

“Receiving Clarity on the Kingdom” Multiple passages Sunday AM 10/28/18

I. Nicodemus didn’t get it (John 3:1-11)

“Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?”

II. Jesus’ disciples didn’t get it (Luke 22:24-30)

“A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves. “You are those who have stayed with Me in my trials, and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to Me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

III. Pilate didn’t get it (John 18:33-38)

“So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to Him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about Me?” Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You

over to me. What have You done?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But My kingdom is not from the world.” Then Pilate said to him, “So You are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world - to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice.” Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”

III. Religion doesn't get it (John 19:14-22)

Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. Pilate said to the Jews, “Behold your King!” They cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but rather, ‘This man said, I am King of the Jews.’” Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.” **He came to His own but they received Him not. -John 1:11**

IV. The condemned thief got it (Luke 23:36-43) - nothing to lose

“The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up and offering Him sour wine and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” There was also an inscription over Him, “This is the King of the Jews.” One of the criminals who were hanged railed at Him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” And he said, “Jesus, remember me when You come into your Kingdom.” And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”

V. The trusting children got it (Matthew 21:14-16) - nothing to prove

“And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant, and they said to Him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise’?””

When we receive the Kingdom of God as our fullest context for existing:

(1) Our allegiance will change. If Christ is the King, He deserves our honor, loyalty, and obedience. We put ourselves under His authority and power. Whatever He says, we determine to do. That’s the point of the oft-repeated lines in the Lord’s Prayer, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). Kingdom people submit their own will to the will of the King.

(2) Our faith will deepen. One of the difficulties people have with the idea of a kingdom is that it doesn’t appear to be in place yet. The world seems to grow farther away from God by the day. As a result, it’s easy to live for the here and now, as if this present life is all that matters. But the hope of the kingdom is that there is far more to life than what we see right now. Jesus made extraordinary promises in regard to a future kingdom, not only for Israel, but for all who follow Him as King. The kingdom may not yet be fulfilled completely, but it has been established and will last forever (6:13).

(3) Our core values will enter a transformation. Our culture values achievement, success, independence, and image. Other cultures value other qualities. But the values of the kingdom reflect what matters to the King. Jesus described a number of His values in Matthew 5:3-10, a section of the Sermon on the Mount known as the Beatitudes (or, as some call them, the “beautiful attitudes”). Kingdom people adopt the King’s values and make choices that reflect those values—in their jobs, families, and communities.

(4) Our priorities will shift. The real test of people’s values is how they spend their time and money. Jesus spoke directly to that issue in terms of the kingdom (6:24-34). He did not demean the value of work or diminish the need for material goods. But He challenged His followers to bring kingdom values into their day-to-day lives. “Seeking first the kingdom” (6:33) puts a Christlike perspective on one’s work and its outcomes.

(5) Our mission will be clarified. Some people are driven to accomplish great tasks with their lives. Others live aimlessly from day to day, lacking purpose or direction. Either way, Jesus affects the outlook of a person's life. He gives His followers purpose and a mission—to live as subjects of the kingdom and promote kingdom values in everyday life and work. Ultimately, He wants His followers to extend His message to the ends of the earth, so that all people have the opportunity to give their allegiance to Him as their Savior and King (28:18-20).

5:00PM Notes Below

“Kingdom Diversions” Matthew 3:16-4:17 Sunday PM 10/28/18

From the life of Jesus, we are able to learn how Satan seeks to divert all of us from our God-spoken identities and assignments in the kingdom. In subtlety, the enemy is constantly seeking to redirect our minds and wills towards lesser investments of who we are in the Kingdom. Harnessing the world system and the different streams of influence from our culture, Satan and his demons are committed to the art of diversion. If they can succeed in disconnecting and diverting us from our true identities as sons and daughters, then they are able to redirect our eternal focus unto a temporary focus. When they are successful at these diversions, Christians no longer live FOR the Kingdom of God even though they are living IN the Kingdom of God. The raw truth is that the enemy succeeds in this tactic of diversion in the lives of innumerable believers. We are able to learn how to consistently overcome Satan’s strategies by learning from Jesus himself as Satan sought to divert Jesus from the assignment He received from the Father.

