



Today we can often hear the comment that people go to church to 'get fed'. To me this suggests that people have become spiritually dependent upon their pastors and teachers. Quite literally the rank and file members of congregations have become 'spiritual consumers' rather than 'producers'. The Bible is no longer in the hands of the people but in the hands of others. I'm certain that this dependency relationship is not intentionally cultivated by church leaders but it nevertheless continues.

Perhaps as church leaders we need to set aside our emphasis of glittering exegesis and swashbuckling exposition and teach people how to read the Bible for themselves. This is the passion that lies at the heart of this book.

You may ask what my qualifications for such a task are.

I am not a professional theologian, but I am a thinker and have reflected deeply on the themes of Scripture. I have discerned a pattern, a simple code. This is not the esoteric codes of the occultist and Gnostics but rather a genetic code - the 'double helix' of spiritual DNA running through the Bible. The two themes of this 'double helix' are relationship and responsibility, and their theological names are Covenant and Kingdom.

I am not a Biblical archaeologist or anthropologist but I am an enthusiast and I have held the artifact of Scripture in my hands for long enough to feel its texture. I have seen the warp and the weft of its richly woven fabric. I have traced the threads of Covenant and Kingdom in each of their directions. The warp reveals how to be one with God, and the weft tells us how to do something for him.

My call has not been that of the academic but that of the church leader and the spiritual guide. In my heart and mind I have traversed the landscape of Scripture many times and I have found its mountains and valleys to be places of challenge and refreshment. I have discovered the guiding coordinates - the latitude and longitude - that orientate the journey.

This book is about the big picture. It gives the broadest sweep of understanding and the simplest framework of interpretation that we can use as we read the Bible for ourselves. I am not suggesting that 'in-depth' Bible study is not important. On the contrary, I believe it should be part of every Christian's experience. This book is simply offered from a different perspective. You can study the Scripture by starting with its details or its largest themes. This is true of every kind of study - if we were to study the earth from its surface we would be conscious of many different elements that make up the atmosphere, biosphere and lithosphere.

Viewed from space however, Earth is blue.

Both perspectives are correct. This book offers a perspective, not from space, but from a vantage point that reveals the two fundamental themes of the Bible, Covenant and Kingdom.

My prayer is that as you read this book your passion to study the Bible will be rekindled and that as you hold that greatest of all books in your hands you will discover at a deeper level that you are held in the hands of another.

*Mike Breen*