

Toward Understanding the Spiritual World

Introduction

- A. The term "spiritual world" may not be the best designation. By use of this term the attempt is being made to describe what Paul called "those things which are not seen" "the things which ... are eternal" (II Corinthians 4:18).
- B. As one looks into the Bible it appears that the unseen world would include the habitation of God, the dwelling place of both holy and fallen angels, and thereby the source of spiritual values and power — both good and evil.
- C. Paul's use of the terms are not very helpful. By use of "seen" and "not seen" it appears he is speaking of "seen" as trials and the "not seen" as the way to evaluate the trials correctly.
- D. Perhaps a better designation can be found to replace "spiritual world."

I. The Unfallen or Spiritual World of Adam and Eve.

What can be said here must be largely by implication. It would appear that while the unfallen world of Adam and Eve had a potential source of evil (that which Satan represented), there was nothing in them or in their world that related to evil.

II. The Fallen World of Adam and Eve.

The Fall brought evil, separation from God, judgment, a curse upon creation, and the establishment of an enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The result produced in Adam and Eve an inability to retrace their steps to God, a depravity which made them inescapably vulnerable to evil, Satanic control, lack of fulfillment, estrangement from one another, from themselves, and the cosmos, as well as sickness, and death.

The "world" in which we live continues to have these characteristics of the Fall as well as a culture produced largely by the non-Christian under the influence of Satan (Ephesians 2:1,2). This culture is described as largely self-centered, sensual (I John 2:15-17), under divine judgment, and its approval brings one into enmity with God (James 4:4).

III. The Kingdom of God. (Kingdom of God, George Ladd in Elwell Ev. Dict of Th.)

A. The Kingdom is God's Reign

The kingdom is the divine authority and rule given by the Father to the Son (Luke 22:29). Christ will exercise this rule until He has subdued all that is hostile to God. When Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36), He did not refer to his realm; he meant that his rule was not derived from earthly authority but from God and that His kingship would not manifest itself like a human kingdom but in accordance with the divine purpose.

B. The Kingdom is Soteriological.

The object of the divine rule is the redemption of men and their deliverance from the power of evil. Christ's reign means the destruction of all hostile powers. The kingdom of God is the reign of God in Christ destroying all that is hostile to the divine rule.

The New Testament sees a hostile kingdom standing over against God's kingdom. The "kingdom of the world" is opposed to God's kingdom (Revelation 11:15) and must be conquered. The kingdoms of the world are under satanic control (Matthew 4:8; Luke 4:5). Matthew 12:26 and Luke 11:18 speak of the kingdom of Satan, whose power over men is shown in demon possession. This world or age opposes the working of God's kingdom; the cares of the age will choke the word of the kingdom (Matthew 13:22). The opposition between the two kingdoms, of God and of Satan, is summarized in II Corinthians 4:4. Satan is called the god of this age and seen to exercise his rule by holding men in darkness. This statement must be understood in light of the fact that God remains the King of the ages (I Timothy 1:17; Revelation 15:3).

C. The Kingdom is Dynamic.

The kingdom is not an abstract principle; the kingdom comes. It is God's rule actively invading the kingdom of Satan. Jesus taught that the kingdom, which will come in glory at the end of the age, has come into history in his own person and mission. The redemptive rule of God has now invaded the realm of Satan to deliver men from the power of evil. In the exorcism of demons Jesus asserted the presence and power of the kingdom (Matt. 12:28). While the destruction of Satan awaits the coming of the Son of man in glory (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10), Jesus has already defeated Satan. The mission of the disciples in the name and power of Christ casting out demons meant the overthrow of Satan's power (Luke 10:18). Thus Jesus could say that the kingdom of God was present in the midst of men (Luke 17:21).

D. The Kingdom is Supernatural.

As the dynamic activity of God's rule the kingdom is supernatural. It is God's deed. Only the supernatural act of God can destroy Satan, defeat death, and transform the world order (Matthew 19:28). The same supernatural rule of God has invaded the kingdom of Satan to deliver men from bondage to satanic darkness.

E. The Mystery of the Kingdom.

The mystery of the kingdom is this: Before this eschatological consummation, before the destruction of Satan, before the age to come, the kingdom of God has entered this age and invaded the kingdom of Satan in spiritual power to bring to men in advance the blessing of forgiveness, life, and righteousness which belong to the age to come.

Conclusion: Our world view must be "big enough" -- to adequately accept and relate:

- A. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world in regard to the following minimal issues: authority, methods, goals, priorities, and pleasures.
- B. The reality of persons with MPD and/or Satanic involvement, the truths regarding deliverance, healing, curses, spiritual gifts, election/believing changing destiny, prayer that produces results, and decisions of faith that transforms.

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