

The Kingdom of God

Part 6: “Accessing the Kingdom”

1. Have you ever been locked out of your car or house? I have heard some pretty funny stories of people who have been locked out and what extreme measures that they will go through to get in. My daughter locked her keys in my car (1999 Sentra). What is interesting is that the trunk and the passenger doors both have a broken key inside of their locks. After calling me for advice, she got a screwdriver and turned the key in the trunk of the car and climbed through the trunk into the vehicle.
 - a. I have heard of folks who had locked themselves out of the house with dinner on the stove, and who had to literally break a window to get in.
 - b. **“Getting into”** somewhere or something is at the heart of many of our pursuits in life. Whether it be a house, car or someone’s diary...most of these pursuits requires a key. If it isn’t a key, then it is at least a ticket to the concert, the movie, or the show.
 - i. There is always an entrance point that we must get past and there is always some sort of price, a key or a ticket that allows us to enter.
 - c. Jesus said some of the same things about the Kingdom of God. Contrary to our common teaching, he wasn’t referring to “getting into heaven” but rather entering the Kingdom of God and accessing the riches of the King.
 - i. He said the following things about “getting in.”
 1. Mt 23:13 - *"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."*
 2. Mt 19:23 - *And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."*
 3. Mt 18:3 – *"Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."*
 4. Mt 5:20 *"For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."*
 5. Mt 7:21 - *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter."*
 6. Mt 21:31 - *"Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you."*
 7. Joh 3:3 *Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*
 8. He told others that he was the “door.”
 9. And to his disciples, he gave “keys to the Kingdom.”
 10. Everywhere Jesus went, people were confronted by the wonders and power of the Kingdom of God and they were trying desperately to get into it!
2. **What Is this Kingdom of God that people are trying so desperately to get into?** (doesn’t that sound different from how the world responds to our message?)
 - a. I would define the Kingdom of God as the manifestation of God’s authority, power, and purposes, whether in a person or place.
 - i. Many years ago, England was the world’s political superpower. She had colonies, which she ruled politically, all over the world. Collectively, England’s rule and these colonies were referred to as the "United Kingdom." It was called a Kingdom because that is where England exercised her authority and purposes.
 - b. **The Kingdom of God is wherever God’s authority and purposes are demonstrated or present.**
 - i. Wherever Jesus went proclaiming the Kingdom of God He also *demonstrated* the Kingdom of God. Sick were healed, blind saw, lame walked...why? Because the rule of God was manifested in that person and place through Jesus.

1. (Small wonder why people wanted to be a part of it!)
- ii. Likewise, Jesus commanded his disciples to proclaim and demonstrate the Kingdom of God. Same message, same results. Read your bible.
- iii. Are you and I disciples? Yes. We have the same command...the same message and when we do so, we will see the same results!
 1. Some of us wonder...why doesn't God use me that way?
 2. Perhaps you aren't "in" the Kingdom...or maybe you are in the kingdom but simply haven't learned how to access the resources that God has placed at your disposal?

3. **Today's sermon is about "getting in" not only to the Kingdom, but also accessing the treasures and blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven.**

- a. Our passage is from Ephesians 1:3 *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."*
 - i. God has blessed us in the where? "heavenly realms."
 1. What does that mean? It means that the promises and everything that Jesus purchased with His blood and everything that Jesus plundered on our behalf, is available to us in the "heavenly realms."
 2. These blessings are accessible in the "heavenly realms." (in that unseen, but not inaccessible spiritual realm).
 - 3.
 - b. **You are blessed in the present.** It is not a future, when you go home to be with Jesus. These blessings of God – for your every need are in the present tense. In fact, it is a done deal with its benefits available to us in the present moment...not the future.
 - c. *"with every spiritual blessing in Christ."*
 - i. Paul did not say God blessed us with five spiritual blessings or 20 spiritual blessings or even 100 spiritual blessings. God blessed us with EVERY spiritual blessing! What does that mean? The Greek word for "every" means "every kind or variety."
 - ii. What is a spiritual blessing? **A blessing is anything that God has said or done on your behalf.** Everything you need for life and godliness, God has provided for you. You will lack nothing. **I urge you to read Deuteronomy 33 for a prime example of what a blessing looks like and does.** I believe a blessing is the release of God's supply for our every need.
 1. (Jews who are Easterners) Easterners live with a different mindset than we westerners. A blessing for them is a mystical and real experience. In one sense it is a sign and feeling of transmitted grace. It is saying I really like you. I wish for you the very best.
 2. On the other hand blessing a person is symbolized with a gift. Easterners never gave what they no longer wanted to another. They gave something of great significance. In the giving they were blessing this friend, or special guest.
 3. Receiving the family blessing was no small thing. It meant that the family accepted you and what you were about. They wanted to participate with you in it.
 4. Even in the past 50 years it was customary in this country for men to ask for the blessing of the father of the bride to be. He gave it as approval of the marriage. I strongly suspect that among us are many stories of fear and trembling young men going into the Lion's den to ask for the hand of their bride. To receive that blessing was a pleasing experience. This is the mystical blessing I refer to.
 5. Jacob wanted the family blessing so much that he cheated his brother out of it.
 6. The later context tells us that God adopted us as His children as a direct result of the work on the cross that Jesus accomplished. Thereby, as God's children, we have an inheritance. **All that belongs to Jesus also belongs to us.**
 - d. Why in the "heavenly realms?"

