

The Kingdom Consciousness of a True Disciple (Part one)

By Jay Wegter

I. The Kingdom Consciousness of a True Disciple. It is the premise of this article that genuine Christ-followers have ‘seen’ by faith the worth of the King and His Kingdom. Therefore, the spiritual sight of the Kingdom exerts a continuous controlling factor in their Christian walk; moving them to hope, holiness, love, and diligence. Thus, what God has done, and will do, through Christ in the inauguration the Kingdom of God is the pervasive mindset of a true disciple—we are calling this mindset, “kingdom consciousness.”

A. The Kingdom of God was the heart of Jesus’ teaching (Luke 4:42-44).

“When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them. But He said to them, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose” (Lu 4:42-43).

Christ’s announcement of the Kingdom of God marked the end of the old era of the Law and the Prophets. Jesus stated that the ‘Good News’ of the Kingdom of God was being preached starting with John the Baptist (Luke 16:16). Jesus’ preaching of the Kingdom of God was very closely associated with the gospel message itself. “And [Jesus was] saying, ‘The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel’” (Mark 1:15).

The term, “Kingdom of God,” in its general sense in both O.T. and N.T. means God’s reign—His divine kingly authority, especially over those who belong to Him (see Ps 103:19; 145:13; Is 52:7; Dan 2:44; 7:14, 27). The passages in Daniel indicate that God’s reign—His rule as King of creation, will at the end of the age *invade* human history and establish everlasting dominion on earth. The glorious message of the Kingdom is that God will establish His kingdom on earth through His Son, Jesus Christ. God’s divine reign is given by the Father to the Son. “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) (see also Luke 22:29-30; 1 Cor 15:24-28; Rev 11:15).

Christ is appointed by God to take back the title deed to the earth and to reclaim God’s authority in every sphere by overthrowing and judging all hostile authority. The angelic victory cry announced during the plagues in the future Tribulation period is, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

This same angelic victory cry encompasses the divine conquest of both the satanic and the human enemies who oppose God’s reign and glory. “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of the brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night” (Rev 12:10).

God is “the great King over all the earth” (Ps 47:2). “His kingdom rules over all” (Ps 103:19). His kingdom is everlasting, enduring through all generations (Ps 145:13). What is particularly revolutionary about the message of the Kingdom of God is that the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, invisible God of the universe will manifest Himself as King on earth. We are reminded of the stanza from

the hymn, “How dread are thine eternal years,” for it reminds us that we are created for God and will have an eternal existence—bearing forever the relation we had with Him while mortals on earth.ⁱ

What is the message of the coming Kingdom of God? Answer: the sovereign King of creation will manifest Himself in time-space history as King of the nations. The Apostle Paul captures the gravity of this event, “. . . that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen” (1 Tim 6:14-16).

The saint’s great Kingdom hope is anchored in the reality that he is joined to Christ, his covenant Head. For in Christ, we have peace, safety, adoption, and refuge. It was the humiliation and condescension of Christ in His cross-work that purchased our security in the new covenant (1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 8:9). This great climatic future event of God manifesting Himself as King on earth will be realized through the ministry of Messiah (see Isaiah chapters 11 and 49). “The Sovereign Lord comes with power and His arm rules for Him” (Is 40:10).ⁱⁱ

B. The gospel call to faith and repentance is not timeless, the message was preached with urgency, “the time has come.” For the gospel call is joined to the reality of what is still impending: the Kingdom of God. History is hurtling toward its predetermined end—history is linear, not cyclical as paganism erroneously suggests. Therefore, the repenting sinner looks to the new and final order at the end of history—these Kingdom promises which fill the O.T. have arrived with Jesus. This helps us understand why Christ and the Apostles announced the Kingdom in their gospel preaching. For the proclamation of the Kingdom was made against the backdrop of the O.T. Kingdom promises to Israel.

Christ’s imminent glorious return will mark the coming of the Kingdom in its physical form. The Kingdom will be ushered in with judgment. Christ as Judge will execute ‘perfect discrimination’ between the sheep and the goats (Mt 25:31-34, 41). The references to “weeping and gnashing of teeth” are found in the Kingdom parables of Matthew 13:39-42, 49-50). What an awesome and sobering thought that our meek and lowly Savior returns as Judge (Jn 5:22-29; Acts 17:31).

