

WE ARE IN THE KINGDOM

- A. Introduction: It's a natural tendency to want to address the immediate crisis in our life. But sometimes the best way to do that is to step back and look at it in terms of the bigger picture. We're working on that.
1. 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 and what God is and wants to do in our lives.
 - a. God made 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
 - b. But God's plan was taken off track through sin. In consequence of Adam's sin: A sin nature was produced in the human race. The earth was infused with the curse of corruption and death. Satan became the god of this world. Rom 5:19; Gen 3:17-19; II Cor 4:4; etc.
 2. Jesus came to earth to put God's plan back on track. He went to the Cross to pay the price for sin so that it and all its effects and consequences can be removed from God's creation.
 - a. Because of the Cross, when a sinner puts faith in Jesus and His sacrifice, he or she can be transformed into a holy, righteous son or daughter of God.
 - b. Jesus will soon return to earth to cleanse it of all corruption and death and restore it to its created purpose, a fit forever home for God and His family of redeemed sons and daughters.
 3. In this lesson we'll continue our discussion of why Jesus came and how we are to live in light of it.
- B. Jesus began His public ministry with these words: Repent for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Matt 4:17
1. When the term "kingdom of Heaven" or "kingdom of God" is used we tend to think of Heaven above or the place where believers in Jesus go when they die.
 - a. But the meaning is much bigger. Kingdom means rule, reign or realm. Jesus came to establish the rule, reign and realm of God in men and through men here on earth.
 1. Not only did Jesus proclaim the kingdom was near, He demonstrated what happens when the kingdom is expressed on earth: the sick are healed and devils cast out. Matt 4:23-25
 2. Then He authorized His twelve followers and seventy others to do what He did—proclaim the kingdom and show it by healing the sick and casting out devils. Matt 10:1-8; Luke 10:1-9
 - b. When Jesus took on human nature and was born into this world, the people to who He first came (based on the writings of the Old Testament prophets) were expecting Him to establish the visible, eternal kingdom of God on earth. Dan 2:44; 7:27; etc.
 1. Jesus did not do so at that time. He will come again and set up God's visible kingdom on earth. However, Jesus did unveil a previously unrevealed form of the kingdom, the kingdom within or the reign and rule of God in the hearts of men. Luke 17:20,21
 2. He then went to the Cross to pay the price for sin so it could be removed and men can be born again or born of God through the new birth or reign of God coming into their heart.
 - c. Following His resurrection, Jesus spent forty more days on earth teaching His apostles things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Then He returned to Heaven and they went out and proclaimed and demonstrated the kingdom. Acts 1:3; 8:12
 2. A few years later, the resurrected Lord Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus as he traveled to Damascus, Syria. He was a zealous Pharisee who had become an ardent persecutor of Christians. Acts 9:1-18
 - a. Saul (Paul) was converted. Jesus appeared to him a number of times after that and personally taught Paul the gospel which he preached. Acts 9:16; 26:16; Gal 1:11,12
 1. A number of mysteries were revealed to Paul. A mystery is something in the purpose and plan of God hither to unrevealed. He used the word mystery twenty-one times in His writings.
 2. The impact of Paul's ministry was massive. He wrote two-thirds of the New Testament (proportionately) and took the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. Paul preached and demonstrated the kingdom. Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31; I Cor 4:20; Acts 19:11,12; etc.
 - b. From his writings we get this insight into the kingdom of God: We are in the kingdom and the

kingdom is in us. For the rest of the lesson we want to discuss what it means to be in the kingdom.

