

CALLED TO GOD'S KINGDOM

- A. Introduction: God has a plan and a purpose to which He has called or invited us. Knowledge of His plan and our place in it is a tremendous source of hope. Eph 1:18
1. I Thess 2:12--God has called us to His kingdom and glory: Who invites you to share His own kingdom and glory. (Weymouth)
 - a. We've spent a number of weeks discussing the call to glory. Glory refers to our created purpose. God created us to become His sons and daughters through partaking of eternal life, the life in Him. This is a position of glory. Eph 1:4,5; II Tim 1:9,10; Ps 8:5; Rom 3:23; I Pet 2:9; etc.
 - b. God's kingdom is His home and we've been invited to live with Him. God has qualified us for His kingdom through the Cross and the new birth. John 3:3,5; Col 1:12,13; etc.
 2. There are several aspects to God's kingdom. He has a kingdom in the invisible realm (Heaven). When we believe on Jesus and are born again we become citizens of this kingdom with access to its power and provision. At physical death we pass into this invisible realm. Phil 3:20; Eph 1:3; II Cor 5:6; etc.
 - a. In connection with the return of Jesus the Lord will establish His visible kingdom on earth and He and His family will live here forever (Dan 2:44; 7:27; etc.). That's been the plan all along. God created the earth to be home for Him and His family (Isa 45:18). The Bible begins and ends with God and His family together on earth (Gen 2; Rev 21:3).
 - b. This world has been damaged by sin. There is a curse of corruption and death in the earth (Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12). It is dominated by a system contrary to God, presided over by the devil, (II Cor 4:4; John 12:31) and populated by a race in rebellion to their Creator I John 3:10).
 1. Jesus came to earth two thousand years ago to pay the price for sin so it can be removed and God can transform sinners into His holy righteous sons and daughters through new birth.
 2. Jesus will soon come again to cleanse and restore earth and establish the visible kingdom of God. Part of the hope inspired by God's call comes from knowing that the Lord is going to restore this earth to be a fit forever home for Himself and His family.
 3. The Bible is clear that in the years leading up to Jesus' Second Coming this world will be filled with increasing chaos and darkness. In our own country we're seeing things take place we wouldn't have imagined just a few years ago. There's anxiety and fear even on the part of Christians.
 - a. But accurate knowledge from the Bible of what is happening will give us light (or understanding) and hope (or expectation) in the midst of the chaos. It will build our faith and trust in God's guidance, provision and protection until He comes.
 - b. Luke 21:28--In the context of fearsome things occurring on earth just prior to His return Jesus told His followers: Look up and lift up your heads. Look up, in the Greek, literally means: to lift oneself up, being elated in joyous expectation (Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words).
 1. The only way you can respond to the chaos as Jesus says is if you look at it in terms of the overall plan of God. It's not what you see. It's how you see what you see.
 2. We're going to take a few weeks and discuss what the Bible says about God's plan and purpose to help us know how to view the events happening around us.
- B. Because of sin this world is not as God planned. He doesn't intend that the world go on forever as it is. Neither is it His intention to "fix things up". The Lord's goal is supernatural transformation of man and the earth restoring both to our created purpose so His original plan can be fulfilled.
1. Paul is the one who prayed that Christians would know the hope inspired by God's call. Paul wrote that he proclaimed the kingdom (Acts 19:8; 28:23). Note what he preached to various people.
 - a. I Thess 1:9,10--Turn from your old way of living to live for Almighty God (His glory and pleasure) and "look forward to and await the coming of His Son from Heaven" (Amp).
 - b. Titus 2:11-13--Turn from you old life, live for God and look (await with confidence and patience) for Jesus to return: Awaiting and looking for the [fulfillment, the realization of our] blessed hope

(Amp); happy hope (Rotherham); looking for the happy fulfillment of our hopes (NEB).

