

Harmony Newsletter

HARMONY PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH

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"Come thou with us, and we will do thee good..."-Numbers 10:29

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NEW YEARS MESSAGE

The first Sunday of 2012 fell on a New Years day. Surely, there was no better place to be on the first day of the New Year than in God's house with His people.

As I prayed for a theme for the upcoming year I thought of our Lord's words to His people in a former day, a day when the church was just beginning, a day in which there was much excitement about Christ's message, and a day in which there was much apathy and false doctrine in the kingdom: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). I titled my message: "A Priority for 2012".

According to our Lord Jesus, God's kingdom should have the *priority* in the hearts and lives of every one of His children. Even in our model prayer, the first thing we are to request is "Thy kingdom come." The little flock should be praying that God's kingdom would come with power in our lives, in our homes, and in the world.

One of the greatest challenges of life is keeping our priorities in order. The world has a way of tearing us away from God's kingdom. We tend to get our world upside down. We can get our marriages upside down. Our whole lives can get upside down if we do not keep our priorities in order. Our Lord knows this so He faithfully gives us a simple admonition: "Seek ye first".

Of course, there are other things we must seek. Jesus did not tell us we were to seek the kingdom and live in a cave. Priority! That is the import of the message. We must follow the simple acronym: K.I.S.S....Keep It Simple Saints. Keep the kingdom first!

If you will notice, Jesus contrasts the kingdom to *things*, "and all these **things** shall be added to you." Things are the *things* that tend to get our world upside down, and our priorities out of order. Jesus mentions food, clothing, and money. That includes all the things that money will buy: houses, cars, and the many things that we think we can't live without. Most of these things are not evil in and of themselves. When we give them the priority, they have become idols.

If we are seeking *things* more than God's kingdom, we must work on Sunday to *pay* for them. If we are seeking things above God's kingdom, we must be away from God's house to *play* with them. If we are seeking things above God's kingdom, our hearts are torn between the two. From all of this, our lives, and the local church will suffer. Jesus knows this. So He gives us this admonition.

But God's kingdom is more than the local church. Much, much more. According to John Gill, "God's kingdom embraces all created intelligences, both in heaven and on earth, who are willingly subject to God and thus in fellowship

with Him." (John Gill Commentary). Paul described in similar terms: "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." (Hebrews 12:22-24).

You will notice that the church is mentioned in that statement. The church is a part of the kingdom that is visible but there is much more to God's kingdom than the local church.

Though it is sad, many dispensationalists are saying that the kingdom is not with us today. According to their wisdom, "John the Baptist, Christ, and the apostles announced that the kingdom of national Israel was 'at hand'. That offer was rejected. As a result the 'kingdom of heaven' in its earthly manifested form was postponed until Christ's second advent." (Unger's Bible Dictionary, Lewis Sperry Chafer).

These are saying that Jesus, John the Baptist, and the apostles failed because of men. Men were stronger than God. But Jesus didn't offer himself to man. He offered Himself to God as a sacrifice. The atonement has been made. Jesus was completely successful. The psalmist has written that in spite of the heathen raging, and people imagining a vain thing, in spite of all of that "I will set my king upon the holy hill of Zion." He didn't say, "I might set my king on the hill", but I "will". Where there is a king, there is a kingdom!

Of course, they must believe this to allow for an earthly, 1000 year reign. If the kingdom is with us now, their whole dispensational theory is ruined. This they know but they will not come right out and tell the masses. But there is another problem with their dispensational sensationalism. If Jesus was rejected the first time, how can they be so sure, so dogmatic, that the same thing will not happen again? If men prevented the first kingdom, surely they could prevent the second attempt? And if Jesus, John the Baptist, and the apostles couldn't succeed the first time, pray tell me who will be able to succeed in the second attempt? No, the kingdom is here! Jesus was, and is, a complete success. He has saved His people from their sins. This is the cry of the kingdom! The King has come. He is victorious! Cast your crowns at His feet.

There are numerous texts that confirm the present presence of God's kingdom. The most obvious is our text: "Seek ye first the kingdom..." Surely, Jesus would not encourage His people to seek a kingdom that did not exist.

Jesus also said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32). If God has given us something, surely it is here.

He also said, "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you" (Luke 11:20). He did cast them out.

Again, Jesus said, "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." (Luke 16:16). You can't press into something that does not exist.

John the Baptist's sermon went like this: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark 1:15). The kingdom is at hand, presently available.

That seems to be the problem with many of the dispensationalists. They do not believe the gospel. Gospel means good news. Jesus has saved His people from their sins. They seem to think that Jesus just laid the groundwork and the rest is left up to preachers to finish what Jesus couldn't do. If they would believe the gospel, believe that Jesus was successful, then they would believe the kingdom is here.

O.K., one more: Jesus said, "...behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21). Present, perfect tense! Yes, a part of God's kingdom dwells within the born again child of God. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost. The law is written on our hearts. There we find the fruit of the spirit which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. It is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Yes, the kingdom is here, and it literally indwells the children of God. Seek these things.

Some men try to say that the terms, "Kingdom of Heaven" and "Kingdom of God" actually define two different kingdoms. Surely, that is straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. The same terms are used in parallel scriptures in the synoptic gospels. The term "Kingdom of God" tells us whose kingdom it is. The term "Kingdom of Heaven" tells us where it is from. It is an extension of heaven itself. It has to do with heavenly things, as opposed to earthly things. How confusing would it be to try to press into two different kingdoms!

I have used a lot of ink to try to give you a glimpse of God's kingdom. But let me be more specific concerning our priority for 2012. Seek ye first God's kingdom. Place it above all other things. If you are a member of a church, be faithful to it every Sunday. Let nothing come between you and your worship of Christ. If you are not a member of the church, and you love Jesus Christ, be baptized at once. Support it financially. Give Him your first-fruits, not what is left over after entertainment and eating out. If God has revealed truth to you, believe it, act upon it, and follow it. Seek a daily walk with Jesus Christ.

Be more committed to the reading of God's word. Work on your prayer life. Minister to those in need. Seek ye first. There is a lot to that admonition. But I believe Jesus knew what He was talking about. If we are busy in the kingdom we have little time to do things that are not profitable. Our minds are filled with the things of God, and we are less concerned with our problems and fears. Seek ye first. Let this be our priority for 2012.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ✓ Men's game night: Saturday night, January 21st. The men will be preparing the game they have taken over the last year. Supper 6 P.M. Fellowship will begin about 4 P.M. Come and fellowship with us and bring a friend. There will be plenty of food!
- ✓ We are working on a time to sing at the Crossing at Malvern. We have several church members who are residents there and are unable to attend church. The time will be announced when we have more information. I hope you will come and sing with us there.
- ✓ At the present time we will not be mailing our sermons to our shut-ins and those who have requested a copy of our services. We greatly appreciate Sister Angela Lindsey's faithfulness and labor in this ministry. She and Brother Jeff have moved to Texas due to his job and we are looking for someone to continue this ministry. If you are interested, please let me know.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- ✓ Sister Brenda Stafford: Due to her diabetes Sister Brenda had to have her foot and lower leg amputated. Please pray for her and her family. It was a special blessing to see her in church Sunday!
- ✓ Sister Louise Beason has had surgery on her leg to open up some arteries to her lower leg. She has also been diagnosed with congestive heart failure.
- ✓ Brother Johnny Shaffer has been hospitalized for fluid on his lungs. He has recently undergone treatment for a heart condition.
- ✓ Sister Lema Clayton is recovering from hip surgery at the Malvern Nursing Home
- ✓ Sister Barbara McAnally is recovering from knee surgery
- ✓ Remember our shut-ins