

Kingdom of God

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Forward

Seeking the kingdom of God means making Jesus the Lord and King of your life. He must control every area—your work, play, plans, and relationships.

The kingdom of God should not be one of your many concerns. It must be central to all you do. Do not hold back any areas of your life from God's control. As Lord and Creator, he wants to help provide what you need as well as guide how you use what he provides.

The kingdom of God was a focal point of Jesus' teaching. It was not just a future kingdom; it was among them, embodied in him.

The Messiah. Even though the kingdom will not be complete until Jesus comes again in glory, we do not have to wait to taste it. The kingdom of God begins in the hearts of those who believe in Jesus (Luke 17:21).

It is as present with us today as it was with the Judeans almost 2,000 years ago.

Chapter 1



Explanation of the kingdom of God

Matthew 3:2

"Turn from your sins and turn to God, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near."

The kingdom of heaven began when God himself entered human history as a man. Today Jesus Christ reigns in the hearts of believers, but the kingdom of heaven will not be fully realized until all evil in the world is judged and removed. Christ came to earth first as a suffering servant; he will come again as King and Judge to rule victoriously over all the earth.

Matthew 4:17

From then on, Jesus began to preach, "Turn from your sins and turn to God, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near."

The "kingdom of heaven" has the same meaning as the "kingdom of God" in Mark and Luke. Matthew uses this phrase because the Jews, out of their intense reverence and respect, did not pronounce God's name. The kingdom of heaven is still near because it has arrived in our hearts.

Jesus started his ministry with the very word people had heard John the Baptist say: “Repent.” The message is the same today as when Jesus and John gave it. Becoming a follower of Christ means turning away from our self-centeredness and “self” control and turning our lives over to Christ’s direction and control.

Matthew 10:37

If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine.

Christ calls us to a higher mission than to find comfort and tranquility in this life. Love of family is a law of God, but even this love can be self-serving and used as an excuse not to serve God or do his work.

Luke 9:11

But the crowds found out where he was going, and they followed him. And he welcomed them, teaching them about the Kingdom of God and curing those who were ill.

The kingdom of God was a focal point of Jesus’ teaching. He explained that it was not just a future kingdom; it was among them, embodied in him, the Messiah. Even though the kingdom will not be complete until Jesus comes again in glory, we do not have to wait to taste it. The kingdom of God begins in the hearts of those who believe in Jesus (Luke 17:21). It is as present with us today as it was with the Judeans almost 2,000 years ago.

1 Peter 2:11

Dear brothers and sisters, you are foreigners and aliens here. So I warn you to keep away from evil desires because they fight against your very souls.

As believers, we are “aliens and strangers” in this world, because our real home is with God. Heaven is not the pink-cloud-and-harp existence popular in cartoons. Heaven is where God lives. Life in heaven operates according to God’s principles and values, and it is eternal and unshakable.

Heaven came to earth in the symbolism of the Jewish sanctuary (the tabernacle and temple) where God’s presence dwelt. It came in a fuller way in the person of Jesus Christ, “God with us.” It permeated the entire world as the Holy Spirit came to live in every believer.

Someday, after God judges and destroys all sin, the kingdom of heaven will rule every corner of this earth. John saw this day in a vision, and he cried out, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them.

They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God” (Rev. 21:3). Our true loyalty should be to our citizenship in heaven, not to our citizenship here, because the earth will be destroyed.

Our loyalty should be to God’s truth, his way of life, and his dedicated people. Because we are loyal to God, we often will feel like strangers in a world that would prefer to ignore God.

Chapter 2



Qualifications to enter kingdom of God

Matthew 5:3-12

"God blesses those who realize their need for him,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them.

God blesses those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

God blesses those who are gentle and lowly,
for the whole earth will belong to them.

God blesses those who are hungry and thirsty for justice,
for they will receive it in full.

God blesses those who are merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

God blesses those whose hearts are pure,
for they will see God.

God blesses those who work for peace,
for they will be called the children of God.

God blesses those who are persecuted because they live for God,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

"God blesses you when you are mocked and persecuted and lied
about because you are my followers.

Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in
heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted,
too.

