

Jesus Christ's Vision of the Kingdom

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. **Heb 12:2**

JESUS CONSTANTLY TAUGHT ABOUT THE KINGDOM

The Kingdom of God was always at the forefront of Jesus' mind. "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." **Mk 1:14**. He said, "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, for **therefore am I sent**." **Lk 4:43**. After his resurrection, Jesus spoke for 40 days about the "things pertaining to the kingdom of God." **Acts 1:3**. **Key Scripture: **Psa 16:8-11****.

In **Matthew 13** Jesus gave parables of the kingdom. He says to his disciples that the kingdom is a secret that only true believers understand: **13:9-11**. Note the constant repetition of **kingdom** in **13:11,19,24,31,33,38,41,43,44,45,47,52**. Jesus says we must become like little children to enter the kingdom: **Mt 18:3**. The Lord's prayer expresses longing for God's kingdom: **Mt 6:10**. Jesus constantly alludes to OT kingdom prophecies (e.g. **Mt 5:5** cp. **Psa 37:3,9,11,22,29,34** / **Mt 18:11** cp. **Mic 7:20** / **Mk 11:17** cp. **Isa 56:7** / **Lk 22:30** cp. **Psa 122:1-5**; **Song 1:12** / **Mt 25:21, 23** cp. "joy" **Isa 12:3**; **51:3,11** / **Mt 26:29** cp. **Isa 65:17**). We will see now that these Scriptures were crucial to his victory over sin.

FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM HE ENDURED

Jesus' prayer in **John 17** reveals the salvation of his brothers and sisters was on the forefront of his mind: **Jn 17:3,6,9,19-26**. Without a clear vision of the kingdom, Jesus would never have endured. There were many reasons for his sorrow in the garden:

1. Repulsion to physical pain and death: **Psa 22:16**; **31:22**
2. The shame of death on a stake: **Psa 44:15**; **Phil 2:8**
3. Sensitive to the shame of nakedness: **Heb 12:2**
4. Rejection despite his love: **Psa 69:4**; **Isa 53:3**; **Mk 12:10**
5. The fear of reproach by wicked men: **Psa 42:3**; **69:9,12,20-21**
6. Fear of being left alone: **Psa 22:1**; **42:1-3,11**; **69:20**

There was trauma in knowing these Old Testament prophecies in advance. However he also would have gained strength from the fact that these prophecies end with glory. As Scriptures were fulfilled one after another, Jesus would have been strengthened knowing the kingdom verses that followed would also be fulfilled.

JESUS STRENGTHENED IN GETHSEMANE BY AN ANGEL

With Jesus alone in the garden, his disciples asleep, God sends his angel "from heaven" strengthening him. The angel came directly from his Father: **Lk 22:43**. The angel came to Jesus after his first prayer (**Mt 26:39**), which was to take the cup away. A similar scene is in **Dan 10:8-12** where Daniel is alone and lying face down on the ground. He had been in mourning: **10:2**. Similar to Jesus, he had just given an intercessory prayer for his people, identifying himself with those he came to save: **9:1-19**. The angel tells Daniel, "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved ... thy words were heard and I am come for thy words... Fear not, be strong... I will show unto thee that which is noted in the Scripture of truth." **10:12,19,21**. Jesus would have been well aware of this. The angel's response in Gethsemane would have followed the same pattern because it was for **the joy set before him** that he endured the cross: **Heb 12:2**. We are not guessing that his mind

was in **Daniel** because he cites Daniel's prophecy numerous times soon after leaving the garden (including **Mt 26:64**; **Jn 18:36**; **19:11**).

There are two other Scriptures that give an insight into Gethsemane. In **Psa 69:13** is Jesus' prayer: "my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy **hear me**." In the servant prophecy of **Isa 49:4-9** we have Jesus in the garden in a state of despair. He reassures himself in God's love for him:

*"Then I said, I have **laboured in vain**, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God. And now, saith the LORD that **formed me from the womb** to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, **yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD**, and my God shall be my strength."* **Isa 49:4-5**

Consider the unique phrase: "I have **laboured in vain**." The **kingdom vision** of **Isa 65:17-25** tells of a time when "the former troubles are forgotten" and "they shall not labour in vain". He is clearly longing for the kingdom as a dramatic contrast to what he was experiencing and feeling. In **Isa 49:6-10** we have God's reply to his prayer:

*"I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time **have I heard thee**... they shall not hunger nor thirst... by the **springs of water** shall he guide them."*

The words used in this context are stunning in their beauty and gave Jesus the strength he needed to press forward to the end. No doubt the angel strengthened him with many kingdom Scriptures.

