

Daily God Walk

**Another Day in
Your Journey of
Faith**

**The King And
His Kingdom**

Day One

The Kingdom Begins

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. - Genesis 1:1-2

Our understanding of God begins with Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God..." Before creation there was God. Before time there was God. The beginning of our understanding of God is that He Is; He is Eternal: He existed before there was a sun, moon and stars with which to mark time.

The next thing we learn about God is also in Genesis 1:1, "...God created the heavens and the earth." We cannot understand this statement by human reason because all of man's logic is based on his relationship with time and matter - it is impossible for us to understand those things that transcend time and matter, except as God reveals himself. We don't understand how God just "spoke" the worlds into existence, but that is what he has revealed to us.

After the creation there is much speculation as to what took place. Some feel that the original creation was just a "rough draft" and God later finished it off. Some believe that God created all of the universe complete and beautiful but a war in heaven caused the desecration of earth and Genesis records a "re-creation" of sorts. We don't know what really happened we just know God created the heavens and the earth.

In the process of creating, God created man. Man was the crowning jewel of creation. It was to man God intended to reveal his love and it was for man he created the earth. This was the beginning of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is simply this; God enabling the spirit of man to be in full fellowship with himself without restraint or any hindrances. Keep that thought

in mind as we explore the King and his kingdom this month.

It is in God's plan that that the life enjoyed in the Garden of Eden by Adam and Eve is to be repeated in the lives of those who believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. All that was lost when man sinned in the Garden is regained through faith in Christ. Yes, even death, the final effect of the original sin, will be done away with at the time our restoration is complete and we stand before Him.

Prayer: God, you are awesome in creation and in the revelation of who you are. Give me wisdom to understand your purposes. Amen.

Message: Man was the crowning jewel of creation. It was to man God intended to reveal his love and it was for man he created the earth. This was the beginning of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is simply this; God enabling the spirit of man to be in full fellowship with himself without restraint or any hindrances.

Affirmation: I am in the kingdom of God and I stand before an open door to the best heaven has to offer.

Reflection: God's kingdom on earth began with the creation of man. How did what Adam and Eve did in the garden affect the kingdom and God's plan for the kingdom?

My Thoughts:

Day Two

God Created Man With A Free Will

Then God said, "Let us make man in our own image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." - Genesis 1:26

In all the creation of God it is only the earth that has life as we know it. God has appointed man to be caretaker of the earth and the life that is on it. That is an aspect of the kingdom of God that we do not speak enough about. God has given man the responsibility of protecting and caring for the earth, its resources and the life that is in it.

The entire creation of God is an expression of his love and grace. We look at it all and are awed by the magnificence of His handiwork. Yet, when we look at the earth around us and the life that it sustains, we too often think of them in terms of how they can serve us.

The environmentalists and the animal activists have a point. God created the earth to be self sustaining and all of the rest of creation cooperates with him. It is only man that arbitrarily kills off life for his own pleasure and destroys the eco-system for his own consumption.

God created man with the potential to be in unity with his own mind and to be a reflection of his own glory. It was God's choice to create man in his own image. Man was created with a free will and he was influenced by his spirit person - the part of him that was in the image of God. Man had no "soul" knowledge, that is, he had no experience outside of the God influence.

God's desire was to have an object of love - and you can't truly love, in the agape sense, an inanimate creature, or a mind-slave who has no will of their own;

so God created man with free will. It was the choice of man to pursue life on his own terms.

As man experienced life on his terms his “soul” nature was awakened and his soul became the dominate influence in his life. The soul is that part of our nature which drives us to satisfying the desires of our physical nature. It is often called our fleshly, or sin nature.

The kingdom God intended in creation is recreated in the hearts of those who trust Christ. We can choose Christ or not - it’s up to us.

Prayer: Lord, grant me repentance to being resistant to your plan and give me the grace to surrender to you. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: God created man with the potential to be in unity with his own mind and to be a reflection of his own glory. It was God’s choice to create man in his own image. God’s desire was to have an object of love - and you can’t truly love in the agape sense an inanimate creature, or a mind-slave who has no will of their own; so God created man with free will. It was the choice of man to pursue life on his own terms.

Affirmation: God gave me the freedom to choose and I have chosen to follow him.

Reflection: How does the free will of man play into the story of the fall? Why do you think that man, given the choice, will usually choose to gratify his own desires rather than being committed to a higher purpose?

My Thoughts:

Day Three

Heaven On Earth

The Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed... In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. - Genesis 2:8-9

When we hear people talk about heaven it often sounds like the garden God had planted in the beginning. All that the man needed to be comfortable and well fed were there, including the tree that would give him life without end.

God observed man, who was alone in this beautiful garden we call Eden, and realized that he needed a companion. God caused a deep sleep to fall on the man and performed surgery on him. He took a rib from man's side and with that rib He created woman.

It is interesting that God did not form woman like he did man and the other animals, from the dust of the ground, but he formed her as a part of man. God created man and woman to be as one, from the same flesh. The first man and woman had a oneness that few, if any, have had since. Adam and Eve realized that they were one flesh.

This ideal world was God's kingdom on earth. Man was given authority over all the earth; man was king and the earth with all that was in it were his subjects. God had given man all that he needed to be set forever, including the tree of life that would sustain him forever.

God is recreating His kingdom on earth, but there is no physical garden. The garden of his kingdom today is in the hearts of men. Just as God walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the garden so he walks and talks with people of faith today.

The Lord is calling men and women into his garden today, just as he placed Adam and Eve in the garden so

long ago. He calls this garden Grace and Salvation and the only condition for entering the garden is faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Lord of Glory.

He offers love, joy and peace in his garden, but it is just an offer.

We have a choice. We can enter his garden or continue doing things our way. Many have chosen their own way and have taken the path of Adam and Eve - Don't make that mistake. Choose the Garden of Grace.

Prayer: Lord, living in your garden and being in your kingdom require faith. Grant me the gift of faith. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: God is recreating His kingdom on earth, but there is no physical garden. The garden of his kingdom today is in the hearts of men. The Lord is calling men and women into his garden today, just as he placed Adam and Eve in the garden so long ago. He calls this garden Grace and Salvation and the only condition for entering the garden is faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Lord of Glory.

Affirmation: I have believed in Jesus, the Christ and have put my faith in him. I am living in the garden of Grace and Salvation.

Reflection: God's kingdom today is in the hearts of those who would follow him. Give some thought to the question of why so many choose the kingdoms of this world over God's Kingdom.

My Thoughts:

Day Four

Lucifer - Enemy Of The Kingdom

How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn. You have been cast down to the earth.

- Isaiah 14:12

There was an enemy to the kingdom which God had established in the Garden of Eden. The same enemy who rebelled against God in an earlier period. You can read that story in Isaiah 14.

This story unfolds like so many we have heard. There was a king (God) and one of his very talented subjects (Lucifer) who thought he could do things better than the king. Lucifer rebelled and a third of the angels joined him. He was defeated and cast out of the kingdom.

Lucifer was banished from the kingdom. Many believe that he was sent to the earth and was given dominion over it. Some feel that Genesis 1:1 should read, "And the earth became void and without form," and that this verse refers to the effect of Lucifer, whom we know as Satan, being cast down to the earth.

If that is true then it makes the creation story really interesting because when God created the Garden which was literally heaven on earth he placed man, a spirit being in a physical body, in the garden and gave him dominion over everything in it. Thus began the struggle for dominance in this world; would God, through man, rule the world or would Lucifer rule the world?

We are yet today caught in this struggle. Those of us who are believers in Jesus as the Christ know the outcome of this war, but it is still a war. The battle against evil and rebellion against the will of God rages among the billions of people on earth today.