I. Kingdom identity is assigned (3:16 -17)

16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately He went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him; 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

After Jesus is given a verbal affirmation from the Father about His identity as the Son of God, His earthly ministry begins. It is noteworthy that, before he launched out into Kingdom activity, Jesus receives a strong word about His Kingdom identity. This is the healthiest pattern for all of us in the Kingdom. Before we begin doing things FOR the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, we need to gain assurance about who we are IN the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Having received affirmation of His identity as the Son of God, Jesus begins to move forward into the ministry assigned to Him from the Father. Satan immediately seeks to interrupt this process before it can get started. What does the enemy do since He cannot steal Jesus’ identity from the Father? He offers Jesus **three diversions** away from the Father’s assignment.

II. The diversion of self-preservation (4:1-4)

SELF-PRESERVATION RUNS COUNTER TO THE KINGDOM VALUE OF ETERNAL PRIORITIES

A. Jesus Kingdom commitments required spiritual sacrifices (1-2) - “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry.”

As the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness, Jesus enters a 40-day fast. These details highlight that there was nothing from the flesh for Jesus to lean upon. He had no shelter over His head. He had no place of comfort to lay His head for sleep. Jesus was also utterly alone without human companionship. To top it all off, His body would have been completely weakened due to the prolonged fast. During these forty days, Satan attacked Jesus in order to keep Him from fulfilling the assignment from the Father. We are not given a record of all the temptations which Satan hurled at Jesus. Only three are mentioned here. All of them fall into the category of Jesus being tempted by Satan to step out of the Father’s plan. This was a battle of spiritual evil against spiritual good.

B. Satan exploited Jesus’ physical weakness and attacked His identity (3) - “And the tempter came and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

Notice that Satan’s first statement contains a hint of accusation about the identity Jesus had previously received from the Father - IF you are God’s Son. Jesus is being asked to defend His identity to the accuser. How would that defense be given? Satan tells Jesus to use His divine powers in order to meet His own physical needs. Luke has already told us that Jesus was very hungry at the end of His fast. The temptation to feed Himself via a miraculous provision of bread would have been very intense. Satan calls Jesus to act in a way to preserve Himself and provide Himself the comfort of food.

C. Jesus strongly resisted Satan by declaring His dependence upon the Father (4) - “But He answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Jesus refuses the first diversion tactic by declaring to Satan that the physical food was not as important to Him as His need to remain fully dependent upon the Father. The “word that comes from the mouth of God” is a reference to the Father having earlier spoken Jesus’

identity to Him. That was the thing which sustained Jesus in His weakness. Jesus refused to meet His own needs. He committed to continue to rely upon His Father's strengthening word rather than giving in to the temptation of self-preservation. This is a test for all of us in our assignments from the Father. Will we endure our testing? Will we trust God for all natural and supernatural resources? Will spiritual strength be enough to sustain us in our physical weaknesses? Will we depart from waiting on the Father and, instead, give in to our own ability to preserve ourselves? Jesus was tempted in this way, and He rested in knowing who He was to the Father. He chose to continue in dependence upon God instead of meeting His own needs by His own power.

III. The diversion of self-assertion (4:5-7)

SELF-ASSERTION RUNS COUNTER TO THE KINGDOM VALUE OF SUBMISSION

A. The setting for this diversion (5) - "Then the devil took Him to the holy city and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple..."

Satan then takes Jesus to the pinnacle of the Jewish Temple. This was no vision. This was a physical relocation wherein Jesus and Satan stood together at an architectural high-point of the building. An elevated view, an exalted position, and an isolating height away from people became the setting for this next diversion tactic.

B. An attack on identity with a temptation of presumption (6) - "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "He will command His angels concerning you," and "On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone."

Again, Satan tempts Jesus to act in independence from the Father. The first diversion contained a call for Jesus to provide for Himself in difficult extremes. This second diversion tempts Jesus to create extremes that would presumably force the Father to come to Jesus' rescue. We also see a repeated subtle accusation about Jesus' identity as God's Son. Notice that the attack on His identity was coupled this time with a twisting of Scripture to promote self-assertion outside of God's will. In essence, Satan is quoting Scripture to Jesus to facilitate Jesus using the Scripture for selfish purposes. The first diversion called on Jesus to prove who He was as God's Son. This

diversion calls on Jesus to force the Father to prove who Jesus is by rescuing Him from physical death.

C. Jesus overcomes by refusing to force the hand of the Father (7) - "Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

To this second diversion, Jesus simply replies by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16. Satan is the wicked father of all those who twist Scripture to achieve selfish purposes. Jesus reveals in His response that the best way to answer those who twist Scripture is to use *untwisted* Scripture. Later in His ministry, Jesus reveals to us that He lived out a constant pattern of only doing what He saw the Father was doing and only speaking what He heard the Father saying. Following the pattern of Jesus, all believers must exercise patience in their God-given assignments, refusing to create situations that force the Father to bail them out. Recklessness is not a fruit of the Spirit. We must develop discernment in order to understand what God is doing so that we may enter into that work with Him. The diversion of self-assertion stands in opposition to the Kingdom value of submission to God.

