

Episode #417: The Theme of the Bible

I. Understanding the theme of a book can be very instructive in coming to grasp its real message. If you knew the theme of a book was war or was racism, your knowledge of that theme would help you understand what the book had to say. In the same way, it will help us greatly in Bible study to know what the theme of God's book actually is.

II. The Bible has many themes, but if we had to pick one, what is THE theme?

III. Suggestions for themes of the Bible.

- A. God, or Jesus Christ. But He is the Main Character, not the theme.
- B. Getting to know God. This is our purpose in studying the Bible, as the name of our program declares, but it is not the theme of the Bible.
- C. Salvation. This is A theme that relates to the overall theme. It is the starting point from which we all must begin. Yet it is not THE theme of the Bible.
- D. Christ's death and resurrection. These are the central act of the Bible, not the theme.
- E. The church. If we define this as Greek *ekklesia*, Hebrew *qahal*, it has a place, but it is not the theme of the Bible.
- F. Israel. This nation is the chosen People, but it was never all about them! Gen. 22:18.
- G. God's people. These fill the Word, but they only relate to the theme.
- H. Dispensationalism. This is an important tool, crucial for understanding the Bible. Yet it is only a tool, and not the theme of the Bible
- I. Heaven. This is a definite location in the Bible, but not the theme.
- J. Truth. This is found only in God, and everything the Bible, His written Word says, is true. Yet this is not the theme of the Bible.
- K. Love. God's love is crucial, but it is not the theme of the Bible.
- L. Faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God, Hebrews 11:6. Faith comes by the Word of God, Romans 10:17. Yet faith is not the theme of the Bible.
- M. Grace. Without God's grace we would all be lost, but it is not the theme of the Bible.
- N. Resurrection. Without this none of us would be saved, but it is not the theme.
- O. Redemption. This is how God saves us, but it is not the theme of the Bible.
- P. The gospel. This is the message we must believe to be saved, but it is not the theme.
- Q. A roomful of people could probably suggest many other possible themes.

IV. No verse says "this is the theme of the Bible," so it cannot be proven this way. I might be able to demonstrate the theme by going through the whole Bible, yet this would be time consuming. I am just going to state my belief, and let you decide for yourself.

V. The theme of the Bible is the Kingdom of God.

- A. Many of the other themes listed above are quite simply related to this one, ultimately.
- B. God's Kingdom is the focus of what He does, His interactions with people, and His work here on earth.
- C. The Kingdom is called by many names in the Bible. It is the theme of many stories, prophecies, and actions of God, even if not specifically stated so.

VI. The importance of the Kingdom in Paul's ministry.

- A. Acts 28:23. Paul had an opportunity to speak to the Jewish leaders in Rome, some of the most powerful men among the Jews in the diaspora (the dispersed outside the land). What was his message to them? Two things: the kingdom of God and Jesus.
- B. Acts 28:30-31. For two years, what was Paul's message to all who came to him? The kingdom of God and the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. I believe Paul's teaching in Rome covered two things: the theme of the Bible and the Main Character of the Bible.

VII. What is the Kingdom of God?

- A. Since a synonymous phrase is "the Kingdom of Heaven" (in Matthew) some people assume it just means "heaven." Luke 13:28. But see Luke 17:20-21. Heaven, a place, cannot "come." Thus, the Kingdom of God cannot be heaven.
- B. Some, like the Schofield Bible or The Companion Bible, suggest that it is God's rule and sovereignty over the universe. Yet again, see Luke 17:20-21. This cannot come!
- C. Some think it just means the church, Christianity, or Christendom. They show this when they speak of "spreading the kingdom." Yet this does not fit with the Bible evidence. Luke 13:28, are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be "in the church"? No!
- D. Some think it is a name for all believers. Yet see Luke 19:11. How could all believers "appear immediately"? Luke 21:31. How could all believers be near?
- E. Some insist that the kingdom is a spiritual thing that happens in peoples' hearts. They quote Luke 17:21 and Romans 14:17. Yet though their idea may seem to fit in these two passages, it does not fit the rest of the occurrences in the New Testament. Luke 22:18. Was the Lord not to drink of such fruit until something spiritual came into men's hearts? This does not make sense!
- F. Often, we have trouble figuring out things in Scripture because we do not go basic enough. Before we can learn what the Kingdom of God is, we must know:

VIII. What is a Kingdom?

- A. Our English word comes from "king's doom." A "doom" was a law, though it later changed in meaning. "King's doom" was shortened to "kingdom," meaning everywhere the king's law held sway.
- B. The Greek word the Bible uses is *basilea*, from *basileus*, a "king" or absolute ruler.
- C. Since our Bibles were translated to English in England, they made this "kingdom" since that was their form of government. In Russia they might have made it "Czardom," in Persia, "Empire." In the USA, we have governors, so our word for the same idea is "government." This is how this word should be translated.

IX. The Kingdom of God is the Government of God.

- A. The teaching of the Bible is clearly that someday the government of God is going to rule over all nations on earth!
- B. Many deny such a fact, most notably the "amillennialists." Yet this is the clear teaching of Scripture, and if we clear away the tradition and superstition surrounding this word "kingdom" it is clear enough to see it. The government of God is coming!
- C. Many repeat the Lord's prayer, "Thy kingdom come." Yet do they really want this? Today we have government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Yet when His kingdom comes, the government will be of God, by God, and for God. There will be no freedom of religion. Men will no longer be free to rule their own affairs or express themselves however they see fit. Everything on earth will be ruled and governed by God. Do you want that when you pray, "Thy kingdom come"?
- D. Our earth is in a mess. We truly need God to step in and set things right. The Bible teaches not only that we need this, but that God WILL do this. This is the hope for this sad, fallen world. This is the theme of the Bible.

X. Conclusion: The theme of the Bible is the Kingdom of God. That is the plan God is working to accomplish in His Word. It will help us immensely in studying to understand this.