Jesus began his sermon with words that seem to contradict each
other. But God's way of living usually contradicts the world's way
of living.

If you want to live for God you must be ready to say and do what
seems strange to the world. You must be willing to give when
others take, to love when others hate, to help when others abuse.

By giving up your own rights in order to serve others, you will one
day receive everything God has in store for you.

There are at least four ways to understand the Beatitudes.

- (1) They are a code of ethics for the disciples and a standard of
conduct for all believers.
- (2) They contrast kingdom values (what is eternal) with worldly
values (what is temporary).

(3) They contrast the superficial “faith” of the Pharisees with the real faith Christ wants.

4) They show how the Old Testament expectations will be fulfilled in the new kingdom.

These beatitudes are not multiple choices—pick what you like and leave the rest. They must be taken as a whole. They describe what we should be like as Christ’s followers.

Past, present, and future aspects of kingdom of God

Matthew 6:10

May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven.

The phrase “Your kingdom come” is a reference to God’s spiritual reign, not Israel’s freedom from Rome.

God’s kingdom was announced in the covenant with Abraham (Matthew 8:11; Luke 13:28), is present in Christ’s reign in believers’ hearts (Luke 17:21), and will be complete when all evil is destroyed and God establishes the new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1).

When we pray “Your will be done,” we are not resigning ourselves to fate, but praying that God’s perfect purpose will be accomplished in this world as well as in the next.

Luke 4:43

But he replied, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other places, too, because that is why I was sent."

Matthew 7:21

"Not all people who sound religious are really godly. They may refer to me as 'Lord,' but they still won't enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The decisive issue is whether they obey my Father in heaven.

Some self-professed athletes can “talk” a great game, but that tells you nothing about their athletic skills. And not everyone who talks about heaven belongs to God’s kingdom.

Jesus is more concerned about our *walk* than our *talk*. He wants us to *do* right, not just *say* the right words.

Your house (which represents your life, Matthew 7:24) will withstand the storms of life only if you do what is right instead of just talking about it. What you do cannot be separated from what you believe.

Jesus exposed those people who sounded religious but had no personal relationship with him. On “that day” (the day of judgment), only our relationship with Christ—our acceptance of him as Savior and our obedience to him—will matter.

Many people think that if they are “good” people and say religious things, they will be rewarded with eternal life. In reality, faith in Christ is what will count at the judgment.

Chapter 3



The kingdom of God has already begun in hearts of believers.

Matthew 10:7

Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near.

The Jews were waiting for the Messiah to usher in his kingdom. They hoped for a political and military kingdom that would free them from Roman rule and bring back the days of glory under David and Solomon.

But Jesus was talking about a spiritual kingdom. The gospel today is that the kingdom is still *near*. Jesus, the Messiah, has already begun his kingdom on earth in the hearts of his followers.

One day the kingdom will be fully realized. Then evil will be destroyed and all people will live in peace with one another.

John 3:3

Jesus replied, "I assure you, unless you are born again, you can never see the Kingdom of God."

What did Nicodemus know about the kingdom? From the Bible he knew it would be ruled by God, it would be restored on earth. It would incorporate God's people. Jesus revealed to this devout Pharisee that the kingdom would come to the whole world (John 3:16), not just the Jews, and that Nicodemus wouldn't be a part of it unless he was personally born again (John 3:5).

This was a revolutionary concept: the kingdom is personal, not national or ethnic, and its entrance requirements are repentance and spiritual rebirth. Jesus later taught that God's kingdom has *already begun* in the hearts of believers (Luke 17:21).

It will be fully realized when Jesus returns again to judge the world and abolish evil forever (Rev. 21; Rev. 22).

Acts 1:6

When the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, are you going to free Israel now and restore our kingdom?"

During the years of Jesus' ministry on earth, the disciples continually wondered about his kingdom.

When would it come? What would their role be? In the traditional view, the Messiah would be an earthly conqueror who would free Israel from Rome.

But the kingdom Jesus spoke about was first of all a *spiritual* kingdom established in the hearts and lives of believers (Luke 17:21). God's presence and power dwell in believers in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Like other Jews, the disciples chafed under their Roman rulers. They wanted Jesus to free Israel from Roman power and then become their king.

