

The 'Discipleship Check List' Transcript

A GV247.TV Programme presented by Stewart Menelaws

DCL No3: Seek first His Kingdom & Righteousness:

This series is for any Christian believer who is either at the very beginning of their journey with Jesus Christ or who has been a believer for some years but lacks a sound understanding of the Christian faith. It should also prove to be a helpful aid which interlinks with all our resources for Shepherds, overseers and believers reaching out to others.

In regard to Matt 6:33, let us begin with 2 questions where we are explicitly told at the outset to "seek first" -

1. The Kingdom of God
2. And - God's Righteousness

Before we look at the meaning of the verse, we need to understand the context. So we ask:-

Who is talking (writing)? Who are they talking (writing) to? What exactly is the message?

Let me illustrate. Mr Postman arrives. The letterbox clatters. You open the envelope in your hand, it's a long hand-written letter.

- Do you read the letter half way through?
- Do you pick and choose sentences to read throughout the letter?
- Do you skip the main body of text altogether and just read the end of the letter?

Of course, we read the whole letter and understand it in the way it's been written. It sounds obvious, but many who profess a faith in Christ Jesus don't do that when it comes to the Bible, they have a pick'n'mix approach. This is a foolish practice because it will - and does - lead to incorrect interpretation and is responsible for all manner of deceptions. So, in context beginning at chapter 5, we read that The Lord went up a mountainside and sat down to teach the people who were gathering to hear Him. (Matt 5:1). An upright life before God is proclaimed.

In chapter 6:19 instruction continues regarding our attitude towards material gain or possessions, warning that it's not possible to serve both God and other desires. The Lord goes on to instruct that we should not be apprehensive about life. While we need to eat, drink and clothe ourselves, the Lord knows we need such provisions but we are not to let them be the god of our lives. We now come to "*But seek first the Kingdom of God*". Right at the beginning of your journey with God, you are instructed that above all things, "seek first!" Q: What are we to seek first? A: His Kingdom.

Question – What is the Kingdom of God?

'Kingdom' is mentioned many times in scripture but it has different meanings depending on the context of the passage so we need to look more closely to understand correctly.

First – The Heavenly Kingdom...

In John 18:36 Jesus Christ tells Pontius Pilate that His kingdom is not of this world – it's from another place. In the context, Christ's Kingdom should not be confused with the earthly kingdoms and empires of men. If it were an earthly kingdom, Jesus said that His subjects would fight to prevent His arrest.

In John 14:1-4 Jesus Christ told His disciples that He would go to prepare a place for them in His Father's house and in Revelation 21:14 the 12 foundations of the wall of the Heavenly Jerusalem bear their names.

In the book of Revelation - after the foretold apocalyptic events on earth are fulfilled, God's Heavenly Kingdom is finally revealed and God Himself will dwell among His people with a new Heaven and Earth and a New Jerusalem (Rev 21:1-3).

Second – The Kingdom that is within you...

We read in the gospel of Luke that the Kingdom is also “within you” (Luke 17:21) and to understand that, we read the requirement to be “born again” (John 3:3), of Christ’s imperishable seed (1 Pet 1:23). We require the Spirit of God deposited in our hearts (2 Corinthians 1:22), which is God’s seal of ownership upon us. The Spirit of God within us is the guarantee that we will receive our inheritance. (Eph 1:14) This is Christ in you – The Hope of Glory. (Col 1:27)

That future hope is understood, when we are told that we will be transformed – replacing our corrupted physical bodies with an eternal spiritual body (1 Cor 15:35-58 & 1 Thess 4:16)

Third – A Kingdom on Earth... (The Millennial Kingdom – Revelation 20:4-7)

In Acts 1:6-8 the disciples asked Jesus Christ if He was going to restore the Kingdom to Israel. After all, the Roman Empire was still in charge.

His answer was that it was not for them to know and they were to go and spread the gospel of salvation to the ends of the earth.

Why did the disciples ask about a Kingdom being restored to Israel? Once again, we need to understand context and a knowledge of the Old Testament is required reading.

Briefly; in Isaiah 65:17-25 we read about a new order of life on earth, but we note that death still reigns over life. Conversely in Revelation 21:4 the new order of things states there will be no more death. We have 2 kingdoms here. One earthly (that revolves around Israel) and one heavenly. The Prophet Ezekiel also speaks about a united Israel with The Lord Himself (Ezekiel 37:22) dwelling among them and fulfilling promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The Heavenly Kingdom:

A new heaven and earth – the promise for faithful believers (Rev 21:1-4)

The Kingdom within You:

The Spirit of God within us – the guarantee of our inheritance (Eph 1:13-14)

A Kingdom on Earth:

A new era on earth lasting 1000 years – Israel (Isaiah 65:17-25 & Rev 20:4-7)

To understand these things further we need to study Eschatology – the study of biblical prophecy, but that’s for another day. So, seek first His Kingdom. We understand from our previous studies that this world is broken and we as human beings are under judgement. There is no fix for this. God is quite clear to us. Outside of Him and His instruction – we will perish.

Common Misunderstanding or Misapplication of the word ‘Kingdom’:

There is a movement that encourages Christians to build Christ’s ‘kingdom’ on earth – via politics, education, arts, science etc. It sounds commendable but it is clearly not scriptural since God’s wrath is going to be poured out on Earth and the entire cosmos will be completely replaced (2 Peter 3:1-15). This view should not be confused with the scriptural command to be salt and light and love your neighbour.

Kingdom building can be responsible for encouraging a worldly attitude and 1 John 2:15-17 warns that love of the world is enmity with God, and selfish gain is often responsible for vain projects and gross financial impropriety through prosperity teaching. All this comes from a philosophical / allegorical interpretive method – which is responsible for many false teachings.

Question – What is His Righteousness?

Before we answer that, let's understand what God has to say about our own righteousness. We are told that our righteous acts are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6) for we have all sinned and we fall short of God's requirements (Rom 3:23) in an unsanctified state we are destined for the Lake of Fire.

To be able to boldly come before the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16) we need to be clothed in God's righteousness and that is accomplished through The Lord Jesus Christ. In Romans chapter 10 verse 3 onwards it speaks of the need to be saved by the righteousness that comes from God (Isaiah 61:10) which is The Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:21). When seeking to rely on our own righteousness it will not be acceptable.

To Conclude:

In regard to His Kingdom, His Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105). As we study His Word, we see the requirement to come to Him with humility, contrition and reverent fear (Isaiah 66:2).

In regard to Righteousness, when we realise that despite our very best efforts we are unable to live up to His standards, we come to see and understand the need for help - Jesus Christ who is the Saviour and mediator between man and God (1 Tim 2:5). It is Christ's Righteousness that covers those who will put their trust in Him.

Love the Lord you God:

Love your neighbour as yourself (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 & Mark 12:28-31)

And so – do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, His good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)

Next week (DCL No4) we look at:

Did you experience deliverance from any ungodly spiritual influences? (Acts 16:16-18) The supernatural world is a real dimension. Has your life come into contact with that world at any point?

The 'Discipleship Check List' series has been produced with the sole aim of encouraging the hearer / reader to study the Holy Bible so that faith in Jesus Christ will be built on Him alone. Every human work is fallible and whilst every effort has been made to represent the truths of God Almighty's Holy Words, this series is but an aid to help encourage study so that the Christian disciple of Jesus Christ will go onto maturity in the most Holy faith.

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