

“The Kingdom of Heaven”  
(Daniel 2:44)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Last week, we finished our overview of what Jesus Christ did within the roughly 34 years of His life to save us.
  - a. He willingly became one with us so that He could offer to God a perfect obedience in our place – in His childhood, in His youth, in His ministry and death, perfectly according to the Law, both in His actions and in His heart.
  - b. And He humbled Himself and suffered for us so that He could discharge His Father’s justice on our behalf. This is what we focused on last week:
    - (i) That Christ, the One who lived eternally in absolute perfection and blessing, was willing to humble Himself, become one with us, and suffer for us.
      - (a) That He was willing to suffer the difficulties of childhood for us.
      - (b) That He was willing to pick up a hammer and do the difficult work of a carpenter for us.
      - (c) That He was willing to suffer reproach, ridicule, hatred and persecution in His public ministry for us.
      - (d) And that He was willing to be condemned, mocked, scourged, and nailed to the cross, and there to suffer God’s full wrath that was meant for us, to set us free from that wrath.
    - (ii) Of course Jesus did this for His Father because He loved Him above all; but He also did this for us, because He loves us – those of us who have trusted in Him.
2. Before we move on, let’s spend a bit of time considering some applications that grow out of the things we’ve seen:
  - a. First, consider what this says about the Father’s love for us.
    - (i) He gave us His only begotten Son for us, the One He loved more than anything else.
    - (ii) He gave Him for us while we were still sinners – He made an infinitely precious sacrifice on our behalf.
    - (iii) And now that He has saved us through His Son and clothed us with Christ, He loves us even more.
    - (iv) What should we give Him in return for this love?
      - (a) We should love Him and give Him whatever He asks of us.
      - (b) We should be all we can be and do all we can do.
      - (c) We should strive to be more like His Son.
        - (1) We can come up with some pretty strange ideas of what it means to be a Christian, or what we should do to honor God.
        - (2) But if it isn’t something Jesus Christ would do, we’re wrong.
  - b. This brings us to a second point: Consider how great the Son’s love is for us.

- (i) He went through all these things while we were still His enemies, while we still hated Him.
    - (a) We never would have been saved apart from Christ's work.
    - (b) Our hearts would have remained cold and unmoved apart from His grace; we would never had trusted in Him.
    - (c) How much should we love Him for loving us first and giving Himself for us so that our stony hearts would be broken and that we would be given a heart of flesh (Ez. 11:19)?
  
  - (ii) What should we give Christ in return?
    - (a) We should love Him and do whatever He calls us to do.
    - (b) We should especially be willing to follow His example in loving His Father and others, since it's His example He wants us to follow.
      - (1) We should love those who are the Lord's – even as He loved them and laid down His life for them, so we should be willing to lay down our lives for one another.
      - (2) And we should love those outside the church.
        - (A) We are to love not only other believers, but also our neighbor, as we love ourselves.
        - (B) We are even to love our enemies.
          - (I) Jesus tells us, "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:44-48).
          - (II) This is what the Lord was teaching us in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10).
        - (C) We are to be a means of salvation to all we come in contact with, not damnation.
        - (D) If we misrepresent the Lord to them, we are becoming the means to their damnation.
        - (E) We need to warn them, but we also need to love them.
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- c. Third, consider how willing the Lord must be to receive all who come to Him.
  - (i) He was willing to send His Son to go through all these things for sinners.
  - (ii) The Son was willing to come and endure them for sinners.
  - (iii) If someone comes to Him, will He accept him? Jesus says, "The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out" (John 6:37).
  - (iv) If you haven't come to Christ this morning, but want to now, He stands ready to receive you; you don't need to be afraid that He won't.

(v) If you have come to Christ, you don't need to be afraid that He will ever reject you: if He loved you enough to send His Son to die for you while you were His enemy, He will certainly keep you once you have been reconciled to Him, no matter how many times you fall.

d. Fourth, let's also be warned by these things.

(i) If Jesus had to do all these things to save us, how could we have ever saved ourselves?

(a) It took one who was God and man to save us: An angel couldn't do it, otherwise the Father would have sent one and spared His Son: How much lower are we than the angels?

(b) It took less for God to create the whole universe than to work out our salvation: If we can't create a universe, how can we save ourselves?

(c) Do we think that our prayers, our "good works", our personal piety, are enough to save us? If it was, why did the Father put His Son through all that humiliation and suffering (Gal. 2:21)?

