

FIRSTS

New Year 2014

Matthew 6:33

WHAT KIND OF YEAR WAS LAST YEAR FOR YOU SPIRITUALLY?

_____ Spiritually Apathetic
_____ Spiritually Inconsistent
_____ Spiritually Consumed

Matthew 6:33 But seek first [God's] kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:33 (AMP)

But seek (aim at and strive after) first of all His kingdom and His righteousness (His way of doing and being right), and then all these things taken together will be given you besides.

Matthew 6:33 (GW)

But first, be concerned about his kingdom and what has his approval. Then all these things will be provided for you.

(NET1) But above all pursue his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

First.... let's take this verse apart...

Seek you: What does it mean to Seek?...

OT idea of seek: Paul explains in **Romans 10:20 (NET1)** *And Isaiah is even bold enough to say, "I was found by those who did not seek me; I became well known to those who did not ask for me."* The most striking application of zēteō is the New Testament religious application. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. This implies far more than a mere "looking around"

Gk: Zēteō [dzay-teh'-o] was to ... was a technical term for philosophical investigation, something "examined, considered" or "deliberated. To seek in this

way like Jesus seeking the lost is to diligently, earnestly, and tenaciously search after something, sparing no effort or expense, for the sought object is valued to the highest degree. I might say it like this today... I am seeking my Ph.D.

First... Adverb - prōton... time, place, order, or importance.

Sometimes the NT uses it as an adverb for time as in ... **Matthew 8:21 (NET1)**
Another of the disciples said to him, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”

or as an adverb for enumeration, **1 Corinthians 12:28 (NET1)**

And God has placed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, gifts of healing, helps, gifts of leadership, different kinds of tongues.

But here it is used as a degree. Declaring a sense of priority rather than time—not “to seek ‘His kingdom’ first” and then seek temporal things ... but “to seek ‘His kingdom’ only.” No compartmentalized life!

Kingdom: It is both here and now and futuristic. It is both visible and invisible; physical and spiritual. Tangible and intangible. External and internal. It is in conflict and yet promises peace. It is the heart condition and fleshing out indication. Let’s see if we can develop and clarify this truth. Let’s look at history.

It’s the first thing Jesus preached about and the theme is carried right through to revelation. The Greek word used as the main framework for this New Testament concept is basileia, “kingdom, rule. The basileia of God, i.e., His “kingdom, domain, rule, reign,” is a principal Biblical concept. It is associated with basileus (“king”). Later used more as turannos, a title for the physical ruler of a people. But, as turannos developed negative nuance (cf. the English word tyrant), and basileus acquired more of a sense of esteem. It came to denote the king according to the law or his lineage, distinct from turannos whose power was seized by illegitimate means. Basileus, then, was the legitimate king of a land. During the reign of Alexander the Great ... Oriental customs infiltrated Greek thought. Successors of Alexander referred to themselves as euergetēs “benefactor”. Receiving divine qualities from the previous. This is where the Hellenistic notion of a divine monarchy became Roman emperor worship.

So we get ... basileia [bas-il-i'-ah], “kingdom, rule,” is derived from basileus, “king.” Originally stood for the royal dignity, power, authority, and rule of the king; Later became the king’s geographical realm, the region of a king rule. This is the dominant meaning in the New Testament. In the Hebrew it is normally translated

the melekh, “king,” or the verb form mālahk, “to rule.” It is unique in Israel’s belief that all of the earth’s powers are subject to God’s sovereignty. God was himself the king of Israel’s theocracy

When Gideon heard the invitation of the people to rule over them he responded, “I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you” **Judges 8:23 (NET1)**. And in **Exodus 15:18 (NET1)** The LORD will reign forever and ever!

