

The Gospel of the Kingdom Seek Ye First the Kingdom

Studio Session 101

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In Matthew 6:33, in the height the of the sermon on the mount, Jesus says to His disciples, "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you," The word He used, when He said 'first', was the word 'proton'. First, it means in the order of things it's the primary preoccupation. Jesus left no doubt that the kingdom of God was worth seeking first. And in fact His gospel was the gospel of the kingdom.

Now today of course you hardly hear any reference to the kingdom when men talk about the gospel. They go about teaching that Jesus was killed, He died on the cross for the sins of mankind, and He was raised from the dead on the third day. Both of which are true facts, and then they say, "And if you accept His salvation, which He purchased on the cross, you'll be saved and when you die you will go to heaven." This is the message that is commonly taught. But in no place in this message is there a reference to the kingdom and yet Jesus, on the earth, went about preaching the kingdom of heaven. It is recorded in Matthew 9 throughout the beatitudes and a host of other references Jesus went about preaching the kingdom of heaven.

Now all of what Jesus preached, in preaching the kingdom of heaven, was preached before He died on the cross. So it makes the cross, His death, and His resurrection a part of what the kingdom of God is and a part of the message of the kingdom. But obviously there is more to the kingdom of heaven and more to the reference, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." It is clear that the limited facts presented today in the typical evangelical sermon resulting in people coming forward to give their lives to Jesus in a typical evangelistic crusade, it's obvious that Jesus was preaching something more than this.

Now hear me clearly, I am not diminishing the value of the cross, in fact the cross has a very pivotal place in the message of the kingdom. And I'm by no means diminishing the resurrection of the dead. The resurrection of the dead has an equally significant place in preaching the gospel of the kingdom. And going to heaven is clearly a valuable goal,

especially when you consider the alternative. But I'm saying that there is more to the gospel of the kingdom than these three things but in classic evangelicalism there is a silence that is unmistakable. And in fact most evangelicals have no idea what the gospel of the kingdom is about. For them the gospel is simply the matter of presenting the death, the burial and resurrection of Jesus and an invitation to accept the price that Jesus paid on the cross for mans sins so that one can, by availing himself of this benefit, go to heaven.

Yet I point out again that before any of that occurred, before Jesus died on the cross, before He was resurrected and ascended to heaven; He went about preaching the gospel of the kingdom. And He told His disciples, and told the world in His day, that the gospel of the kingdom was the message for which He came and that the kingdom itself was the priority that every men should seek. So it would seem to me that the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, though they are part of the gospel of the kingdom, they by no means constitute all of what the kingdom is. Without the context of the kingdom we really do not understand what the death of Jesus on the cross was about and without the context of the kingdom we do not understand what the resurrection of Jesus is about.

So what comes about then, by the present gospel that is being preached, is this: That whoever will accept this gospel of the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of mans sins will go to heaven. But there is no concept, beyond that, of life in the kingdom of God. And if, perchance, God has a purpose that is wrapped up in the presentation of the kingdom, then we miss that purpose all together. But I want to show you that there is vastly more at stake in the gospel of the kingdom than we have perhaps thought. And this understanding would revolutionize even the thing that we teach.

Look, in the book of John, the 20th chapter, Jesus tells us what we should go and do. Here is a fascinating passage of scripture, "On the evening of the first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for the fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you,' after He had said this He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you'. And with that He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'." Now note this, then He goes on to say, "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

He sent His disciples in the same manner in which He had been sent by the Father and He says to His disciples, "Go and do this, you are doing this in the same manner in which the Father sent Me. Whosever sins you forgive, will be forgiven; and whosever sins you retain, will be retained." Note this, He's not saying to His disciples, "Go and tell people that if they will repent of their sins because I have died on the cross and been resurrected, then God will forgive their sins. It's not what He's telling you; it's not what

He's telling His disciples to go and say. He's saying to His disciples, "You go in the manner in which the Father sent Me, I'm sending you in the same manner. Whosoever sins YOU forgive, will be forgiven; and whosoever sins YOU retain, will be retained."

