

Seek First the Kingdom of God & His Righteousness- Part 2

Mat 6:31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' **32** "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **33** "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. **34** "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. *Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

- ✓ In our last lesson, we looked at two contrasting actions set side by side; one that we are not to do and one that we are to do. We are not to be distracted from seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness by being preoccupied with the things of this life, as our Father knows that we need them.
- ✓ Faith and Hope are key components in the seeking of His kingdom and His righteousness; seeking of His kingdom and His righteousness are synonymous as one cannot be without the other.

His righteousness

- ❖ Since we cannot seek the kingdom of God apart from seeking His righteousness and vice versa, what is 'His righteousness' and how can we seek it?
 - ✓ Is it an outward show and can you tell that someone is righteous by looking at them?
 - ✓ Please let us note that we are to seek first 'His Kingdom' and – 'His righteousness' – the righteousness that is to come from God.
- ❖ So, to begin to understand what 'His righteousness' is, let's go back and review what the Lord said in the previous chapter;

Matt. 5:20 "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

 - ✓ We should note in this verse that our entrance into the kingdom of heaven is based on whether our righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees or not.
 - ✓ One might therefore ask; how was their righteousness that we must exceed? Please remember that we do not have to guess or bring man's wisdom into this as scripture interprets itself.
- ❖ The scribes and the Pharisees thrived within a legalistic system of dos and don'ts extracted from God's word, even burdening the people with regulations of their own invention -

Matt. 15:1 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, **2** "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? **4** For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' **5** But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God"— **6** then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. **7** Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

8 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. **9** And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' "

- ❖ So, the Scribes and Pharisees are teaching as doctrines the commandments of men that what the scripture admonishes us to do;

2Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Seek First the Kingdom of God & His Righteousness- Part 2

- ❖ As a consequence, the righteousness that Scribes and Pharisees produced was **self-righteousness** born out of actions emanating from within themselves, rather than actions emanating out of faith (faithful obedience to what God has said).
- ❖ Now self-righteousness in any form is unacceptable to God, hence Christ tells the people that unless their righteousness goes beyond the self-righteousness exemplified by the Scribes and Pharisees they would by no means enter the Kingdom being offered to them-
Isa. 64:6 *But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;*
- ✓ Hence, they were, and we are, to seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness – the righteousness that can only come from God.
- ❖ Let's also look at Matthew 23 to see more on what the scripture has revealed on the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees;
Matt.23:1 *"Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, 2 saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. 3 Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. 4 For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. 5 But all their works they do to be seen by men.....13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.....28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*
- ❖ We can see that these Scribes and the Pharisees were not doing what they were asking the people to do. In actual fact, they were the teachers of the law. They knew what the law of Moses required them to do and no wonder they sat on Moses' seat and expected others to obey the law whereas they were not doers of it themselves. According to James 1:22, when we are hearers and not doers of the word, we deceive ourselves and all we have then is self righteousness.
- ❖ Let us see what Paul wrote concerning the righteousness that is to come from God;
Phil.3:4... *If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;*
- ❖ And the righteousness that is from God is ours only by faith, never from doing that which seems right in our own eyes or from adhering to the commandments and traditions of men.
- ❖ To understand the righteousness from God by faith, we only need to revisit that written about the father of faith – Abraham.
- ❖ We will remember that God made a number of progressive promises to Abraham concerning his inheritance and his descendants.

Seek First the Kingdom of God & His Righteousness- Part 2

Gen 15:5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." **6** And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

- ❖ And having given the promises there then came the test to prove the genuineness of Abraham's faith;
Gen. 22:1 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." **2** Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."
- ❖ And if we then go to God's own commentary on these two interrelated events we will see their significance;
Heb 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, **18** of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," **19** concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.
- ❖ Abraham's action in offering up Isaac was by faith. He believed what God had said in Genesis 15 concerning Isaac and the heavenly realm of the Kingdom and therefore in Genesis 22 fully expected God to bring about that which He had promised earlier even if that meant raising his son from the dead.
- ❖ And this event is opened to us further in –
James 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? **22** Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? **23** And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. **24** You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.
- ❖ What we are seeing here is what we could refer to as a 'Divine exchange'. Abraham believed God and acted upon that belief in faithful obedience. God then took Abraham's faithful obedience and put it on account for him as righteousness – it was the righteousness that God gave, His righteousness, given to Abraham through Abraham's faith. And by this Abraham's faith, what he had believed was brought to a place of completion, or to its goal.
- ✓ There is no self-righteousness to be seen here, only the righteousness of God accounted to Abraham, by faith.
- ❖ And this 'Divine exchange' has particular significance for us because of what we see in –
1Pet 1:9 receiving the end [Goal] of your faith--the salvation of your souls.
- ✓ So then, our faith is brought to its goal, the salvation of our soul, the reward of the inheritance, not by believing God alone, but through works that prove the genuineness of, what we have believed.
- ✓ Our acts of faithful obedience with respect to that which God has said will be exchanged into righteousness, the righteousness accounted to us by God. The righteousness that is from God by faith.
- ❖ The word translated 'accounted' in Genesis 15:6 literally means to weave, as in weaving a fabric – which is an interesting thought when we consider –
Rev. 19:7 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." **8** And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Seek First the Kingdom of God & His Righteousness- Part 2

- ❖ Now we understand that the wedding garment that Christ's wife will wear is made up of acts of righteousness – acts of righteousness woven together in exactly the same way as we have seen with Abraham.
- ❖ Having believed what God has promised concerning our inheritance, we would then govern our lives accordingly, producing action or works in connection with our faith. That then brings our faith – what we have believed to its goal, its completion – resulting in the salvation of our souls (Please read 1 Pet. Chapt.1).
- ❖ Our acts of faithful obedience in respect of what God has said will be translated into righteousness, the righteousness accounted to us by God. The righteousness that is from God by faith.
- ❖ Both what we have believed, and the righteousness accounted to us through our works are provided by God as He is the only One who can provide the 'fine linen, clean and bright'. This is why self-righteousness can only ever be seen as 'filthy rags' and the contrast between the two is striking.

Rom 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

- ❖ The good news concerning the Christ, is the power of God to the salvation of the soul for everyone who believes, because in this good news the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.
- ❖ There is then a process as we go from faith to faith in which the righteousness of God is revealed. And this process can only be achieved through our faithful obedience and can we believe that what Abraham did was written for our sake as well? We can be sure that the same righteousness would be imputed to us who believe as we follow the steps of our father of faith.

Rom.4:3 *For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."..... 20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. 22 And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness." 23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, 24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.*

Questions

1. As we seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, how significant is what the Lord says in Matthew 5:20 and why?
2. From what we looked at in Matthew chapter 15 and 23, how do we understand the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees?
3. How do we understand Isaiah 64:6
4. How does what Apostle Paul says in Philippians 3 help us to understand the two types of righteousness?
5. How does the father of faith, Abraham teach us how to seek God's righteousness?(Scripture references?)

Seek First the Kingdom of God & His Righteousness- Part 2

6. Please explain Revelation 19:7-8

- **2 Timothy 2:15- Remain diligent as you prayerfully study. See you on Saturday God willing!**