God's kingdom does prevail and if we are to be restored to the place God intended for us from the

beginning then we must join the battle by committing our allegiance to God through a commitment to faith in Christ as our redeemer and restorer of things lost in the fall. Adam and Eve lost it all and we can regain the kingdom through faith in Christ.

Our battle against sin and evil is not just about Satan. There is a spirit of the world we must do battle with as well as our own soulish nature that we must be constantly on guard against. We must learn to live in the strength of Holy Spirit so that we won't succumb to evil.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to stay in this battle for the kingdom you have established. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: God's kingdom does prevail and if we are to be restored to the place God intended for us from the beginning then we must join the battle by committing our allegiance to God through a commitment to faith in Christ as our redeemer and restorer of things lost in the fall.

Affirmation: I am committed to the kingdom of God and to the war against Satan. God and his kingdom will be victorious.

Reflection: This devotion speaks of man as a spirit being in a physical body. What thoughts do you have about that? If Lucifer was cast out of heaven and given the earth as his domain, then what is the significance of God making a beautiful garden on the earth and placing man there to have dominion over it?

My Thoughts:

Day Five

Man Fails The Choice Test

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. - Genesis 3:6

When God formed man from the dust and breathed life into him man was perfect. He was a spirit man in a fleshly body. The only life he knew was the breath, or Spirit, of God that was breathed into him.

Man was created body, spirit and soul, but his soul was dormant at creation. His body was from the dust of the earth and his spirit was from the breath of God. The life in the body came directly from the breath of God. This thing we call "life" that is in man is the eternal spark that God ignited with his own breath.

As long as man lived in innocence he was dominated by his spirit man. He walked and talked with God without any resistance. His flesh was guided by his spirit and his spirit was fully given to God.

That was man's state of existence in innocence. However, God had also given man a soul at creation. The purpose of soul seems to be to answer the cravings of the flesh. As long as the soul lay dormant and man was guided by his spirit, he continued in innocence. God warned man about the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil because he knew that the knowledge of evil would awaken the soul. When man becomes awakened to the pleasures of evil his soul begins to dominate the spirit and leads man to fulfill his desires.

The serpent appealed to the human side of mankind. He addressed the needs and desires of the flesh. When Adam and Eve listened to the serpent their soul person began to have desire. When the soul person saw what was desirable to the flesh they traded their innocence for the empty promises of their soul man.

Living in the kingdom frees us from soul dominance and releases the spirit man to pursue righteousness. “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:5p6).

Prayer: Father, it is so easy to live after the flesh, but grant me grace to live in the spirit. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: Living in the kingdom frees us from soul dominance and releases the spirit man to pursue righteousness. “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

Affirmation: I am no longer dominated by my soulish nature which leads to death but I am submitted to the spirit man which leads to life and peace.

Reflection: There seems to be a fine line between the soul and spirit in man and the words themselves seem to be used interchangeably. Can you explain what is the "soul" of man and what is the "Spirit" of man?

My Thoughts:

Day Six

Man Loses Peace With God

So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

- Genesis 3:23

If Eve had known the consequence of listening to the serpent she would never have listened. But she didn't know. All she knew was that when she listened to him, and thought about what he had said, there was awakened in her desires she had not had before.

She looked at the tree in a different light. Before, it did not bother her that she could not eat the fruit, there was plenty of other fruit that she could eat. Now, because she had listened to ideas she had never considered before she had doubts and suspicions about God.

"Why doesn't God want me to be wise like him," she asked herself. "Is God really afraid that I will be as wise as him?" Seduced by the thought of becoming like God she took the step and ate the fruit.

The effect of this act of rebellion against God went far beyond the man and the woman. The harmonious relationship between God, man, the earth and the animals was lost. Man hid from God, the earth grew thorns and animals became afraid of man.

In a word man lost his peace. When peace with God is lost there is no other lasting peace to be found. Everything that offers peace in the world today is related to the forbidden fruit and the peace that it offers turns out to be a disappointment.

Since he lost favor with God in the Garden mankind has been on a quest to restore what was lost. He has established kingdoms that imitate the kingdom of God but fall far short of what God offers. Man has tried to

fill his emptiness with vain behaviors that have only left him empty.

When man failed to trust the wisdom of God in the Garden of Eden and partook of the forbidden fruit he lost his peace and he has been trying to regain it ever since. The only way to lasting peace and reestablishing harmony with God, the earth and our fellow man is by entering the kingdom of God through faith in Jesus the Christ.

God is reestablishing his kingdom, and restoring peace in the hearts of mankind, one person at a time.

Prayer: Lord, I have listened to wrong voices and desired wrong things. Grant me the grace to trust you and you alone for my peace. Amen.

Message: When man failed to trust the wisdom of God in the Garden of Eden and partook of the forbidden fruit he lost his peace and he has been trying to regain it ever since. The only way to lasting peace and reestablishing harmony with God, the earth and our fellow man is by entering the kingdom of God through faith in Jesus the Christ.

Affirmation: I have regained my peace with God and his creation through faith in Jesus the Christ.

Reflection: Is there a parallel between the experience of Eve in the garden with the experience we face today? Eve thought about how the fruit was pleasing to the eye and how it would make her wise. It appealed to her fleshly desires just as sin does today.

My Thoughts:

Day Seven

Man's Journey Back To God

Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the Lord.

- Genesis 4:26

When man fell from grace, favor with God, he became a mere shadow of the image he once was. Created in the image of God he became the victim of his own choices and he was separated from God.

Adam and Eve were dead from the day they partook of the fruit. Their spirit died, or at least became dormant, as their soul man became alive and began to dominate their life. Their physical man began the journey toward death when God banished them from the Garden saying, "He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."

The first children born to Adam and Eve brought heartache to them. Cain, the oldest, killed Abel his younger brother out of jealousy and from that time crimes against others has been a common thing.

Life outside the kingdom of God in the garden was not an easy thing and man began to realize his need of guidance beyond his own wisdom. Our verse today declares, "At that time men began to call on the name of the Lord."

Things have not changed much today. Billions of people around the world call out to the god of their understanding desperately seeking a way to restore what was lost to man in the garden. Fallen from grace, mankind, who was created in the image of God, now tries to recreate god in his own image. The thousands of religions in the world tell the dismal story of man's attempt to recreate the kingdom he lost when he fell from the grace of God.

God is offering his kingdom today to those who will receive it. His kingdom is not to be found in the religions of the world; It can only be found through faith in Christ alone. Man's efforts cannot recreate the garden, but God can restore peace to man.

It is ironic that the motivation for mankind to partake of the forbidden fruit was so that he could become like God and it is that attempt to be like God which caused him to lose his godlikeness. God, through Christ, desires to restore his image in man.

Prayer: Lord, I have tried to recover peace and harmony by my own efforts, and it doesn't work. Grant me your peace. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: Billions of people around the world call out to the god of their understanding desperately seeking a way to restore what was lost to man in the garden. Fallen from grace, mankind, who was created in the image of God, now tries to recreate god in his own image. God's kingdom of peace can only be found through faith in Christ alone. Man's efforts cannot recreate the garden, but God can restore peace to man.

Affirmation: God has restored me to a place of peace in him through faith in Christ alone.

Reflection: Give some thought to the idea that man is trying to create god in his own image and try to verbalize what that means to you.

My Thoughts:

Day Eight

God Had A Plan To Restore The Kingdom

All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast - all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. - Revelation 13:8

Even before the fall of man God had a plan. God's plan to restore man began before man was even created. In fact, God's plan for the kingdom of God on earth began before creation.

Remember the story of the rebellion in heaven inspired by Lucifer? From the time that God banished Lucifer from the kingdom in heaven and cast him to the earth, God has been planning to establish his kingdom on earth as a final conquest of the evil one.