The Kingdom belongs to Christ, it is given to Christ (Heb 1:8; 2 Tim 4:18; 2 Pet 1:11; Lu 22:29). It is the Kingdom of Christ and of God (Eph 5:5; Rev 11:15; 1 Cor 15:24). Those in the ‘Lamb-Lord’ program will inherit the eternal Kingdom—they will be triumphant in the ‘Lion program’. In the N.T. the Kingdom of God is the divine authority and rule given by the Father to the Son (Lu 22:29). Christ will exercise this rule until He has subdued all that opposes God. Then, He will return the Kingdom—His messianic authority—to the Father (1 Cor 15:24-28).

The end of the age will see a great apostasy, or falling away from the faith just prior to Christ’s glorious return. “Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first” (2 Thess 2:3). The world is presently filled with scoffers who are willfully ignorant of this ‘hostile takeover’ in which Christ shall crush all opposition to God in the coming Day of the Lord (Rev 11:15; 2 Pet 3:3-13).

C. The death and resurrection of Jesus was the decisive point in the coming of the Kingdom (Mt 16:21; Mk 9:31; Luke 18:31-34; 24:7). According to Colossians 2:13-15, Christ's redemptive work *disarmed the rulers and authorities* (making the rescue of the elect possible). In other words, Christ's sacrifice in the place of His people not only brought redemption to the elect; it also stripped Satan of his weapons (2:15). The Kingdom is now manifest in heaven's spiritual rule over the hearts of believers (Luke 17:21); and one day will be established in a literal earthly kingdom (Rev 20:4-6). In one sense the Kingdom is a present reality, but in its fullest sense it awaits a yet-future fulfillment.ⁱⁱⁱ

FOR DISCUSSION: Why are the thoughts of a true disciple of Christ dominated by thoughts of the Kingdom of God? Why is 'Kingdom consciousness' practical for everyday life instead of merely theoretical and ideal?

II. The subject of the Kingdom of God contains elements which can be confusing to those who have not studied its phases, or stages of installment.

A. Perhaps the easiest way to understand these phases or installments of the Kingdom is to recognize how they are tied to the work of Christ. *First*, the Kingdom is present in Christ's earthly work and ministry—for His 'in-breaking' into human history was "that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3:8), and "give His life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45) (the church which Christ is building *manifests* the Kingdom, but is not *equivalent* to the Kingdom. The church is an 'outpost' of the Kingdom). *Second*, the Kingdom has been inaugurated spiritually in that Christ completed the work His Father gave Him to do, and has been exalted to the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:34; 5:31; Phil 2:9). In referring to His exalted state Christ could say, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Mt 28:18). *Third*, at His glorious return, the Kingdom of God invades human history in power and glory and judgment, signaling the beginning of the Messianic age. "I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt 8:11-12) (see also 2 Thess 2:6-10).^{iv}

Christ is 'God's mystery' (Col 2:2). How wonderful beyond words it is that the Creator, the King of the cosmos is our suffering substitute. But, this glorious mystery requires a revelation in a man's soul (2 Cor 4:6). For, the wisdom of God in the cross is spiritually discerned—requiring the regenerating work of the Spirit (1 Cor 2:10-16). The power of God and the wisdom of God are brought together in one person, our Lord Jesus Christ. To the extent that we promote God's wisdom, we exalt God's power in Christ. Unless Christ is preeminent and central, God's wisdom is not exalted. God has made foolish the wisdom of the world "through the foolishness of the message preached" (1 Cor 1:21). God intends to shame the wise—this is His divine purpose: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise" (1 Cor 1:19). God destroys the world's wisdom, and He does so with *cosmic ramifications*.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells (2 Pet 3:10-13) (see also Mt 24:27-31; Rev 6:12-14).

Like an immense steel wedge, God, in sending Christ, presses in upon the folly of the world's wisdom with the divine wisdom of the cross. The men of the world regard the cross as weakness and folly. But, Christ is the only source of total, final, absolute wisdom that there is. Christ and Him crucified embraces both the mystery of Christ's person and the wonder of His redemptive work. The whole fulcrum, the whole balance point, the arrow point, the focus of God's wisdom, the very axis of God's wisdom is '*Christ, and Him crucified*' (1 Cor 1:18-25; 2:2).

