



GOOD NEWS

for the unsaved WORLD!

(#65)
The kingdom of God.

On the "ROAD TO SALVATION,"
you start with the **FACTS!**

WE SAW THIS LAST TIME



And the #1 FACT is:
GOD!

Specifically, the *God of the Bible*. His Word, *the Bible*, is also implied. (Without it, we would have nothing reliable to say!)

WHEN "INTRODUCING GOD" – PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW:

- ❖ He is the creator, the one who made all things.
- ❖ He is the sovereign ruler over all creation.
- ❖ His judgments are righteous; he has no favoritism.

FROM LAST TIME

TODAY

Another look at God's rule over creation... we call it: **"The Kingdom of God."**

"The **kingdom of God** is near. Repent and believe the **good news!**"
Mark 1:15b (NIV)

The book of Matthew tends to use the phrase "kingdom of heaven."

How did this Good News "kingdom focus" come about?

The Old Covenant was weak: The law of Moses showed us what was right... but it *could not change people's hearts*.

The New Covenant is strong: By it, God embeds within his people a desire to do what is right. *Our hearts are changed!*

For the law never made anything perfect. But now we have confidence in *a better hope*, through which we draw near to God.
Hebrews 7:19 (NLT15)

I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.
I will be their God, and they will be my people.
Hebrews 8:10b (NIV)

SALVATION under the two covenants.

The Old Covenant was "**external**": *FEW* under this covenant desired to do God's will – though it did become the heart desire of those who were saved.

The New Covenant is "**internal**": *ALL* under this covenant have a heart desire to do God's will. They are willing to submit to God's rule... and they become part of his kingdom!

THE KEY POINT IS THIS...

Jesus accomplished this change in covenants; and he announced the change by saying, ... "**... the kingdom of God is near!**"
Luke 10:11b (ISV)

WHAT is this "Kingdom of God"?

❖ An aspect of God's sovereign rule over all creation.

We can describe this rule in a variety of ways.

From the perspective of God as creator...

As Creator, he rules all the earth – everything past, present and future. Nothing surprises him; nothing is beyond his control.

- Sin makes it difficult for us to see this. But we can trust him; he will bring all things to a righteous and fair conclusion.

We must not forget that God's sovereign rule does NOT do away with our responsibility. We *choose* our choices... and are held accountable for what we choose.

From the perspective of time, our main focus is on:

God's future rule over the earth...

Here, we focus on Jesus' return – the time when sin will be totally removed from the earth. This is a day that all of God's people look forward to! When that day arrives:

... the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 11:9b (NIV)

God's present rule in the lives of his people...

God's people want to follow him now. Since God has put his laws in their hearts, their desire is for his will to be done in their lives now.

RESPONDING THE RIGHT WAY TO GOD'S RULE:

A CHANGED ATTITUDE!

EXAMPLE: WHEN HUMBBLED BY GOD, THE KING OF BABYLON (NEBUCHADNEZZAR) DESCRIBED GOD'S RULE THIS WAY:

His rule is everlasting, and his **kingdom** is eternal.

All the people of the earth are nothing compared to him.

He has the power to do as he pleases among the angels of heaven and with those who live on earth.

No one can stop him or challenge him, saying, "What do you mean by doing these things?"

Daniel 4:34b-35 (NLT)

HE THEN RESPONDED THE WAY WE SHOULD ALL RESPOND:

"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble those who are proud."

Daniel 4:37 (NLT)

RESPONDING THE RIGHT WAY TO GOD'S RULE:

CHANGED ACTIONS!

GOD HIMSELF BROUGHT ABOUT THIS CHANGE IN DESIRE!

... our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who **gave himself for us** to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Titus 2:13b-14 (NIV)

For we are **his workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10 (CSB)

THIS IS WHY THEY PRAY:

GOD'S PEOPLE WANT HIS RULE TO BE SEEN ON EARTH NOW.

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Matthew 6:9b-10 (ESV)

I WANT TO BE A PART OF GOD'S KINGDOM!

YOU CAN BECOME A PART OF GOD'S KINGDOM, BUT ONLY UNDER GOD'S TERMS!

To become a part of God's kingdom:

We **MUST** acknowledge God's kingly authority... and be willing to live under his authority! This must become the desire of our heart.

➔ **Under the Old Covenant...**

Many people remained unsaved, because the Old Covenant could not change hearts. Only those willing to submit to God experienced a heart-change.

➔ **Under the New Covenant...**

This heart-change has become the focal point of the New Covenant, so all under this covenant are saved. (Fake "believers" – those who don't change – remain outside the covenant... and outside the kingdom.)

This is WHY...

➔ **Under the New Covenant, the Kingdom of God is so important!**

- ✓ It was Jesus' focus.
- ✓ It was the apostles' focus.

IN THE BOOK OF ACTS: Even when they didn't mention the word "kingdom," they were still "proclaiming the good news of the kingdom."

Their message was about God's rule in the lives of people!

★ **HERE IS WHAT WE DISCOVER...**

JESUS SPENT A LOT OF TIME TEACHING THE APOSTLES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

For 40 days he appeared to them and talked with them about the **kingdom of God**.

Acts 1:3b (GW)

He also corrected wrong expectations.

(They thought the future aspects of the kingdom would soon occur.)

When the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, are you going to free Israel now and restore our **kingdom**?"