Why do I say that? 1 Peter 1:18-21 tells us that we were redeemed by the blood of the lamb who was chosen before the creation of the world. Also, John, in Revelation 13:8, refers to the names "written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world."

God had a plan of recreating the kingdom before the first kingdom of God on earth fell. There is no greater evidence of the love of God than this; God knew man would make wrong choices and fall from grace so he had a plan to redeem man even before man fell.

God created man as an object of his love. He did not create man to be a slave who served only because he had no choice, but He created man so that he would have someone to whom he could show his love.

God also desired man to love him. That could only happen if man had a choice, so God created man with the ability to choose his own way. From the beginning

God knew the choices man would make and it was this knowledge that enabled him the greatest opportunity to show his love.

How do we know God loves us? “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us” (1 John 3:16). “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly... God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8).

God's love for man drove him to make a plan of redemption. God has revealed his plan to us and we have been redeemed.

Prayer: Lord, I am victim of the sin nature just like every person that has lived. Thank you for your plan of redemption. Amen.

Message: How do we know God loves us? “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us” (1 John 3:16). “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly... God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8).

Affirmation: I know God loves me because he had a plan to restore his kingdom in me even before I was born.

Reflection: God created man to have an object of love and when tested man failed miserably. What is it in man that hinders him from returning the love God shows him?

My Thoughts:

Day Nine

God's Plan For Abram's Descendents

The Lord had said to Abram... I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. - Genesis 12:1-3

Since before the fall God had a plan to restore man to being the image of himself on the earth. Even in creation when he placed man and his kingdom in the original garden, God had a plan to restore what he knew would be lost.

That's what I would call long range planning. Thousands of years before Christ the God of the universe had already devised a plan to establish his eternal kingdom. Over time God began to reveal his plan to man.

The first hint that man had of God's plan of redemption was when He brought Adam and Eve animal skins to cover their bodies. There had to be bloodshed and a death to cover their sin. We know they got that message because Abel knew to offer an animal as sacrifice to God, and that was what caused Cain to be jealous and angry; God accepted the animal sacrifice but rejected Cain's sacrifice of grains.

The next hint we get of the kingdom of God is the promise to Abram in Genesis 12:3, "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Though Abram did not realize the extent to which the world would be blessed by his progeny, he did gain a sense of purpose about his life to bring nations into the world that would be world shapers.

A message I see developing about the kingdom of God is that there are no incidental members. Though each of us may not realize our value in the kingdom,

God does, and he guides us according to his will in order to accomplish his purposes.

We learn to accept hardship, even tragedy, knowing that the end of our faith is eternity in the kingdom. This hope gives us courage. Hebrews 6:19 calls this hope, “An anchor for our soul.” It is this hope which gives us the confidence to face whatever life puts in our path.

In Philippians Paul told us that this hope had given him the confidence to endure all of life, the good and the bad. In fact he says, “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (4:13).

Prayer: Thank you Lord for allowing me to be a part of your kingdom. Grant me grace to be worthy. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: We learn to accept hardship, even tragedy, knowing that the end of our faith is eternity in the kingdom. This hope gives us courage. Hebrews 6:19 calls this hope, “An anchor for our soul.” It is this hope which gives us the confidence to face whatever life puts in our path.

Affirmation: My faith in Christ has released the hope that he has given me the strength to endure all things.

Reflection: This devotion mentions long range planning by God. What is it referencing and what effect does it have on us? How is our hope in Christ an anchor for our soul?

My Thoughts:

Day Ten

Rules For God's Kingdom

These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.

- Deuteronomy 6:1-3

Relationships are established with rules. Some rules are written, as in the laws of the land, but others are not, as in personal relationships. In most personal relationships we don't literally sit down and say, "OK, these are the rules; you will live by them or you will not be in relationship with me," but those rules are implied none the less. However, in business, employment and government we are given the rules of relationship upfront.

The rules for relationship with God in his kingdom are what we call the law of Moses. The law of Moses is actually the law of God as given to Moses when he spent many weeks on Mt Sinai recording the law as God gave it to him.

This law covers just about every aspect of our lives. It addresses health, safety and sanitation. It speaks to diet, the things we should and should not eat. It also addresses appropriate relationships with our neighbors and strangers. This law even addresses environmental issues. And, not to be left out, it covers our relationship with God.

When we look closely into the law of Moses we discover that it is all about respect. In fact, the best known part of the law is the Ten Commandments. These ten rules for life are about respect. The first three are about respecting God. The fourth is about respecting the earth. The fifth is about respecting parents and elders. Six through ten are about respecting and being in relationship with others.

In fact, Jesus summed the entire law up in just a few words. We are to love God with all of our heart and to love others as we love ourselves. Love and respect - those are our challenges in the kingdom.

God's rules for the kingdom today are not that much different than his rules for the kingdom in the time of Moses. Most of the ceremonial law has been fulfilled in Christ, but the moral law is still as applicable today as it was then. God's law is his guide for our relationship with Him.

Prayer: Father, I have not always respected you, the earth and others as I should. Grant me grace to love and respect. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: God's rules for the kingdom today are not that much different than his rules for the kingdom in the time of Moses. Most of the ceremonial law has been fulfilled in Christ, but the moral law is still as applicable today as it was then. God's laws are his rules for our relationship with Him.

Affirmation: I am no more oppressed by God's rules than I am by the laws of our land. I realize that God's rules enable me to live the abundant life.

Reflection: Can you see how the 10 Commandments are about respect? Can you explain your answer? What did Jesus say was the summation of the entire law?

My Thoughts:

Fearing God Produces Long Life

These are the commands... the Lord your God directed me to teach you... so that you, your children, and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life.

- Deuteronomy 6:1-2

Many have seen the rules of the kingdom as being impossible to keep. They see them as harsh and unrealistic. It is easy for some to get the idea that God just gave us this big set of rules that he knew we couldn't keep just so he would have an excuse to chastise us.

What was the intent of the Lord in giving these commands? His purpose is clearly stated in verse two, "so that you may enjoy long life." God knew that the way to long life was to live in harmony with him, others and the earth. That's all the laws, or rules, of the kingdom are about. They are about reestablishing the harmony that God had with man in the garden so long ago.

Are these laws difficult to keep? Yes they are. In fact, over the years the Jews had tried to define the law very carefully so that a person would not in any way offend God. Their effort produced a set of rules that no man could follow. They had missed the point.

That was not God's intention in giving the law. He gave man the law so that he would have a guide to being in relationship with him. One of the keys to understanding the kingdom is not just to abide by the rules but it is to understand that God is preparing us for kingdom life. He speaks of fearing God and obeying the commands so that we will have long life, but ultimately the life we gain is eternal life.

When you are concerned about obeying the rules and gaining long life just remember the core of the

commands. It is respect. Respect God, the earth and others. Love God and love others and you will fulfill the entire purpose of the law.

We often hear the “obey these laws” command, but we seem to miss the part which says, “that you may enjoy long life.” When we live out God’s law we are building healthy relationships, we are living a healthy lifestyle, and we have a healthy relationship with God. All of those result in having a long life.

Prayer: Lord, I need your Spirit to enable to live righteously. Amen.

Message: One of the keys to understanding the kingdom is not just to abide by the rules but it is to understand that God is preparing us for kingdom life. He speaks of fearing God and obeying the commands so that we will have long life, but ultimately the life we gain is eternal life.

Affirmation: I understand that God's laws are given so that we may have access to the abundant life Christ promised us.

Reflection: Some see the laws of God as being too restrictive, and others see them as a guide for living well. How do you see the laws of God?

My Thoughts:

Day Twelve

Purposes Of The Kingdom

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

- John 10:10

From the beginning man has misunderstood the purposes of the kingdom. The serpent posed the idea that God was holding man back by restricting what he should know. Man listened to that lie and a desire was begun in man to know what God knows and thus become like God. The serpent is the thief Jesus was talking about.

The feeling that following God will somehow keep me from being fulfilled has permeated the human experience since the first sin. Many today feel that God's way is boring and leaves no place for just being themselves. How many times have we been asked, "What do you Christians do for fun any way?"

The thief, who is the same as the serpent in the garden, has sown false hope in self, which is the seed of destruction. Listening to the lies of the arch deceiver has allowed him to steal our peace, destroy our hope and lead us ultimately to death.

All of man's searching for the good life, outside of what God has to offer, has left him empty and still searching. It seems that the more he strives for fulfillment the emptier he becomes. As man focuses on self-realization he moves further and further from the God who has promised fulfillment in knowing him.

Jesus expressed a purpose in the kingdom of God in our verse for today. "I have come that you might have life, and have it to the full." A primary purpose for the kingdom is to restore man to the fullness he had with God in the garden.

The kingdom of God is positioning us so that the best heaven has to offer can be released to us. The kingdom is not about controlling our life but it is about calling us to a lifestyle which allows him to open the doors of heaven and pour out upon us a blessing we cannot contain. It is about God having an opportunity to express his love for us.

The Scripture is full of promises which are to be fulfilled in those who have been born into the kingdom of God through a faith in Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for the opportunity to experience your kingdom. Grant me the grace to serve you will. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: A primary purpose for the kingdom is to restore man to the fullness he had with God in the garden. The kingdom of God is positioning us so that the best heaven has to offer can be released to us.

Affirmation: God's purpose for me is that I might have an abundant life. He makes the way for me to have that life by showing me the path to follow. That path is his law.

Reflection: We must not misunderstand the grace of God. The path to abundant life in the kingdom of God is straight and narrow. Not everyone who claims to be on the path are really on the true straight and narrow path. Think about it.

My Thoughts:

Day Thirteen

The Kingdom Is Peace, Joy And Righteousness

The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. - Romans 14:17

It is very easy to become comfortable in our theological position and miss what God is doing today. The Jewish religious leaders did not accept the kingdom Jesus taught because he spoke of a kingdom that messed with their theology.

We aren't much different today. We have a tradition of Jesus as the Christ and we have developed a theological system around who he was/is, how he is manifest and to whom he is manifest. How would we respond if he manifest himself outside of our theological framework?

Paul was addressing just such issues in this verse. Even the young church of that day struggled with traditions. There were some things that were taught in the earliest days of the church that were later put aside as God gave them greater revelation of the kingdom.

I have been guilty of being victim to the fallen nature way of looking at others. If they don't fit my mold then they are probably not believers. If we are going to be effective reaching this generation we are going to have to look a little deeper into kingdom truth.

This passage makes it very clear that the kingdom is not about what you eat or drink (we could add what you believe about non-essential doctrines) and it is not about our traditions. The kingdom is about righteousness, peace and joy which comes through being in fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

A tragedy is that some believers do not have the joy and peace they should have because they are too concerned about how others are responding to peripheral issues. It is time to do a peace and joy check. We are called to peace - let's live like it.

I have found that when I am looking at others my peace is lost and I have little joy, but when I am looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith (Hebrews 12:2), my peace returns and brings with it joy. We are encouraged to set our hearts and minds on things above (Colossians 3:1-2). If you want peace keep your mind stayed on the Prince of Peace.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to judge others by my traditions and grant me the grace to receive your peace. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: I have found that when I am looking at others my peace is lost and I have little joy, but when I am looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith (Hebrews 12:2), my peace returns and brings with it joy. We are encouraged to set our hearts and minds on things above (Colossians 3:1-2). If you want peace keep your mind stayed on the Prince of Peace.

Affirmation: I have discovered that being in the kingdom of God is peace and joy as I live out his righteousness.

Reflection: It is easy to become more concerned about the doctrine, or even the appearance of others, than it is to be motivated by God's love.

My Thoughts:

Day Fourteen

The Kingdom Of God Is Not A Religion

To whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared?... I am God and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. - Isaiah 46:5, 9

It is interesting that since man fell from Grace he has been trying to establish a religion that would restore the kingdom he lost in the garden. If it wasn't so sad it would be amusing the way that ancient man would create a god that was a reflection of what he wanted a god to be then worship the god of his invention.

Unfortunately, man is still creating gods of his own invention and serving them. Most men don't actually fashion an image to bow before but they have invented all manner of things to take the place of God. From sports to knowledge man bows before his gods.

Read what Isaiah writes about these gods: "Some pour out gold from their bags and weigh out silver on the scales; they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god and they bow down and worship it. They lift it to their shoulders and carry it; they set it up in its place, and there it stands. From that spot it cannot move. Though one cries out to it, it does not answer, it cannot save him from his troubles" (46:6-8).

Doesn't this sound like what people are doing today? Every Sunday some will bow at the altar of sports worshipping the efforts of men. Some spend their life at the altar of academia worshipping the wisdom of men who claim to know more than the Lord God.

We need to remember that God is establishing his kingdom and only those who are aware and who seek him will enter it.

Isaiah continues, "I am bringing my righteousness near, it is not far away; and my salvation will not be

delayed, I will grant salvation to Zion, my splendor to Israel” (46:13). Seek his kingdom.

The salvation of the Lord is not in the religions of man but it comes by his grace through faith in Jesus the Christ as Lord and Savior. Peter declared, “There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The kingdom of God is not about religion it is about a relationship with the living God.

Prayer: Thank you Father for the revelation that gods of man are just substitutes for the real thing. Help me to serve you well. Amen.

Message: The salvation of the Lord is not in the religions of man but it comes by his grace through faith in Jesus the Christ as Lord and Savior. Peter declared, “There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The kingdom of God is not about religion it is about a relationship with the living God.

Affirmation: It is by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, that I have entered the kingdom of God.

Reflection: Can you see a parallel between the gods of ancient times and the gods men worship today? How does the average, educated and intelligent person today worship gods?

My Thoughts:

Day Fifteen

*Some Seek Kingdom Results
But Not The King*

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill."

- John 6:26

There are many reasons why people follow Jesus. Some because they hear him and fully understand the message of the kingdom. There are some who follow him for the loaves and fishes. In today's language they are those who hang around only for what they can get.

Jesus was trying to reveal himself to his followers, but all they could see was the loaves and fishes that filled them when they were hungry. He was trying to teach kingdom principles, but their focus was on their need.

In this passage Jesus goes on to relate the story of Moses and the manna which fed the children of Israel in the desert. Then he said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." Jesus was telling them that the kingdom was about more than food; it is about eternal life.

Those who heard him speak did not understand his message and began to grumble among themselves. They argued that he was just the son of Joseph, how could he say that he came down from heaven?

Never mind that this man went around doing miracles that no one had ever done before and speaking truth which only reinforced faith in his Father. Forget the demoniacs who were freed and the lepers who were cleansed. Don't mention the blind and deaf who were

healed. Oh no, we can't accept him because we don't understand him.

Working with people who struggle with recovery from drug and alcohol abuse I have known many people who enjoy the high, but want to get over the addiction. They want the benefits of being clean and sober, but don't want to live without the high. Many of us are like that; we want the kingdom but we don't want to serve the king.

We all know those who call themselves "Christian" only for the benefits, but have never really gotten hold of the message of the kingdom. The blessing of the kingdom is not our needs and desires being met; it is establishing God's rule of love and life.

Prayer: Lord, I do enjoy the loaves and fishes, but help me to not make that my focus. Grant me grace in your kingdom. Amen.

Message: Many of us want the kingdom but we don't want to serve the king. Some call themselves "Christian" only for the benefits, but have never really gotten hold of the message of the kingdom. The blessing of the kingdom is not our needs and desires being met; it is establishing God's rule of love and life.