- C. There is more to reality than what we contact with our five physical senses. There are seen things and unseen things. Col 1:16
1. God, who is Invisible, presides over an invisible realm or kingdom of full power and provision.
 - a. Although this realm is not normally visible to men on earth, scripture records numerous examples where the heavens were opened permitting men to see the unseen and experience its power.
 1. II Kings 6:15-17--When Elisha and his servant were surrounded by the Syrian army the veil was pulled back and the servant saw angelic protection encompassing them.
 2. Luke 2:13-15--The night Jesus was born in Bethlehem the veil was pulled back and shepherds saw and heard angels praising God for what was accomplished.
 - b. The invisible preceded and produced the visible. The Invisible God spoke His invisible Word and the visible, physical realm came into being. The invisible will outlast and ultimately change and transform the visible. I Tim 1:17; Gen 1:3; Heb 11:3; II Cor 4:18
 1. This invisible realm can produce tangible changes and results in the visible material world. Jesus administered the power of this kingdom to produce visible results.
 2. Invisible power healed bodies and minds, stopped storms and multiplied food. Jesus dispensed this power through His words and touch. Mark 4:39; Matt 8:3; Matt 14:15-21; etc.
 2. Because of the Cross and the new birth we are now citizens of this kingdom and authorized to access and administer its power. To be in the kingdom means to be a citizen of the kingdom. Phil 3:20
 - a. Phil 3:20--The word conversation (in KJV) is citizenship in the Greek. It comes from a word that means citizen (natural born or naturalized) and to behave as a citizen.
 1. For our citizenship (ASV); Our country is in the heavens (Alford); The state of which we are citizens is in Heaven (20th Cent); We are citizens of heaven (Phillips).
 2. Webster's says citizenship is the state of being vested with the rights and duties of a citizen. A citizen owes allegiance to the government and is entitled to its protection and privileges.
 - b. Since Paul is the one who wrote these words, let's consider what citizenship meant to him to give his statement a context. As a Roman citizen Paul knew citizenship meant rights and privileges.
 1. Citizenship in the Roman world meant the right to vote, hold office, appeal to Caesar, contract a legal marriage, hold property. Roman citizens could not be bound, beaten, condemned or punished without being heard.
 2. Rome controlled a vast amount of territory at its peak. Roman citizenship superseded all else before the law and it gave a person an elevated position throughout the Empire.
 3. Adam Clarke (noted Hebrew and Greek Bible scholar in the late 1700s), quoting ancient Roman secular manuscripts about the prevailing culture of the day, wrote: "That exclamation, I am a Roman citizen...has often brought assistance and safety, even among barbarians in the remotest parts of the earth." In other words, being a citizen brought results in peoples' lives.
 - c. In Acts 22 Paul went to Jerusalem. A riot broke out because the Jews thought he was teaching people to abandon the Law of Moses. And they believed he'd brought a Gentile into the Temple.
 1. Roman soldiers intervened and kept the crowd from beating Paul to death. He asked for a chance to speak to the crowd. When he said Jesus sent him to the Gentiles the mob went crazy again. Roman officials were going to bind and beat Paul to get to the bottom of it. But it didn't happen because they learned Paul was a Roman citizen. Fear fell on everyone. v24-29
 2. The same thing happened in the city of Philippi when the magistrates discovered that Paul was a Roman citizen after they had beaten and imprisoned him. Acts 16:37-40
 - d. To be in the kingdom means to be a citizen of Heaven. As citizens we have rights and privileges here on earth. Note one translation of Phil 3:20--But we are colony of heaven (Moffatt).
 1. A colony is a territory under the political and economic rule of a nation. The mother country is the source of power and provision for the colony. When Paul was in Jerusalem he was far

from Rome. Yet he had the backing of Rome. That was his mindset when he wrote Phil 3:20.

2. We are citizens of the kingdom of Heaven (a real place in the unseen realm). Although we don't yet live in the mother country, it is our home, our protection and our source. Those rights and privileges go with us wherever we are.