From 1 Samuel 8:7 we learn ... All of Israel’s neighbors were ruled by kings; eventually the Israelites demanded that they too should have a king like the other nations. Samuel, the last of the mighty judges, upon hearing this was greatly distressed, but the Lord said to him, **“Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them”**

So God named Saul to Samuel as the first king (Samuel would anoint Saul as king later), Saul was chosen by lot as Israel’s king. The kingdom God desired for Israel was to be a divine kingdom, God’s gift to them. But the people did not desire the best, so God allowed them to have the next best, but still selected by God.

Then later God’s plans are more fully realized. David is chosen as king. He and the establishment of his kingdom became a rallying point for the entire nation. but, after only a few generations his kingdom fall into disunity. Not simply unrest but a deep division, the deepest in the history of the people of Israel. The nation was severed into two kingdoms, a southern kingdom—Judah, and a northern kingdom—Israel. You might remember this from our book club on the Panorama of the Bible,

Even after the establishment of the two kingdoms the Lord was still the king of the people. The Psalms mention God as king over 30 times, either directly or indirectly. The Prophets contain many similar references. Alluding to the Lord as king merged with eschatological/ messianic prophecies of the eternal kingdom that was promised to David and his line. Messiah is not only the Son of David, He is God’s Son: “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion” (Psalm 2:6,7).

In the OT with increasing clarity the prophets revealed the nature and scope of the Kingdom. Scripture clearly gives God’s design for the world that has been corrupted by Satan and sin. It reveals helplessness of man in an apostate, deceived, and cursed world. It shows that mankind has fallen under God’s wrath and it is imprisoned to sin. But salvation’s promise, that offer... is shown throughout history:

one day it will all end. God through His Son, the Messiah will rescue the redeemed, and He will destroy everything that is corrupting that which He created.

NT: Jesus begins His ministry he picks up on John's announcement that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (cf. Matthew 3:1,2; 4:17). Jesus announces the time of fulfillment had come. How? With the preaching of the gospel, with His healing of the sick (Matthew 4:23f.), and with His driving out of the evil spirits (Matthew 12:28).

What does it mean ... it had come? Satan was "dethroned" (Luke 10:18), and the righteousness through Christ through the disciples through the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

The kingdom of God here is an overlapping of the present and the future, just like in the Old Testament. It is not only a prophecy of the soon coming of God's kingdom, but is also a declaration that the kingdom of God is actually present in Jesus Christ. If the King—Jesus—is present, therefore, the Kingdom must also be here. The Kingdom was manifested through the life and works of Jesus: "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you" (Luke 11:20).

Obviously this Kingdom (or rule) and royal power of God is more than a physical, visible, tangible entity. We know this because Jesus stressed the inner, spiritual nature of the Kingdom. It belongs to the poor in spirit, and it comforts those who mourn. Those seeking mercy will find it in the kingdom of God. It is designed for the meek, for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. In the kingdom of God those who are pure in heart will see God. The kingdom is marked by peace; the peaceful and peacemakers will be called God's children. Those belonging to the Kingdom—its citizens—must expect the same destiny in this world as did the prophets and the Lord: they will be ridiculed and persecuted.

Only by being born again can one enter this Kingdom (John 3:3-5). It is realized especially in the lives of those who recognize there is nothing they have done to deserve it (Matthew 5:3; 21:31). At the same time, it must be taken by force (Matthew 11:12). One must recognize the value of the Kingdom citizenship and be willing to ensure nothing interferes with gaining this "heavenly treasure" (Matthew 13:44).

Even though Jesus preached about the spiritual character of the Kingdom, He also revealed the coming of the visible eschatological kingdom (Luke 19:11f.). This

visible manifestation of God's kingdom will initially take place at the return of Christ. At Christ's second coming the Kingdom will arrive with power (Mark 9:1).

So let's review: Facts about the Kingdom...

