

What is the Kingdom Like: Part 4

In studying what the Kingdom of God is like, what we have learned so far is the following:

- It will have no end, it is an eternal Kingdom.
- The citizens of the Kingdom are also eternal and will have no end.
- The Kingdom will be given to the true citizens of the Kingdom of God.
- For now it is an unseen Kingdom that lives within the souls of its citizens.
- It is not of this world.
- It cannot be shaken or moved.
- It is a Kingdom of ultimate power.
- It is a Kingdom that is marked by mercy, redemption, compassion, and forgiveness.
- This Kingdom is inside out and upside down when compared to human logic, reasoning, and wisdom.
- It is a kingdom of righteousness.

We learned in **Hebrews 1:8-9** that Jesus is the righteous scepter—the scepter which symbolizes the sovereignty and imperial authority of the Father. And unless one is willing to bow under and reach out and touch the scepter, they will not live but will die. Last week we left our study with the statement that Jesus has always loved righteousness and has always hated iniquity. And being children of the Kingdom of God, those who have bowed under and reached out and touched the

scepter of righteousness, we understand that like Jesus we are also to love righteousness and hate iniquity; after all, we are to be found in His image.

1 John 2:29

If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

Being in in the *present active participle*, everyone who now and continually practices righteousness is born of Him. And since “born” is rendered in the *perfect passive indicative*, we know that such a person has been born new by God and it is a done deal—a perfect work—and that is a statement of fact. So let’s think about this. Jesus loved righteousness—always did and always will—and in like fashion those who have truly been born of Him will literally, in the Greek, “do” righteousness and continue to do it. The implication is that if your life is not marked by righteousness then you have a serious issue with which you must contend. You have to ask yourself whether you have actually bowed yourself under, and reached out and touched, the scepter of righteousness or have just convinced yourself that you have. Since this is obviously a big issue, we are going to dive in and do some serious Bible study on this issue of righteousness. We must know what it is all about if we are ever going to love it like Jesus loves it.

The first thing we have to know is that both the Father and Jesus are righteous; and all their ways are described as being righteous or literally in the Greek equitable in nature. This indicates that they are fair, impartial, even handed, and unbiased. It

is also used to speak of what is morally right, virtuous, upright, and justifiable. The Hebrew word of righteous, attributed to God in *Psalms 7:11* and *50:6*, means He is just, lawful, and correct—He is “right.” Accordingly, in *John 17:25* Jesus calls His Dad the righteous Father. And in *1 John 2:1; Acts 3:14; 22:14* Jesus is called the Righteous One, and in *2 Timothy 4: 8* the Righteous Judge. In addition, all the works of God, including His judgments are declared to be righteous (*Revelation 15:3-4; 16:5-7*). Thus, like all of us, they do according to what they are—according to their very nature, which in their case is righteousness.

Think of this list of attributes, and put it in the context of always practicing righteousness: fair, impartial, even handed, unbiased, morally right, just, virtuous, upright, justifiable, lawful, and correct. These are all things which man is not capable of being or doing on a sustained basis; thus we have the declaration in *Luke 18:19* that only God is truly good. Man is far too corrupt and self-preserving to be, and continue to be, righteous. *Isaiah 64:6* says that even our so called “good” deeds are like filthy rags when compared to God’s righteousness; and that is because of the level of innate selfishness which we can never avoid, for it corrupts all that we do. Paul jumps on this truth and reminds us that all, both Jew and Greek (which was just a way to say “everyone”), are all under sin for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and His righteousness (*Romans 3:9, 23, 11:32; Galatians 3:22*). This is why the Spirit declares:

Romans 3:10-12

No one is righteous—not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single

one." (Quoting: **Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3**).

This is also why **Psalm 130:3** declares: "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" The implication is that no one could stand for no one is fair, impartial, even handed, unbiased, morally right, just, virtuous, upright, justifiable, lawful, and correct. But we stand before Him because He pardons all our iniquities, does not deal with us according to our sins, nor rewards us according to our iniquities. In fact, He has cast them away from us as far as the East is from the West (**Psalm 103: 3, 10, 12**). In other words, on our own we could never stand before our righteous God; nevertheless, He makes us stand. **Isaiah 64:5** says that the Lord has met with the one who rejoices in doing righteousness and remembers His ways. With the word "met" being in the Hebrew perfect, we know it is a completed act which has now become our state of being: He has met with us; that is a very cool idea. Hence, our ability to "love righteousness" comes only from Him having met us. Therefore, our righteousness is a consequence of what He does for us and has nothing to do with what we do for Him.

As such, **Romans 8:33** flat out says that God justifies or makes us right with Him. And being rendered in the *present active participle*, He makes us right now and continues to make us right before Him every moment of our now. Henceforth, from the moment we are made right with God, we are always right with God. As I said, it is our state of being—a consequence of what He has done and continues to do for us. Righteousness is a gift from God and is not something we can earn.