1. We hear “Second Coming” in terms of 20th century religious clichés. Talk of Jesus’ return becomes: Who is the Antichrist? Is the rapture pre, mid or post tribulation? Should we store up food? All of that takes our focus off the overall plan.
 2. When Paul said: Look for Jesus he did not mean: The rapture could come at any minute and it’s definitely pre-trib. He meant: Live with the awareness that a wonderful plan is unfolding, you’re part of it and it will be completed.
2. The people to whom Jesus came two thousand years ago understood the future better than most of us.
 - a. They knew this present age is coming to an end, and that’s a good thing. We see the phrase: “end of this world (age)” and “world to come” repeatedly in the New Testament. Matt 12:32; Matt 13:40; Matt 28:20; Mark 10:30; Heb 2:5; Heb 2:5; Heb 9:26; etc.
 - b. When Peter asked Jesus what reward he and the disciples would receive for leaving all to follow Him Jesus told them their reward will come in the regeneration. Matt 19:28--In the new age—the Messianic rebirth of the world (Amp); When the world is born anew (Rieu)
 1. The Greek word for regeneration is the same word is used of the new birth in Titus 3:5. Just as men are transformed through new birth, earth will be transformed and made new.
 2. Peter and the others didn’t have to ask Jesus to explain what He meant. They knew from the writings of the prophets. Isa 65:17--New means fresh; comes from a word meaning renew, repair. The idea is to make new what already exists not make something that never existed.
 - c. Peter, in one of his first sermons in the Book of Acts after Jesus returned to Heaven, declared that Jesus would remain in Heaven until the restitution of all things. Acts 3:21
 1. The Greek word means to restore something to its former state--restoration of all things (ASV); when all things are put right (Basic); until the whole world is recreated (Rieu); until the final recovery of all things from sin (TLB)
 2. God, through His prophets, has been talking about the end of His plan of redemption since the beginning when He first began to unveil it after Adam’s sin in the Garden of Eden. Gen 3:15
3. In II Pet 3:10-12 Peter wrote about the transformation that will take place in the earth at Jesus’ return.
 - a. Day of the Lord (v10) was the term used in the Old Testament for the coming of the Lord to establish His kingdom on earth. Jesus’ return won’t be unexpected for those looking for it.
 - b. Some misinterpret this passage to mean that earth will be destroyed by fire. The original meanings of key words in the original Greek language make clear what Peter is saying.
 1. *Elements* means the most basic components of the physical world (atoms, molecules). *Shall melt* (v10) and *dissolve* (v11,12) mean to loose. It is the same Greek word is used when Jesus said of Lazarus: Loose him and let him go (John 11:44). *Shall melt* (v12) means to liquefy. We get our English word thaw from it. To thaw means to reverse the effects of freezing.

Burned up (v10) in the oldest manuscripts available means found or shown. Idea is not destruction but exposure of corruption from the purpose of removal.

 2. The fire is God’s Word (Jer 23:29; Jer 5:14). Just as in the beginning God spoke His Word and the heavens and earth were created, so He will speak again at His Second Coming and His Word will cleanse creation from corruption and death and renew the heavens and the earth.
4. Peter wrote of looking for Jesus to return. v12--“looking for” means to anticipate in thought in hope; “hasting” means to urge on; by implication, to await eagerly; looking for and earnestly desiring (ASV).
 - a. Expecting Jesus to return to complete the plan of redemption gave Peter courage to deal with the hardships of his time period. This letter was written just before he was executed. II Pet 1:14,15
 1. v13--Peter faced death looking for (anticipating in hope) the new heavens and earth or the restoration of all things as he called it in Acts 3:21.
 2. Of course he looked forward to going into the invisible kingdom to be with the Lord. But he understood that separation from the body is temporary. He knew he’d be back to earth made new, God’s eternal kingdom on earth, to live here forever. Job 19:25,26

- b. Part of the hope inspired by God's call or invitation comes from knowing that a plan is being worked out, a plan with a beginning, middle and end.
 - 1. Remember, Peter is the one who said God has been talking about the end since the beginning (Acts 3:21). He was also among those who heard Jesus first message to His disciples following His return to Heaven: I'll be back. Acts 1:9-11
 - 2. There are twice as many prophecies about the Second Coming of Jesus as the first. The Lord fulfilled all the prophecies about His first coming. Peter knew He'll keep the rest of them.
- C. Just as there was a generation of people who witnessed the first coming of Jesus there will be a generation that sees His Second Coming. We are most likely that generation so we will see increasing chaos.
 - 1. II Tim 3:1-5--Paul wrote that perilous (fierce) times will come on the earth prior to the Lord's return. Then he made clear the source of the chaos by describing the behavior people. (See NLT)
 - a. Human beings have behaved like this since the fall of man in the Garden, but it's more and worse.
 - 1. There are more people living on earth now than have ever lived throughout all of human history combined. More people means more fallenness. Sin has a cumulative effect. I Cor 5:6
 - 2. Because of technological developments (TV, movies, internet, etc.) sin can go farther and the effects can reach more people.
 - b. Up until the middle of the 20th Century Judeo-Christian ethics and moral standards were almost universally accepted in western society (America and Europe) even amongst people who didn't believe in God. This morality served as a restraining force. But the counter-culture movement of the sixties did much to undermine these restraints. We're seeing the fruit of it in societal behavior.
 - 1. Rom 1:18-32 describes a downward spiral that takes place when men willfully reject God. It produces a reprobate mind or a mind unable to make decisions in its own best interests.
 - 2. People profess spirituality but live sinful lives (even in the Church). In II Tim 3:5 Paul said that just before Jesus returns people will "maintain a façade of religion" (Phillips) but reject the power that could make them godly (NLT).
 - A. We've reached the point where, to uphold a moral standard, is considered hate speech.
 - B. Objective truth has been replace by subjective "truth". "Truth" has become whatever you deem it to be as opposed to an absolute, unchanging reality.
 - 3. I Tim 4:1-3--Paul said prior to the Lord's return, those who have abandoned Judeo-Christian principles will hinder marriage and refuse meat. We live in a time when marriage is being redefined worldwide and there is a worldwide vegan movement that puts animals on a par with human beings. Saving the earth as it is has become a moral and religious crusade.
 - 2. Our lives are going to be increasingly affected by these developments. We will be affected by the decisions and actions of these reprobate minds. It's hard to watch and difficult to live with.
 - a. II Pet 2:7,8--Righeous Lot was vexed by the wicked behavior of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. God protected him and eventually delivered him but it was still hard to watch. Lot was "greatly worn out and distressed by the wonton ways of the ungodly and lawless...(what he witnessed) tortured his righteous soul everyday with what he saw and heard of [their] unlawful and wicked deeds (Amp).
 - b. The Bible does give specific instructions as to how we should view what is happening around us as we see it unfold. We'll discuss some of what it says over the next few weeks.
- D. Conclusion: We can't lose sight of the fact that a plan is unfolding and we have a part in it. God is gathering His family.
 - 1. We aren't here to fix up the world. We're here to show Jesus to the world around us so people will acknowledge Him as Savior and Lord and be transformed from sinners into sons and daughters.
 - a. Everybody has an opinion about politics, the increasing racial tensions and police shootings, the upcoming presidential election, Syrian refugees and ISIS, control of the border and immigration

reform, etc.

- b. Our flesh wants to persuade people to our point of view. It's easy to see people who hold a different view point in these areas as idiots. But this is reality:
 1. Everyone who has died this year due all the various expressions of violence in our cities, from injustice to terrorism, is somewhere right now. They didn't cease to exist. They're either in Heaven or Hell, depending on whether or not they knew Jesus. It no longer matters to them which side of these issues they supported.
 2. Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump both have value to God and have been invited into His plan and purpose. Jesus died for both of them. The most important thing is not the outcome of this election but that they and their families come to saving knowledge of Jesus.
 - c. None of this means that you have to agree with opposing points of view. It doesn't mean you have to like the consequences of decisions people make. It means you have to look at this from the standpoint of eternity. We'll deal with specifics in upcoming lessons.
2. Back to Peter's second epistle. Peter wrote it over thirty years after Jesus returned to Heaven. When Jesus left, no one knew when He would return. By the time of Peter's epistle many were doubting the Lord's promise to return. II Peter 3:4
 - a. In that context Peter wrote the passage discussed above about earth's transformation at the Lord's return. We aren't going to discuss everything Peter wrote right now, but note this. It is in this context that Peter penned a familiar passage of scripture. II Pet 3:8,9
 - b. If you recall, last week we looked at the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt 13:24-30). Jesus told it to illustrate several points about the nature of life between His first and second comings.
 1. Tares (sons of the devil) will grow up side-by-side with the wheat (sons of God). That seems to make no sense, especially when the behavior of the tares can cause such chaos. But when you understand that God wants the tares to become wheat by bowing their knee to Jesus it makes sense.
 2. In the context men stewing about Jesus' return taking so long Peter said: He's not willing that any should perish but that all should repent. Time is space to repent. Every day this present age goes on is a day that someone can become a son of God.
 - c. This age will not go on forever. Just as Jesus came at the right time two thousand years ago (Gal 4:4; Rom 5:6) He'll once again come at the right time. Until He returns let's keep our focus on what really matters.
 3. Yes, but what about me and my family in the midst of all the chaos? None of this is bigger than God. He will get us through until He gets us out. More next week!