

ACCESS TO THE UNSEEN

- A. Introduction: We are talking about why Jesus came and how we are supposed to live in light of it.
1. When we read through the Gospels (the four accounts of Jesus' ministry on earth), we see that the word kingdom is frequently used. Jesus' first public words were: Repent for the kingdom of heaven (kingdom of God) is at hand.
 - a. The terms kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God are often used interchangeably in the New Testament. Matt 4:17; Mark 1:15
 1. The people to whom Jesus first came two thousand years ago were expecting Him to set up a physical, visible kingdom on earth. Luke 2:25,38; 19:11; 23:51; etc.
 2. Jesus did indeed come to establish the kingdom of God on earth. And, if we're going to walk in victory in this life, we must understand what Jesus did two thousand years ago, what He is doing now, and what He will do in the future -- and what it all means for us.
 - b. When the term kingdom of God is used people generally think of Heaven above where God lives and believers in Jesus go when they die. But that's only part of the meaning. There are different aspects to God's kingdom. The Greek word translated kingdom means rule, reign or realm.
 1. There is a place called Heaven where God and His throne abide and where all who've died right with God through Jesus live. Ps 11:4; I Kings 8:30; Heb 12:22,23; I Thess 4:14-16; etc.
 2. Jesus will return to earth in the not too distant future and establish the visible kingdom of God on earth, and the present Heaven will come to earth. Dan 2:44; Rev 21,22; Rev 11:15; etc.
 3. Kingdom is also refers to the reign of God in men's hearts through new birth. Luke 17:20,21
 2. To fully discuss all of this we must understand that there is more to reality than the world we contact with our five physical senses. (We could do entire lessons about each point.)
 - a. There are seen (physical, material) things and there are unseen (spiritual) things — all created by God who is Invisible, who is Spirit. Col 1:16; II Cor 4:18; I Tim 1:17; John 4:24
 - b. God's unseen creation includes angels who have rank and function. His seen creation consists of the physical, material heavens (outer space and the atmosphere around earth) and earth. Human beings have both an unseen and a seen portion. (We'll discuss this more fully in the next lesson.)
 1. Much of what God created is not as He intended it to be because of rebellion against His rule as the rightful King over all.
 - A. At some point in eternity past there was an angelic uprising in the unseen realm, led by Lucifer, an archangel now known as Satan or Adversary. Isa 14:12-14; Ezek 28:1-19
 - B. A counterfeit kingdom was set up in the invisible realm. It is a kingdom of darkness and death. Eph 6:12; II Cor 4:4; Matt 12:26
 2. God then created men and women to become His sons and daughters. He created earth to be home for His family. God's intention was that men and women serve as His under rulers on earth. God would reign in them and through them on earth. Gen 1:26,27
 - A. When the first man, Adam, listened to Satan and chose independence from God through sin, he turned his God-given authority on earth over to the devil. Luke 4:6
 - B. Satan's kingdom which, up to that time, had only existed in the invisible realm was established on earth. Since that time, all human being are born into his kingdom under his control, and he works through them to accomplish his purposes. Eph 2:1-3
 3. Mankind and earth have been radically have been altered by this rebellion. Adam was the head of the human race and the first steward of the earth. His sin affected both humanity and the physical world.
 - a. Men now are born with a nature contrary to God (sin nature) and, like Adam, choose independence from God through sin (Rom 5:19). The material world is infused with the curse of corruption and death (Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Rom 8:20-22). There is an invisible counterfeit ruler and kingdom dominating and influencing men, blinding them to reality as it truly is (II Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2)
 1. The goal of salvation (redemption) is to reclaim what was lost through sin, undo the damage

done to men and earth, and reestablish the reign of the rightful King.

2. Jesus came to progressively restore the reign or kingdom of God throughout the invisible and visible realms He created.

b. Let's briefly deal with a question that might arise at this point. How does the fact that God is sovereign fit with the idea that His rule or reign must be restored in the worlds He created?

1. God is sovereign or all powerful and the highest authority. God, in His sovereignty, has chosen to limit Himself. He gave men free will, opening the possibility of choices of which He does not approve. With free will come both choices and consequences. If someone

chooses not to serve God, the Lord does not force His rulership on them.

