

QUALIFIED FOR THE KINGDOM

- A. Introduction: We've begun a series on why Jesus came to earth and how we are to live in the light of it. He came to put God's plan back on track. The goal of salvation is the restoration of God's original plan to have a family of holy, righteous sons and daughters with whom He can dwell forever on this earth.
1. God created men and women to become His sons and daughters. He made earth to be home for Him and His family. The Bible begins and ends with God and His sons and daughters on earth. Rev 21,22
    - a. God made human beings with the capacity to receive something of Himself into our being (His uncreated eternal life) and become, not just His creations, but literal sons. John 1:4; John 14:6; Titus 1:2
      - b. Gen 2:9--It was God's intention that the first man, Adam, eat from the tree of life. Doing so would have been an expression of submission to and dependence on God and would have united Adam to eternal life, the life in God Himself.
    2. Instead, Adam chose independence from God and ate from the forbidden tree. In doing so, he took the entire race resident in him into the pigpen of sin, corruption and death.
      - a. His actions had huge consequences for God's family and the home He created for them.
        1. The Garden of Eden was paradise or God's home on earth (Heaven). When Adam sinned the Garden was closed to men and disappeared from the earth. Gen 3:22-24
        2. There was a fundamental change in human nature. Beings made in the image of God developed a nature contrary to God (a sin nature) and, like Adam, chose independence from God through sin. Gen 4:1-6; Rom 5:19; Eph 2:1-3; etc.
        3. The earth itself was infused with corruption and death (the curse of sin) making life on this planet very difficult and deadly. Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Rom 8:20-22; etc.
        4. The governmental structure on earth was 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 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 in Greek).
      - b. God knew what Adam would do and the effects it would produce and had a plan devised to undo the damage. God Himself would take on flesh and die to deliver men and earth from sin. Rev 13:8
        1. Jesus went to the Cross to pay for sin so it can be removed and God transform sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters when they put faith in Jesus and His sacrifice.
        2. Eph 1:4,5--Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will. (RSV)
    3. When Jesus began His public ministry His first words were: Repent for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand (Matt 4:17). Kingdom means rule, reign, realm. Jesus came to restore the reign of God in men and through men on earth. In this lesson we want to continue our discussion of what Jesus did and how we are to live.
- B. Rom 8:29,30 gives us a brief summary of how God restores His reign or kingdom in men by making sinners into sons through Jesus.
1. Jesus is the pattern for God's family. In His earth ministry He showed us what sons and daughters of God look like or how they live and act in relation to God the Father and to their fellow man.
    - a. 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 union with and in dependence on the uncreated eternal life of the Father in Him. John 5:26; Acts 10:38; John 14:10; Mark 1:13; Mark 4:38; Mark 11:12;etc.
    - b. We don't become Jesus. We become like Him in character and power. We become the person God created us to be, fully free from every trace of sin, corruption and death and fully glorifying to Him in every aspect of our being.

1. Our destiny is to be conformed to the image of Christ. Conformed comes from a word that means to have the same form as. It has the idea of an inward, lasting change of character or nature: v29--to be molded into the image of His son [and share inwardly His likeness] (Amp).
  2. We have all been summoned or invited to our destiny. You may have been a surprise or an accident to your mom and dad, but not so to God. He knew you before He formed the earth and called you to become His son or daughter through Jesus.
  3. God transforms sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters by justifying and glorifying us.
2. It is sometimes said that Christians are forgiven sinners. But that is not accurate. Through the Cross of Christ we have been justified or acquitted. Let's discuss what that means.
- a. All men are guilty of sin before a holy God. Although God loves the men and women He created, He is also a just God. That means He always does what is right. It is just and right to punish sin.
    1. God must punish sin to be true to His own righteous nature. God cannot, will not, let anyone off the hook for sin. Ex 23:7; Prov 17:15; Prov 24:24
    2. The righteous penalty for sin is death or eternal separation from God (Rom 6:23). But if God carried out the punishment proscribed by His own Law, He would lose the race He created.
  - b. So God, in His love and grace, devised a masterful plan. He Himself took on flesh and died in our place. He died for us as we should have and would have died.
  - c. Jesus took the righteous punishment that should have come to us for our sin. Justice has been satisfied in regard to our sin. We have been justified.
    1. Justified comes from a word that means to render just or innocent. It means acquitted.
      - A. When forgiven, you're guilty but the one you wronged chooses not to hold it against you.
      - B. When pardoned, you're guilty but you're released from the penalty. It is not enacted.
      - C. When acquitted, all charges are dropped because there's no evidence of wrong doing.
    2. Col 2:14--He has utterly wiped out the written evidence of broken commandments which always hung over our heads, and has completely annulled it by nailing it to the Cross. (Phillips)
- c. Through the Cross our sin has been wiped out and God can deal with us as though we never sinned when we put faith in Christ and His sacrifice. Rom 5:1
- C. A holy God can't have sinners as sons. Our nature must be changed. Once we are acquitted through faith in Christ, that transformation can take place. We can be glorified.
1. Man was created for a position of glory--sonship and rulership. Ps 8:4-6--God created man and crowned him with glory and honor or majesty (Moffatt) and greatness (New Life).
    - a. God made man a fit companion for Himself. He made man a being who could potentially become His son by receiving His life and then being conformed to the image of Christ or made like Jesus in character and power, a glorious position.
    - b. One consequence of sin is that man has come short (lit. fallen short) of the glory of God.
      1. Rom 3:23--All have lost the divine glory which they were meant to have (Barclay); all of us have gotten off track of God's original intention and have missed the fulfillment for which we were destined (Johnson).
      2. Before sin, man was in a position of glory. The implication is that if there were no sin, man could be restored to glory. Jesus came to earth to deal with our sin was to bring us to, restore us to glory. Heb 2:10; I Cor 2:7; I Thess 2:12; II Thess 2:14.
  2. You may be wondering how this fits with the statements that God won't share His glory with anyone (Isa 42:8; 48:11)? God spoke these words to Israel when they were in idol worship. In this context, to give God's glory to another means to worship one who is not God. God will not share His glory, the honor that belongs to Him as God, with another god. There are no other gods.
    - a. When the Bible uses the phrase "the glory of God" it sometimes means the honor and praise given

to God or by God. But the glory of God also refers to the visible manifestation of God—God showing or demonstrating Himself in what ever way He chooses.

