

## I. Finalizing our Series

- A. Over the past couple months, we have walked through the dramatic progression in which the Lord is restoring humanity and the earth. In our last two teachings, we will examine both: how we are to view our lives in this age, and how Scripture invites us to focus our vision upon the next.
- B. As we study this progression and the ultimate goal of God we must understand that the death and resurrection of Jesus is not the grand climax of the story, but rather a glorious necessity in God's plan of total and unbreakable restoration.
  - 1. All of us at times can feel like we are pointlessly passing through the days and months without any clear direction. As normal as this is, we must see that the scriptures invite us to have our minds renewed as to who we are. To find ourselves and His plan for us in this drama, what our purpose is now, and the hope of our final destiny in Christ. (Eph. 5:15-17, Phil. 3:12-14)

## II. Present Age Identity

- A. Present Age - The Bible declares this present age evil and corrupt, and thus friendship with the world is direct opposition to the Lord. The Biblical believer's healthy relationship to 'the world' is to position yourself as radical witness of love unto salvation to make a clear disassociation from its ways, values, and systems in your heart and lifestyle. (Rom. 12:2, Eph. 5:15-16, Gal. 1:3-4, Jam. 4:4-5, 1 Jhn. 2:15-17)
  - 1. In Christ – Our citizenship or position is we are no longer alienated and separated from God. Instead, through Christ we have been brought near and actually seated with Him in the heavenly places. The reality of our life, identity, and authority is now with Him where He is. This corresponds to the truth that we are in Christ. (Eph. 2:4-6, Col. 3:3-4, Phil. 3:20-21, 1 Pet. 2:11)
  - 2. Present Pilgrimage - We are strangers and pilgrims here because we are citizens of another age. The government to which we owe allegiance, and in which we find our identity, is the coming kingdom of the man Christ Jesus. We must increasingly define ourselves by this reality and have our hope, longing, and reward set upon our eternal destiny. (1 Cor. 15:19, Heb. 6:17-20, 1 Pet. 1:13-14)

### III. Primary Will of God

- A. Establishing the First Order Calling (5/7/17 Abiding in Love) – Currently, aspirations of popularity, influence, signs and wonders, power, and honor often define successful Christianity. This is mostly contrary to the exhortation in scripture from Jesus and His Apostles. They overwhelmingly point to the reality of growing in your love for Jesus as the primary assignment of the believer. Responding to this reality produces greatness in the kingdom of God.
- B. I must clarify before going into this that we are not talking about some kind of gain in our legal position (righteousness through faith). What we are setting our hearts to gain is a greater living condition (fullness of love for Jesus).
1. Perfecting us in our love for Him - Scripture refers to the ultimate outworking of the life of the Spirit within us as maturity, or bearing fruit unto perfection, of the love of God formed in us. We must conceive of this relationally, this process of growth will only happen through intimate communion with Him. (Lk. 6:48, 2 Cor. 7:1, Gal. 3:3, Col. 1:28, Heb. 6:1)
  2. Becoming Blameless – **To be blameless does not mean free from weakness or completely liberated from temptation or struggle. Blamelessness is to cooperate fully with the grace of God in each progressive season of our life.** In other words, there are no areas of active resistance to what the Lord is asking of us primarily through the word but also through the leading of the Spirit. (1 Cor. 1:7-9, Phil 2:14-15, Col 1:21-22, 1 Thes. 3:11-12, 1 Tim. 6:13-15, 2 Pet. 3:13-15)
  3. Conforming us to His Image – It is very important to understand that this conformity does not come about through external replication of behavior. We are conformed to His image by a true interior change that manifests in the external. (Gal. 2:19-20, 4:19, 5:16-25, 2 Cor. 4:10-11, Col. 3:5-10)
- C. Looking at the Parable of the Sower - Positioning our Hearts (Mat. 13:1-23)
1. In what is known as the parable of the sower, Jesus identifies two general challenges to the word (seed), that has been deposited in our hearts resulting in a fruitful life of maturity of love, and participation in expanding His kingdom.
    - a. Persecution - External challenge of persecution and suffering which arises through the testimony and witness of Jesus. Largely the church in the west has not proven herself in this context, however, this is very common in most parts of the world.

- b. Worldly Cares – Internal challenge to resist the world in the mist of external ease. In the west the cares of this world are so pervasive we have grown dull to its toxin. Sadly many believers remain stunted in the garden of their heart. It's easy to become lax in the command to actively and intentionally resist that which chokes the growth of the love of God in us.
- Cares of this World - Jesus is not referring here to legitimate trouble we encounter in this age but the heart that is weighed down through preoccupation with eating, drinking, and clothing. (Mat. 6:25-33)
- Deceitfulness of Riches - The lie of financial resource, is that life consists in the abundance of possessions and that monetary abundance will provide the joy and security our hearts crave. (Lk. 12:13-21)
- Desires for the Pleasures of Life - The desire to experience pleasure and gratification through the experiences of this life, both sinful and innocent, chokes the love of Jesus within our soul. (Is. 47:8)

*Living things grow in visible creation. Acorns develop into oak trees, tadpoles into frogs, babies into adult men and women. We are so convinced that things slowly mature to a fullness of life that if we were to notice that a three-foot sapling suddenly stopped growing, we would immediately and without any need for reasoning about it conclude that something had gone wrong...Many of us do not understand to be applicable on the supernatural level what we fully grasp on the natural level. We are not alarmed about truncated spiritual development. Yet Jesus said that He came not only that we might have life but also that we might have it abundantly, and St. Paul insisted that we are to live so intensely that we are to be filled with the utter fullness of God and nothing less. (Tomas Dubay)*

#### **IV. Secondary Will of God**

- A. Growing in love for Jesus will automatically result in growing in love for your neighbor. This will manifest itself in true acts of Justice displaying the glory and truth of God to the world. It is His desire that all church ministry should be flowing from and in this reality.
  - 1. The command to make disciples (outward ministry) is overwhelmingly engulfed in and tied to the command to grow in your love relationship with God.

- B. There is a biblical sense in which participation in the Kingdom is present in the midst of God's people on the earth as they honor Christ and pursue righteousness. Throughout redemptive history God's strategy for bringing widespread kingdom understanding was to anoint individuals as agents of His ways and redemptive purposes.
1. Authority as Intercessors with Jesus – We are to take up the mantle of standing in the gap for this lost world through intercession. Jesus gave us the great privilege and command to partner with His intercession to see His Kingdom manifest on the earth. (Jer. 62:6-7, Ps. 72:19, Mat. 6:10, Lk 18:1-8, Thes. 1:11-12, 1 Tim. 2:1-4)
  2. Displaying the values and authenticity as witnesses of the Kingdom – The church is to operate in the heart values of the Kingdom, coinciding with authentic power by the Holy Spirit. His power is given to demonstrate and bring glory to the person of Jesus. The plan of God in this calling is that it will result in salvation coming to a lost and broken world. (Is. 49:6, Mat. 28:19, Mark 16:15, Jhn 13:34-35, Acts 1:8, Rom. 10:18, 15:19, 1 Rev. 11:3)
  3. Instituting Kingdom realities – Establishing the realities of the coming reign of Jesus through righteousness and justice. This is manifested in true Godly influence and transformation in culture, society and government before the return of the King. (Is. 1:16-17, 58:2-7, Zep. 2:3, Mat. 25:34-46, Jas 1:27)