B. In Christ's first coming, His redemptive rule and supernatural power have now invaded the realm of Satan, delivering the elect from the power of evil (Col 2:8-15; Mt 12:28). Though the evil one was defeated at the cross, the final destruction of Satan awaits the coming of the Son of man in glory (Mt 25:41; Rev 20:10). Though this event is future, Jesus could say that the Kingdom of God was present in the midst of men because the messianic works manifested its power (Mt 11:12; Is 35:5-6; Lu 17:21).

The Lamb-Lord messianic program involves the exertion of supernatural power every single time a sinner is saved (Eph 1:19-23; James 1:18; 1 Pet 1:3). This same supernatural power has invaded the realm of Satan and has defeated death. All of the Lord's people will be raised in bodies which are incorruptible in order to inherit the blessings of the Kingdom (1 Cor 15:50ff.).

C. The presence of the Kingdom now in history (in the 'Lamb-Lord' program) is a mystery (Mk 4:11). This mystery is a divine purpose which has been hidden for long ages but finally has been revealed (Rom 16:25-26). The mystery of the Kingdom is this: before its dramatic consummation, before the destruction of Satan, before the age to come, the Kingdom of God has entered this age in spiritual power, invading the realm of darkness in order to bring men in advance the blessings of *forgiveness* (Mk 2:5) *life* (Jn 3:3); and *righteousness* (Mt 5:20; Rom 14:16) which belong to the age to come. That is the great mystery, the righteousness of the Kingdom in its present form is an inner, absolute, imputed righteousness (Mt 5:22; 2 Cor 5:21). Christ is ruling His own people by His love, truth, and authority *now*, He is enthroned in their hearts *now* (2 Cor 5:14-15)—all before He returns in might and glorious conquering power. True disciples of Christ are ever cognizant of these Kingdom realities.

D. The Kingdom parables of Matthew 13 embody this new revelation which is a mystery. The Kingdom has come among men, but not as yet with political power which compels every knee to bow before the glory of its King. Rather, it is like a seed cast on ground which may be fruitful or unfruitful, depending on its reception (Mt 13:3-8). The Lamb-Lord form of the Kingdom has indeed come to men, and by the quickening power of sovereign grace, the hearts of the elect are made willing to enter. But, the present order in the world is not disrupted—the sons of the Kingdom and the sons of the evil one grow up together in the world until the harvest (Mt 13:24-30, 36-43). Like the proverbial mustard seed, the present form of the Kingdom, though insignificant and despised in the world will one day be a great tree (Mt 13:31-32). This same Kingdom, like a bit of leaven hidden in a bowl of dough, will yet fill the earth (Mt 13:33).^v

Blessed are you that you have been granted *eyes to see and ears to hear*—that you might perceive the infinite wealth and beauty of the King and His Kingdom (Mt 13:16). Blessed are you to have been given the gift of repentance to depart from your idols and your attraction to the works of the devil, the

imposter king (1 Thess 1:9). For, the Kingdom is coming in glory—on that day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord and rightful King (Phil 2:9-11).

The mystery of the Kingdom of God coming in humility instead of glory was an utterly new and amazing revelation. Yet, Jesus warns that men should not be deceived. Though the Bearer of the Kingdom was put to death and condemned as a criminal—it is nevertheless the Kingdom of God. Like buried treasure, or a priceless pearl, the acquisition of the Kingdom merits any cost or sacrifice (Mt 13:44-46). The humility of the Kingdom in its Lamb form ought not lead to a misunderstanding of its true nature—for it one day will divide the good from the evil in eschatological salvation and judgment (Mt 13:47-50). To see the value of the Kingdom in its present form requires a work of divine grace—this perception is a function of faith in the gospel.

E. In this age the ‘sons of the Kingdom’ are called to heroism; they will experience sufferings (2 Thess 1:5), and tribulation. “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). But God will rescue them from every evil and save them for His heavenly Kingdom. “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen” (2 Tim 4:18) (see also 2 Pet 1:11; 1 Cor 6:9-10).

The ‘Lion program’ will be a radical new world order. (See Christ’s title as ‘Lion of the tribe of Judah’ in Revelation 5:5). We will share in perfect fellowship with Christ and will share in His ‘rod of iron’ rule and authority. “He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received *authority* from My Father; and I will give him the morning star” (Rev 2:26-28) (see also Mt 26:29-30; Lu 20:34-36).

Again, to our ears tuned to the ‘bounciness’ feel-good, alien values of modern Evangelicalism, the Kingdom proclamation can sound too other worldly—too fantastic, too fictional. But, in the face of those inner objections we ask, “Do you know who Christ really is?” “Are you aware of the seriousness of His call to be an overcomer?” (Rev 2-3; 21:7).

The present realm of the Kingdom in the world through Christ’s church shows that the dynamic power of God’s reign has invaded this evil age. The Kingdom has been ‘spiritually inaugurated’ in that the saints have been delivered from the power of darkness and the tyranny of sin (Col 1:13; Rom 6:21-23), and they now enjoy the spiritual blessings of God’s reign. Jesus said that since John the Baptist the Kingdom of God has been preached and men enter it with violent determination (Lu 6:16).^{vi} That is what believers do—the violent determination needed to enter the Kingdom depends upon your estimation of the King and His Kingdom! And, that zeal and diligence necessary in order to enter the Kingdom is a function of genuine saving faith.

The Kingdom is not the church. It is impossible to substitute the church for the Kingdom in such passages as: Acts 8:12; 19:8; 28:23. Yet, there is an inseparable relationship between the two. The church is a fellowship of believers who by the sovereign grace of God have accepted His Kingdom offer, submitted to His rule, and entered into its blessings. Thus, we may say that the Kingdom of God creates the church. The redemptive rule of God in Christ brings into being a new people who receive the blessings of the divine reign. The Kingdom also works through the church. The disciples preached the

Kingdom of God and performed signs of the Kingdom (Mt 10:7-8; Lu 10:9, 17). We also see that the church is entrusted with the ‘keys of the Kingdom’—Matthew 16:18-19; Luke 11:52.^{vii}

Because of the mystery of the Kingdom in its present form, and because of the humiliation of Christ in the ‘scandal’ of the cross, the natural man is offended by the gospel. Therefore, the Kingdom must be received with childlike faith (Mt 18:1-5). The Judas’ of the world have esteemed Christ and His Kingdom to be on the ‘loser’ side of the tally. What a shock it will be when Christ returns in wrath and conquest—with the doors of mercy finally closed—all the tribes of the earth will mourn (Rev 1:7-8).

III. *The Kingdom is soteriological—the object of divine rule is the redemption of men and their deliverance from the powers of darkness.* “Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*” (Is 45:22-23).

A. Christ’s reign means the destruction of all hostile powers (1 Cor 15:23-28). The N.T. sees the Kingdom of God standing over against the kingdom of the world which opposes divine rule (Rev 11:15, 18). The kingdoms of the world are under satanic control and must ultimately be conquered (Mt 4:8; Lu 4:5; 1 Jn 5:19). The world opposes the working of God’s Kingdom. The ‘god of this age’ exercises his rule by holding men in darkness (2 Cor 4:4; 2 Tim 2:24-26; Heb 2:14-15). Nevertheless, God remains King of the ages, and in the coming of the Kingdom a mighty, apocalyptic in-breaking will finally put an end to all rebellion. “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, *be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen*” (1 Tim 1:17). This momentous culmination of history will see the merging of the Lamb program with the Lion program. For, our Savior is mediatorial King.

Thus, the Kingdom of God entails the redemptive rule of Christ as mediatorial King who defeats the powers of darkness and delivers believing men from the sway of evil. Entrance into the Kingdom (a kingdom ‘transfer’ Colossian 1:13) means deliverance from the powers of darkness, and entrance into the Kingdom of the Son—this is accomplished by the new birth (Jn 3:3-5)^{viii}.

