

Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

Series: "The Kingdom of God"



Message: "The Life of the Kingdom"

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Dr. Mary Craig

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In John chapter three Jesus tells Nicodemus, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," and "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:3, 5) Thus the KOG is essentially bound with eternal life. To see the KOG and to enter the KOG we must be born again. We must be born-out-of-God ones. "Whosoever is born (regenerated) of God does not commit sin: for His seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." (1 John 3:9)

The Holy Spirit regenerates the heart and then a person wants Christ. The Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit comes into someone. The seed of life is planted within the true believer. A true believer is not going to sin habitually, deliberately, easily and/or maliciously. **The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.** A true believer has been **saved by grace, through faith; and that not of himself. It is the gift of God and not of works [not of anything we have done or could do], lest any man should boast. (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8, 9)**

There is something in every person that wants life, clings to life, and holds on even in desperate times. Someone has to be emotionally unbalanced or have strong chemical imbalances to take their own life. Someone will only give their life for something deemed greater than oneself; and that rarely. In normal conditions, we want to live. While we were enemies, Christ died for those given to Him by His Father.

The life of the KOG is a life higher than physical life. This life is eternal life. It is Jesus who joins together the two Biblical realities of eternal life and the KOG.

Last week we spoke of the mystery of the KOG. Jesus came and disclosed the divine purpose of God which had not been revealed to OT saints. The OT perspective was that the coming of the KOG would bring a transformation of the existing order, but as it related to the political order (Isaiah 2:1-4) and the very physical order (Isaiah 11:6-9). The creation is to be delivered from bondage to decay and corruption (Isaiah 65:7; 66:22).

Jesus comes and says that the mystery is this: the Kingdom which will one day change the entire external order has entered into This Age with His coming, and His coming is bringing the blessings of God's Kingdom to people without transforming the old order. This Age will continue until it comes to a close, while at the same time the KOG is here and people may already enjoy the powers of The Age to Come. The KOG has invaded the kingdom of Satan and those who see and enter the KOG can be delivered now from the power of Satan, delivered from the bondage of sin, delivered from the mastery of sin and death. With the penalty of sin paid for by the death and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, Satan's power is broken; death must loose its hold; one who is born again has eternal life now. John 3:36. The power of the future Kingdom of glory has come among people in a secret, quiet form to work in their midst.

Eternal life belongs to The Age to Come; yet this eternal life is also now in this present evil age. That which is born of God cannot die and lives forever because Jesus Christ is God and came in the power of an endless life in order to give His life a ransom for those ordained to life. Believers struggle now inasmuch as the flesh is at war against the Spirit. (Romans 6-8) This war ends at death.

In Matthew 25 Jesus talks about the judging of the nations as sheep are separated from goats. Some are blessed and inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world (Mt 25:34). And some, the wicked, will go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life. (Mt. 25:46) Eternal life belongs to the future and is something we inherit; but it is also now.

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death unto life. John 5:24

When the young man came to Jesus and wanted to know what he had to do to have eternal life, Jesus told him he had to cut himself loose from all other loyalties and follow Him. (Mt. 19:16ff) Then Jesus told His disciples that it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. This was so astonishing that the disciples wanted to know, “Who then can be saved?” It turns out that this is impossible for a man, but not with God. God alone saves. Only Jesus saves.

Salvation, eternal life, the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God; all belong to the future and all are reserved for the disciples of the Lord Jesus, for those who follow Jesus. But when does a person have eternal life? A person can have eternal life upon passing from death unto life now, and yet...

Eternal life does belong to the future. 2 Corinthians 5:1-4. Eternal life has to do with the whole person, spirit, soul, and body. When a person finally inherits eternal life, that which is mortal is swallowed up in life. 1 Cor. 15:50. Eternal life includes the redemption of our bodies. The spirit is regenerated and wakes up and comes alive. With the spirit alive, the soul is affected and we change, being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. When we physically die, we will have the redemption of our bodies; we will be physically resurrected from the dead. But resurrection from the dead isn't just when we physically die. We reign over sin and death now. When the last enemy, death, is destroyed, the kingdom is delivered to God the Father. God will be all in all. 1 Cor. 15:24-28. Revelation 22:1-4 tells us more.

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. Revelation 22:1-4

Jesus didn't come teaching reincarnation. He came teaching resurrection. We don't keep coming back in a different form of life and find ourselves moving up the suffering ladder and the color caste system. Jesus redeemed us from the bondage to sin and the penalty of death for sin. The redemption of the gospel affects the whole of the human being: body, mind, soul, spirit, and life. .