"The Father sets those dates," he replied, "and they are not for you to know."

Acts 1:6-7 (NLT)

THE KINGDOM OF GOD WAS THE FOCUS OF THE APOSTLES' PREACHING AND TEACHING.

[Paul] entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the **kingdom of God**.

Acts 19:8 (ESV)

Later, he describes the new disciples as...

... you to whom I have preached the **Kingdom**...

Acts 20:25b (NLT)

The apostles' focus wasn't merely on the fact that the Kingdom exists! There is a lot implied by this "summary statement"!

The apostles message was about entering the Kingdom... and there is only one way to do that: through Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS CONNECTED TO JESUS — WHO HE IS AND WHAT HE DID.

From morning until evening [Paul] explained things to them, testifying about the **kingdom of God** and trying to convince them about **Jesus** from both the law of Moses and the prophets.

Acts 28:31b (NET)

[Paul] preached the **kingdom of God** and taught about the **Lord Jesus Christ**.

Acts 28:23b (NIV)

★ The Good News can be summarized by these two concepts! ★

[Philip] proclaimed the good news about the **kingdom of God** and the name* of **Jesus Christ**, ...

Acts 8:12b (CSB)

* (In the Bible, a "name" represents the person and all he is.)

IT IS NOT EASY TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

When people accepted the Good News, it was necessary for the apostles to be...

... strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith.

"We must go through many hardships to enter the **kingdom of God**," they said.

Acts 14:22 (NIV)

This is one of the reasons there are so many fakes in the church. They want the future benefits of being in the kingdom, but have no interest in the present "entry requirements."

TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD...

(Which means the same as: "to be saved.")

➡ **There are requirements.**

We must be willing to submit to the rule of God... and doing this goes against what our sinful nature wants to do.

➡ **Certain things prevent it from happening. EXAMPLES:**

- ✓ Thinking we're "entitled" to salvation under our own terms.
- ✓ Making excuses for our "favorite" sin, ignoring God's warnings that it is not an option.
- ✓ Changing what Scripture says, to what we want it to say.

SCRIPTURE CONTAINS MANY WARNINGS THAT WE CANNOT CLING TO LIVES OF SIN AND BE SAVED.

The two ways are opposites.

- Here is just one example of the many warnings:

[SUCH PEOPLE ARE NOT MEMBERS OF GOD'S KINGDOM. THEY ARE STILL IN WHAT JESUS DESCRIBES AS "OUTER DARKNESS."]

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the **kingdom of God**? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the **kingdom of God**.

1 Cor. 6:9-10 (NIV)

This is why Jesus and the apostles so frequently mention concepts such as: self-denial, repentance, obedience, "carrying one's cross," etc.

BUT ALL THIS CAN'T BE TRUE... NOBODY'S PERFECT!

NO, GOD'S PEOPLE HAVEN'T REACHED PERFECTION. BUT THEY STRIVE FOR IT!

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY GUARANTEES THAT THEY WILL DO SO!

Don't close your eyes to all those Scripture passages that focus on righteousness, obedience, and holiness in the lives of saved people. Those passages DO exist!

There is practical value in admitting these things!

- People who admit that sin is "not an option," and that God empowers his people to not sin: They won't be "sinlessly perfect," but they'll be inclined to sin less.
- People who treat sin as "an inevitable part of life" will be inclined to make excuses for their sin. (And will try to explain-away all those Scripture passages that disagree with them.)

YES, those "obedience" verses are really there!!!

[A RANDOM SAMPLING]

Eager to do what is good – Titus 2:14.
 Created to do good works – Ephesians 2:10.
 Those born of God cannot go on sinning – 1 John 3:9.
 The fruit [evidence] of the Spirit... - Galatians 5:22-23.
 The obedience that comes from faith – Romans 1:5.
 God gives you the desire and power to obey him – Philippians 2:13.
 If you love me [Jesus], you will obey me – John 14:15.
 God's grace teaches us to say no to [sin] and yes to [godliness] – Titus 2:11-12.
 All who have this hope [being with Jesus in eternity] purify themselves - 1 John 3:3.
 We died to sin and cannot live in it any longer – Romans 6:2.
 No one who lives in sin has seen or known Jesus – 1 John 3:6.

YES, OTHER SCRIPTURE PASSAGES...

... Tell us about the need to stop sinning, the need to be taught, to learn, to grow, etc. (For some, these things hadn't yet happened.) **But the key issue is this:** God's people want to do what they need to do. They're not making excuses.

BUT THERE'S JUST NO WAY A PERSON CAN DO THIS! IT'S SO "UNNATURAL"!

THAT'S EXACTLY THE POINT. YOU CAN'T... IF YOU RELY ON YOUR OWN POWER.

HERE IS WHERE GOD'S GRACE COMES INTO FOCUS. OUR ABILITY TO DO ALL THIS COMES FROM HIM!

GRACE!

Without it, you will remain a slave to sin.

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

John 8:34-36 (NIV)

*** GRACE! THIS WILL BE OUR TOPIC NEXT TIME! ***

★ **THIS WEEK'S MISSION!** ★

PURSUE A "KINGDOM PRIORITY"!

> And let GOD take care of the rest! <

But seek first the **kingdom of God** and his righteousness, and all these things [the necessities of life] will be added to you.

Matthew 6:33 (ESV)

Credits (1)

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