B. As recipients of the redeeming work of the Lamb program, we experience a ‘kingdom transfer’ in which we are granted citizenship in Christ’s Kingdom (Phil 3:20-21). The significance of Christ as Mediatorial King is profound. No other King in history has loved righteousness perfectly (Heb 1:8-9), has come as a humble servant without ego (Jn 5:30ff.), has given His own blood to make friends of His enemies (Rev 1:5-6). Those who reject the Son’s rightful rule will be revealed as avowed enemies of His Heavenly Father and His glory.

The Kingdom comes at the end of the age—Jesus taught the prayer known as ‘the Lord’s prayer. “Thy Kingdom come” (Mt 6:10) is a violent prayer; for in order for God’s will to be done on earth universally by men, there must be condemnation by fire and a throne of judgment. The wicked will suffer judgment by fire, and the righteous will inherit the Kingdom (Mt 25:31-46; 13:36-43).

IV. *In Christ and His work, the future has already come (2 Cor 5:17). The age to come (though not in its global fulfillment) is penetrating this present age.*

A. The sin, death, and meaninglessness of the present age have been confronted by, and transformed by the righteousness, life, and meaning of the age to come. Hope in Christ connects us to

the *age to come*. “If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied” (1 Cor 15:19). The reality of the coming Kingdom joins gospel hope to the *eschaton* (the final event and stage in God’s redemptive program). ‘Kingdom consciousness’ consequently shapes and animates the affections and eternal values of a true disciple of Christ.

The conquest of sin, death, and the devil at the cross established the rule of God over the church. We are in a period between the comings of Christ. The future, or eschatological dimension, penetrates the present. The truth is, with the coming of Christ, the present age died (Gal 4:4; Eph 1:10). This is a fundamental division recognized by Scripture.^{ix} “Last Days” refers to the present period established at the cross (Heb 1:1-5; Heb 9:26; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 3:1; 1 Cor 10:11).

The *end of the ages* has come upon us. The victory won at the cross of Christ has established this era as “*the last days*.” We live in a unique time period between the victory won at the cross, and the consummation of this victory at the *Day of the Lord* (2 Pet 3:11-12). (See Peter’s Pentecost sermon beginning with the declaration of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, Acts 2:14-42).

FOR DISCUSSION: In what sense does the first coming of Christ mark the fact that the *end of the age* is imminent? How should this affect our gospel proclamation (in terms of urgency)?

B. We live between the cross and the resurrection—these two decisive events are to control the believer’s entire perspective. Eternal life is a present reality—in essence it has begun in the believer already (Jn 3:36; 5:24; 6:47, 54; 11:23-27). For the believer, the present age of this world has passed. The so-called wisdom of the present world has been judged and exposed by Christ as folly and shameful.

The “wisdom” of this world is foolishness. It cannot lead men to a saving knowledge of God. The Lord is systematically *shaming* the wisdom of the world through the ‘*foolishness of the cross*’—He is doing so through a message regarded as foolish by the world (1 Cor 1:20; 2:6-8; 3:18; Titus 2:12).

Think of how tragic it is for the unbeliever living blithely and apathetically in his spiritual darkness. For him, the present age still belongs to Satan—for Scripture states that *the whole world lies in the power of the evil one* (1 Jn 5:19). By contrast, the believer has been *delivered from the domain of darkness and has been transferred into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son* (Col 1:13). For us as believers, God’s grace has brought eternity into time. Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20-21).

God has decisively reclaimed us and saved us for Himself. Yet there is a final phase of this reclamation that is still to come. Scripture says that *we are eagerly waiting for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body* (Rom 8:23b).

The fact that believers are eagerly awaiting their glorification does not diminish the truth that God has now, in the present, ‘broken into our lives’—transforming them by the reality of His truth, power, and love. C. K. Barrett writes, “*The common pattern of N.T. eschatology is in [the book of] Hebrews made uncommonly clear. God has begun to fulfill His ancient promises; the dawn of the new age has broken, though the full day has yet to come. The “age to come” is already being tasted and experienced (Heb 6:4-5) because “the world to come” has already been subjected to Christ’s rule (Heb 2:5).*”^x

This rule of Christ is the target of opposition from enemies of the knowledge and glory of God (Heb 2:8-9; 10:13-14); but the outcome is sure (Heb 9:26). Thus the author of Hebrews speaks of a

salvation being experienced in the present, a redemption, an inheritance, and a covenant each of which is also “eternal” (Heb 5:9; 9:12, 15; 13:20).

