

## I. Christus Victor

- A. Welcome to part six in our series called Christus Victor. Jesus is our foundation, and to study him, is to strengthen the foundation. We are looking at what the Bible says about all the major events in the life of Christ. So far, his birth, childhood, baptism, temptation, calling the disciples, and miracles.
- B. *The Teachings of Jesus.*
- C. Today, our topic is his TEACHINGS. Jesus went everywhere teaching and preaching.
  - 1. *Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. (Matthew 11:1, NKJV).*
    - a) This was his main thing.
  - 2. *Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. (John 18:20, NKJV).*
    - a) This was his routine. Wherever he went, he found the synagogue and preached there. And when he was in Jerusalem, he taught in that ancient megachurch type of setting every time he could. He taught in fields. He taught in homes. He was a walking, talking truth machine.
  - 3. *And in the daytime He was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet. Then early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him. (Luke 21:37, 38, NKJV).*
- D. There are four books in the Bible that focus on the life and sayings of Jesus. These four books are called the GOSPELS: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Sometimes Bibles will put the words of Jesus in red, and that's pretty cool. Just remember, however, that all the words of the Bible are God's Word and have equal power for our lives today.
- E. I just want to say that for Jesus, the Savior of the World, teaching, preaching and communicating truth was a really big deal.
- F. Jesus spoke a lot of messages, a lot of talks, and a lot of conversations. They weren't random. They weren't disconnected ideas that just came to mind. Like spokes on a wheel, they all connected in a common hub. What was it?
- G. I'll let the Bible speak for itself:
  - 1. *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." (Mark 1:14, 15, NKJV).*
  - 2. *Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God... (Luke 8:1, NKJV).*
- H. When the writers of the gospels wanted to sum up in one compact phrase all the teachings of Jesus, they said, "the kingdom of God." One exception is the Book of Matthew in the Bible, where it's called the Kingdom of Heaven. Same thing (beyond all question, same thing).
- I. It's easily one of the most widely interpreted phrases Jesus ever used. And the interpretations are all over the map.
- J. I'm going to put on my professor hat. Let's study out this central message of the Great Teacher, Jesus.

II. *The Teaching of Christ / The Kingdom of God*

## A. The Info

- 1. Old Testament Roots: the roots of Christ's teaching are all in the Old Testament. Especially Daniel 2:44, Deuteronomy 17:14-20, and 2 Sam 7:12-16.
- 2. GOSPELS: About 119x (kingdom of God, of heaven, my kingdom, the kingdom)
- 3. ACTS: 8x (frequency is going way down)
- 4. EPISTLES: 18x in 16 books. (frequency way down)
- 5. REVELATION: 3x (frequency back up, but it's about the Kingdom)
  - a) The main person in the Bible who used the term, Kingdom of God/Heaven, was Jesus. After him, his followers began using other terms to express the same idea. The Holy Spirit guided the writers of Scripture to move away from the terminology of the kingdom. We can only guess why this happened. But it's probably because a) they could convey the same truths without getting stomped on by a bunch of insecure Roman kings, and b) because they could convey the same truths without confusing a bunch of people who thought "politics" as soon as they heard the word kingdom.
  - b) So the phrase kind of faded out in early Christianity—it was used but not as much as in the gospels. Other terms took over, like salvation, grace, heaven, and fruit.
  - c) So that's the data. Now, what's the heart of meaning? I don't want to take our eyes off of Christ the Victor, so let me remind you that this was the summary title for everything he taught.
  - d) So what did it mean. Well, that's a little tricky.

## B. The Meanings

- 1. Every word has a force field, and it pushes and shapes all the words around it. So it's the context that helps you understand a thing. This is important. Most words have a range of meanings, and they can be really different.