Affirmation: Believing in Christ is more than receiving the blessing. It is establishing a relationship with God.

Reflection: Listen carefully to how kingdom life is described by believers. Notice how often we express a "bless me" mentality.

My Thoughts:

Day Sixteen

Christ In You - The Hope Of The Kingdom

God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you the hope of glory. - Colossians 1:27

God did not just haphazardly place man in the Garden of Eden then allow him to be vulnerable to failure. From the very beginning he had a plan. In fact, before the beginning he had a plan. His plan was to establish a kingdom that would not be affected by evil.

I have come to realize that not only do we have hope in God but God has hope in us. Some time ago I saw our text passage in a new light. We understand that God has made known to us the mystery of the ages and that is Christ in us. But, what is the purpose of Christ in us?

Paul writes that this revelation of the Christ in us is the very hope of glory. Think about that statement. Could he be saying that the hope of glory, that is the hope of God, is placed in this truth that Christ, the anointing and the anointed one, dwells in every believer?

The first kingdom of God on earth was in the Garden of Eden. Satan thought he had destroyed God's kingdom on earth when the kingdom in the garden collapsed; but as God reveals himself it becomes clear that he had a plan that went far beyond the boundaries of Eden. His plan was not defeated but was actually put into motion by the events in Eden.

God's plan from the beginning was to finally administer the fatal blow to Satan and establish his kingdom in a place that could not be affected by anything in the physical realm. His kingdom would be in the heart of man. The hope of God for his kingdom is this: Christ in you and I.

This hope of the eternal kingdom being present in the hearts of those who will believe and commit their lives to the Christ who is the son of God is the message of the kingdom of God. This hope is two sided: It is God's hope in we who represent His kingdom on earth and our hope in He who is the Lord of eternity. The kingdom of heaven is not of man but it is joy, peace and righteousness in the Holy Spirit.

God has so much hope in his plan to have a kingdom on earth in the hearts of men that he commissioned the Holy Spirit, the administrator of the kingdom, to live in the heart of every kingdom member.

Prayer: Lord, Grant me the grace to be faithful to the hope you have placed in me. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: The hope of his kingdom is this: Christ in you and I. This hope of the eternal kingdom being present in the hearts of those who will believe and commit their lives to the Christ who is the son of God is the message of the kingdom of God. earth and our hope in He who is the Lord of eternity.

Affirmation: My hope in God is the Christ in me and God's hope in me is that I will live out the Christ in me.

Reflection: Give some thought to this two sided hope talked about in this devotion. How has this hope affected your life, and are you fulfilling God's hope in you?

My Thoughts:

Day Seventeen

Kingdom Of Eternal Hope

You are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end. - Luke 1:31-33

Many in the time of his birth and life on earth missed the impact of Jesus who is called the Christ. They had a narrowly focused view of who the Christ, or Messiah as he is called among the Jews, would be.

They saw one coming who would be anointed to subject the world to his rule. The Messiah they looked for would conquer the world and rule with a rod of iron. He would conquer Rome and break the Jews out of political bondage.

The prophecy was that the throne of David would be established forever through this anointed one. The problem was that the Jews had a single dimension perspective on the anointed one. They only saw him through the prism of their own national identity

Daniel prophesied of the Christ, "All peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (Daniel 7:14). Two important statements are made in this prophecy. First, All peoples will worship him. And second, his kingdom will never be destroyed.

Here is an interesting perspective on David's kingdom. He failed God and the law in many ways, but his heart was to serve God. In fact God even said that David was a man after God's heart. Is it possible that the kingdom David was really foreshadowing was not one of earthly rule but one of the kingdom of God being in the heart?

Has there ever been a physical kingdom on earth that has not been destroyed? Could it be that the kingdom that will never be destroyed is fulfilled by the kingdom God establishes in the heart?

The world has built kingdoms with violence and a drive to rule over others. The kingdom of God is built on faith, hope and love. The kingdom of God is built with renewed and restored hearts of men. The palace of our king is the hearts of those who believe in him.

Prayer: Father, thank you for the understanding that your kingdom is of the heart. Grant me the grace to surrender my heart to you. Amen.

Message: The world has built kingdoms with violence and a drive to rule over others. The kingdom of God is built on faith, hope and love. The kingdom of God is built with renewed and restored hearts of men. The palace of our king is the hearts of those who believe in him.

Affirmation: God chose to place his throne in the hearts of those who would trust him and commit their life to him - I am committed to the Christ life and he has enthroned my heart.

Reflection: Give some thought to the question of what does the "kingdom that will never be destroyed" look like.

My Thoughts:

Day Eighteen

Kingdom Hope Is Good News To The Poor

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. - Luke 4:18

Every time I read this passage I am amazed at the response of the others who were in the synagogue and heard the reading. First, they were “amazed at his gracious words.” Then he spoke to them about their inability to receive him as anything other than a local carpenter.

The message did not move them but they were certainly moved by Jesus explaining that they wouldn’t accept him for what he truly was - the one anointed by God to usher in the kingdom of God. They drove him out of the synagogue and tried to kill him, but he escaped.

The message of hope that he came to proclaim is just as real today as it was on the day he was ejected from the synagogue. The good news is still that the poor are blessed because their hope is in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3). The Christ anointing is to bring God’s kingdom to the common person.

What is the hope of the poor? Certainly God does promise prosperity to those who follow him whole heartedly, but the greater hope of the poor is to receive something that wealth cannot buy. The poor seem to be favored to enter the kingdom of God more easily than those with riches.

The benefits of the kingdom are reserved for those who can appreciate every blessing that God brings into their lives. It is harder to enter the kingdom for those who have been able by their own devices and labor to produce prosperity. Too often they want to be credited with their accomplishments rather than to truly give the credit to God.

Greater is the blessing of peace in poverty than distress in wealth. The good news to the poor is that when they (we) are resting in the hope of God's provision we are content in what he provides. Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians that he has found contentment in the life of faith whether he has plenty or finds himself hungry from lack of food.

Whether poor or well fixed the true blessing is that those who trust God, and through faith in Christ receive the kingdom of God, have an inner peace which surpasses all human understanding.

Prayer: Lord, grace me the grace to be content with your peace whether I have much or little. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: Greater is the blessing of peace in poverty than distress in wealth. The good news to the poor is that when they (we) are resting in the hope of God's provision we are content in what he provides. Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians that he has found contentment in the life of faith whether he has plenty or finds himself hungry from lack of food.

Affirmation: The anointed good news of the kingdom has rescued me from the despair of my circumstances.

Reflection: How are the poor blessed by the good news of the kingdom? Is the prosperity of material wealth the good news to the poor?

My Thoughts:

Day Nineteen

Kingdom Hope Is Good News For The Prisoner

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, he has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners. - Luke 4:18

I have known many prisoners over the years and some of them were behind bars. We have heard the axiom, "Iron bars does not a prison make," but there is another phrase I would like to coin. It is this, "The absence of prison bars does not make one free."

I have read how elephants are trained to not use their strength to escape. When they are just babies a rope is tied to their foot and they are tethered to a post. They struggle and struggle to get free, but they can't break the rope. As the elephant grows it finally realizes that it can't break free so it quits trying. When the elephant becomes an adult all the trainer has to do is tie a rope around its leg and it won't even try to escape. The elephant has learned that it is a prisoner.

We have all known people who were in that kind of prison. In fact, many of us have had our own prisons to deal with. I have dealt with hundreds of drug addicts who were in a prison of addiction. My wife and I worked with a woman who was in a prison of alcohol and street life. She had been given an opportunity to change, but she could only see the prison (addiction) she had been in for over 20 years.