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 ESV

We have eternal life the moment our spirit is regenerated and we are born of God. That seed of life is planted within us and the life of God cannot die. Born again, we want Jesus, who is life and truth and grace; God in the flesh, the Incarnate Word. We accept what He has done in our behalf through His obedient life and death and resurrection. We believe in Him and we believe Him. We are new creations; so much so that old things are passed away and all things are become new. We put all of our confidence and trust in Jesus alone for eternal life, for salvation. We are saved from sin whose wages is death, saved from sin's penalty and power. We are saved at the last from the presence of sin.

Eternal life means the knowledge of God. John 17:3. **Now this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.** Berean. This is not just intellectual knowledge and believing; trusting in Jesus is not a mere intellectual assent. It is not trusting Jesus with mere temporal faith. Knowledge in Scripture is more than intellectual apprehension, like, "Okay I get it. I understand what you're saying." This "knowing" means experience. This "knowing" means personal relationship, being one spirit with Christ in a vital spiritual union, fellowship, friendship, mutual "knowing." Paul will describe the relationship in terms of the building, the body, and the bride. Jesus spoke of the relationship as branch to vine. John 15.

There is a life exchange in the covenant of grace. We share God's life. (Jeremiah 31:31-33) Right now we have received of the fullness of Jesus. Right now we enter the covenant of grace and enjoy the blessings of that covenant. But some day we will enjoy all of the fullness of Jesus and the covenant will be consummated. Having eternal life means entering into a personal, profound, perfect knowledge of God as Creator and Redeemer. We will know absolutely the truth, the love, the grace, the mercy, the thoughts, the ways, the reasons, the life of the Living God.

The future has become present, a present reality. We're not at perfection yet; but we can have a present, personal, and profound relationship with the true God now. We can apprehend that for which we were apprehended, partially and incomplete, but nevertheless there. 1 Cor. 13:11, 12. Ancient mirrors were polished metal that tarnished and pitted easily. You only got an imperfect image. You could get the idea, but not anything perfect, like seeing something face to face. Today we know in part.

Eternal life also is the life of God's Spirit dwelling within us. The life of the Age to Come is the work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God. We become spiritual bodies. 1 Cor. 15:42-44. A "spiritual body" is a body whose life and energy is derived from the Holy Spirit. A spiritual body is a real body, a tangible body, completely and perfectly energized and made alive and empowered by the Holy Spirit. 2 Cor. 5:4 Ephesians 1:13, 14. We inherit this. 1 Corinthians 15:42-50; 2 Cor. 5:1-10.

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in Whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:13, 14. NKJV

We have a promise of the fullness of this but God has also given unto us the Holy Spirit now as a guarantee, or down payment. We have a claim on this now.

The life of the Holy Spirit is given to us now. The new birth which is entering the KOG is the beginning of the life of The Age to Come. Even though partial, it is real. We participate in this life now. We have the Holy Spirit now. We have the first fruits now. Romans 8:22, 23.

Let's consider a fruit tree. Blossoms break out; but blossoms are not fruit. Blossoms are the promise of fruit coming. After blossoms the leaves break out, but still, no fruit. Soon after the leaves show up, little hard green fruit comes along. That still isn't first fruits. First fruits is when the **fruit has begun to ripen**. You see that first peach or apple or orange or grapefruit. It's the first fruit that is edible. You wait for the rest to catch up. First fruits is the beginning of the harvest. It is more than promise; it is experience. It is reality. It is possession.

God has given us the Holy Spirit as the first fruits of the life to come in the resurrection when Jesus returns. We have eternal life now. We are expected to grow and ripen and bear the fruit of righteousness in the KOG now as we receive life from the vine; the life of Jesus flowing into us by the power of the Holy Spirit. We have an initial experience of what our lives will be forever. It's more than a promise. It's a guarantee.

We are being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. We are being transformed by the renewing of our minds. Everything about us should be changing as we submit ourselves and yield to the Holy Spirit, to His life and energy, to His power and presence, to His kingdom and rule. Everything about God is alive. Jesus came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly. John 10:10. This is why I pray over you and into you living waters, living manna, living bread, living fire, the living Word, living Way, living breath, life from the Living God, the Living Father and the Living Spirit, the Spirit of Life, the Spirit of the living God. Amen.

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:25

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