



the coming kingdom

a prophetic message for our universe

APRIL - MAY 2010

This Book Belongs to _____

The Coming Kingdom Reading

Jesus said, “.... **The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.... for the kingdom of heaven is near.**”

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”

“I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

.... Whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. And this *good news* of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations... The time has come.... The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

**“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.
For Thine is the Kingdom and the glory
forever and ever,
Amen.”**

*Matthew 4:23 Luke 17:21 Matthew 4:16-17 Matthew 13:44-46 Mark 10:15
Matthew 7:21 Matthew 5:19 Matthew 24:14 Mark 1:15 Matthew 6:9-13*



MAY 2

Abstinent & Indulgent *John Jesus*

Luke 1:15; Luke 5:33-39; Luke 7:18-35

Sermon Notes

From before his birth, John would be _____ with the Spirit. During his life he would _____ himself of _____.

Jesus, too, was filled with the Spirit, but he did not _____ or _____ according to a _____.

The religious leaders considered John to be an _____ and Jesus to be an _____.

John primarily preached to the _____ while Jesus fellowshiped with _____.

People suffer from poor _____.

Taking _____ may not be _____, but they may be _____.

God's _____ for your life _____ variable _____.

Our _____ can look very different but have similar _____ through God's Spirit.

We all are called to the coming _____.

Introduction

I started using a term several years ago, "Prohibitionist Theology." The early American prohibition heavily influenced churches in this nation. Rather than reading Scripture and trying to understand those things prohibited by Christ, many preachers adopted the political/legal prohibitionist thinking and began to interpret the Bible through that lens.

This led to all kinds of biblical compromises. Jesus no longer turned the water into wine, but turned the water into refined Welch's grape juice. Jesus' interactions with tax collectors and sinners only included people over-eating, not drinking alcoholic beverages. Smoking became more than a horrible choice, it became a sin. Extra-marital sex was elevated above virtually any other sin. This sin was directly linked to adolescent dancing (so dancing had to be forbidden). Of course, dancing was caused by rhythmic music, so any music with a beat was also condemned. On and on and on it went.

Over time Christians were no longer defined by what they believed, what they promoted, what they cared about...they were defined by what they didn't allow. They were defined by what they prohibited.

When we think this way we are thrown for a loop when we study Scripture. How could people in the Corinthian church get drunk during church gatherings if wine wasn't utilized with the communion meals? How could John be accused because of his abstinence while Jesus was condemned as indulgent? Taking vows and practicing moderation is both Godly and biblical – don't hear me saying they aren't. However, to define our Christianity by what we aren't rather than by our new life in Christ is not spiritually healthy. And people who base their religion on rules will condemn regardless of what you do. I know because they condemned Jesus and they condemned John. Let's talk about God embracing both!

Reflection

Sunday, we compared the lives of John and Jesus and specifically the accusations made about them. What thoughts did you have from the lesson and your studies about John and Jesus and their roles ushering in the Kingdom of God?

Heart

Why are people prone to judge others? John and Jesus provided the people with a wide range of style and were both judged unworthy. Is this human nature, spiritual sickness, discernment...what do you think?

Soul

Staying on point – focusing on a clear mission – can prevent us from being clouded by criticism. John and Jesus are good examples of missional living. When they were with people they were intentional in their purpose but authentic in their relationship. Deep in your soul, what mission for Christ keeps you from being completely clouded by the criticism of the religious world and the secular world?

Mind

When you read Luke 1:15, Luke 5:33-39 and Luke 7:18-35, what do you think is interesting about the approaches of John and Jesus, and which approach do you consider more comfortable as your personal approach? Also, do you think the Kingdom needs more “John” or more “Jesus” in approaching the lost? Why?

Strength

People often use vows to enhance their commitment to the Kingdom. John was a great example of this. People have abstained from all kinds of things in order to heighten their awareness of their own commitment. Share with the group a vow or commitment you’ve taken in the past that enhanced your walk with Christ. Consider taking a new vow for a set period of time that could enhance your Kingdom experience as we approach Missions Sunday on May 23rd. If you’re comfortable share that vow with your LIFEGroup.

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