Jesus replied that God the Father sets the timetable for all events—worldwide, national, and personal. If you want changes that God isn't making immediately, don't become impatient. Instead, trust God's timetable.

The kingdom of God is explained in parables.

Here is another story Jesus told: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field.

Mark 4:26-29

Jesus also said, "Here is another illustration of what the Kingdom of God is like: A farmer planted seeds in a field, and then he went on with his other activities.

As the days went by, the seeds sprouted and grew without the farmer's help, because the earth produces crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens.

And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle."

This parable about the kingdom of God, recorded only by Mark, reveals that spiritual growth is a continual, gradual process that is finally consummated in a harvest of spiritual maturity.

We can understand the process of spiritual growth by comparing it to the slow but certain growth of a plant.

**The kingdom of God comes from small beginnings
To great results.**

Matthew 13:31-32

Here is another illustration Jesus used: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field.

It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants and grows into a tree where birds can come and find shelter in its branches."

The mustard seed was the smallest seed a farmer used. Jesus used this parable to show that the kingdom has small beginnings but will grow and produce great results.

The kingdom of God has worldwide impact.

Matthew 13:33

Jesus also used this illustration: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like Yeast used by a woman making bread. Even though she used Much flour, the yeast permeated every part of the dough."

In other Bible passages, yeast is used as a symbol of evil or uncleanness. Here it is a positive symbol of growth. Although yeast looks like a minor ingredient, it permeates the whole loaf. Although the kingdom began small and was nearly invisible, it would soon grow and have a great impact on the world.

Chapter 4



The kingdom of God is of priceless value.

Matthew 13:44-46

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered Hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field—and to get the treasure, too!

"Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a pearl merchant on the Look out for choice pearls. When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!

Believers cannot judge who will be in kingdom of God.

Matthew 13:47-49

"Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a fishing net that is thrown into the water and gathers fish of every kind.

When the net is full, they drag it up onto the shore, sit down, sort the good fish into crates, and throw the bad ones away.

That is the way it will be at the end of the world. The angels will Come and separate the wicked people from the godly,

The parable of the fishing net has the same meaning as the parable of the wheat and weeds. We are to obey God and tell others about his grace and goodness, but we cannot dictate who is a part of the Kingdom of Heaven and who is not.

Why the religious leaders missed kingdom of God.

Matthew 13:52

Then he added, "Every teacher of religious law who has become a disciple in the Kingdom of Heaven is like a person who brings out of the storehouse the new teachings as well as the old."

Anyone who understands God's real purpose in the law as revealed in the Old Testament has a real treasure.

The Old Testament points the way to Jesus, the Messiah. Jesus always upheld its authority and relevance.

But there is a double benefit to those who understand Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of heaven. This was a new treasure that Jesus was revealing.

Both the old and new teaching give practical guidelines for faith and for living in the world. The religious leaders, however, were trapped in the old and blind to the new.

They were looking for a future kingdom *preceded* by judgment. Jesus, however, taught that the kingdom was *now* and the judgment was future.

The religious leaders were looking for a physical and temporal kingdom (via military rebellion and physical rule), but they were blind to the spiritual significance of the kingdom that Christ brought.

The “keys” to the kingdom of God.

Matthew 16:19

And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you lock on earth will be locked in heaven, and whatever you open on earth will be opened in heaven."

The keys give the authority to announce the forgiveness of sins (John 20:23).

Some say the keys may be the opportunity to bring people to the kingdom of heaven by presenting them with the message of salvation found in God's Word (Acts 15:7-9).

The religious leaders thought they held the keys of the kingdom, and they tried to shut some people out.

We cannot decide to open or close the kingdom of heaven for others, but God uses us to help others find the way inside.

To all who believe in Christ and obey his words, the kingdom doors are swung wide open.

Misconceptions about kingdom of God

Matthew 17:22-23

One day after they had returned to Galilee, Jesus told them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed. [23] He will be killed, but three days later he will be raised from the dead." And the disciples' hearts were filled with grief.

