

PRIORITY OF GOD'S KINGDOM

The Bible: The Book of the Coming Kingdom of God

Main Message:

- * John the Baptist - Matthew 3:1-2
- * The 12 disciples - Luke 10:8,9,18
- * Apostle Paul - Acts 28:31 Preached the Kingdom and the King (Lord Jesus Christ)
- * **Jesus** -Matthew 4:17, 6:33, 9:35, Luke 4:43, Acts 1:1-3

**‘Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness’
‘Our Father.....Thy Kingdom Come!’**

All of the above persons preached the gospel of the kingdom of God, as will God's messengers in the **end times** - Matthew 24:14, Revelation 11:15. The kingdom message is not just about a future kingdom in Israel and throughout the whole world. The invisible kingdom is here now in the lives of those are servants and friends of King Jesus.

The words: preach, gospel and kingdom were used in secular life before they were used with spiritual meanings.

Preach - This was to proclaim or act as a herald who announces something important *

Gospel - This was good news of a victory in a military campaign **

Kingdom - Royal power, kingship, king's realm, dominion, rule

** The ancient Greek military had men who acted as couriers (messengers) who were known as long day runners. Pheidippides was one of them. In 490 B.C., The Greek forces faced an attack from Persians on the coastal plain of Marathon. Pheidippides was sent from Athens to the city state of Sparta to seek military assistance for the Athenians. He ran 153 miles barefoot over the mountains in about 36 hours. When he arrived there, the Spartans told him they could not assist the Athenians due to a current religious festival. However, they could send help after six days when the festival was finished. Pheidippides ran back 153 miles to Athens to convey that message. He then joined the army forces as they marched the 25 miles to Marathon to resist the invading Persian army of between 18,000 to 25,000 soldiers (one source says 60,000) which was led by Darius I. Although the 10,000 Athenians were outnumbered, they pulled off a stunning victory. The information provided by Pheidippides was crucial for their winning strategy. A courier was sent back to Athens to preach (proclaim) the gospel (good news) of Nike (victory) over the Persian army.

(Legend has it that the courier was Pheidippides and after his announcement, he collapsed and died. However, scholars later said it was likely the courier for the victory announcement was Thersippus. -Source: Greek writer Plutarch)
Sometimes stories are embellished to make them more dramatic. Everybody likes a story of heroism midst challenging odds. Nonetheless, the idea for the marathon run of

26 miles was inspired by this story. Today there is also a run of 153 miles called the Spartathon which seeks to replicate the challenging run that Pheidippides made from Athens to Sparta.

‘The course begins in Athens and runs over roads, rough tracks and muddy paths, crosses vineyards and olive groves, climbs steep hill sides, and most challenging of all, takes runners on the 4000 foot ascent and descent of Mount Parthenio during the night. After the descent, it barely gets easier for the runners as they follow around 50 miles of roads that winds up and down hills before descending into Sparta.’ - worldsmarathons.com

GOD’S COURIERS / MESSENGERS

Hundreds of years later the story is told of another military courier who traveled over land and sea to proclaim a message of the greatest military victory of all time. This, however, is no legend, but was recorded carefully by the messenger and his traveling companion, Dr. Luke who recorded Paul’s missionary journeys in the Book of Acts. Paul was in God’s army and spent most of his life preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Pheidippides got his assignments from the Athenian army officers, Paul received his from the commander, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul - God’s Messenger

As servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience, and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything. - 2 Corinthians 6:4-10 NIV

In another passage Paul speaks of being **in prison, flogged, exposed to death, beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked, a day and night in the open sea, constantly on the move, in danger from: rivers bandits own countrymen Gentiles in the city in the country at sea false brothers** Paul went **without sleep, experienced hunger, thirst, the cold, nakedness, and the daily pressure** of concern for the churches he had planted. - 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

The theme of jesusreigns.net is the **kingdom of God** and how followers of Jesus Christ can learn to **reflect** His image, **reign** in life and **reproduce** this in others through discipleship training. Here is a key verse to meditate on about reigning.

*For if by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of **grace** and of the gift of **righteousness** **reign in life** through the one man, Jesus Christ. - Romans 5:17 NIV*

Despite all his trials and battles, the apostle Paul lived as an overcomer who had learned to 'reign in life'. He had been the worst of sinners, but when he received God's grace and the gift of righteousness, he walked in boldness and authority!

One time while in meditation the Lord seemed to say to me.

You are to reign as a king but live like a soldier

God has told us we can **reign as kings.** **not** **live like kings**

Jesus, Paul and other effective ambassadors of God's kingdom throughout history did not live lives of self-indulgence but they **lived simply so that others might live.** They lived lives of **sacrifice** and service to others. for the sake of God's kingdom, not theirs. They **forsook comfort** for the cause of the great commission and the kingdom of God. However, they were not overcome by the circumstances of life or the dark kingdom forces. **They lived as overcomers in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

In the section on Kingdom Principles, you will learn about the Balance Principle. People have a tendency to go to extremes in their doctrines and lifestyles. In the section on Spiritual Warfare, we will learn about being a good soldier.

Endure hardship with us as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 2:3

(I use the color brown as an earthy highlight color for the life and walk of a disciple. It symbolizes the down to earth realities of sacrifice, obedience, trials and hardships for those who truly follow Jesus.)

Paul was willing to live a selfless life for a name and cause greater than himself. His mission was to proclaim the good news that Jesus Christ has defeated the powers of darkness and set mankind free from the penalty and power of sin and its presence in the future. Paul wrote these words:

For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves. In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. - Colossians 1:13-14 NIV

I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome. I am not ashamed of the gospel. because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. - Romans 1:14-16 NIV

Paul was fully aware that he was involved with a spiritual war. Jesus had won the victory through his death, burial and resurrection and was seated on the throne of the universe. His job and that of all Christian ambassadors is to spread the good news of the present and future reign of Jesus. That is the kingdom priority. Satan, the enemy of man and God, does all he can to oppose God's kingdom activity, but this cosmic conflict comes to a glorious end, as revealed in the final chapters of Revelation. **Amen.**

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