The good news is that Jesus came to open those prison doors. There is freedom in knowing him and receiving his grace. I was in one of those prisons for years. I had become victim to my own behaviors and was addicted to a sin that was destroying me. I finally found the way to be free and I have not gone back into that prison.

The good news to those in prisons of undesirable behaviors is that he has come to set you free. If you are in bondage to a behavior that you no longer want to serve turn wholly to him and seek him for the freedom he has promised.

In Galatians 5 Paul writes, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (v1). Some have misunderstood the freedom of grace. They have thought that grace was freedom to continue in sin without consequence, but it is not. Grace gives us freedom from sin and from sins prison.

Prayer: I want to thank you for freedom - And I ask you for the grace to continue in the freedom you have given me. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: In Galatians 5 Paul writes, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (v1). Some have misunderstood the freedom of grace. They have thought that grace was freedom to continue in sin without consequence, but it is not. Grace gives us freedom from sin and from sins prison.

Affirmation: "I am free - thank God, free at last." The prison of my past no longer holds me. I am free in Christ.

Reflection: This freedom promised by Christ is freedom from the inside out. Have you been held captive by a behavior from which you wanted to be free? Jesus was anointed to give you freedom.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty

Kingdom Hope Is Good News To The Sick

The Spirit of the Lord is on me for he has anointed me to preach... recovery of sight for the blind. - Luke 4:18

Jesus came preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. The good news that he preached included healing and wellness to the whole person. You might say he preached a “holistic gospel.” He healed people from their inner struggles and he healed them of their physical struggles.

Wherever Jesus went people were healed. In fact, when John the Baptist was in prison he sent his disciples to ask if Jesus was indeed the Messiah. When they came to Jesus he responded, “Go back and report to John, what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor” (Matthew 11:4-5).

The message to John was clear. A major sign of the Christ was healing and restoring the physical body. Why is it necessary to recognize this aspect of the message of the kingdom? Many believe the reason it was important to put an emphasis on healing is that sickness was a curse of man’s fall from grace and the kingdom of God is restoring those things that were lost in the fall.

God has made healing a part of the restoration process that begins as we surrender to Christ, receive his grace and enter his kingdom. It is God’s intention that every person who enters the kingdom will be healed of every sickness. That is why he placed the river of life and the tree of life in the new, eternal garden he has prepared for believers: Waters of life and leaves of the tree of life for the healing of the nations.

We will all be healed, totally and permanently. Not all of us are healed in this physical, temporal life, but

many are. However, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death... crying or pain" (Revelation 21:4). In the eternal kingdom all will be healed.

Scripture has given us hope for healing here; both inner healing of emotions and physical healing. But, we know that not all people are fully healed while in this body of flesh. We do know, however, that someday this mortal body shall put on immortality and we shall be changed in a moment - transformed from mortal to immortal. Come quickly Lord Jesus.

Prayer: I thank you for the healing that Christ has made available to us in the kingdom. Grant us grace to live in health. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: Scripture has given us hope for healing here; both inner healing of emotions and physical healing. And we know that someday this mortal body shall put on immortality and we shall be changed in a moment - transformed from mortal to immortal. Come quickly Lord Jesus.

Affirmation: I am healed and I am being healed. I will receive "eternal" healing when I have my resurrected body.

Reflection: We are promised healing, but our healing is not always the restoration of this physical body. Give some thought to the idea that while we have physical healing here while in this body, most of us don't seem to be healed - why is that?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty One

Kingdom Hope Is Good News To The Oppressed

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me... to release the oppressed. - Luke 4:18

There are many kinds of oppression. There is oppression from a societal perspective. Words like bigotry and racism are often used in describing societal oppression. There is also political oppression when a government or governing body puts unnecessary burdens upon people.

There is also spiritual, or emotional oppression. When a person becomes overwhelmed and feels so burdened down that they cannot function well they are usually under some kind of emotional or spiritual oppression. This kind of oppression can lead to depression if the oppressed person is not freed from their oppression.

Jesus was once teaching and healing when he looked closely at the crowd. He looked past what they were wearing and how they looked, he looked into their heart. "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). These people were oppressed.

Some of them felt the oppression of Roman occupation of their homeland. Others felt the oppression of wandering through life having no purpose or direction. Still others had a sense of being misunderstood and abandoned by their religious leaders.

The Lord is still moved with compassion for people who are oppressed. There are millions of people today who feel the desperation of being helpless over their circumstances. They go here and there trying to find

some relief, but they can't find it in friends, government or the social structure. Jesus is the answer.

We are not intended to carry our burdens alone. When we begin to feel that we are fenced in by the circumstances and that kind of oppression is getting us down we can take these burdens to Jesus. Peter writes in 1 Peter 5:7, "Cast your cares on him because he cares for you."

Jesus came to bring relief from oppression. You may not be able to control the circumstances that make you feel closed in and left without any options, but you can take those circumstances to Jesus and trust him to give you hope in the midst of trying times.

Prayer: Thank you for freeing me from looking to the circumstances for peace. Grant me the grace to keep trusting you. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: We are not intended to carry our burdens alone. When we begin to feel that we are fenced in by the circumstances and that kind of oppression is getting us down we can take these burdens to Jesus. Peter writes in 1 Peter 5:7, "Cast your cares on him because he cares for you."

Affirmation: I have released all of my anxious thoughts to Jesus because he cares enough for me to take them upon himself.

Reflection: This devotion mentions several kinds of oppression; societal, governmental and emotional. How do you see the gospel affecting each of those?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Two

Kingdom Hope Is The Good News Of God's Favor

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me... to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

- Luke 4:18-19

For over 1500 years the Jews had been in a spiritual battle that they were losing. Moses gave them the Law, God's will for them revealed, but they could never measure up to it.

For centuries scholars had explained, redefined and expounded upon the meaning of the law and how it was to be applied to daily life. What they wound up with was a complicated set of rules that made following God's simple rules an impossibility.

The leaders had grasped the letter of the law but they had not gotten a hold of the spirit of the law. They seemed to see God as an ogre that was just waiting for an opportunity to cast a judgment upon them. The God they knew was an oppressive tyrant.

Then Jesus came anointed to proclaim a period of favor with God. What was really interesting was the message of grace, or favor, that he preached. To the harlot he simply said, "Go home and don't do this again." To the tax collector he instructed, "Repay all that you have unfairly collected from the people."

When he gave the standard for who would be received into his kingdom and who would not, he never mentioned the law. He only addressed generous works of kindness to the poor, hungry, naked and sick (Matthew 25).

The favor of God that Jesus preached was faith based rather than performance based. John wrote, "To all who received him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

He goes on to say, “children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision... but born of God.” Those who believe in His name receive God’s favor, grace, and are born into God’s family.

The condition for grace in the kingdom of God is faith. Just faith! We make a faith commitment of our lives to him and he gives us grace. He frees us from the curse of sin, poverty, oppression and sickness. It is faith in him which releases his grace to live righteously in this world and in his kingdom.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the favor to live by faith having my trust placed in you instead of my ability. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: The condition for grace in the kingdom of God is faith. Just faith! We make a faith commitment of our lives to him and he gives us grace. He frees us from the curse of sin, poverty, oppression and sickness. It is faith in him which releases his grace to live righteously in this world and in his kingdom.

Affirmation: Christ was preached; I heard the message; I believed and my faith led me to receive the gift of Christ. Now I am living in the grace of God.

Reflection: Jesus introduced a new era. The focus of the old era was the law which continually reminded us of our shortcomings. The new era is grace, the favor of God, available to all who will believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Three

The Government Of The Prince Of Peace

To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. - Isaiah 9:6

The hope of the Jews for thousands of years is that there would arise a prince who would become king and restore the fortunes of Jerusalem and to bring peace to the world through the strength of his reign. They saw all of the prophecies concerning the one they would call Messiah to be about establishing the physical throne of David and conquering all of their enemies.