The disciples didn't fully comprehend the purpose of Jesus' death and resurrection until Pentecost (Acts 2).

We shouldn't get upset at ourselves for being slow to understand everything about Jesus. After all, the disciples were with him, saw his miracles, heard his words, and still had difficulty understanding.

Despite their questions and doubts, however, they believed. We should do no less.

The disciples didn't understand why Jesus kept talking about his death because they expected him to set up a political kingdom.

His death, they thought, would dash their hopes. They didn't know that Jesus' death and resurrection would make his kingdom possible.

Chapter 5



Membership in kingdom of God rules

Matthew 20:1

"For the Kingdom of Heaven is like the owner of an estate who went out early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard.

Jesus further clarified the membership rules of the kingdom of heaven—entrance is by God's grace alone. In this parable, God is the landowner, and believers are the workers. This parable speaks especially to those who feel superior because of heritage or favored position, to those who feel superior because they have spent so much time with Christ, and to new believers as reassurance of God's grace.

Importance of bearing fruit for kingdom of God.

Matthew 25:29-30

To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who are unfaithful, even what little they have will be taken away. Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

This parable describes the consequences of two attitudes to Christ's return. The person who diligently prepares for it by investing his or her time and talent to serve God will be rewarded. The person who has no heart for the work of the kingdom will be punished. God rewards faithfulness. Those who bear no fruit for God's kingdom cannot expect to be treated the same as those who are faithful.

Disciples would see kingdom of God arrive.

Mark 9:1

Jesus went on to say, "I assure you that some of you standing here right now will not die before you see the Kingdom of God arrive in great power!"

What did Jesus mean when he said that some of the disciples would see the kingdom of God come with power? There are several possibilities. He could have been foretelling his transfiguration, resurrection and ascension, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, or his second coming.

The transfiguration is a strong possibility because Mark immediately tells that story. In the transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8), Peter, James, and John saw Jesus' glory, identity, and power as the Son of God (2 Peter 1:16).

Why it is difficult for rich to enter into kingdom of God.

Mark 10:23

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for rich people to get into the Kingdom of God!"

Jesus said it was very difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. This is true because the rich, with most of their basic physical needs met, often become self-reliant.

When they feel empty, they can buy something new to dull the pain that was meant to drive them toward God. Their abundance and self-sufficiency become their deficiency. The person who has everything on earth can still lack what is most important—eternal life.

Developing proper perspective of kingdom of God.

Mark 12:24

Jesus replied, "Your problem is that you don't know the Scriptures, and you don't know the power of God.

We need not be afraid of eternal life because of the unknowns, however.

Instead of wondering what God's coming kingdom will be like, we should concentrate on our relationship with Christ right now because in the new kingdom, we will be with him.

If we learn to love and trust Christ *now*, we will not be afraid of what he has in store for us then.

Chapter 6



Relationships in the kingdom of God

Mark 12:25-27

For when the dead rise, they won't be married. They will be like the angels in heaven.

But now, as to whether the dead will be raised—haven't you ever read about this in the writings of Moses, in the story of the burning bush? Long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died, God said to Moses, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'

So he is the God of the living, not the dead. You have made a serious error."

Jesus' statement does not mean that people won't recognize their partners in the coming kingdom. It simply means that God's new order will not be an extension of this life and that the same physical and natural rules won't apply.

Jesus' comment in Mark 12:25 was not intended to be the final word on marriage in heaven. Instead, this response was Jesus' refusal to answer the Sadducees' riddle and fall into their trap.

Sidestepping their question about the much-married woman, he gave a definitive answer to their question about the resurrection.

Why kingdom of God is good news.

Luke 4:43

But he replied, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other places, too, because that is why I was sent."

The kingdom of God was good news! It was good news to the Jews because they had been awaiting the coming of the promised Messiah ever since the Babylonian captivity.

It is good news for us also because it means freedom from slavery to sin and selfishness. The kingdom of God is here and now because the Holy Spirit lives in the hearts of believers.

Yet it is also in the future because Jesus will return to reign over a perfect kingdom where sin and evil no longer exist.

The kingdom of God is both spiritual and physical.

