

WHAT'S THE POINT?

- A. Introduction: We all have troubles. We all need and want help from God. To access God's power and provision, we must understand the big picture so we can cooperate with God as He works in the earth.
1. We say this frequently but it bears repeating: You'll struggle to walk in peace, joy and victory in this life if you don't understand the big picture—why we're here, what God is and wants to do.
 - a. If you don't see the big picture your perspective will be skewed as you try to deal with life. And, you could unknowingly be working at cross purposes with God.
 - b. You must learn to look at life in terms of the big picture. Why did Jesus come? What did He accomplish? How are we supposed to live in light of what He accomplished? What's the point?
 2. This is the big picture: God created men and women to become His sons and daughters, and He made the earth to be home for Himself and His family. Eph 1:4,5; Isa 45:18
 - a. The first man, Adam, chose independence from God and took the entire race resident in him into the pigpen of sin, corruption and death. Adam's disobedience had enormous consequences.
 1. Beings made in the image of God are now born with a nature contrary to God (sin nature) and, like Adam, choose independence from God through sin. Gen 4:1-6; Rom 5:19; Eph 2:1-3; etc.
 2. The earth itself has been infused with corruption and death (the curse of sin) making life on this planet very difficult. Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Rom 8:20-22; etc.
 3. The governmental structure on earth has been altered. God originally commissioned Adam and man in Adam as His under rulers on earth (Gen 1:26,27). When Adam sinned he turned rulership on the earth over to Satan who then became the god of this world (II Cor 4:4). His kingdom or reign was established on earth (Luke 4:6--power is EXOUSIA or authority).
 - b. Jesus came to put God's plan back on track. He went to the Cross to pay for sin so it can be removed and God can make sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters when they put faith in Jesus and His sacrifice. Heb 9:26
 1. Jesus will return in the not too distant future to cleanse the earth from all corruption and death and restore it to its created purpose, a fit forever home for God and His family. Rev 11:15-18
 2. The Bible begins with God and man interacting together in a world free from sin, corruption and death and it ends with God and His family together again on earth. Gen 2; Rev 21,22
 3. We're going to begin a series of lessons on God's purposes--why Jesus came and how we are to live in light of it. In this lesson we want to introduce (but not fully discuss yet) a number of topics which we will discuss in more detail over the next few months.
- B. Matt 4:17--When Jesus began His ministry two thousand years ago, His first public words were: Repent for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.
1. Repent means a change of mind and heart away from self and sin toward God. Jesus came to bring men back to God (I Pet 3:18). We could do an entire lesson on this, but consider one point.
 - a. Luke 19:10--Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Sinners are referred to as "lost" because men and women in their fallen condition are lost to the purpose for which they were created--sonship and relationship with God. Jesus has made it possible for men to fulfill their created purpose.
 - b. Salvation is about more than keeping people out of Hell or providing them with a ticket to Heaven. Salvation is transformational. The goal of salvation is to transform sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God who fully glorify Him (whole lesson for another day).
 - c. Matt 4:17--Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, the Reign of heaven is near". (Moffatt)
 1. When the phrase "kingdom of God or kingdom of Heaven" is used we tend to think of Heaven above or the place where believers in Jesus go when they die. But the meaning is bigger.
 2. Kingdom means rule, reign or realm. God's aim is not to take us off the earth to Heaven. His intention is to bring the kingdom of Heaven or His reign back to earth.
 2. Hold that thought. Let's back up. Before sin, God and Adam interacted with one another in Eden.