Romans 5:17

For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the **gift of righteousness** will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

According to the rest of the passage (***Romans 5:18-21***), when Jesus gave up His life as a perfect sacrifice, in obedience to His Father, this one act resulted in justification of life to all men (in other words, He forgave all men of their sin). But to many others—to those who would believe—it meant the impartation of righteousness. Through the obedience of the One, God makes us right before Him such that we can reign in life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And if righteousness is a gift, it is not something we deserve based on something we have done. ***Romans 3:21-28*** explains that God has shown us a way to be made right with Him without keeping the requirements of the Law: by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who they are—there is no distinction. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood, and receive His redemptive work by faith.

Romans 10:9-11

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is **by believing** in your heart that you are **made right** with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.

If we are made right by believing, there is no room for boasting or thinking that we have done something “good” enough to be accepted by God. Our right standing with God is based only on faith and not by obeying any standard of so called “goodness.” We must never forget this truth.

Furthermore, **Romans 1:17** says that we are made right with him, from start to finish, by faith: it literally says from faith to faith. This helps frame for us how we are to live. If our relationship with God started by faith, then it must continue by faith. This is one of the reasons religion tends to be so impotent; it is a systems that is designed around what we can do for God and for one another in service to God. But unless what we “do” derives from faith, from betting our lives on what God has said, including that fact that the Father appoints our work (**John 4:34, 3:27**), it is all meaningless, worthless even. Our right standing with God is not ever based on what we do or have done. It is only based on faith: actively believing the truth.

Now, even though righteousness is a gift, the Lord desires us to accept this gift and then let it invade our souls and ultimately define our lives such that we live by faith, for according to **Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11**, the “Righteous shall live by faith.” Remember, the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He (Jesus) is righteous; in contrast, the one who practices sin is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. But the Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil (**1 John 3:7-8**). In other words, Jesus came and died to free us from the power which sin exerted over our lives, thereby enabling us to live by faith. But we must receive this gift by choosing every moment of our now to present ourselves to God as those alive from the dead and the members of

our physical body as instruments of righteousness to God. This is where it all becomes very practical.

God makes us right with Him, but practically, we have to learn how to let this condition—of being right with God—pour forth into and ultimately from our lives. And as with all things in our relationship with God, there is His part and there is our part. He died for our sins, but we have to accept the gift by faith through Jesus Christ. He made us right with God, but we have to freely surrender to the King. He will live through us, but we have to open up unto His majesty. That is the difficult thing about true relationship, it is always mutual and demands a level of reciprocity. In other words, we always get a choice in the matter; God never forces us. To explore this reality, we are going to go through **Romans 6:8-23** and explore our part of embracing the righteousness we have been given.

Romans 6:8-11

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so **consider** yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

“If we have died with Christ,” is the baseline presupposition in terms of our responsibility to God. Those who have not died with Christ have no obligation or duty to God whatsoever. After all, they belong to the devil. Only those who have in

fact died with Him enter into a reciprocal relationship with Him. Not surprisingly, “consider” is in the *present middle imperative*. Thus, it is a command for you to dig down deep in your soul and choose, right now, to believe that you are now alive (and will continue to be alive) unto God in Christ Jesus; while, at the same time, you are now dead to sin (“dead” is rendered in the *present active infinitive*).

This defines our crisis of faith. Will we choose to bet our lives on this truth? Will we choose to dig down deep in our soul and overpower our emotions, our thoughts, and the lies of the enemy with this truth? Will we wield this truth like a great sword and cause the lusts within our body to be submitted to the truth versus the normal way we allow the truth to be submitted to the lusts within our body. Remember, from start to finish our relationship with God is defined by faith. Thus, if you want to experience the righteousness of God and the abundant joy of your right relationship with Him, you must, every moment of your now, choose to consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God.

Romans 6:12-14

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Here we start with two more commands: do not let sin reign in your mortal body

so that you should now obey its lusts and do not present the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness. Both “reign” and “present” are rendered in the *present active imperative*. Thus, these two “do not’s” are to govern every moment of your now and they are intended to address that part of our humanity that gives ourselves room for sin based on what we feel or think about our circumstances. Sometimes things are so rough in our lives and so confusing that we honestly believe we deserve a little sin. Isn’t that what Noah did after his time on the ark? He believed he deserved to tie a few on. Like us, he presented himself to the flesh and the flesh over took him. This entitled indulgence is what these two “do not’s” are intended to crush.

The word translated as “reign” comes from the same word that is used to describe the Kingdom of God. Thus, this instruction paints a black and white picture with no middle ground of goodness or not so badness. Either the Kingdom dominates your life or sin dominates your life. Thus, you are commanded to not let sin, the power of the kingdom of the devil, rule over your life. Man think he is so independent and the one who charts out his own destiny. But this passage confirms the power of the two kingdoms. One kingdom or the other will rule you and you will be captive. If you let sin reign, the lusts within your body will control your choices, your feelings, your thoughts, etc. You will be a slave to the devil.