Luke 9:22

"For I, the Son of Man, must suffer many terrible things," he said. "I will be rejected by the leaders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. I will be killed, but three days later I will be raised from the dead."

This was the turning point in Jesus' instruction to his disciples. From then on he began teaching clearly and specifically what they could expect, so that they would not be surprised when it happened.

He explained that he would not *now* be the conquering Messiah because he first had to suffer, die, and rise again. But one day he would return in great glory to set up his eternal kingdom.

The kingdom of God kingdom of God is equally available to all.

Luke 10:21

Then Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit and said, "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding the truth from those who think themselves so wise and clever, and for revealing it to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way.

Jesus thanked God that spiritual truth was for everyone, and not just for the elite. Many of life's rewards seem to go to the intelligent, the rich, the good-looking, or the powerful, but the kingdom of God is equally available to all, regardless of position or abilities.

We come to Jesus not through strength or brains, but through childlike trust. Jesus is not opposed to engaging in scholarly pursuits; he is opposed to spiritual pride (being wise in one's own eyes). Join Jesus in thanking God that we all have equal access to him.

Trust in God's grace, not in your personal qualifications, for your citizenship in the kingdom.

How to make kingdom of God your top priority

Luke 12:31

He will give you all you need from day to day if you make the Kingdom of God your primary concern.

Seeking the kingdom of God means making Jesus the Lord and King of your life. He must control every area—your work, play, plans, relationships. Is the kingdom only one of your many concerns, or is it central to all you do? Are you holding back any areas of your life from God's control? As Lord and Creator, he wants to help provide what you need as well as guide how you use what he provides.

Jesus preparing a place for his own in the kingdom of God.

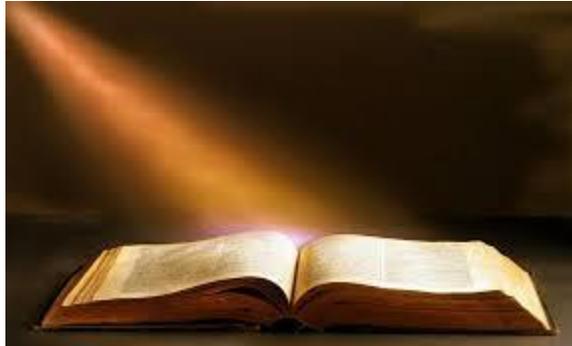
Luke 12:35-40

"Be dressed for service and well prepared, as though you were waiting for your master to return from the wedding feast. Then you will be ready to open the door and let him in the moment he arrives and knocks.

There will be special favor for those who are ready and waiting for his return. I tell you, he himself will seat them, put on an apron, and serve them as they sit and eat! [38] He may come in the middle of the night or just before dawn. But whenever he comes, there will be special favor for his servants who are ready!

"Know this: A homeowner who knew exactly when a burglar was coming would not permit the house to be broken into. You must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected."

Chapter 7



Those in the kingdom of God may surprise us.

Luke 13:30

And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

The kingdom of God is not fully realized until Jesus comes again.

Acts 1:3

During the forty days after his crucifixion, he appeared to the apostles from time to time and proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. On these occasions he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

Jesus explained that with his coming, the kingdom of God was inaugurated. When he returned to heaven, God's kingdom would

remain in the hearts of all believers through the presence of the Holy Spirit. But the kingdom of God will not be fully realized until Jesus Christ comes again to judge all people and remove all evil from the world. Before that time, believers are to work to spread God's kingdom across the world. The book of Acts records how this work was begun. What the early church started, we must continue.

Do you really want the kingdom of God to grow?

Luke 19:20-27

"But the third servant brought back only the original amount of money and said, 'I hid it and kept it safe. I was afraid because you are a hard man to deal with, taking what isn't yours and harvesting crops you didn't plant.'

'You wicked servant!' the king roared 'Hard, am I? If you knew so much about me and how tough I am, why didn't you deposit the money in the bank so I could at least get some interest on it?' [24]

Then turning to the others standing nearby, the king ordered, 'Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one who earned the most.'

'But, master,' they said, 'that servant has enough already!'