- a. By the time Jesus came to earth the term paradise was used for the home of the righteous dead (II Cor 12:4). It comes from a Greek word (PARADEISOS) meaning park or garden. It was used for the Garden of Eden in the Septuagint (first translation of Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek).
1. The Garden of Eden was paradise or God's home (Heaven) on earth (lesson for another day).
When Adam sinned the garden closed to men and disappeared from earth. Gen 3:22-24
 2. Gen 3:15--Following Adam's sin, God came immediately with the promise of the coming Redeemer (Jesus) who would undo the damage done by man's sin. One of the things the Redeemer would do was reopen Eden (Heaven, paradise) on earth.
- b. We've discussed in a previous series how God, from that point on, gave increasing revelation of His plan to deliver mankind and the earth from sin, corruption and death (known as redemption) through His prophets. They recorded those revelations in what we know as the Old Testament.
1. The Old Testament prophets wrote that God will one day establish His visible kingdom or reign on earth. The first time the word kingdom is mentioned in connection with God's kingdom on earth is in the Book of Daniel.
 2. Daniel interpreted a dream had by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. In the dream the king saw the establishment of the visible kingdom of God on earth: A Stone not cut with human hands broke apart a statue representing the kingdoms of this world. The Rock became a great mountain that covered the whole earth. Dan 2:28; 34,35; 44
- c. When Jesus began His public ministry with the message that the kingdom of Heaven is near, He had everyone's attention. They were looking for the Redeemer to come and set up the visible kingdom of God on earth. They knew He was coming to restore what had been lost through sin.
1. Not only did Jesus proclaim the kingdom was near, He demonstrated what the kingdom expressed on earth looks like. He traveled around healing the sick and casting out devils or demonstrating happens when the reign of God comes on the scene. Matt 4:23-25; Luke 11:20
 2. What does it look like when the kingdom is here? The curse resulting from sin is banished-- Bodies are healed and minds set free. Men and women are restored. Lack is banished. Storms are stilled. The dead are raised.
- d. Not only does it mean that the curse is broken, it means that dominion is restored to men. Jesus began to replicate His work through men, giving them (and us) a foretaste of what is to come.
1. Matt 10:1--He gave His disciples power (the Greek word authority) over devils and diseases. Authority is delegated power. Power and authority (Amp).
 - A. Matt 10:7,8--Then Jesus sent them out to do what He had been doing: Tell everyone that the kingdom is near and it demonstrate to them by using what I've given you.
 - B. v7--Wherever you go proclaim that the Reign of God is near (Moffatt); proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven has arrived (Phillips).
 - C. Bodies and minds set free by the power of God are the calling cards of the kingdom.
 2. Luke 10:9--Jesus commissioned seventy more to go ahead of Him to places He Himself would travel. He told them to announce the arrival of the kingdom by healing people.
3. Jesus did not at that time set up the visible kingdom of God on earth. Instead, He revealed a previously unseen (but vital) form of the kingdom or reign of God -- the kingdom within. Luke 17:20,21
- a. The kingdom within is the reign or rule of God in the hearts of men through the new birth. This inward transformation is critical because without it, a person cannot enter the kingdom. John 3:3,5
 1. When a person believes on Jesus and His substitutionary death and resurrection (He took our place on the Cross and was punished to pay the price for our sins), he is born of God.
 2. The uncreated life in God, the life of God Himself, comes into that person, regenerates his spirit, and he is born of God. He becomes a literal son or daughter of God by birth, a partaker of the life in God, eternal life. John 1:12; Titus 3:5; I John 5:1; etc.
 - b. The new birth is the beginning of a process that will ultimately entirely transform us and make us like Jesus in our whole being. Our destiny is to be made like Jesus in character and power.

1. Rom 8:29--For those whom He foreknew—of whom He was aware and loved beforehand—He also destined from the beginning (foreordaining them) to be molded into the image of His son [and share inwardly His likeness], that He might be the first-born among many brethren (Amp); the eldest in a vast family of brothers (Weymouth).
 2. We don't become Jesus. We become the person God created us to be -- born of Him, fully free from every trace of sin, corruption and death and fully glorifying to Him in every respect.
 3. When we say we want to be like "so and so", it doesn't mean we turn into them. It means they have traits we would like to have. Jesus has traits that we now have (because we're born of Him) and will have when we are fully conformed to His image. (Lessons for another day)
 - c. Jesus in His humanity shows us what men and women born of God look like. Jesus is God become a man without ceasing to be God. While on earth He did not live as God. He lived as a man in dependence on the life of His Father in Him. John 5:26; Acts 10:38; John 14:10; etc.
 1. Jesus died so that our sin could be removed and we could be born of God and become His literal sons and daughters. While on earth He showed us what sons and daughters look like.
 2. Through the new birth and the baptism in the Holy Spirit we receive the same empowering abilities by which Jesus, in His humanity, lived while He was on earth.
 - d. Remember what salvation is all about: Restoration of God's original plan to have a family of holy righteous sons and daughters with whom He can dwell forever on a renewed earth.
 1. The new birth begins the process of transformation that will make us fully like Jesus in every part of our being. Right now, by the power of God in us, we have the potential to walk even as Jesus walked when He was on earth. I John 2:6; I John 4:17
 2. We have the privilege and the responsibility of knowing Jesus and then showing Him to the world around us. We are to proclaim and demonstrate the kingdom.
 4. Jesus understood the reason for which He came to earth two thousand years ago: To make it possible for the kingdom or reign of God to be extended into the innermost being of those who put faith in Him.
 - a. He knew that the entrance of the kingdom would transform them from unholy, unrighteous sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters and empower them to demonstrate the kingdom by showing the character and power of the Perfect Son to the world around them.
 - b. At the Last Supper, Jesus laid out the plan for His followers as He prepared them for His soon departure from earth and the commission they would receive to continue His work.
 1. John 13:34--He told them: Love one another as I have loved you. Demonstrate My character.
 2. John 14:10-12--He told them: The Father in Me has done His works through me. In this way I have shown Him and His kingdom to the world. You will now go out and continue my works (the Father's works) as you show Me to the world around you. Demonstrate My power.
 3. John 14:20--He told them: When that day comes (following the resurrection, and you understand what My death has accomplished) you will know that I am in union with my Father and you are with me and I am with you. (Goodspeed). You will have in you the same empowering ability by which I have lived and walked.
- C. Conclusion: We'll do entire lessons on many of the points we've made. Let's close with these thoughts.
1. How is any of this useful to people who live in a real world with real problems and need real help?
 - a. There is an invisible realm of power that can produce tangible change in our lives. You're now a citizen of that kingdom and authorized to administer the power of the kingdom. Col 1:13
 - b. What if you learned to demonstrate the kingdom in your life? Jesus' first followers learned to do so. In Acts 3:1-26 Peter administered the power of the kingdom and healed a lame man.
 1. Notice Peter's mindset that day: v6--When the man asked for help Peter replied: I'll give you what I have. Freely I've received. Freely I give.
 2. Peter knew he had something real, something tangible, to give this lame man. He knew he was empowered and authorized to use the power of the kingdom.

- c. The Temple rulers were not happy about what happened and questioned Peter and John about what they had done (Acts 4:1-22).
1. Peter used the situation and preached Jesus to the crowd that had gathered. He credited Jesus working through them as the One who healed the lame man.
 2. Note one comment about the reaction of the authorities to Peter's works and words. They noted that both Peter and John had been with Jesus. Acts 4:13--And realized what being with Jesus had done for them. (The Living Bible).
2. When Peter prayed for the lame beggar, he knew what he was authorized to do and he expected the power of the kingdom to be demonstrated -- and it was. Where did Peter get that kind of knowledge and that kind of confidence? He got it from through spending time with Jesus.
- a. We can't literally follow Jesus around and spend time with Him like Peter and John did because He has temporarily returned to Heaven.
 1. But we can spend time with Him through His written Word, the Bible. The Living Word, Jesus, is revealed through the written Word of God. John 20:31
 2. John 6:63--All the words through which I have offered myself to you are meant to be channels of the spirit and of life to you, since in believing those words you would be brought into contact with the life in me. (Riggs Paraphrase)
 - b. The greatest gift you can give yourself as we begin this new year is to become a consistent, systematic reader of the New Testament.
 1. Most people, if they read at all, skip around and read a verse here or a verse there. Or they read just the study notes at the bottom of the page. But the Bible is not a collection of independent verses. It is a collection of books and letters meant to be read from start to finish as are any books and letters.
 2. Set aside a few ten to fifteen minutes a day. Start at the beginning of the New Testament. Read as far as you can. The next day, pick up where you left off. Don't worry about what you don't understand. Don't stop to look up the words or read what the commentary says. Just keep reading. Understanding comes with familiarity.
 - c. What if it's boring? What if you don't seem to get anything out of it? Don't worry. Just keep reading. When you finish a book or letter, read it again.
 1. The Bible is a supernatural book that will work in you and produce change if you will simply read it. It will build strength, confidence and joy into you. It will gradually change you and make you more and more like Jesus in character and power. And that's the point.
 2. II Cor 3:18--And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit. (Amp)
3. We have much more to discuss in upcoming lessons. More next week!