2. Take the word “p-r-e-s-e-n-t.” If I accent the first syllable, PREsent, it means a couple of things. For example, if it’s your birthday, and there’s a gift wrapped on the table, that’s your present. Or, if I’m in a classroom and the teacher is calling the roll, you might say, “present,” which means you are here. Or your counselor might tell you to be “present” with a person which means you’re emotionally engaged with what they’re saying. How do you know which is in view?
  3. The context.
  4. Same deal with the Kingdom of God:
    - a) *Heavenly Kingdom* (Matt 25:34, 2 Tim 4:18)
    - b) *Theocratic Kingdom* (Exodus 15:18, 19:6)
    - c) *Literal Kingdom* (1 Sam 8:4-22)
    - d) *Cosmic Kingdom* (1 Chron 29:11,12)
    - e) *Millennial Kingdom* (Rev 12:10, 1 Cor. 15:24, Rev 11:15, Dan 2:44)
    - f) *The Salvation Kingdom* (Col 1:13, 4:11, Rev 1:9)
    - g) *The Ethical Kingdom* (Romans 14:17, Matt 6:10, 1 Cor. 4:20)
    - h) *Spiritual Kingdom* (Luke 17:21, Mark 4:1-34, Mt 13:18,ff)
  5. It’s not good Bible teaching to just say, “Yeah, you know, the kingdom of God,” without specifying which aspect of the kingdom you’re talking about!
  6. I want to highlight the last one on our list, because it’s the most important and the most overlooked.
    - (1) *Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; “nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.” (Luke 17:20, 21, NKJV).*
      - (a) [Note... modern translations make a big mistake when they say “among you” or “in your midst.” The Greek word *entos* means within you, as in its only other occurrence in the New Testament, Matt 23:26.]
  7. What if most of the preaching in the Bible isn’t about building the kingdom of God in the world as much as it’s about building the kingdom of God in your own heart first!?
- C. The Core
1. The geeky part of me loves this stuff. But the normal part of me wants to make it simple, and so I’ll let that part take over.
  2. There are not 8 kingdoms of God. There’s just one, and they are all related and connected to each other.
  3. Here’s how:
  4. I have a happy place. It’s called Hawaii. The first time Margi and I went there, we were addicted. The sky, the sand, the water, the beaches, palm trees, gentle breezes, music, culture, and serenity. Have you been? It’s one of the most awesome places you’ll ever see. Just don’t make me go zip-lining again.
  5. Other than that, it’s perfect. As soon as you get off the plane in Hawaii, your blood pressure drops. Hawaii is my happy place. What’s your happy place?
  6. But as awesome as it might be, what would you say is the ultimate happy place, even better than Hawaii?
  7. Heaven.
  8. Start with heaven. The presence of God. No turmoil. No sorrows. No sadness. No pain. Breathtaking beauty. The Bible says at God’s right hand, there are “pleasures evermore.” Pleasures. It’s hard to even imagine.
  9. This is the ultimate happy place. And this is where we’re going if we have Jesus.
  10. When Jesus talked about the kingdom of God or of heaven, in the most complete sense, he is talking about heaven. He is talking about his Father’s throne room and his Father’s house.
  11. And all the other expressions of the kingdom are simply this: different ways that the atmosphere of heaven is brought into our lives on earth.
    - a) What is the point?
    - b) When Jesus taught, everything he taught had one singular goal: to tell you there’s a pipeline to heaven and to show you how to build it.
      - (1) Which means that even though you live on earth — even though you’re stuck inside this morally broken pain machine — you can breathe that peaceful, gentle, beautiful air of God’s heavenly kingdom.
    - c) You live in one element, but can breathe the atmosphere of another.
  12. The heavenly kingdom (first on our list) and the spiritual kingdom (last on our list) create a pipeline to bring about all the other expressions of the kingdom.
  13. When you build the kingdom of God inside your heart, something happens to you. You create a pipeline to heaven you never had before. This is wisdom. This is spiritual maturity. This is how you live in one element, but breathe the air of another—you breathe heaven’s atmosphere as the kingdom grows within you. This was the heart message of Jesus.

14. Not behavior. Not doing. Not activism for heaven. But growing mature and beautiful on the inside, so the kingdom of God is in you first, before it ever flows out into the world.

D. The Parable

1. Let's look at one of the mother-ship teachings of Jesus in the Bible.
  - a) *Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching: "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. "And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. "Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. "But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. "And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. "But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred." (Mark 4:2-8, NKJV).*
2. So Jesus tells the parable. And his disciples are confused. So he has to decode the parable and make it plain for them.
  - a) *"The sower sows the word. "And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. "These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; "and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble. "Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, "and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. "But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred." (Mark 4:14-20, NKJV).*
3. Let's decode the decoding...
  - a) The Sower is God.
    - (1) Jesus is reminding us that it's his kingdom, his power, his effort, his supernatural work, and his amazing grace. Unless God took the initiative, nothing good would ever happen in our lives. God is the sower. What's he sowing?
  - b) The Soil is the human heart.
    - (1) The condition of the seed is perfect, but the condition of the soil is the question mark. Either you want it or not. You care about it or not.
    - (2) Whatever the kingdom of God might be, it is something that is supposed grow inside your heart.
    - (3) Your emotions, your psychology, your intellect, your thoughts. Everything inside you. Your personality. Your health. Your well being. Mind, will, emotions.
    - (4) Jesus was a teacher, and his main teaching is that the heavenly Father is intensely interested in what is happening inside your heart. This is where the kingdom of God takes root—or not. This is where your pipeline is formed—or not— to breathe the atmosphere of heaven.
      - (a) What dysfunctions bring you down?
      - (b) What addictions control your life?
      - (c) What heartbreaks weigh on you day after day?
      - (d) What is broken inside your heart?
        - i) The power of God is there to heal you. When Jesus died on the cross, he opened access to heaven's healing power for you.
        - ii) The primary arena of operations for the power of God is the soil of the human heart.
          - (1) What is God putting in there?
  - c) The Seed is the Word of God (the Bible).
    - (1) The Bible. The truths. The supernatural, living and powerful Word of God.
    - (2) If there's any message I can get across to all of us, over and over and over again, it is that you cannot access the supernatural powers of heaven apart from a growing knowledge of the Scriptures.
    - (3) When Jesus was teaching about the kingdom of God, he was mainly talking about something God was trying to build inside you.
      - (a) The Kingdom of God:
 

