**But Seek First The Kingdom Of God…**

Ken Sils / continued from the front

Jesus began His ministry, preaching about this declaration. Mark’s account of the gospel highlights it in **Mark 1:14-15**, ***“Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel!”*** Jesus was proclaiming that His kingdom (the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven) is at hand! His kingdom is very near; it’s so close, you can sense it, you can feel it; you can almost taste it! Despite a widely held religious dogma that’s convinced millions of believers that the kingdom of Jesus is still a future event after some “Rapture” of the church, Jesus was clear: it was near the people in the 1st century!

So, what is this kingdom then? It is the church that Jesus was going to build! Notice the connection He made with His church and His kingdom in **Matthew 16:18-19**, ***“And I say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”***  Now, I ask you: what good would “the keys” to the kingdom of heaven be for Peter if he wasn’t going to be able to use them because Jesus postponed the coming of His kingdom until the church was “raptured”? But, the kingdom or the church of Jesus Christ did come in the 1st century and Peter was instrumental in turning “the keys” to make that happen (read **Acts 2**).

To help us appreciate the power of this truth, consider Paul’s declarative to the Christians in **Colossians 1:13-14**, ***“He (our Father) has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us INTO the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin.”***  Within (on the inside of) the kingdom of Jesus Christ, people receive redemption towards our Father by the power of the King’s blood! Within the kingdom of Jesus, people are liberated from the slavery of sin! By “seeing and entering” the kingdom of God, people from every nation under heaven are “born again” or “born of water and Spirit.” (**John 3:3-5**).

Jesus came for the purpose of building His church or creating His kingdom and no man or celestial being would prevent it! Jesus was preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and telling those who would then hear: it is at hand – it is near; repent and believe in the gospel! Paul stated in **Romans 1:16**, ***“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”***

The righteousness of God is found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The tenets of Jesus’ “sin forgiving” and “life-saving” covenant are found in the New Testament. Not only can one discover what they must do to be saved from their sin, but also uncover a host of practical solutions to aid them with their specific problems they encounter in this life!

And not only these things, but HOPE! Hope for a future bathed in eternal blessings with the God who made us! Jesus rose from the grave to confirm HOPE beyond this life. The Hebrew writer spoke of it in this way, ***“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul…,* Hebrews 6:19.”** How comforting it is to know: Jesus wants us in His church, His kingdom and ultimately, in His eternal abode when this life is over! Heaven is the greatest place there is! See, just thinking about it can settle the soul!

You can be a member of His church, a citizen in His kingdom and forevermore, be with the Lord when this life is over! Be anxious for nothing; seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness! If you would like to learn more about the kingdom of God, let’s study together!