JESUS' VISION REVEALED BEFORE CAIAPHAS

In **Mt 26:63-64** Jesus comes out of the garden and is brought before Caiaphas who illegally puts him under oath. He demands, "tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus' brilliant reply is,

*"thou hast said... Hereafter shall ye see the **Son of Man** sitting on the **right hand of power**, and **coming in the clouds of heaven**."*

His brief reply cites **Psalms 110** and **Daniel 7** with devastating effect. His reference to these Scriptures show they were on his mind, and for very good reason. Caiaphas rends his clothes, forbidden under the law: **Lev 21:10**. An incredible scene is presented of a corrupt high priest before the true high priest. No wonder Jesus' mind is on **Dan 7:13-14**! Those verses speak of him being taken by the angels ("the clouds of heaven") to his Father and also receiving the glories of the kingdom. But why **Psalms 110**? "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make **thine enemies thy footstool**... Thou art a **priest forever!**" **110:1,4**. His reply propels us into **Revelation, Christ coming with the saints in glory** - where he makes us kings and priests! **1:6-7**.

JESUS' VISION REVEALED ON THE CROSS

The words of Jesus on the cross were few, 7 sayings in all. One is particularly revealing in relation to Jesus' vision. The thief asks, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replies, "You will be with me in **paradise**" **Lk 23:43**. This is the **garden of Eden restored!** (**Song 4:12-15**; **Isa 51:3**) Careful reading of **Psalms 22** reveals a **significant change** half way through **22:21** which then accelerates into a glorious vision of the kingdom in **22:22-31**.

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Yahweh provided this last miracle to get His Son through the final moments on the cross. Amongst all the rejection here was a man who responded. Luke is the only one who records this event. He is the doctor, a healer. It is **Luke** who records (in **4:17-19**) Jesus reading **Isa 61:1-2** about *healing the broken hearted and recovery of sight to the blind*, a Scripture which describes immortal saints as **trees of righteousness**, and Christ being "as a bridegroom (who) decks himself like a priest" (**61:10** ESV). **Isaiah 61-62** is a beautiful vision of the kingdom, Eden restored, of God being married to his people again: **Isa 61:10**; **62:4-5**. So too, Christ will marry his bride in a **garden**, the **paradise** of God (**Psa 45**; **Mt 22:2**; **Rev 2:7**; **19:7**; **21:2,9**). In this unique word **paradise**, Jesus expresses the entire purpose of God and his greatest desire.

PARADISE IS A VISION OF BELIEVERS IN THE KINGDOM

In **Revelation 2:7**; **22:1-3** the saints are revealed as the garden (**paradise**) for the healing of the nations. Not only is the marriage of Christ and his bride celebrated in a garden, but **the bride herself** is a garden (**Song 4:12,16**; **5:1**; **6:2,11**; **8:13**; **Rev 22:2, 14**). This a constant theme in Scripture (e.g. **Psa 1:1-3**; **Isa 32:14-18**; **41:15-20**; **51:2-3**; **55:12-13**; **61:1-3**). "A **garden enclosed** is my sister, my spouse; a **spring shut up**, a **fountain sealed**. Thy plants are an **orchard** (Heb. **paradise**) of pomegranates with pleasant fruits. A **fountain of gardens**, a **well of living waters** and **streams from Lebanon**. I am come into my **garden**, my sister, my spouse" (**Song 4:12,13,15**; **5:1** cp. **Jn 4:13-14**; **7:37-38**)

The rare word translated "orchard" (in **Song 4:13**) is **pardes**, equivalent to that translated **paradise** in **Lk 23:43**. When Jesus said, "I thirst" (**Jn 19:28**), he was not only fulfilling **Psa 22:15**; **69:21**, but was expressing his longing for **living waters** in the **paradise** of God (**Isa 12:3**; **58:11**; **Psa 42:1-3**; **Prov 5:15-18**; **Joel 3:18**; **Zech 13:1**; **14:8-9**; **Rev 7:17**; **21:2,6**; **22:1**). In his suffering, he longs for **paradise**, the marriage of the Lamb, being united with his bride. His mind projects forward to **Rev 21-22** (based on many OT Scriptures, e.g. **Ezek 47:4-12**). Jesus was dying on a **dead tree**. He has excruciating **thirst**. On his head is a **crown of thorns**. He was looking to a time when there would be **living trees, pure water**, when there is **no more curse** (**Rev 22:1-3**).

God's Word is implanted in all of us, slowly growing over many years to ultimately bear fruit in **paradise** (**Mt 7:20**; **21:43**; **Gal 5:22-25**; **Jas 3:17**; **5:7-8**; **Rev 2:7**). The perfected bride of Christ is the flawless embodiment of the incorruptible Word of God, the fully grown paradise of God. In **John 17:21-26** Jesus prayed that we might *all be one* as the Father was in him. Jesus' vision of the kingdom was being with us as his glorified bride, in complete unity with the Father. This is an invitation too great to decline and one which we must all grasp hold of tightly. Jesus says in **Jn 7:37-38**:

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scriptures hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."