1. For example, in the Old testament God demonstrated Himself or His glory to Israel both as a cloud and a pillar of fire. In the New Testament He demonstrated His glory (Himself) in and through the Perfect Son Jesus and in and through His redeemed sons and daughters.

2. God created us in such a way that He can indwell us and then demonstrate Himself in and through us -- both His character and His power -- which in turn brings Him honor and glory.

Matt 5:16; John 15:8; Gal 1:24; Phil 1:11

b. God's glory in this sense is God Himself. God glorifies us by giving us His life in every part of our being. Jesus was restored to life by the glory or life of the Father. Rom 6:4

1. To be glorified means to be made alive with the glory or the uncreated life of God in every part of our being.

2. Rom 8:30--And those whom He justified He also glorified—raising them to a heavenly dignity and condition [state of being] (Amp); Those who He accepted as righteous He also brought to glory (20<sup>th</sup> Cent); He has shared His glory with them (Cont); he has also given his splendour (NEB).

c. To be glorified is another way of saying to be fully conformed to the image of Christ or made like Jesus in every part of our being.

3. Being glorified or being fully conformed to the image of Christ is a process. It begins at the new birth when your innermost being (spirit) is glorified or made alive with the life of God.

a. In connection with the catching away of the Church and resurrection of the dead, our body will be glorified or made like Jesus' resurrected body (immortal, incorruptible). Phil 3:20,21--Fashioned like unto is the same word translated conformed in Romans 8:29 (having the same form as).

b. Now, in this life, God desires that these inward changes show up outwardly in our mind, emotions, and body, in our thoughts, words, and actions. (lessons for another day)

1. If we will read and feed on God's written Word it will gradually change us and make us more and more like Jesus in these area. 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)

2. Changed is another form of the word used in Rom 8:29 and Phil 3:21. It is used to describe what happened to Jesus when He was transfigured before His disciples. Matt 17:2--His inward condition showed up on the outside.

c. If you are born again, you are a finished work in progress. You are fully God's holy, righteous son or daughter but you are not yet fully glorified or fully conformed to the image of Christ. I John 3:2

1. There are two sides to the Christian life: position and experience. Position is what you are in relation to God now that you are born again. Experience is how you actually live. The two don't always match yet.

A. Your position is an accomplished fact. It's your because of what God did through the Cross and the new birth.

B. God can and now does deal with you as a son. You have the same position before God that Jesus had when He was on earth -- that of a holy, righteous son of God. I John 4:17

2. What you do doesn't change what you are. But what you are will ultimately change what you do. Rom 8:29 puts "glorified" in the past tense because He who has begun a good work in you will complete it and we'll be fully glorified or conformed to the image of Christ. Phil 1:6

D. Conclusion: Jesus came to earth to bring the kingdom, to reestablish the reign of God in men and through men on this earth. We are to demonstrate the character of Jesus and the power of the kingdom in the earth. We have not said all we need to say but consider these thoughts as we close.

1. Jesus said that men cannot enter the kingdom without being born again (John 3:3,5). Through the Cross and the new birth we have been qualified for the kingdom.
  - a. Col 1:12,13--And you will always be thanking the Father who has qualified you to share the loft of His people in the realm of light. It is God who has delivered us out of the dominion of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of His dearly loved Son. (Williams)
  - b. The kingdom or reign of God has come into us through His Spirit and life and we've been delivered out of the reign and realm of the devil into the kingdom of God. We're in the kingdom and the kingdom is in us.
  - c. There is an invisible realm of power that can produce tangible change in our lives. We're now citizens of that kingdom and authorized to administer the power of the kingdom. What if we learned to demonstrate the kingdom in our lives? Jesus' first followers learned to do so.
2. To walk in the power of the kingdom you must first see yourself as you truly are in relation to God. You are His holy, righteous son or daughter in the process of being fully conformed to the image of Christ. You have been authorized and empowered to walk as Jesus walked. I John 2:6
  - a. Acts 3:6--When Peter healed the lame beggar at the Temple gate he knew that he had been given something which he was commissioned to give to others. He knew he was qualified.
  - b. We struggle with these things because we are more aware of our shortcomings and failures than we are the changes that have taken place in us through the new birth.
    1. Peter made it clear to the crowd that gathered when the man was healed that day that it was not his power or holiness that had restored the man (Acts 3:13). He understood that he had been made holy through the Cross and empowered through the new birth to demonstrate the kingdom just as Jesus had done. Jesus in me and through me did it.
    2. Keep in mind that this is Peter, the one who abandoned Jesus in His darkest hour, denying that he even knew the Lord (Matt 26:69-75). Peter understood that those failures and weaknesses were vanquished by the arrival of the kingdom.
3. I realize that few Christians actually walk in any of these things, mainly because it's not widely preached or believed. But we are going to feed on the Word of God until the reality of the kingdom -- what we have and what we are because we are in the kingdom and the kingdom is in us -- begins to dawn on us and we begin to experience it more and more in our lives. More next week!