- C. Besides the kingdom of God, another kingdom functions in the unseen realm, the kingdom of darkness.
1. God has always existed. In eternity past He created invisible things, including angels. This angelic realm has rank and function. At some point there was an angelic rebellion led by Lucifer, an archangel, and a counterfeit kingdom was set up in the invisible realm. This kingdom is one of darkness and death (Isa 14:12-14; Ezek 28:1-19; Eph 6:12; etc., lessons for another day).
 - a. When the first man, Adam, listened to Satan (Lucifer) and chose independence from God through sin he turned his God-given authority on earth over to this rebel. Luke 4:6
 - b. Satan's kingdom which had existed only in the invisible realm was established on earth. All men are now born into his kingdom under his control. Eph 2:1-3
 2. Because of the circumstances of Jesus' conception (God was His Father) He did not partake of fallen human nature and was not born into the kingdom of darkness. John 14:30; Luke 22:53
 - a. At the Cross Jesus joined us in our fallen condition, putting Himself under the dominion of darkness and death to break its power and bring us out. II Cor 5:21; Rom 6:9; Isa 53:6; etc.
 - b. Heb 2:14,15--that by [going through] death He might bring to naught and make of no effect him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. (Amp); dethrone (Goodspeed).
 - c. Before He died Jesus told the disciples He would not drink with them again until He did so in His Father's kingdom. He drank with them after His Resurrection. Luke 22:18; 24:41-43; Acts 10:42
 1. Something in the rulership of earth changed when Jesus died and rose from the dead. The power structure was altered. John 12:28-32.
 2. Men and women can now come out of the kingdom of darkness, out from under the dominion of death, through faith in Jesus and His sacrifice on the Cross.
 3. As sinners we were citizens of that realm of darkness. We were in the death realm. But we have been transferred into the realm of light and life -- the kingdom of God. Col 1:13
 - a. Translated comes from two words that denote a change of place or condition and to set or move from one place to another --who has rescued us out of the authority of darkness (Rotherham); from the dominion of (Conybeare); has removed us into (20th Cent); reestablished us in (Phillips); and transplanted us into (Conybeare).
 - b. Acts 26:18--Paul was commissioned by Jesus to turn men from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God.
- D. Conclusion: Rom 5:17--Because of Adam's sin death (darkness, Satan) has reigned over the human race. But through Jesus, death's dominion over us is broken. We have changed kingdoms and can now reign in life through the power and provision of the kingdom of Heaven.
1. Jesus, in His earth ministry, shows us what it looks like when a son of God who is a citizen of the kingdom reigns in this life. Remember, Jesus is the pattern for God's family. Rom 8:29; I John 2:6
 - a. Jesus came out of the invisible realm to live in this seen, material realm (John 6:38). 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 power and provision of His Father and that kingdom (John 5:26; Acts 10:38; etc.).
 - b. Jesus paid for our sin making it possible for us to be delivered out from under the authority and power of the kingdom of darkness. And He showed us how a son can interact with a kingdom of which he is not a part.
 1. To be a citizen of the kingdom of Heaven does not mean we'll have no more problems in life. We still live in a fallen world populated by citizens of that kingdom.

A. Although the devil has been judged, he has not yet been subjugated. He still goes about seeking to devour men. I Pet 5:8

B. At the return of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue confess to His Lordship.

And the devil and all the citizens of his kingdom will be forever removed from contact with God's family. Phil 2:9-11; Rev 20:10

2. Jesus encountered trials and tribulation. Relational issues (His family thought He was nuts, Mark 3:21); people lied about Him (Matt 12:24); grief (his cousin John was executed, Matt 14:11-13); overworked (Mark 6:31,32); frustrations with people (Matt 17:17; John 11:33-35); devil came to tempt Him (Luke 4:13); had to pay taxes (Matt 17:26,27); got caught in a storm (Mark 4:37); in a desert place with no food (Matt 14:15); etc.

3. Yet in every circumstance Jesus had wisdom (or light) to deal with what He encountered in a victorious way. He had provision when He needed it. And He had power to set men and women free wherever He went.

2. Jesus' testimony about all of this was: John 16:33--In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; be of good cheer—take courage, be confident, certain, undaunted—for I have overcome the world. —I have deprived it of power to harm, have conquered it [for you] (Amp).

a. There is more in His statement than we can deal with right now. But consider one point. Through the Cross and His resurrection victory Jesus made it possible for us to change kingdoms.

1. The new birth gains us entrance into the kingdom of Heaven at death, but it also gives us citizenship in this invisible realm now. Because we are citizens we can access the power and provision of that realm and it can affect us and our life here in on earth. John 3:3,5

2. Acts 28:1-6--When Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake he knew that as a citizen of the kingdom he was authorized and empowered to shake it off with no harm done (Luke 10:19).

And that's exactly what he did.

b. We must take time to learn what God has given us through the Cross and the new birth, become persuaded of it, and then learn to live and walk in the light of it?

1. What if, in the midst of the riot in Jerusalem in Acts 22, Paul had not known the value of Roman citizenship and stood his ground based on his rights?

2. What if, when that snake bit him, he did not know the value of heavenly citizenship and stood his ground based on his rights?

c. Much more to talk about next week!!