

The Way of Jesus

Week 3

*A 12 Week Seminar For Disciples Of Jesus
St Stephens/Sewickley
January-March 2010*

The Gospel Jesus Brought, Part II

Key Verse:

"Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."

Mark 1:14-15 (RSV)

"Jesus then came into Galilee announcing the good news from God. 'All the preliminaries have been taken care of,' he said, 'and the rule of God is now accessible to everyone. Review your plans for living and base your life on this remarkable new opportunity.'" Mark 1.14-15 (DW, quoted in DC – 'Divine Conspiracy', p.15)

Key Terms:

- **Our Kingdom** is "the range of our effective will... where our choice determines what happens." (DC, p.21)
- **God's Kingdom** is the range of his effective will, which extends throughout creation, except for the Satanic realm for a while (DC, p.26)
- **The Gospel of his Kingdom** is the good news that his kingdom is present and available to any and all through simple trust in Jesus, bringing to us the remarkable resources of his Kingdom for life and living.

Reflections on God's Kingdom

1. **Definition:** The Kingdom of God was the major teaching topic of Jesus in his earthly ministry. God's Kingdom is the extent of God's effective **rule** and the dominant reality of all creation. It is that sphere of influence where God is King and where He redeems and rules and reigns through His Son.
2. **Time:** It is eternal, already present in Jesus, though yet to be consummated (Exo 15.18; Psa 145.13; Luke 1.33; Rev 11.15). For believers, eternity begins **now** (John 5.24; 1 John 5.13). "Old age" is lived in that light. This life's lessons, wisdom, & responsibilities carry over into eternity and set the stage for what is to come. Nothing is wasted.
3. **Access:** The Kingdom is fully available in Jesus. The door is "wide and low"; anyone may come - just stoop and enter. See the Beatitudes in Matt 5. This was apostolic preaching (Acts 1.6; 8.12; 20.21; 28.23, 31). Through simple trust in Jesus the life and the resources of the kingdom come to us.

4. **Our Identity:** You are a "*never ceasing spiritual being, with an eternal destiny in God's great universe. Spiritual in substance. Never-ceasing in duration. Creative governance in destiny.*" (DW) Your life as a human being is completed only by living in and from the kingdom, that is by trusting Jesus Christ, who brings us into the redemption and rule of God, and through our discipleship to him enables us to fulfill the covenant of Genesis 1.26-31 for eternity.
5. **Authority:** All "say" is given to Jesus (Matt 28.18). So we can have full confidence in Jesus for all of life; every relationship, circumstance, opportunity, crisis, or decision. We can go to him with complete confidence in his wisdom and his leading. His authority is shared with his partners (Luke 9 & 10; Willard, Hearing God, pp 130-33).
6. **Discipleship:** Faith and obedience are the primary connection between us and Jesus in the life of the Kingdom. We are his apprentices, those who live with and study and apply the teachings of a master for every part of their lives, and become like the master on the **inside** so that we act like him on the outside. It is not possible to be a disciple of Jesus without the intention to follow him. The major barrier to this apprentice life is our 'self-life', which must be set aside (Luke 14.25-33).
7. **Grace** is not just given for the forgiveness of our **past**, but also given for living in the **present** (2 Pet 3.18). The Kingdom itself is a gift of the Father, a matter of sheer grace (Lk 12.32). Kingdom life depends on grace from moment to moment; the greatest saints burn grace like a rocket burns fuel on its launch!
8. **Human Effort** is commanded in every book of the Bible. Passivity born out of a misunderstanding of saving grace undermines our sanctification and our impact. "Grace is not opposed to our **effort**, but to our **earning**." (DW) Grace calls forth our full, active, intelligent effort. Sanctification and Kingdom ministry cannot happen without Him. He will not do it without us.
9. **Purpose:** We were made for a kingdom; we were made for dominion (Gen 1.26). Your Kingdom is the range of your effective will, what you have 'say' over. It is integral to your personhood and the image of God in us. Adam and Eve's fall came because they did not trust God to create what was best for them. Our Kingdom growth makes us more and more trustworthy to rule and reign in His Kingdom. God's intent for each of us is where we would grow to the point where he can empower us to do what we want, because we shall want what He wants. Thus, we are in "*training for **reigning***" (Gen 1.26; priesthood of all believers, Matt 25.21; Rev 5.10; 22.5, etc) with creative governance in our destiny.
10. **Power:** The power of the Kingdom is the greatest **energy** in the world. It includes the strength of God himself, his goodness and his grace, the gift of his Spirit, the shared authority of Jesus, the freeing power of his Word, the forgiveness secured by his blood, etc, etc. The resources of the Kingdom are fully adequate for any and every circumstance in life. Prayer, for example (talking with God about what we are doing together), is an enormous Kingdom power. The Gospel is a similar power. Remember that his power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor 12.9).

Bible Study: God's Kingdom

These are passages on what Jesus and his Apostles taught about the gospel. Look up the following verses, and summarize them in the spaces below.

Reference: Matt. 3:1-2

Reference: Matt. 4:17

Reference: Luke 10:5-9

Reference: Acts 1:3

Reference: Matt. 10:5-8

Reference: Acts 28:30-31

Reference: Col 1:13-14

If you were trying to explain the Gospel from these verses to someone else, how would you phrase it?

Homework for Week 3

- Read Philippians 3 this week, devotionally
- Read Luke 13-18 this week, devotionally
- Pray through the 'Breastplate of St Patrick several times this week. It is a 'Kingdom Prayer'!

The Breastplate of St Patrick

I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through the belief in the threeness,
Through confession of the oneness
Of the Creator of Creation.

I arise today
Through the strength of Christ's birth with his baptism,
Through the strength of his crucifixion with his burial,
Through the strength of his resurrection with his ascension,
Through the strength of his descent for the judgment of Doom.

I arise today
Through the strength of the love of Cherubim,
In obedience of angels,
In the service of archangels,
In hope of resurrection to meet with reward,
In prayers of patriarchs,
In predictions of prophets,
In preaching of apostles,
In faith of confessors,
In innocence of holy virgins,
In deeds of righteous men.

I arise today
Through the strength of heaven:
Light of sun,
Radiance of moon,
Splendor of fire,
Speed of lightning,
Swiftness of wind,
Depth of sea,
Stability of earth,
Firmness of rock.

I arise today
Through God's strength to pilot me:
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,

God's hand to guard me,
 God's way to lie before me,
 God's shield to protect me,
 God's host to save me
 From snares of devils,
 From temptations of vices,
 From everyone who shall wish me ill,
 Afar and anear,
 Alone and in multitude.

I summon today all these powers between me and those evils,
 Against every cruel merciless power that may oppose my body and soul,
 Against incantations of false prophets,
 Against black laws of pagandom
 Against false laws of heretics,
 Against craft of idolatry,
 Against spells of witches and smiths and wizards,
 Against every knowledge that corrupts man's body and soul.

Christ to shield me today
 Against poison, against burning,
 Against drowning, against wounding,
 So that there may come to me abundance of reward.
 Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
 Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
 Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
 Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise,
 Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
 Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
 Christ in every eye that sees me,
 Christ in every ear that hears me.

I arise today
 Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
 Through belief in the threeness,
 Through confession of the oneness,
 Of the Creator of Creation.