God's relentless effort (sowing) to bring fullness of life to your inner world (soil) through the transforming power of his Word (seed).
    - (4) And this only happens as the seed takes root and grows in receptive, prepared soil.
    - (5) When the kingdom grows within you (spiritual maturity), that's where you'll find peace in any storm. That's when you stand strong in the eye of a hurricane. That's when you'll find comfort when you're sad, guidance when you're lost, rest when you're weary, truth when you're confused, and acceptance when you've blown it.

- (6) It's inside you. It's the Word of God, over time, taking root, and flourishing.
- (7) Jesus said, the Kingdom of God is within you," (Luke 17:21). Maybe one reason why so many Christians lose faith in tough times is because we've been shoved out to build Christ's kingdom in the world around us, but we've never taken the time to build it in the world within us.
- d) When Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God, he was talking about the gracious rule and reign of God first deep inside your own heart and life, and then and only then letting that beautiful light shine for everybody you know.
- e) We pastors make a tremendous mistake when we send people into the world to build God's kingdom out there, without ever helping them build it in themselves first.

#### E. Miracles and the Kingdom

1. Last week we talked about the miracles of Christ. I left you hanging with the question of whether God still does miracles today.
2. The kingdom of God was manifested by miracles, yes, but those miracles were never ends in themselves. Everybody Jesus raised from the dead, died again. Everybody Jesus healed, got sick again. The people Jesus fed got hungry again. The miracles were never the point.
3. They were pointers to something far better and far more important.
4. They were pointers to the saving work of Christ. So both his miracles and his teachings testified to the exact same thing: Jesus Christ came into the world to rewind the devastation caused by sin and the Fall.
  - a) In every single case, a miracle solved *A* problem. But Jesus didn't come to solve *a* problem in your life; he came to solve *the* problem.
  - b) Because all those problems that make us pray for miracles are really one thing: the gnarled outgrowths of a single malignant root called sin.
  - c) The great Cross of Christ, and our Savior's Finished Work there, released a flood of Calvary Love strong enough to wash away all the guilt and stain of sin.
    - (1) That's the biggest miracle of all.
      - (a) Aren't you thankful for that? I know I am.
5. If a miracle isn't pointing to Christ as Savior, don't believe it. If it isn't inspiring you to grow deeper in Scripture, don't buy it. If the miracle-working, prophecy-speaking, faith-healer isn't lifting up the Word of God as the transforming weapon of the Holy Spirit, walk away (Ephesians 6:17).
6. If we don't take our stand on the Bible, we'll be sucked into false teachings and all kinds of craziness.
7. And I don't mean a simple Bible verse, taken out of context, smeared on top of a miracle cupcake. That's not how to use God's Word.
  - a) There is simply no shortcut and no substitute for the patient, regular, ever-deeper exposure to the mighty Word of God.
8. Teachings. Promises. Realities. Truths. Doctrines. Theologies. Commands...because the heart of Scripture is Christ.
9. Scripture is the divine transport system to form Christ into the deepest parts of your soul. His power. His wisdom. His healing. His grace. His courage. His character. His joy. His love.
10. Jesus said, *"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4, NKJV)*
11. That's why we preach and teach. That's why we have small groups and classes, Bible studies and Grow U. That's why almost every sermon I preach begins with me saying, Open your Bible, please.

#### III. It's the Word.

- A. It's the Word that makes you strong.
- B. It's the Word that makes you brave.
- C. It's the Word that gives you an answer to Christ's enemies.
- D. It's the Word that gives you hope.
- E. The Word is able to make you wise.
- F. The Word is the Father's love letter, the Son's heart laid open, and the Spirit's sword.
- G. The Word equips you.
- H. The Word sanctifies you.
- I. The Word sustains you.
- J. The Word comforts you when you're sad, guides you when your lost, and lights a fire in your belly when your light grows dim. It's your inheritance, your privilege, your truth base, and your authority.
- K. It's a really big deal, and as long as God gives me a voice to speak and a pulpit to speak from, I will do my best to deliver the one thing worth delivering week after week — the invincible, inerrant, inspired, soul-transforming, life-giving teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, make us people of the Book.