2. God, in His sovereignty, has chosen to work with and through men to accomplish His purposes. When His entire plan is completed, in the ages to come, we will marvel at how wonderfully God worked within the parameters He established in His creation to bring the highest glory to Himself and the greatest good to the most people (whole lessons for another time). Rom 11:33

4. Through one man (Adam) the reign (kingdom) of sin and death entered the world. Through one Man (Jesus) the reign (kingdom) of righteousness and life was reestablished in the world. Rom 5:17-19

a. When Jesus came to earth He took on a full human nature. Remember, Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God. While on earth He did not live as God. He lived as a man in dependence on God His Father. John 5:26; 6:57; 10:38; 14:10; etc.

1. Jesus became man so He could join us in our fallen condition. At the Cross He put Himself under the dominion of darkness and death to break its power over men and bring us out. John

2. Through the sacrifice of Himself He began the process of reclaiming and reestablishing the reign or kingdom of God throughout the seen and unseen worlds. John 12:31; Luke 22:53;

Isa 53:6; Rom 6:9; Heb 2:14,15; etc.

b. When we put faith in Christ and His sacrifice at the Cross we are delivered out of the kingdom of darkness and death and transferred into the kingdom of God. Col 1:13

c. The dominion or reign of Satan, darkness and death over us is broken and we can now reign in life through the power and provision of the unseen kingdom of God. Access is restored. Rom 5:17

B. For many of us, these statements have little impact on our daily lives in part because we don't see reality as it truly is and don't know how to live in the light of what happened when Jesus broke the power of the kingdom of darkness and death.

1. There is more to reality than what we see. God created both seen and unseen things. The invisible preceded the visible. Heb 11:3--By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen. (NLT)

a. Recent discoveries in quantum physics have lead scientists to conclude that there are ten observable dimensions or spaces between the three we contact with our physical senses (length, width, height). Science is beginning to confirm what the Bible has told us for centuries.

1. God who is Invisible presides over an invisible realm or kingdom of full power and provision. Not seen doesn't mean not real. It just means we can't see or contact it with physical senses.

2. Although this realm is normally not visible to us scripture records many examples where men were permitted to see the unseen and experience its power. II Kings 6:15-17; Luke 2:13-15

b. The phrase "the heavens were opened" is often used when scripture recounts these incidents. We tend to hear those words with an element of "fairy tale" mixed in. But something real happened.

"The heavens were opened" means another realm, another dimension was opened or became perceivable to men on earth. In many cases the power of that kingdom altered this realm.

c. I'm not teaching something weird or freaky. I'm conveying to you the way the Bible describes reality or the nature of the world as God created it to be. If I said—The starship Enterprise just passed from one dimension to another through a newly discovered worm hole—we'd all get that.

2. Before Adam sinned he had access to the unseen. God (Who is Invisible) and Adam freely interacted with one another in Eden. Gen 2:15-25; 3:8
 - a. Eden was God's home on earth or Heaven on earth. It was open, not closed to men. In the midst of the Garden was the tree of life. It was God's desire that Adam (and man in Adam) eat from that tree. Doing so would have been an expression of submission to and dependence on God and would have united man to the eternal life in God (lessons for another day. Gen 2:9
 1. Gen 3:22-24--When Adam sinned the Garden was closed to men and eventually disappeared from earth into the unseen realm.
 2. After Eden was closed to men, the tree of life is mentioned only two times in scripture. Both times make it clear that the tree of life is located in Heaven or God's invisible home.
 - A. Rev 2:7--When Jesus appeared to John on the Isle of Patmos in 95 A.D., He said that the tree of life is in the midst of the paradise of God. Paradise comes from a Greek word which means a park or an Eden (PARADEISOS). By the time Jesus came to earth the term paradise was used for the place where believers go when they die (Luke 23:43).
 - B. Rev 22:2--John saw Heaven come to earth when the capital city, New Jerusalem descended (whole lessons for another time). Note that John described a river coming from the throne of God. On each side of the river was a tree of life.
 3. I'm not trying to impress you with Bible minutia or trivia. I want to strike your thinking about an invisible realm that can affect our lives.
 - b. Jesus said many times that He came from Heaven and it's clear from scripture that He returned to Heaven when He left earth. John 6:38,51; John 3:13; Acts 1:11; I Thess 1:10; 4:16; II Thess 1:7
 1. Don't hear this like pretty words on a Christmas card. Jesus actually came out of and went back into the invisible realm. Jesus told Nathanael, one of His followers: If you follow Me you will see interaction with this dimension. You'll see the heavens opened up. John 1:51
 2. Scripture records that on a number of occasions angels came out of the unseen realm to interact with Jesus. Matt 4:11; Luke 22:43; 24:4; Acts 1:10
 - c. Jesus was aware of the invisible kingdom behind the visible world. He saw a spiritual cause behind material results. He said: The birds eat and flowers are dressed because the Invisible God takes care of them. And God wants to do the same for us. Matt 6:25-33
 1. Jesus, as a man, had access to the invisible realm. He administered the power of the unseen kingdom to produce visible results in the physical realm.
 2. Invisible power healed bodies and minds, stopped storms, raised the dead, and multiplied food. Mark 4:35-41; Matt 8:3; Matt 14:15-21; Luke 7:11-14; etc.
3. Men and women are cut off from the unseen kingdom of God due to sin. Jesus came to change all that.
 - a. Through His death and resurrection Jesus opened the way into Heaven for us at our death. But He also opened access to the power and provision of the unseen kingdom of God to us in this life.
 - b. When Jesus said: The kingdom is at hand He meant: I am about to do what is necessary to open this realm, open this dimension, to you right now.
 1. Luke 9:27--I solemnly say to you, some of you who stand here will certainly live to see the kingdom of God (Williams). Every person to whom Jesus made that statement died two centuries ago without seeing the visible kingdom of God set up on earth.
 2. What did Jesus mean? Something did change before those people died. Because of the Cross, the unseen was once again opened to men and we can become citizens of that kingdom.
 - A. Through His sacrifice Jesus qualified us for the kingdom by wiping out our sin. Through the new birth the reign of God comes into our hearts and makes us citizens of the kingdom. Col 1:12,13; Phil 3:20
 - B. A citizen is a member of a state or nation who owes allegiance to its government and is entitled to its protection. A citizen is vested with rights and duties. (Webster)
4. Jesus came to restore the reign of God in men and through men on this earth. That process has begun

