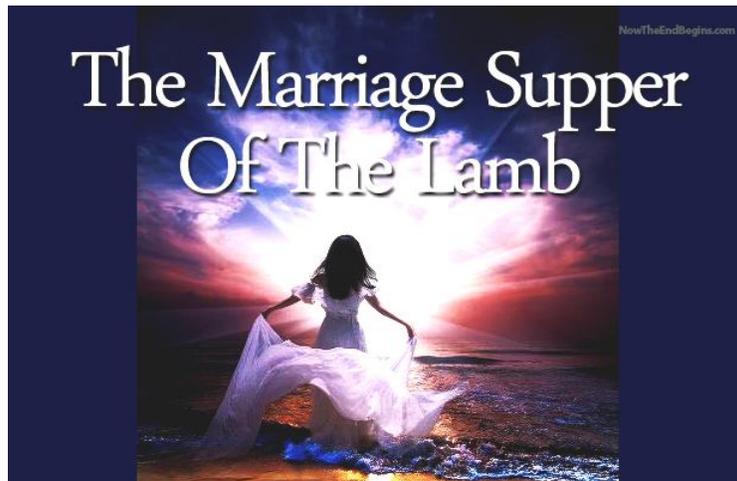


## September Week #3 Devotionals & Consideration



When we come to Jesus we can imagine ourselves being in the crowd and listening to His words. How did Jesus begin His ministry? What was important to Him? What would He want us to hear?

According to **Mark 1:12-13**, “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God; and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel.” What can we learn from this passage, and what might Jesus mean by his words?

### The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

Jesus began his ministry by teaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. **What did Jesus say about the kingdom of God?** The following verses illustrate what Jesus had to say about the kingdom.

**Matthew 5:5** Blessed are the poor in spirit, *who come unto Me*; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**Matthew 5:12** Blessed are they that are persecuted for My name's sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**Matthew 5:21** Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so to do, he shall in no wise be saved in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach these commandments of the law until it

be fulfilled, the same shall be called great, and shall be saved in the kingdom of heaven.

**Matthew 13:30-32** The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.... The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened....

**Matthew 13: 46-49** The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field. And when a man hath found a treasure which is hid he secureth it, and, straightway, for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. And again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world.

The preceding scriptures show what Jesus had to say about the kingdom. The following paragraphs summarize more of His words about the kingdom.

In the parable of the sower, we learn that those who hear the word of the kingdom and receive the seed on good ground will bear fruit, some a hundred-fold, some sixty, and some thirty. And from the

parable of the wheat and the tares, we learn that the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked. At the harvest, or the end of the world, the wicked will be cast out and the righteous shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father.

Later, in **Matthew 18**, the disciples had questions about the kingdom of heaven.

**Matthew 18: 1-3** Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

And in **Matthew 18:23-34**, we learn that the kingdom of heaven is like a king who forgave his servants their debts, and that we are required to forgive others their trespasses.

These and other scriptures help us understand what Jesus wants for those who would *come unto Him*.

### **The Time is Fulfilled – The Messiah has Come**

Returning to our opening scripture from **Mark 1:12-13**, “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God; and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel.” What else can we learn from this passage, and what might Jesus mean by His words?

What did Jesus mean by, “The time is fulfilled...”? In **Luke 4: 16-21** we read the following: “And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as His custom was He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto Him, the book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where

it was written, the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and He sat down. And the eyes of all those who were in the synagogue, were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them. *This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.*” Jesus was saying that He was the anointed one, the Messiah prophesied by Isaiah.

### **What else did Jesus say about Himself?**

In **John 3:11-22** He tells Nicodemus that He comes from heaven, will be lifted up, was given by God to save the world, and that the holy prophets had testified of Him.

In **John 4**, He tells the woman at the well that, “whosoever drinketh of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” He also says, “I who speak unto thee am the Messias.”

In **John 5**, He claims Sonship by saying, “For the Father loveth the Son...” He goes on to claim to be the Son of God.

In **John 6**, Jesus says, “I am the bread of life, he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst. All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me: and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine Own Will, but the Will of Him that sent Me.... And this is the Will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise Him up in the resurrection of the just at the last day.” When the Jews murmured at

His words, He said, "No man can *come unto Me*, except he doeth the Will of My Father who hath sent Me. And this is the Will of Him who hath sent Me, that you receive the Son; for the Father beareth record of Him; and He who receives the testimony, and doeth the will of him who sent Me, I will raise up in the resurrection of the just."