John 5:19 - "So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise."

IV. The diversion of self-exaltation (8-10)

SELF-EXALTATION RUNS COUNTER TO THE KINGDOM VALUE OF PATIENT HUMILITY

A. A consistent tactic is repeated & elevated (8) - "Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory."

Notice the strategy of Satan which he employs in this third diversion to redirect Jesus away from the Father's assignment: from the stones of the ground (vs. 3) to the top of the Temple (vs. 5), now to the heights of a mountain. Satan will sometimes elevate you for his own purposes. Satan opens up a supernatural window through which Jesus is shown the impressive glory of temporary human kingdoms. It is significant that Satan's diversionary tactics included taking Jesus higher and higher with each step. Some people cannot handle

elevation without losing their identity and being diverted from their God-ordained Kingdom assignments. Jesus would not fall to these strategies.

B. Satan's core-value is exposed (9) - "And he said to Him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."

Interestingly, as he is currently the prince of this world (John 14:30) these human kingdoms with all their glories were Satan's to give to Jesus. Jesus was promised by the Father as the Messiah to eternally rule over all the kingdoms of humankind. Satan seeks to divert Jesus from the Father's plan which included a deadly cross. Satan wanted Jesus to exchange His own eternal Kingdom for the temporary kingdoms of this world. He wants every Christian to do the same. Everything in our culture pleads with us to exalt ourselves. We are trained to serve ourselves, advertise ourselves, position ourselves and exert ourselves in order to gain what we want. Jesus was being asked to take a shortcut in the Father's plan. Yet, the price which Satan required contained a demand for Jesus to deny the Father and bow to Satan. Satan has always wanted to be worshiped as God is worshiped. He hates it when any of us deny ourselves, trust the Lord and choose humility. He knows how these things bring the Father pleasure and result in Him being glorified. Shortcuts in the Kingdom do not accomplish God's purposes. Shortcuts are always aimed to exalt ourselves hastily and deny the Father's plans and timing. Self-exaltation runs in opposition to the Kingdom value of humility.

C. Jesus refuses to be diverted (10) - "Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve."

When this third diversion tactic of Satan is fully manifest, Jesus issues an authoritative dismissal of him. When we sense the solicitation from Satan to divert us from our identity and assignment, we need to take authority and act decisively. We cannot flirt with his attempts to redirect us from our Kingdom paths and onto the tantalizing pathways of this world system. Jesus has had enough of Satan and, having defeated him each time, He dismisses Satan and exercises complete authority over him. May each Christian understand that we also have authority over Satan to the degree that we are dependent upon and obedient to the Father. We gain such Kingdom power when we intentionally live in humility, refusing to assert ourselves in ways that cause us to act independently of God.

James 4:7 - "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

IV. The diversion fails and clarity is gained (11,17)

A. We see a strengthened Son (11) - "Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to Him."

What a wealth of mystery there is in this verse! Jesus is in utter human weariness. He has fasted for forty days. He has endured massive temptations. He has gone toe-to-toe with Satan in complete dependence upon the Father. Now, heavenly angels are sent to come alongside of Jesus to minister to Him. We are not told what they did nor how they strengthened their King. We recognize here that God has incredible, supernatural resources available to all who will depend on Him for their strength. When you run out of your own resources, God never runs out of His. When we cannot see any natural means by which God will rescue or sustain us, remember that He is not limited to the natural. There is another realm into which we are invited when we remain confident in our identity and committed to our assignments.

B. We see a strengthened certainty (17) - "From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Having been offered all of the kingdoms of the world, and having resisted the diversion tactic from Satan, Jesus immediately began His public ministry by calling all people to change their own thinking about the kingdoms of this world and to embrace the everlasting Kingdom of God as the context for their lives. He had been shown all that Satan had to offer. He had beheld the greatest heights, pleasures and powers that the kingdoms of earth can provide. He had refused all of that and chosen to depend on the Father and to complete the assignment given to Him. If we will follow this pattern from Jesus, we will also be able to declare with confidence that the Kingdom of God is our message. We will call men and women to repent of their foolish pursuit for lesser kingdoms and to devote themselves with all that they are to the eternal Kingdom of God.