- God's kingdom is both present and future, both a spiritual reality to be experienced now and a future eschatological event. The Kingdom is made up of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).
- It is evidenced in the things that show God is ruling in the life of the individual. The Kingdom is not merely in word; rather it is actualized in the Spirit's redemptive power (1 Corinthians 4:20).
- At its consummation all of creation will be restored to its former glory (Revelation 3:21).
- The old world will be made new (Revelation 21:1).
- Creation will be released from its temporary bondage to evil and sin (Romans 8:19). On the cosmic level the heavens and earth themselves will be renewed (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:5; cf. Isaiah 65:17; 66:22).
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- Apparently a period of 1,000 years—the Millennium—will be the interim period between the appearing of the Kingdom and its total arrival (Revelation 20:1f.).
- It is possible that the Millennium reflects a convergence of the two dominant ideas of the Kingdom in first-century Judaism, a nationalistic/political kingdom and a cosmic/universal reign of Messiah. One common denominator, however, is an expectation that Israel's kingdom would be restored (Acts 1:6) in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies about God's kingdom on earth in the end time.
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- The Kingdom is often defined as “the kingdom of God” in the New Testament, or “the kingdom of heaven,” sometimes it is called the “Father's kingdom” or the “kingdom of Jesus Christ.” The differences in these descriptions are negligible.
- Heaven's rule is God's rule. From all eternity the Kingdom, the reign, the royal power and rule has belonged to both the Father and the Son.
- It is not something invented, it is eternal (Luke 1:33).
- When it is fully realized it may be called Christ's kingdom (Luke 22:29; 2 Timothy 4:18; 2 Peter 1:11), but 1 Corinthians 15:27 states that at the end,

Christ will give it back to the Father from whom He received it in the first place. With the consummation of the Kingdom, Jesus' messianic function will come to a close.

- Throughout eternity the Kingdom's throne will be both God's and the Lamb's (Revelation 22:1).

Without being legalistic about firsts...

FIRST THINGS FIRST

1) FIRST OF THE DAY: SEEK GOD

Psalms 63:1 NKJV ...*O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.*

Mark 1:35 *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*

Bible Reading Plan... if you fail to plan you plan to fail...

2) FIRST OF THE WEEK: WORSHIP

Acts 20:7 *On the first day of the week we came together to break bread...*

48% of American Christians go to church once a month!

Hebrews 10:25 *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another...*

3) FIRST OF THE MONTH: TITHE

Leviticus 27:30 *A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord.*

Bring the tithe NOT give it as it already belongs to the Lord!

Matthew 23:23 NLT ...*Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the*

law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.

Jesus said to tithe... acknowledge God as the source.

No giving because your not a cheerful giver... you still have to give. God wants you cheerful about it.

Remember to do the other things too!

4) **FIRST OF THE YEAR: FAST**

Joel 1:14 *Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord.*

Ask you to fast with me for the next week starting Monday for a week.

Jesus doesn't say if you fast ... LOOK...

Matthew 6:17-18 *But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

“When you fast” today would be... wash your face and brush your teeth.

“obvious to men” means don't let others know about it overtly.

Was last year inconsistent, apathetic or weak? Do you think that is the standard that God wants in our life?

I don't want a mediocre year. I don't want to limp along. I don't want a bland plain vanilla year! I don't want to go through another year calling myself a Christian and living the fruits of being one. I don't want Satan to lure me into putting God second or third. Giving God my leftovers. Seek FIRST the Kingdom. Put God FIRST! In the Day, in the Week, In the finances, in your life. Join me in the fast.

If you want what you had... do what you did. If you want something you never had... you must do what you never done! Then next year when you are asked about your last year spiritually ... you can say how incredible it was and when they ask why you can say that you Put God First.

Most people will do well in some areas but there is one area that is going to be a struggle for you. In your mind before we pray... be honest with yourself before God and ask God to strengthen you in that area that will be a struggle.

If you are listening to this on the internet if you don't know God. If you want this year to be different for you. I want to encourage you to turn your life over to him. To put Him first this year. Not to save you from hell but because you want him as your savior. Its a new year and scripture tells us that the old has past away and things become new. ... Give your life to Him and put him First!...

Great Conversations: What specific tools, relationships, or resources will help you put first things first in 2014?

Prayer: