spiritual force. To receive a spiritual breakthrough, we have to be militant in exercising kingdom principles. This is a spiritual matter, and it applies to all of us – whether our natural personality is to be assertive or quiet. Passivity will leave us spiritually wounded instead of securing our breakthroughs. We must be ruthless with the enemy – he wants to destroy us! Demonic strongholds will tremble and fall away as we push against them in God's power. By the strength of the indwelling Holy Spirit and His supernatural weapons, we are enabled to break through the enemy's containment. In the process, we grow stronger to fulfil our role in the kingdom.

The purpose if a spiritual breakthrough is the expansion of the kingdom.

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