We must not miss the significance of this. The truth of the kingdom of God that we believe and preach is all about God’s mighty in-breaking into human history. God’s *in-breaking* involved both saving and vanquishing. God has done for us what we had no hope of doing for ourselves—He has conquered our darkness and our love of darkness. And He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and placed us as subjects in the Kingdom of Christ (Col 1:13-14). Christ our Redeemer-King makes His redemptive work (of atonement, propitiation, and penal guilt transfer) the basis for our kingdom transfer. We have been transferred to the kingdom of light—an entirely different domain.

C. God’s rule has begun in the hearts of believers, and will someday soon fill the earth. As disciples and subjects of King Jesus, we receive this Kingdom—we receive the Kingdom because by His sovereign grace, God had made us subjects of Jesus Christ, the King of Kings—believers are citizens of His kingdom. In Christ, the eternal God—eternal life—eternal truth walked on this dusty planet 2000 years ago. It was through Christ that God was breaking into our age in sovereign mercy. In Christ, God took decisive action against sin, death, and the devil—the forces which held His people in subjugation and bondage.

During His earthly ministry, the context of “The Kingdom of God,” was the means by which Jesus defined Himself, and His work. The message of the kingdom of God is what Jesus used to set forth and reveal the purposes of God in sending His Son (Matt 12:28; 16:28).

D. Living between the cross and the resurrection means the believer’s life is defined by both events. To live between the cross and the resurrection is to live between the two events in a way that is dynamically connected to both. Romans 5:1-11 contains this “*already, not yet*” tension. “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:1-2). The believer does ***not yet*** actually reign with Christ over the earth, but does ***already*** belong to that new age and rule of life in Him. “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” (Rom 5:17, see also, v. 21).

The outworking of the “reign of grace through righteousness to eternal life” is through “Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 5:21). This is why the role of ***ongoing faith in the gospel*** is so vital. For, the gospel is our constant reminder of the reality of the present reign of grace and life. We really do participate in the reign of grace and life (v. 17). It is ongoing faith in the gospel that produces a life-transforming awareness of the reign of grace in its future Kingdom expression.

Ongoing faith in the gospel deepens our assurance, hope, and joy in the unshakable fact that the reign of grace cannot be frustrated, no matter what tribulations we face (Rom 5:1-5). Salvation transferred and discharged us from the old era of sin’s reign (2 Cor 11:3; Jn17:3). Believers have been radically identified with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Our part in the process of renewal is to keep the eyes of our minds fixed upon things that are unseen. The phrase “things that are unseen” refers especially to ***the age to come*** (2 Cor 4:18; Phil 3:8-17). This same *fixing of the mind on things above* refers also to the “treasure principle.” In other words, *where your treasure is, there will your heart (affections) be also* (Matt 6:19-21; Col 3:1-3; Eph 4:22-23).

We are not to be preoccupied with temporal things, we are to fix our minds upon eternal things (2 Cor 4:16-18; Phil 3:18-19). Our responsibility is to fix our eyes on things that are unseen—that is the Kingdom age to come in which the resurrection of our body and glory will be ours. Faith and hope in God’s promises is the key to *being renewed day by day*—that’s ‘Kingdom consciousness’ in action.

FOR DISCUSSION: Name and describe some of the ways the believer’s life is to be controlled by the two events of the cross and the resurrection. How are these two events to shape and deepen our commitment to ‘Kingdom consciousness’?

Endnotes:

ⁱ *My God, how wonderful Thou art*, Author: Frederick W. Faber, 1848

ⁱⁱ R. B. Gaffin Jr., “The Kingdom of God,” *New Dictionary of Theology*, IVP, 1988, p. 367

ⁱⁱⁱ MacArthur Study Bible, p. 1396

^{iv} Gaffin, p. 368

^v G. E. Ladd, “The Kingdom of God,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter Elwell, Ed., Baker, 1984, p. 609

^{vi} *Ibid*, p. 610

^{vii} *Ibid.*, p. 611

^{viii} *Ibid.*, p. 608

^{ix} David Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers*, pp. 205-210

^x C. K. Barrett quoted in Wells, p. 212