

The Way of Jesus

Week 10 - The Gospel Jesus Announced, Part II

Key Verse:

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:13-14 (NIV)

Key Terms: (SG, p.19)

Last Week

- **Our Kingdom** is "the range of our effective will... where our choice determines what happens." (DC, p.21)
- **God's Kingdom** is the range of his effective will, which extends throughout creation (except for the Satanic realm for a while (DC p. 26).
- **The Gospel of his Kingdom** is the good news that his kingdom is present and available to any and all through simple trust in Jesus, bringing the remarkable resources of his kingdom for life and living.

This Week

- **Within the Kingdom:** everything and everyone that obeys God and the actions of his will, whether by nature or by choice, is within the Kingdom (cf p. 25)
- **Other Kingdoms:** These Kingdoms are present on earth along with the Kingdom of God. For example, the kingdom of darkness and the kingdoms (or rules) of individuals who are "trying to run their own show"

Digging into Chapter Two

1. What does Dallas say about the "Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven" slogan (pp. 35-37)?

2. What does Dallas mean by “the Gospels of Sin Management”? (p.41; cf SG pp 27-28)

3. He enumerates two of these Gospels (of the right and of the left – p.41) Describe them.

Reflections on the Gospel

For years I have been taught that the Gospel brings forgiveness for my past and hope for my future through the death and resurrection of Jesus. But I haven't been so clear about what it means for today. Discipleship and the Lordship of Jesus have always been central, but to many Christians they are “optional add-ons” for people who are extra spiritual.

If you listen to the pollsters, there is good evidence that many American Christians seem to agree with this. The moral quality of our lives is surprisingly similar to the lives of those who do not share our faith. Those who profess saving faith in Jesus are statistically similar in behavior to our unbelieving neighbors in issues like honesty, integrity, sexual purity, and permanence of marriage (DC, p.38). Why could this be so?

If your understanding of the Gospel is similar to the one I expressed above, then you will see that it sets the stage for human passivity, which Dallas Willard thinks is the besetting sin of modern Christians. I become passive because my todays do not have a central purpose in this truncated gospel. I have been given permission to become passive by a distorted view of grace that teaches (rightly) that salvation is of the Lord and says (rightly) that there is nothing I can do to earn this salvation, and goes on to imply (wrongly) that human effort is not needed as an important part of this salvation. No honest reading of the NT

would come to this conclusion – but here we are, with churches full of passive Christians.

So, many of us look back with thankfulness. We look forward with hope. And we seek to draw others into this forgiveness and hope. But other than this, we passively await real life – which is yet to come after this life is over.

The Gospel of the Kingdom, on the other hand, sees that I am created to rule under and with God, and that my life, here and now, was originally intended to be caught up in that rule, that Kingdom. The announcement of the Kingdom of Jesus and his open invitation is to bring my own little kingdom (rule) into his great and eternal Kingdom, here and now. To yield all I am and all I have 'say over' to Him, by whose redeeming power I am cleansed, and healed, and transformed, and equipped and trained for Kingdom rule ('servant rule') under and alongside him. All of my life is now caught up in this transformation into Christlikeness. All my life is caught up in 'training for reigning'. Nothing is wasted. Nothing is left out. Nothing shall be lost. Eternal life has already started.

Reflection Question: Summarize the key ideas in the Reflection in your own words.

Bible Study: Paul Describes the Kingdom

Look at Colossians 1:10-14

How does Paul describe the 'life worthy of the Lord'?

How does he say we enter this life? What is God's part? Our part?

Paul mentions two Kingdoms. Describe them.

Spiritual Tool for the Week

Start to Memorize Psalm 16.

Reflections on your experience

Readings for Next Week:

Skim The Divine Conspiracy, Chapter Three, picking out main themes

Read Study Guide pp 29-39