in us with the new birth. Jesus will come again in the not too distant future to remove every trace of sin, corruption and death from His creation and set up the visible kingdom of God on earth.

- a. Meantime, His earth ministry shows us what the reign of God looks like in a fallen world when it works in and through citizens of Heaven. We can do the works Jesus did. John 14:12; I John 2:6
 - b. In every troublesome circumstance, Jesus had wisdom 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. John 16:33; Matt 4:23,24; 9:35; etc.
5. I'm not talking about something weird or freaky. I'm not encouraging anyone to seek contact with the unseen realm or supernatural experiences apart from the Bible. But we need to recognize that Christianity is transformational and supernatural.
- a. The ultimate end of salvation (redemption) is to transform sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God and transform the earth into a fit forever home for God and His family.
 - b. Supernatural power produces these transformations. Supernatural means of or relating to an order of existence beyond the visible, observable universe.
- C. Conclusion: We have much more to say in upcoming lessons. But consider these thoughts as we close.
1. Faith activates the power of the unseen. Most of us have little or no confidence in unseen power from the Invisible God for a number of reasons (who lessons for another day).
 - a. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Rom 10:17). The Bible is a supernatural book that reveals supernatural truths. Scripture reveals the unseen by telling us about it.
 - b. The greatest gift you can give yourself is to become a regular, systematic reader, particularly the New Testament. Read for ten to fifteen minutes a day (or as close to that as possible).
 1. Start at the beginning of a book or letter and read to the end of it. Put a marker where you leave off at the end of your reading and pick up there the next day.
 2. Don't skip around. Don't worry about what you don't understand. Don't try to look up all the words. Just keep reading. Understanding comes with familiarity. When you finish a book or letter, read it again and again.
 - c. Because the Bible is supernatural it will work in you, build strength, peace and joy into you. It will change your view of reality. I Thess 2:13; Matt 4:4; Jer 15:16; I John 2:14; II Cor 3:18; etc.
 2. Take time to think about these things. It won't happen automatically. Your mind naturally gravitates to what you see and feel as soon as you walk out the church doors.
 - a. Matt 6:33--We are to seek God's kingdom. That means a lot of things, but the word seek has an element of desire in it. Set your heart on his kingdom (Phillips); pursue the Kingdom (Rieu).
 - b. Col 3:1,2--Seek is the same word. Affection is the word mind in the Greek. You must lift your thoughts above (Knox); give your minds to the things which are above (Weymouth); practice occupying your minds with (Williams); let your thoughts dwell on the higher realms (NEB)
 3. Ask God to help you see reality as it truly is so you can walk in the light of it. More next week!