Now that's said in your bible, it's in red letter. It means that Jesus said it and He said it that way. That's very different from the teaching that says, "Go and tell the people that Jesus died on the cross for them and if they will accept His forgiveness and will confess their sins, then God will forgive them their sins and will save them." There's nowhere in the scriptures where that instruction is given, that's the instruction we've come up with but it is not the instruction that we have been given. We quote a passage from Romans the 8th chapter which says, "And if we will confess our sins He's faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The problem is, this passage from Romans 8 is spoken to the believer; not to the unbeliever. And it's preceded by the scripture that says, "If any man sins he has an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." It means that if you are already under the covenant, the covenant established in His blood; then you have an advocate, you have your own lawyer with the Father. So if at that time you sin (and we know that Christians sin). John says, "If any man says he sins not he is a liar and the truth is not in him." So Christians do sin. How is a Christian forgiven if he sins? Well he must confess his sin; he must confess the thing that he's done that's wrong. And the advocate he has with the Father, Jesus the righteous, will present his case to the Father and then the Father will forgive him. That's because in this arrangement we have God as our Father. God becomes your Father when you are born of His Spirit, according to Romans, still in the eighth chapter, it says, "You did not receive a Spirit that makes you a slave again to fear but you received the spirit of sonship, by whom you cry Father." To have an advocate with the Father, He becomes your Father. And the advocate that you have who advocates to the Father for you is Jesus the righteous. That is the prerogative of the saved, it is not the prerogative of the unsaved because for the unsaved God is not yet their Father. One becomes a child of God when you receive the spirit of adoption by whom you cry Father, Father. For the Spirit Himself testifies with our spirits that we are the sons of God.

So you get to be a child of God when the Holy Spirit dwells within you, confirming and testifying to your spirit that you are born of God. So this passage in Romans 8 is especially about how the Christian, how the believer, is forgiven when he sins. It's amazing how we have strung together these scriptures to produce a collage that has nothing really to do with what the Bible says. The shallowness of our understanding is really to be blamed for this hodge podge of doctrines that we've strung together. No where does the scripture require the unsaved to repent of his sins. But the unsaved is required to repent. We've just assumed that repentance is the repentance of his sins. He is to repent, but of what? That will be the subject of another broadcast, this is a series

entitled the Gospel of the Kingdom. Part of the intention of this series is to present to you what the kingdom actually is and how you may introduce the kingdom to another.

Jesus went about preaching the gospel of the kingdom and He sent His disciples to do the same. It was not the first time in, John 20, that Jesus promised that what His disciples would do would be to forgive sins. In the 16th chapter of the book of Matthew, Jesus had taken His disciples to the coast of Cesarea, in the region of Philippi. At verse 13 of Matthew 16 they had come to the coast of Cesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, "Who do they say that I the Son of Man am?" It was Peter who responded, "You are the Christ, You are the Son of the Living God." And Jesus said to him, "You are blessed Simon son of Jonah because flesh and blood did not reveal this truth to you, but My Father who is in heaven." Then He says to him, "And I will give to you the keys to the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Now when He gave His disciples the promise and the commission, in John 20 at verse 21 and following, He did not limit the function of forgiving sins to Peter. He made it the general commission to whoever went to preach the gospel of the kingdom. So for any religious group today, to claim on the basis of Matthew 16, that Jesus gave to Peter the right to forgive sins, and that's unique to any institution claiming its origin from Peter, that's is nonsense. Because John 20:21 shows Him giving the same exact prerogatives to the rest of the disciples, not just to Peter. And by extension, we understand that this is the foundation called the Great Commission. So whoever goes to present the gospel of the kingdom, goes to present the forgiveness of sins to those who are invited to be in the kingdom. So it's not anybody's prerogative exclusive of all of those who go to preach the gospel of the kingdom.

Now men love exclusivity because it allows them to remain in control and allows them to decide what goes into the field and what does not, and so on. And men love to make the case for their own uniqueness, and some have done so for many hundreds of years; more than a millennium and a half in some instances. And therefore they feel very comfortable sitting on that mountain of presuppositions. But it still doesn't make it so; the fact is the original documents tell us that all of the disciples were given the same prerogative. You today, who go to preach the gospel of the kingdom, have the same prerogative. But I haven't explained what it is that men are to repent of, that will come up in this series.