'Yes,' the king replied, 'but to those who use well what they are given, even more will be given. But from those who are unfaithful, even what little they have will be taken away.'

Luke 19:39-40

But some of the Pharisees among the crowd said, "Teacher, rebuke your followers for saying things like that!"

He replied, "If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!"

The city of Ephesus was under the domination of the Roman Empire. The main responsibility of the local city leaders was simply to maintain peace and order. If they failed to control the people, Rome would remove the appointed officials from office. The entire town could also be put under martial law, taking away many civic freedoms.

Chapter 8



Don't let personal concerns blind you to kingdom of God's coming.

Luke 22:40

There he told them, "Pray that you will not be overcome by temptation."

Jesus asked the disciples to pray that they would not fall into temptation because he knew that he would soon be leaving them. Jesus also knew that they would need extra strength to face the temptations ahead—temptations to run away or to deny their relationship with him. They were about to see Jesus die. Would they still think he was the Messiah? The disciples' strongest temptation would undoubtedly be to think they had been deceived.

Many thought Jesus' death had finished kingdom of God.

Luke 23:42-43

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."

And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Although the disciples continued to love Jesus, their hopes for the kingdom were shattered. Most of them had gone into hiding. As one of his followers sadly said two days later, "We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21). By contrast, the criminal looked at the man who was dying next to him and said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." By all appearances, the kingdom was finished. How awe-inspiring is the faith of this man who alone saw beyond the present shame to the coming glory!

Reversal of values in the kingdom of God

Luke 24:25

Then Jesus said to them, "You are such foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures.

Why did Jesus call these disciples foolish? Even though they well knew the Biblical prophecies, they failed to understand that Christ's suffering was his path to glory.

They could not understand why God did not intervene to save Jesus from the cross.

They were so caught up in the world's admiration of political power and military might that they were unprepared for the reversal of values in God's kingdom—that the last will be first, and that life grows out of death.

The world has not changed its values: a suffering servant is no more popular today than 2,000 years ago. But we have not only the witness of the Old Testament prophets; we have also the witness of the New Testament apostles and the history of the Christian church all pointing to Jesus' victory over death.

Will we step outside the values of our culture and put our faith in Jesus? Or will we foolishly continue to be baffled by his Good News?

God personally invites us into the kingdom of God.

1 Cor. 1:2

We are writing to the church of God in Corinth, you who have been called by God to be his own holy people.

He made you holy by means of Christ Jesus, just as he did all Christians everywhere—whoever calls upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and theirs.

Corinth, a giant cultural melting pot with a great diversity of wealth, religions, and moral standards, had a reputation for being fiercely independent and as decadent as any city in the world.

The Romans had destroyed Corinth in 146 B.C. after a rebellion. But in 46 B.C., the Roman Emperor Julius Caesar rebuilt it

because of its strategic seaport. By Paul's day (A.D. 50), the Romans had made Corinth the capital of Achaia (present-day Greece).

It was a large city, offering Rome great profits through trade as well as the military protection of its ports.

But the city's prosperity made it ripe for all sorts of corruption. Idolatry flourished, and there were more than a dozen pagan temples employing at least a thousand prostitutes.

Corinth's reputation was such that prostitutes in other cities began to be called "Corinthian girls."

A personal invitation makes a person feel wanted and welcome. We are "called to be holy." God personally invites us to be citizens of his eternal kingdom.

But Jesus Christ, God's Son, is the only one who can bring us into this glorious kingdom because he is the only one who removes our sins.

Sanctified means that we are chosen or set apart by Christ for his service.

We accept God's invitation by accepting his Son, Jesus Christ, and by trusting in the work he did on the cross to forgive our sins.

By including a salutation to "all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," Paul is making it clear that this is not a private letter.

Although it deals with specific issues facing the church at Corinth, all believers can learn from it.

The Corinthian church included a great cross section of believers—wealthy merchants, common laborers, former temple prostitutes, and middle-class families.

Because of the wide diversity of people and backgrounds, Paul takes great pains to stress the need for both spiritual unity and Christlike character.

If the kingdom of God does not dwell in you, ask Jesus to day to come into you life, forgive you of your sins and allow his spirit to dwell in you.