In contrast, always, from beginning to end, present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead. The Greek word translated as “present” is in the *aorist active imperative* and literally means to draw next to or to stand alongside of God. It is a command, but it is a command regarding your overall lifestyle. In other words, always presenting yourself to God should be your way of life and what marks and

distinguishes you. And you are to come alongside Him, stand next to Him, or make yourself available to Him as one who is now alive and continues to be alive from the dead. Alive from the dead is to be your ongoing and continual experience (“alive” is rendered in the *present active participle*).

Likewise, you are to always, from beginning to end, present the parts of your body to God as instruments or tools of righteousness; and that is also a command. Please do not miss the imagery. The one thing about a tool or an instrument is that it does not work itself. Someone has to use it or play it. The idea here is that if every moment of your now you present yourselves as one who is available to God, He will use you for His righteous purposes and you therefore won’t even be able to indulge yourself in unrighteousness, for you will be in His hands. But the choice is yours. This is the way you reciprocate and dwell in a mutual relationship with Jesus Christ, who made you right with the Father.

Now the final line of this section is glorious. “For sin shall not be master (or be your Lord) over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” This means that our right standing with God is never dependent upon our ability to do it right and follow the rules. The Law which prescribes right from wrong is a snare for all humanity, for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin (and God’s wrath) so that every mouth may be closed and the whole world may be accountable to God (***Romans 3:19-20; 4:15***). After all, no one can keep the Law; in fact, we were actually made to die to the Law not to keep it. The Law was never meant to be kept; rather, it was like an instructor intended to convince us that we cannot be good like God. The Law was given so we might know, from head to toe, our need for a Savior who would graciously make us right with God. (***Romans 7:4-13; Galatians 3:24***).

Therefore we are not to present and keep presenting ourselves to sin in any way, shape, or form, or else we will be dominated by sin. It will be our Lord—our Master. We may utter from our mouths “Jesus is Lord” but with our lives we will declare that “sin is our Lord.” And this is how many of you still live; yet, this is not to be your lot in life. When it says, “for you are not under law but under grace” this is not just a statement about our lives, oddly enough it is a command (it is rendered in the *present active imperative*). This is so weird; it seems like this statement just describes our current condition: not under the law but under grace. But it is a command.

Let’s step back a second so I can explain this. The phrase, “For sin shall not be master or Lord over you” is rendered in the *future active indicative*. In other words, your future will be free from sin, and this is a statement of fact regarding your eternal state. After all, we know that one day we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is (**1 John 3:2**); and since He is righteous so shall we be. Yes, one day you will be entirely free from the entanglements of sin. But did you notice this was not a command for you to obey? Rather it is merely a statement of fact regarding your future—sin shall not be master over you? Why? Because God has commanded that you are under grace and not under the law. By His Word, the grace of God has been imparted to you through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which has been given to you; therefore you are not now under the Law which condemns you and brings forth death, but you are now under grace which brings forth life and redemption.

This truth is intended to blow your mind away and be the motivation for you to no longer present yourselves to sin, but to God as one who is alive from the dead. Remember, the Law was put into place to shut the mouths of everyone, for

everyone without exception has violated the Law. Everyone is guilty of sin. But God has commanded that you are under grace and are therefore made right with Him through Jesus Christ. And you now have peace with God (**Romans 5:1**). And you did nothing to deserve this favor, it was all Him. In contrast, all others, those who are still under sin, who have not bowed before, and touched, the scepter of righteousness will experience and continue to experience death both in their now and in eternity. And keep in mind, biblical death is not an ending of things, rather, it is the most horrible existence that never ends.

Romans 6:15-18

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

This makes our present choice very clear. To whom do you want to be enslaved? To sin or to righteousness? It is all decided based on who and what you now present yourselves to (it is rendered in the *present* tense). Accordingly, there is no middle ground of personal rule and independence; you are a slave one way or the other. You either choose to volitionally enslave yourself to your God or by default you are

a slave to the devil, to sin, and to all manner of unrighteousness. In this instance, Paul is thanking God that they had become obedient from the heart to the truth. God did not force anyone to obey, but each person chose to obey and chose to present their body as a slave to righteousness. This choice defines the manner in which the righteousness which God has given you is practically pressed in to your life and out from your life. Like Paul, I want to rejoice in you in this very same manner. I want to celebrate you making the choice to now present yourselves to God as His slave and not as a slave to your flesh, your lusts, your twisted thoughts, your crazy emotions, or the deceptions and lies of the enemy.

Romans 6:19-23

I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The goal of presenting your body to Jesus is your sanctification or as we understand it our “living Hope.” It is the fulfillment of the idea that we can truly be

like Him. Being found in His image is not just a Christian myth or an impossible dream, it is to be our reality. But let's stop here tonight and we will pick things up again next week and deal with the remainder of this passage: **6:15-23**.

Let's Pray