From their perspective this passage gives them inspiration for that hope. A child would be born who would carry the government of peace upon his shoulders. They believed that, but they didn't understand it. The only way they could see peace coming to the world was to have one king who would keep the peace with a rod of iron.

The religious people of Jesus day looked for a prince who would become king and who would bring peace, but they didn't recognize him when he came because they could only understand the kind of peace that man could give - the peace of dominion and subjection. People today are not much different.

There are even Christians who think peace on earth can only come through a strong government. Jesus knew that would never work, that is why he lived and died as he did.

His government is on earth, but it is not of this world. He does not rule from a throne and a palace made with hands. His throne is the heart of those who will receive him. His peace is for those who will place him upon the throne he came to establish.

The child of whom Isaiah spoke would indeed come and establish a government. His government is called the kingdom of God. His message confused the religious leaders, but the common people understood him well. The poor were given hope; the blind could see - and the favor of the Lord had come to them.

Prayer: Lord, help me to understand that peace does not come through the devices of man but only through faith in Christ. Amen.

Message: His government is on earth, but it is not of this world. He does not rule from a throne and a palace made with hands. His throne is the heart of those who will receive him. His peace is for those who will place him upon the throne he came to establish.

Affirmation: The Prince of Peace has come and he offers peace to all who will receive him regardless of race, creed, sex or any other tag of identification.

Reflection: The world thinks of peace in terms of societal and governmental authority. Was that the kind of peace being prophesied by Isaiah? Can there be true peace at the hands of a government or an un-regenerated society?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Four

Prince of Peace - King of Hearts

To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. - Isaiah 9:6

Isaiah saw a child who would be born to be king. He saw a child upon whose shoulders the government would rest. This child would not be ordinary, but rather would be so extraordinary that people would remark concerning his wisdom and call him Wonderful Counselor.

Some would declare him to be God himself who has become man and has dwelt among us. He would also be called Prince of Peace.

Could it be that there would be one, born of a woman, who had the ability to bring peace to the earth? Would there ever be one who would be the answer to the longing of man to be at peace with God and his fellow man?

It was the hope of the Jews that there would be born among them such a child. They saw that this child prince would mature to be the King of Israel: A son of David to once again sit in judgment of the enemies of the Jews. They saw him as a conqueror, one who would bring peace by subduing all who opposed him.

This child was born, and he was born a prince who would bring peace to the world. However, he wasn't born in a palace, but in a manger. Kings and priests did not herald his birth, rather shepherds gathered to give him homage.

Those who should have recognized him as their king instead rejected him as a blasphemer. He came to bring peace in the only way that lasting peace could be

established; by changing the heart of those who would call him Lord.

This prince of peace today rules in the world of those who will recognize him as their Lord and their God. His peace is everlasting and does not depend upon what others do; His peace rests upon those who will trust him as Lord.

Prayer: Lord, I want to be a vessel of honor to you and peace to men. Grant me the grace of presenting the hope of Christ to others. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.

Message: Those who should have recognized him as their king instead rejected him as a blasphemer. He came to bring peace in the only way that lasting peace could be established; by changing the heart of those who would call him Lord.

Affirmation: The Prince of Peace has become King of my heart as I have placed my faith, hope and trust in Him.

Reflection: The world is looking in all the wrong places for peace and it tries all the wrong things to bring peace. Has there ever been a lasting peace established by force? Has any government survived without being able to enforce the law to keep the peace? How does the peace of Christ compare to the peace of the world?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Five

Prince Of Peace Is Born In A Stable

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirenius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register.

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and

praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. - Luke 2:1-20

I agree with Isaiah who wrote, "To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Celebrate Him with great joy in this season.

Prayer: I give thanks and celebrate with the angels the Prince who was born to bring peace to the earth. I rejoice that Jesus, the Christ, has opened the door for all who believe to enter His kingdom. Amen.

Message: "To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Celebrate Him with great joy in this season.

Affirmation: I rejoice with the angels that Jesus, the Christ of God was born and that I have embraced him by faith.

Reflection: It is a good day to reflect on the grace of God and the love of God which brought Christ to the world.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Six

Wise Men Still Worship Him

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." - Matthew 2:1-2

It has always been a point of interest to me that the leaders of the faith of Judaism didn't see the signs of his coming, but wise men of other cultures did see them. The ones to whom he came to begin his mission of peace on earth did not recognize him but strangers did.

People are no different today. Those who study such things tell us that about two billion people in the world call themselves Christian, but the peace that Christ came to give is not realized in much of the world. Why is that? Could it be that those who call themselves by his name have not recognized his purpose in coming to earth?

It was Christians who led the crusades. Hitler called himself Christian and very few Christians of his day stood against him until public opinion demanded a response. Have those who are called Christian missed the purpose of the Prince of Peace?

Christ did not come to establish an empire by force as others have done. He came to establish peace through changing the hearts of men. There is no way that conquering the world with the sword will bring lasting peace. Indeed, Jesus told Peter when he cut off the ear of the soldier, "Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword."

Why is it that so many of those who are called Christian miss this point, but many of other cultures have died rather than pick up the sword? Do we have the right to raise a weapon against another human when Christ went willingly to the cross? Peace on earth can

only be achieved as each person accepts the Prince of Peace into their hearts.

Remember, it was the “Prince of Peace” who used a rope to drive the money changers from the temple. And, if you remember the reason he gave for doing that was, “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. But you have made it a den of thieves” (Mark 11:17).

We are not to fight for the kingdoms of this world, but we are to take a stand for the kingdom of God.

Prayer: Lord, help me to sheath my anger along with my sword and to realize that lasting peace can only come through Christ. Amen.

Message: Do we have the right to raise a weapon against another human when Christ went willingly to the cross? Peace on earth can only be achieved as each person accepts the Prince of Peace into their hearts. We are not to fight for the kingdoms of this world, but we are to take a stand for the kingdom of God.

Affirmation: I have joined the fight to build the kingdom of God by winning one heart at a time.

Reflection: One cannot truly worship the king born in a manger and pursue peace the way the world does. Our hope cannot be in the sword, but rather it must be firmly placed in the cross. Every believer must decide which kingdom he is willing to die for.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Seven

The First Message Of The Christ

After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions... His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this?... "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" - Matthew 2:41-51

Even as a child Jesus knew he was the Christ. He knew his mission and he was committed to it. At 12 years of age he began his ministry by addressing the leaders of the temple. He asked questions of them and displayed a wisdom that amazed them. He was indeed an anomaly, but in fact he was the Christ of God who had come to bring the opportunity of peace to mankind.

What was the message he was teaching? We have no record of what he was saying, but if the rest of his ministry is any indication it isn't hard to figure it out. He was teaching them that the kingdom they were expecting was present and would soon be manifest.

However, even though they were expecting a king to come and a kingdom to be established, they did not realize the nature of that kingdom. Neither did they realize the manner in which the kingdom would be established.

The world had never known a king who built his kingdom upon love. Every world conqueror has built their kingdom by force, and not one of those empires has lasted. Jesus came teaching, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God," and this kingdom of the heart cannot be stopped.

This was a new message. The mindset of man was to conquer through force, but Christ taught us to humble our enemies by serving them in love. The result is that today, 2000 years after his kingdom was begun in the

hearts of his followers, there are 100's of millions of people who would gladly lay down their life for this Jesus who is called the Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to love as you loved and to serve those who would persecute you for your namesake. Amen.

Message: This was a new message. The mindset of man was to conquer through force, but Christ taught us to humble our enemies by serving them in love.

Affirmation: When the love of God is demonstrated, even to those who would be our enemies, then the grace of God is extended to all who will come.