(d) Whenever we even begin to think we've earned any of our own righteousness, we take honor away from God for the greatest thing He has ever done.

(e) It's no wonder He so severely condemns self-righteousness in Scripture. It's no wonder that Christ was so provoked by the Pharisees and others who trusted in their own righteousness.

(f) *Never* begin to trust in your own righteousness in any way for any part of your justification, or for anything else.

(g) *Never begin to think by your good works that you are making yourself better than others.*

(1) *All our works are filthy rags. Apart from the grace of Christ, we are absolute beggars.*

(2) *When we begin to think that we are better than others, we have fallen into a works righteousness.*

(3) *Let's learn to say with the hymn writer: Nothing in my hands I bring. Simply to Your cross I cling.*

(ii) Let's consider as well how sinful it is to reject everything the Lord did for sinners. I'm addressing those here who have heard everything that Jesus Christ has done, but haven't received Him.

(a) If you haven't come to Him, it means that what He sacrificed, and all His sufferings and death, don't mean enough to you.

(b) When you don't listen and respond to His call to believe in Him and repent, you are doing nothing different than the unbelieving Jews who rejected Him and considered His blood to be worthless (Heb. 10). You are rejecting Him.

(c) Christ's sacrifice calls you to immediate faith and repentance.

(d) If someone offers to save your life by giving up their own, it is very ungracious to ignore them. How much more when this offer comes from the only begotten Son of God?

- (e) This is why unbelief is such a serious sin: it devaluates what God has done for us through His infinitely precious Son.
- (iii) Jesus has done everything that needs to be done to save you – things you never could have done – and He offers to save you: all you need to do is receive His grace.
  - (a) The wedding feast is prepared, and now He invites you to come: He says, “I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast” (Matt. 22:4).
  - (b) Will you come to His feast?
  - (c) Every time you hear His invitation and don’t respond, you are saying “no.”
  - (d) Don’t say no to Him again. Trust and receive Him this morning.

## B. Preview.

1. In our final few moments this morning, let’s break ground on the third period of the history of redemption – the period in which the Lord is making this offer of salvation to all the nations: from the resurrection of Christ to the end of the world.
  - a. The first period had to do with preparing for Christ’s coming to purchase our redemption.
  - b. The second period had to do with His actual work of redeeming us.
  - c. The third period has to do with applying that work.
    - (i) This is where we are currently in God’s plan.
    - (ii) This is when Jesus actually begins to receive the joy that was set before Him when He endured the cross (Heb. 12:2).
    - (iii) There were two things Jesus set out to do through the time of His humiliation:
      - (a) He came to lay the foundation for the overthrow of Satan’s kingdom (John 12:31-32).
      - (b) And He came to lay the foundation for the salvation of His elect (Heb. 5:8-9).
    - (iv) Now that that is done and He has been glorified, the work of bringing in the elect and overthrowing Satan’s kingdom begins.
2. It’s during this time that Jesus will fulfill the purpose for which God created the world.
  - a. He first brings an end to the material state of the church and begins the spiritual state.
    - (i) The types and shadows of the Jewish worship make way for the establishing of the spiritual worship that will continue to all eternity, as Jesus told the woman of Samaria, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father” ( John 4:21).
    - (ii) The earthly Jerusalem makes way for the heavenly one.
  - b. Then His kingdom begins to grow until it replaces all earthly kingdoms: “Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of *all* the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom *will be* an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him” (Dan. 7:27).

- (i) God created this world to prepare a kingdom for His Son – a kingdom that would remain for all eternity: He is the heir of all things.
- (ii) This world fulfills His purpose as that kingdom advances.
- (iii) This is the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God.
  - (a) The kingdom John the Baptist preached was at hand (Matt. 3:2).
  - (b) The kingdom Jesus and His disciples announced (4:17; 10:7).
  - (c) The same kingdom represented in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream as the stone cut without hands that shatters the world empires: “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever” (Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14).
  - (d) It isn’t an earthly kingdom, but a heavenly one, as Jesus tells us in John 18:36, “Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.’”
  - (e) It began after Christ’s resurrection, at His ascension, and will continue to grow, little by little, until it finally fills the whole earth, as we are told in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream: “You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” (Dan. 2:34-35).
- c. It’s important that we understand where we are in the history of redemption so that we will have a better idea of what we’re supposed to do to promote it.
- d. This is what we’ll be looking at in the upcoming Lord’s Days. Amen.