But the capstone of what Jesus says is found in **John 8:38** when he says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." Jesus is claiming that He is the God of Abraham, the God of Moses, The One God. To confirm that, He says in **John 10:30**, "I and my Father are one." Jesus is one with God.

### The Kingdom of God is at Hand

Returning again to our opening scripture from **Mark 1:12-13**, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God; and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel."

What does He mean by the kingdom of God is at hand?

In **Matthew 6:38** He said, "Seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

In **Luke 11**, the people said that he cast out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils. But Jesus said in **verse 21**, "If I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God has come upon you."

In **Luke 17** Jesus healed the ten lepers. After the one leper, the Samaritan, came back to give glory to God, the Pharisees demanded to know when the kingdom of God should come. Jesus answered them and said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; Neither shall they say, Lo, here! Or, Lo, there! For,

behold, the kingdom of God has already come unto you." He continues by warning His disciples to not follow after false reports, but rather to be ready to be gathered into the new heaven and new earth.

However, in **Luke 19:11-25** we read that some Jews taught that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. In response, Jesus told the parable of the nobleman who left money with his servants when he went to a far country to receive for himself a kingdom. He expected the servants to make use of the money wisely until his return. One increased the money by ten-fold, one by five-fold, and one did not increase. While we generally liken this to the parable of the talents, and focus on making good use of the gifts that God gives us, part of the point in this version is that the nobleman would be gone for awhile before returning.

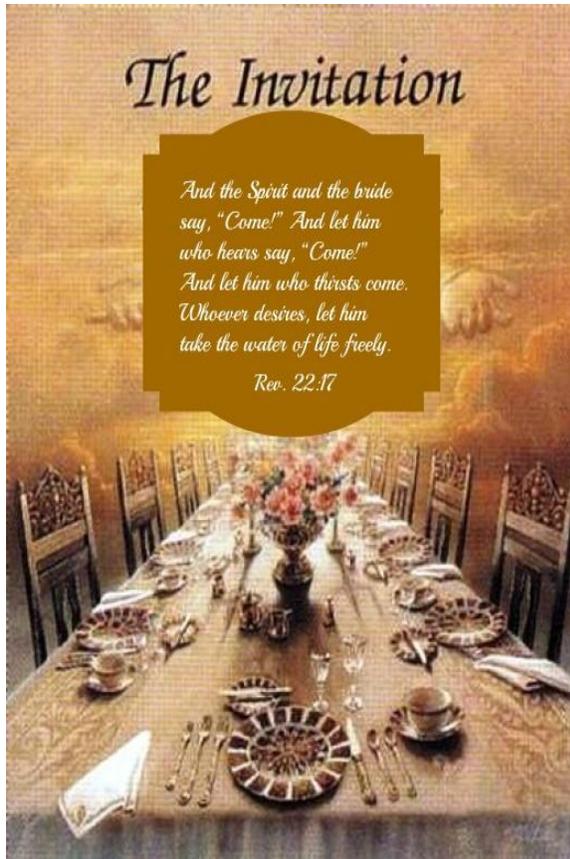
Putting these scriptures together, we see that the kingdom of God in the heart and our response to it is immediate and we are expected to live and be blessed as in the kingdom. However, the return of Jesus bringing a new heaven and a new earth will not be until the time appointed, and when it comes, we should be ready without "looking back."

### Repent Ye and Believe the Gospel

Returning one last time to our verse, from **Mark 1:12-13**, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God; and saying, **The time is fulfilled**, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel."

What did Jesus say about repenting and believing? Very early in His ministry He said, "Blessed are they who shall believe on Me...and come down into the depth of humility, and be baptized in My name; for they shall be visited with fire and the Holy Ghost and receive a remission of their sins." In **Matthew 7:22** He said, "Repent, therefore, and enter ye in at the strait

gate....” And in **Matthew 9**, the Pharisees ask why Jesus eats with publicans and sinners. He says, “I am not come to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance.”



Regarding the gospel, He said in **Mark 8:43**, “He that layeth down his life for My sake and the gospel’s, shall come with Him, and shall be clothed with His glory in the cloud on the right hand of the Son of Man.”

Other gems from the words of Christ are, “Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.”

“Lay up not for yourselves treasure upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor

rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

“Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

“Ask of God; ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

“Hearken, and hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”

Certainly, if we *Come to Jesus*, we will see that being students of His words will bring us closer to Him.