Reflection: What was the message Jesus was teaching the educated religious leaders when he was just 12 years old? Could he have been telling them that they will never win the hearts of the people forcing them to live a law that they themselves could not keep? How did the message Christ presented differ from the message of the Pharisees and other the priests?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Eight

The Christ Anointed At Baptism

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

- Matthew 3:16-17

Even Jesus, the Christ of Redemption, had a moment in time when his anointing became manifest. For him it was at his baptism. The anointing was not the baptism itself but it was the approval that heaven gave him. The Spirit of God, which is the anointing, came upon him like a dove and set upon him.

It is true that Jesus was born as God-man. He was fully man and fully God. Yet, there was a point where the anointing to accomplish his purpose was made manifest. His baptism and anointing is the point at which his public ministry began.

I am mentioning this because there is a time when we are to make our faith public and there is a distinct point in time when we are anointed to fulfill our role in the kingdom of God. Of his own baptism Jesus said to John when he was arguing with him about being baptized, "It is proper for me to do this to fulfill all righteousness."

Baptism is not only a good thing to do; it is a very important thing to do. When we perform the righteous act of baptism we are declaring to the world that we are now a new creation and citizens of the kingdom of God. We are now ready to be anointed for service.

Just as Jesus was anointed for his work in the kingdom, so we will have a moment in time where God manifests his Spirit in us with a call to service. That event will probably not involve a dove setting on our

shoulder, or any other physical manifestation, but there will be something happen inside of us, in the place where the Spirit of God dwells, that gives us the assurance that this is the call of God.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to submit to the work of the Holy Spirit and to allow the Holy Spirit to use me in service. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: Just as Jesus was anointed for his work in the kingdom, so we will have a moment in time where God manifests his Spirit in us with a call to service.

Affirmation: I am ready to be used of God because I have been confirmed in the faith and he has called me to serve.

Reflection: There are many points of consecration in our faith walk and each one of them brings with it a new commitment to the kingdom of God. What has God put in your heart to do in service to his kingdom? Not all are called to public ministry but all are called to serve.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Nine

Kingdom Of God For Common Man

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people... Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him. - Matthew 4:23-25

Jesus did not come to comfort the religious, but to bring hope to those who realized their need. While religious leaders followed him hoping to catch him in some error the common people followed him hoping to be touched by his anointing.

It is interesting that his first persecution was in Nazareth. Luke records Jesus sitting in the synagogue and reading to the leaders from Isaiah about the ministry he had been anointed to fulfill.

When he explained that he already knew he would not be accepted in Nazareth because “no prophet is accepted in his hometown” (Luke 4:24), these fine religious folks became angry and tried to throw him from a cliff, but he escaped them.

Religious people rejected him because he did not fit the picture they had developed of the Messiah. The common people, however, saw his works and made their decision based upon what they saw him do. It was kingdom anointing that attracted people to him.

The primary purpose of the kingdom is not to fulfill religious expectations but to answer the needs of the people. Religious leaders are not much different today. If the work of the Holy Spirit does not fit their preconceived ideas, then they reject it. And because they are more committed to their tradition than to the move of God they miss what God is doing in the now.

God is looking for people who will hear his call and be willing to go beyond the walls of religious expectation to affect this generation with kingdom anointing. He is looking for people who are willing to risk rejection by religious folks in order to accomplish his will. Are you one of those people?

Prayer: Lord, help me to not let my religious tradition keep me from kingdom anointing for this generation. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: The primary purpose of the kingdom is not to fulfill religious expectations but to answer the needs of the people. God is looking for people who will hear his call and be willing to go beyond the walls of religious expectation to affect this generation with kingdom anointing.

Affirmation: I am committed to sharing kingdom hope with others who are in need of hope.

Reflection: Why do you think the religious people of Nazareth wanted to kill Jesus when he told them, "No prophet is accepted in his hometown?" This devotion calls people to be willing to "go beyond the walls of religious expectation." What do you think that means?

My Thoughts:

Day Thirty

The Returning King

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. - John 14:1-3

The hope of believers since the beginning of the faith has been the eternal home which awaits the faithful. However, the disciples did not understand that when Jesus spoke the words John records in our verse today.

Even at this time, shortly before his crucifixion, the disciples were looking for a literal earthly kingdom to be established with them as the 12 leaders, just as there were 12 tribes of Israel.

After seeing the miracles, and hearing the teachings of Jesus, the disciples still didn't get it. In fact, when Jesus was taken to be judged they ran and hid. Peter denied him then disappeared. They gathered in a room questioning what they would do now that their venture was over.

Finally, after the resurrection, Jesus revealed himself to them. Their faith began to grow, and then he was being taken from them again. They watched as he ascended to heaven and an angel appeared to them and told them, "This same Jesus, who was taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

They realized what Jesus meant when he said, "I go to prepare a place for you." They knew then that there would be a time that the king would return. Now they must go to Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father.

When the Holy Spirit came upon them, bringing with him the kingdom anointing, the disciples realized that now the kingdom was theirs to build until he returns. Our hope is in his return, his hope is in our faithfulness to kingdom anointing and purpose.

God, through our faith in Christ, has given us a hope and we have this hope as an anchor for our souls - Hebrews 6:19

Prayer: Lord, grant me faith to continue serving you in the hope of that eternal home. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: When the Holy Spirit came upon them, bringing with him the kingdom anointing, the disciples realized that now the kingdom was theirs to build until he returns. Our hope is in his return, his hope is in our faithfulness to kingdom anointing and purpose.

Affirmation: Jesus is returning and I am patiently awaiting his arrival. I am committed to working until he comes.

Reflection: Is it possible that the return of Christ is in two stages? First, he returns as Holy Spirit to indwell believers and second he returns to bring his followers into the eternal kingdom.

My Thoughts:

Day Thirty One

The Kingdom Of Eternal Peace

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life... He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. - Revelation 22:17-21

There was a relationship that man had with God in the garden that man has been driven to duplicate ever since the fall and he has had very little success. The best man has been able to do is produce a cheap imitation.

All of the religions of the world, including self-realization movements, have had the objective of restoring the inner peace we all desire and to be reconciled with God. But both religion and self-realization have failed to accomplish lasting peace.

I once stood on the door-step of a young lady who had just told me that, "My life is just fine, thank you very much." This young lady had it all together. She had a good job, a nice house, good clothes, and probably a lot of friends. What more could she want?

I looked her in the eye and said, "I have talked to hundreds of people and I have yet to find one who doesn't know Jesus Christ and who has perfect peace in the depths of their heart." With that she invited me in to tell her more about Jesus.

There is a special place inside all of us that is put there by God. That special place can only be filled by God himself. Without him that place is empty and we feel empty. We will try just about anything to fill that place and gain perfect peace, but it can't be done without knowing Jesus Christ.

All the religions of the world cannot give one in a lifetime what knowing Jesus can give in a moment. He

not only gives us perfect peace in this life, but he has prepared a place for us that will give us perfect peace with him forever. Jesus is coming soon.

Prayer: I thank you Jesus for giving me the peace I could not find on my own. Grant me the grace to continue in your peace as I walk this journey of faith. It is in your name, Jesus, that I ask. Amen.

Message: All the religions of the world cannot give one in a lifetime what knowing Jesus can give in a moment. He not only gives us perfect peace in this life, but he has prepared a place for us that will give us perfect peace with him forever. Jesus is coming soon.

Affirmation: Jesus is coming soon. My trust is placed in that hope. My assurance of that hope being true is the peace he gives me. A peace greater than the circumstances of life.

Reflection: Jesus is the final link in the chain of restoration God has been constructing since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. It is through faith in him that we are given the hope of eternal peace. What has been the objective of all the religions of the world? Why haven't they been successful reaching their objective? How is Christ the answer?

My Thoughts:
