

## **This Present Kingdom**

### **Introduction**

#### The Unshakeable Kingdom

### **I. His Kingdom is Here and Now!**

The purpose of discipleship is to actually begin to live the life Christ described in the Sermon on the Mount. He said in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) that we are to teach them everything Christ commanded. This is not about behavior modification. This is about inner life transformation.

Transformation always begins with a renewed mind (Romans 12:2). As we begin to “set our mind on things above” (Colossians 3:1), we begin to see Christ as He is, and He becomes our life (Colossians 3:4). When He becomes our life, our love for Him forces out fear (1 John 4:18) and real renewal of the mind takes place that enables us to live the life of obedience – “doing” not just “hearing”. It is this obedience that leads to abundance and real proof of our love (John 14:21).

### **II. The Sermon on the Mount Outline**

The Beatitudes – Matthew 5:1-12

The Kingdom Life – Matthew 5:13-7:23

The Result – Matthew 7:24-29

### **III. The Two Realms of Reality**

The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world are two parallel realms of existence that cross when we are saved. Now we live in both kingdoms, and our calling is to place our heart and mind on the Kingdom of God, not the kingdom of this world.

In 1 Corinthians 4:9, Paul makes it clear that our lives are being observed, not just in the natural realm but in the supernatural as well. “For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.”

As Francis Schaeffer said in *True Spirituality*: “The word in the Greek which is translated as ‘spectacle’ has nothing to do with our modern use of that word. It is the idea of theater; we are on a stage being observed. He says here that the supernatural universe is not far off, and that while the real battle is in the heavenlies our part is not unimportant at all, because it is being observed by the unseen world. It is like a one-way mirror. We are under observation” (p. 60).

We know this is true from the book of Job. We are given a glimpse into the throne room of God and we are granted insight into a cause and effect relationship with Heaven. Schaeffer continues, “Job did not understand that he was being observed, but he was. More than that, he was playing a part in the battle of the heavenlies, even though he did not know it, when the series of disasters struck. He was not only being observed, but there was a cause and effect

relationship from the seen to the unseen world. We know this in the teaching of Christ, too, because Christ tells us that when a sinner repents, the angels in heaven rejoice” (*True Spirituality*, p. 61).

We have a very real enemy who along with our flesh will fight this change. The evil one wants to keep us ensnared by our errant thinking. That is why we must be diligent to stand firm against his schemes and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). This requires that we slow down enough to actually think about what we are thinking about and the choices that follow our line of thinking.

#### **IV. The Wise Person**

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus states that the one who listens and obeys is like the wise man who built his house upon the rock. The storms of life will come, as they do against every life, but the one built upon the rock will stand! Listen to the words of Dallas Willard:

“Certainly, life on ‘the rock’ must be a good way to live. Wouldn’t you like to be one of those intelligent people who know how to live a rich and unshakeable life? One free from loneliness, fear and anxiety and filled with constant peace and joy? Would you like to love your neighbours as you do yourself and be free of anger, envy, lust and covetousness?” (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 342).

This life is actually possible through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Dallas goes on to say, “Clearly, our entire inner reality of thought and feeling would have to be transformed to bring us to such a place” (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 342).

Just as Christ died for us on the cross, we too must die daily (Luke 9:23; Galatians 2:20) that we might experience resurrection life in Christ. It is the power of this new life that sets us free from bondage to sin and death. If we are to say “yes” to Christ, then we must say “no towards the dominance of things and of self” (Francis Schaeffer, *True Spirituality*, p. 16).

Unfortunately, many of us have been impacted by culture more than we realize. The value system of the world and its focus on materialism has swept us into its current. How are we to break away from worldly or fleshly thinking and living and instead focus on and live for the Kingdom of God?

#### **V. Spiritual Disciplines**

There are certain spiritual disciplines that we observe in the life of Christ that we must emulate if we are to experience this inner transformation. This is not going to come about as the result of a completed course of study or of knowing all the right biblical answers. This transformation will come about as we actually begin to live out what we know to be true. It is about becoming an apprentice or bondservant of Christ and beginning to live as He would live.

We must understand that “special experiences, faithfulness to the church, correct doctrine, and external conformity to the teaching of Jesus all come along as appropriate, more or less automatically, when the inner self is transformed but they do not produce such a transformation” (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 351).

Our first objective then must be to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. That is the greatest command and will accomplish for us all that Christ commanded. Loving Him with our entire being causes all the thoughts and behaviors that displease Christ to not only no longer entangle us but to no longer entice us. Only when our hearts are undivided – wholly loving and pursuing Christ – will lesser loves be exposed and expunged.

The training that takes place in discipleship is about halting our automatic behaviors and responses. We place our entire being on the altar as a living and holy sacrifice to the Lord (Romans 12:1). It is only then that our automatic responses can be reprogrammed. No longer enslaved to our flesh, we are free to be filled with His Spirit and He enables us to walk as He walked.

The Bible states, “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7a). What our mind dwells on when we are at leisure reveals what is most important to us. It reveals our character – who we truly are. Only by changing how we think can we change how and even who we are.

We have learned so much about the brain and how God has created it to be renewed. Neuroscience has opened to us an understanding of how this takes place. As we fix our mind on Christ, our actual thinking begins to change; which literally changes the very structure of our brains. As we continue to guard our thoughts and keep our minds set on the Spirit, we begin to experience real life and peace (Romans 8). We are stopping and causing to fade away wrong ways of thinking. We are replacing them with the truth of God’s Word and new neural pathways form that become our default. But lest you think this is a simple task – it is not!

Many believers who are not mature in the faith get frustrated thinking that the Christian life doesn’t work for them. It isn’t that the Christian life doesn’t work, it is that this form of outward conformity to the law has never worked. The law points us to our utter dependence upon Christ, the only One who was ever able to obey the law. We cast ourselves upon Him and become His apprentices. It is then that our inner being becomes conformed to His image.

When we are captivated with our King, and our hearts are undivided, we begin to “see” as He sees. We begin to value what He values. It is then that we begin to live for His Kingdom and those things that are eternal. The things of this world “grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace” (*Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*).

“Spiritual formations for the Christian basically refers to the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ Himself” (Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*, p. 22).

“Spiritual transformation is the process by which Christ is formed in us for the glory of God, for the abundance of our own lives and for the sake of others” (*Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership* by Ruth Haley Barton, p. 15).

We are to labor with and for each other “until Christ is formed within you” (Galatians 4:9). That is our goal – inner transformation. “It is who we are in our thoughts, feelings, dispositions, and choices – in the inner life – that counts” (Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, p. 24).

“Because Jesus is the actual Logos – the organizing principle of the world, the agent of creation, the being that holds the whole universe together – this means that His philosophy alone is whole, complete, and truly true” (*Jesus the Great Philosopher*, p. 201).

Salvation is just the door – there is an entire Kingdom to explore and incorporate into your life on earth – this life depicted by Heaven coming to earth.

Spiritual Disciplines are daily rhythms built around the Kingdom of God – Spiritual Disciplines are included on Day 5 of each week’s study. We are asking you to incorporate each one into your life. These new habits of thought and action are the pathway to a new inner reality.

What would happen if we took God at His Word? How would our culture and world change if true believers started thinking and living like Christ?

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