- i. There is a biblical principle that we must understand if we are to be effective in prayer and in life. That is that **something must first take place in the spiritual realm before it can take place in the earthly realm.**
 - 1. This is why angels battle on our behalf. It is why war is taking place in the heavenlies (in the spiritual realm).
 - 2. This is why Jesus told us to “pray down” the blessings of heaven when in the Lord’s prayer we are to ask *“thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth AS IT IS in heaven.”*
 - 3. It is why God forbade idolatry and worship of demonic spirits – see the Old Testament – it led to the conquest of God’s people.
 - a. If you give the enemy ground in the spiritual realm then you end up giving your physical ground to your enemies.

- e. God has blessed you with "every spiritual blessing."
 - i. There is not one spiritual blessing that you don't have.
 - ii. No other Christian is blessed more than you.
 - iii. That's impossible since God gave you "every spiritual blessing."
 - iv. You have as much access to God, as much access to spiritual knowledge and power, as much access to God's love and grace as any other Christian alive today or who has lived or will live.
 - 1. You have as much as the Apostle Paul, Billy Graham, and every other Christian. The only difference between you and them lies in whether you *access* those blessings or not.

4. How do we access the “heavenly realms?” where our blessings are?

- a. Let me do some review of some elementary principles because it is foundational to understanding the way we access the spiritual realms:
 - i. **You and I are the only creature that God created that was designed to live in both the spiritual realm and the physical realm simultaneously.**
 - 1. When God created Adam, Adam could interact both with the physical world (the animals) and the spiritual world (God) simultaneously. No other creature had a physical body and a spiritual body as well. But Adam did.
 - 2. So that is what Satan did. He set up a counterfeit kingdom here on earth... the very antithesis of God’s K.
 - 3. We saw a picture of God’s Kingdom in Gn 1-3.
 - a. God is loving King over his treasured creation. We see beauty, order, intimacy, health. But immediately after Adam and Eve fell to Satan’s temptation, we see death, sin, murder, and sickness.
 - b. They have become subject to Satan’s rule... with Satan usurping the authority God gave them to rule as His ambassadors over the earth.
 - c. If I were to raise up an army to attack a neighboring country. Once I defeat them, everything that is theirs becomes mine. All the inhabitants and everything they own become subject to me.
 - d. That’s what happen to Adam and Eve, and all their descendents after them. Because of the fall, man’s authority was removed from the earth. We became the subjects of a new ruler, of a new kingdom... the Kingdom of Darkness. And that’s been true ever since.
 - 4. At the moment Adam sinned, his spirit was “cut off” from access to God, his spirit lost its ability to communicate with and see into the heavenly realm.
 - a. It was still there in a damaged form, but it was cut off from knowing God

- b. Adam could still reach out towards God as through a glass darkly, he had the imprint of God on his soul and he had a spirit that yearned to connect to God, but because of sin, could not connect in its original manner.
 - 5. At the same time, death also came to Adam's physical body. It did not perish into the dust at that moment. But in the day in which Adam was created, in the 1000 year time period, Adam's physical body died and crumbled into the dust.
 - a. The moment Adam sinned, death came into his body, sin and death. It was now subject to sickness, to deterioration, old age and the diminishing of its faculties until finally it returned to the dust.
 - ii. Essentially, Adam was cut off from the Kingdom of God. God spoke repeatedly through out the Old Testament how He would reestablish His Kingdom upon the earth. And the people of God collectively have been crying out for its coming for generations, until Jesus arrived on the scene in a Galilean seaside village.
5. Accessing The Heavenly Realm:
- a. Heaven is literally the realm of the spirit.
 - i. When Paul says that God "has blessed us in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 1:3), he is not talking about a place, nor about the future. He is talking about a spiritual reality—spiritual blessings right here and right now (same verse).
 - ii. When he says that we are seated with Christ in heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6), he is not talking about a place. He is talking about spiritual realities; that our life and existence is now with Christ.
 - b. **In Christ, we are able to enter heaven even before we die.**
 - i. "*We have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus*" (Hebrews 10:19). Where do you think the Holy Place is? It is in heaven! But we enter his presence not through physical transport, but in our innermost person, in heart and soul.
 - 1. It is a movement of the spirit, not of the body.
 - ii. This is why Jesus preached the Kingdom of God and not 'how to get to heaven when you die.'
 - 1. Heaven is something we begin to experience when we become a child of God – we don't wait until we die to taste it or experience it.
 - 2. When we shed this body, we leave this world behind and step FULLY into the heavenly realm, but we are there in our spirit already!
 - c. **Our citizenship is now in heaven** (Philippians 3:20). We really belong in the spiritual world.
 - i. God is calling us heavenward, toward this reality (verse 14).
 - ii. Since that is where we belong, we need to focus on heavenly realities.
 - iii. It is our future, **and** it is our present calling, even today.
 - iv. We share in a heavenly calling; we have tasted a heavenly gift (Hebrews 3:1; 6:4).
 - v. We have already come to a heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22).
 - vi. These are spiritual realities
 - d. **Jesus said that His Kingdom was not of this world; He never said that it was not in this world.**
 - i. We live in both places – this world and the next simultaneously. It is important for us to learn how to enter the heavenly places in our Spirit, because this is exactly how we ACCESS the blessings and promises of God that are ours in Christ.
 - ii. It is why quiet time, worship and the secret places of the heart are so crucial to the Christian life.
 - iii. What I have found both in my own life as well as in countless others is that we want short cuts to the blessings. We want to merely name it and claim it and not draw near to God. We act like spoiled children who want what they want when they want it and don't realize that intimacy with their Father is essential to RECEIVING or ACCESSING the promised blessings of the Father.

6. My challenge to you and myself this week is to draw near to God. Jesus tells in Matthew 6:6 “*“But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, (your spirit) close your door (shut out the distractions) and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”*”
 - a. Let’s pray!