What is emerging for us is a picture; Jesus goes out and preaches the gospel of the kingdom, heals the sick, raises the dead, casts out demons and forgives men their sins. Here's an example of Jesus forgiving sins. This is from the book of Matthew the 9th chapter verse 2. Here in Matthew 9 Jesus forgives sins. Here, it's simple enough. "Jesus stepped into a boat crossed over to His own town, some men brought to Him a paralytic who was lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith He said to the paralytic, 'Take heart,

your sins are forgiven'. At this some of the teachers of the law said to themselves this fellow blasphemes. Knowing their thoughts Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? Which is easier, to say your sins are forgiven or to say get up and walk? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins.' Then He said to the paralytic, 'Get up take your mat and go home,' and the man got up and went home. When the crowd saw this they were filled with awe and praised God who had given such authority to men."

But Jesus did not just forgive men their sins, He also retained men's sins. Look at this from the book of John the 9th chapter. John 9:41, this is after Jesus had healed the blind man and the Pharisees put Him to the test. The man who had been blind they threw him out of the synagogue and he found Jesus, and Jesus said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He said, 'Who is He sir, tell me so that I will believe on Him.'" And Jesus says, "I'm the one speaking." Then the man worshiped the Lord. Verse 39, Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into the world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." Some Pharisees who were with Him and heard Him when He said these things asked, "What, are we blind too?" Jesus said, "If you were blind you would not be guilty of sin, but now that you claim you can see, your sin remains." The word in the Greek for remains, 'memo', meant to hold in place, to stay as you were, to remain in stasis.

Jesus forgave sins, and Jesus retained sins. And He said to His disciples, "Go and preach the good news of the kingdom, whosever sins you forgive, will be forgiven; whosever sins you retain, will be retained." Well, what's going on? What is this 'Gospel of the Kingdom' that Jesus preached? What is this gospel of the kingdom that permits those who preach the gospel to forgive sins and to retain sins? Now here's what I'm not saying; I'm not saying that you died on the cross so you can forgive someone else's sins. I'm saying that you are sent by the One who died on the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ; you are sent as His delegate but you're sent to forgive sins. Now that leaves a whole host of unanswered questions, such as 'how do you know whose sins should be forgiven, how do you know whose sins should be retained?' When should ones sins be forgiven, when should ones sins be retained? And if you say that repentance is not the repentance of sins but it is repentance nonetheless; of what should a person repent?

These are huge questions and we'll address them in due course. But first, in this series, we are laying out the understanding of the kingdom. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Now there are two things that go with the Kingdom, two words, two expressions: The kingdom of Heaven, and the kingdom of God. Now how are these words different? What key do they hold to a much greater understanding of these things? Well the word for 'kingdom' is the word 'basilica'. It's a Greek term and it means 'a foundation or basis of power and rule'. That is, where do you get the authority with which to rule, from where does it come. So when it speaks of the

kingdom of heaven, it speaks of this authority to rule coming from heaven. So the kingdom is on the earth, but its origin is from heaven.

So the authority comes from heaven and when you speak of the kingdom of God, you speak about the very source from which the authority to govern comes; from God Himself. So whoever is in the kingdom of God lives in an earthly existence within a context that is from heaven. Hmm. Think about that for a moment. Whoever lives in the kingdom of God, lives by the authority that comes from God. Now tell me this, how much authority does God have? Is there any other basis of authority but God? Whoever lives in the kingdom of God lives by the authority of God. Whoever is in the kingdom of heaven, lives in the reality of the eternal while he lives in time.

Ahh, suddenly we begin to see that the Gospel of the Kingdom provides a context in which to view the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus. Rather than what we've done all along, which is to view it by itself; so we are free to tell people truth but without its context. We tell people that Jesus died on the cross, that is true. We tell people that Jesus was raised from the dead, that is true. We tell people that He died for our sins, that's true. But if you tell people these things apart from the context of the kingdom of God and/or the kingdom of heaven, then you're telling them something that stands alone when it was meant to stand within a context. Because if people respond to these truths, what happens to them? Our normal understanding is, they get to be members of our church. The biblical understanding is, they get to live in a heavenly existence in time, under the authority and power and protection of the Living God. Now why is that so? The rest of the story now will introduce the enemy of God and man, so stay with me while we study the Gospel of the Kingdom.

I'm Sam Soleyn, God bless you, I'll see you next time. Bye bye.