

judgement and proclaim the hope of salvation, what do we see going on in our midst? Servants injuring other servants, not just in matters of novel prophetic interpretation, but also in raising the profitless disputations of former generations, and perhaps even undermining faith in those things that we once held so dear.

And what will be the recompense for such behaviour? Jesus himself puts it with unmistak-

able gravity: “the lord of that servant will come . . . and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes” (Lk. 12:46,47). Blessed, then, is that servant whom the Lord, when he comes, shall find feeding the Lord’s sheep and lambs.

## “The kingdom of God is within you”

“And when [Jesus] was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Lk. 17:20,21).

ONE OF the distinctive beliefs of the Christadelphian community is that of a future Kingdom of God on earth, to be ruled over by him “whose right it is”, Jesus Christ, from “the city of the great King”, Jerusalem (Ezek. 21:27; Mt. 5:35). The Scriptures leave us in no doubt that it is to be a literal Kingdom—no less than the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. Both the Old and New Testaments furnish us with incontestable evidence to this fact; see, for example, Psalm 72, Isaiah 35,65, Micah 4:1-4, Matthew 5:5, Luke 1:32,33 and Acts 1:6-11.

Christendom has truly gone astray on this central and essential Bible doctrine, defining the Kingdom to be either the Church itself, or the spiritual reign of Jesus in our hearts, or both. An examination of this saying of Jesus will affirm the true and consistent Bible teaching concerning the Kingdom of God, and expose the error of suggesting that the Kingdom already exists. Consider the following points:

- This is the only passage that appears to say that the Kingdom of God is within us. It would be foolish to base an important doctrine on a single verse. A survey of the term ‘Kingdom of God’ in the Scriptures will soon reveal where the weight of Scripture lies, defining it to be a literal Kingdom to be established at a future time. Jesus himself looked forward to this time as one of renewed fellowship with his followers when, speaking at the Last Supper, he said, “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, *until that day* when I drink it new with you in my *Father’s kingdom*” (Mt. 26:29). We must always allow God’s Word to interpret itself and to define its terms.

- The context displays Jesus speaking to the Pharisees, of whom he said: “ye . . . outwardly appear righteous unto men, but *within* ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Mt. 23:28). There could have been few people more unsuitable to be declared by Jesus as having the Kingdom of God within them! Many times we read of people ‘entering’ the Kingdom as a reward (25:21-23; 2 Pet. 1:11), but never do we read of the Kingdom ‘entering’ people.
- Two important textual points to be noted are, firstly, that the word “within [mg. among]” occurs only twice in the New Testament, and is translated ‘among’ or ‘in the midst’ in several other translations; and, secondly, that the word “you” is in the plural, referring to those gathered around. The only satisfactory explanation is that Jesus was referring to himself, and everything he stood for, as the Kingdom being in their midst, for it was he who was “*born King of the Jews*” (Mt. 2:2), who *preached* “the kingdom of God” (Lk. 4:43), who was *called* “the kingdom of our father David” (compare Mark 11:9,10 with John 12:13<sup>1</sup>), and who will *reign over* the Kingdom of God (Rev. 11:15). A truly unique encounter!
- Jesus also plainly declares: “The kingdom of God cometh not with *observation*”; the Greek word *paratēresis* means ‘outward show’. It was the Pharisees who critically “*watched [paratēreō]*” Jesus (Lk. 6:7; 14:1) as he taught “the things concerning the kingdom of God”.

1. Through the use of Hebrew parallelism, Jesus and the Kingdom are made synonymous in this passage.

They thought and acted as though the Kingdom consisted of a religious observance of outward show, and in so doing “shut the kingdom of heaven against men” and suffered not “those who would enter to go in” (Mt. 23:13, RSV). By contrast, Jesus goes on to say that the day of the Son of man (that is, his return and Kingdom) will be openly seen, “as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven” (Lk. 17:24). It will be evident to all that the time of Christ’s rule and Kingdom has begun.

Sometimes it is suggested that, inasmuch as “the fruit of the Spirit” or “the spirit of Christ” is within us, then, in a sense, the Kingdom of God is ‘within us’. It seems to the present writer that caution is needed here, for the use of such lan-

guage can be confusing. Certainly we should be cultivating spiritual qualities in our lives, and developing Christlike minds. Of that there is no doubt, and such virtues will be perfected in the Kingdom; but to turn this round and say this is ‘in a sense’ the Kingdom now, is to take a step which the Scriptures do not, and deflects our vision away from the Bible definition of God’s Kingdom. On this basis, we could argue that all things in our life should have a bearing on, or are leading to, the Kingdom of God, and that therefore the Kingdom of God is here now. A glance at the world (and at ourselves) manifestly declares that God’s Kingdom is not yet in existence; but let us take courage in the fact that we are “heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him” (Jas. 2:5).

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## “We preach Christ crucified”

Mark Vincent

### Part 1: A message concealed

**T**HE GOSPEL of Mark, conventionally assumed to be the earliest of the Gospels, begins with a clear and unambiguous statement of the unique status of the Lord Jesus: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus [the] Christ, the Son of God” (1:1).

In these simple words Mark asserts two things that are of basic importance to our study. He asserts that Jesus is the promised Messiah (Hebrew) or Christ (Greek), the special ‘anointed one’ who was to come, the one who would perfectly fulfil the kingly, priestly and prophetic roles that Old Testament anointing implies. And he asserts that Jesus is the Son of God, with all which *that* implies. One could not wish for a more straightforward statement of these two crucial facts about Jesus, two facts which pick him out from all other men who have ever existed.

#### Disappearing terms

But it is remarkable that after this initial statement of Mark 1:1 these two titles of Jesus—Christ and Son of God—are more notable by their absence in Mark’s narrative than by their presence. Indeed, the term ‘Christ’ does not occur again until Mark 8, and then disappears from the record once more until towards the end of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

It is not until the last week of Jesus’s life that the term begins to be used with any regularity.<sup>2</sup>

Something similar can be said of the title Son of God. Apart from one or two sporadic occurrences elsewhere, it is only at the beginning of the Gospel and in the Passion narrative that the designation is applied to our Lord.<sup>3</sup> It is after the death and resurrection of Jesus that these terms are used openly and frequently in the rest of the New Testament.<sup>4</sup>

This connection between the titles Christ and Son of God and the death and resurrection of Jesus is not fortuitous or something being

1. There is one exception: Mark 9:41. Jesus is clearly addressing his disciples at this point, so the pattern is not broken.
2. The distribution of the occurrences in Mark 12–16 (and in the parallel accounts in the other Synoptic Gospels) is also instructive, though can only be hinted at here. In several passages Jesus is not identifying himself explicitly with Messiah (note his reluctance to answer in Luke 22:67), and it is only after the high priest’s question that he is attacked or mocked for claiming to be Christ.
3. A similar story again holds for the other Synoptic Gospels.
4. John is a special case, not to be examined here.