

Fanning it into Flame
Sunday, January 10, 2010
Whose Kingdom Are You Advancing?

In Matthew 3:1-9 we see John the Baptist come on the scene saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." It was a ripe time in history for this message as Roman occupation made life oppressive for Israel. There was a buzz about the coming of the Messiah and even some false ones showed up. People wanted change, but they wanted it their way. They had their designs for what the Messiah would do. After Jesus was baptized by John and spent 40 days of temptation in the wilderness he came out and began to preach the same message as John, however he added something significant to it, i.e. miracles. Matthew 4:23-25 states: *Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. 24 News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. 25 Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.* (NIV)

When he taught the disciples to pray he made it clear that it was all about Father's kingdom. "*Your kingdom come, your will be done*" was the priority. We can have a subtle bent toward "our kingdom come, our will be done." After Jesus fed the five thousand it says in John 6:15 that he withdrew to a mountain by himself because they wanted to force him to be their king. When they saw Jesus a little later after he had walked on the water, etc they said to him, "*Rabbi, when did you get here?*" *Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."* While God does care about meeting our needs, he tells us in Matthew 6:33 "*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*" We need to keep things in proper perspective. In Matthew 13:10-58 *The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" 11 He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. 14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. 15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'* This passage can seem so contrary to the loving nature of Jesus. Why wouldn't he just plainly tell them the whole picture? The reason is found in the fact that apart from faith it is impossible to please God. He is not so much interested in a cognitive understanding but in a faith-filled walk of obedience in relationship. He presents a situation to us to see our response. As we approach him with a desire to know him more, he extends more. He gives us invitations to come closer. He is in no way reluctant to have this happen. He longs for it. However, it must be genuine to have any value. A mere trying to keep the law will not cut it. He wants a personal relationship with us. Our nation is ripe for revival. Our economy is hurting. The national debt is in the trillions. Our national security is questionable. Our stability is in the balance. God is giving the church the opportunity to shine. We are just as ripe for the message of the Kingdom now as in the days of Jesus in Palestine. We need the message of the Kingdom and we need to preach it the way Jesus did. He set the example and we're to follow it with his enthusiasm. He loved doing what he did and he wants us to experience the same joy as we step up to the plate and allow him to work in us and through us miracles and all. Remember, it's not about us. We've been bought with a price and don't belong to ourselves. We are his! It's his kingdom and we are privileged to be part of it. Let's believe God for great things in 2010.