

The Kingdom of God Contrasted With Other Things

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Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Being a citizen of the Kingdom of God is a very special privilege. In a world whose Creator needed nothing, and in which man stands as a paradox...being the only species that God created that has rebelled and gone away from Him, it is truly remarkable that He has chosen to mark out some of these rebellious humans to be brought into His Kingdom as children and citizens, and make them co-heirs with His only Begotten Son. It is incredible that He should design the means of this, and then be the initiator of the plan, doing for these humans what they were incapable of doing for themselves because their carnal minds were at enmity with Him.

With that having been done for us who are delivered from darkness into the Kingdom of His Dear Son, we now stand in an entirely different relationship with our God. We are counted His friends, are given opportunity to fellowship with Him through the Holy Spirit's presence with us. And that brings us to our text. In it, Paul has been writing about the controversy surrounding what we can and cannot do as Christians. In this writing, he was dealing with the issue of those who were offended by the eating of meat offered to idols, and of the issue of those who felt liberty to eat meat offered to idols because they understood the liberty they had. The exposition advances as we would expect to the subject of what is really spiritual and what is earthy. So, in our text verse, Paul makes the difference. We want to look at that difference with the idea of giving ourselves more clarity on the difference in what would be called "just things" and what would be called "spiritual things." We trust the Lord will give us understanding so that we can go away edified about our spiritual lives.

I. The first thing we notice is what the Kingdom of God is not: Meat and drink here stands for earthly things; things that the creature has and does which may be relevant to spiritual things, but are not in any way spiritual things. And in the sense that Paul refers to them here, they are actually presented as in opposition to the Kingdom of God, because they are the creature objects of opinions and actions among these Christians that cause dissension.

We may have a lot or a little of "meat and drink" in our lives

But the main thing to notice is that the Kingdom of God **is NOT meat and drink**; this brings us to some thoughts about this fact:

If such things as are represented by meat and drink here are not of, (that is, not an element of the things to be considered as part of the Kingdom of God), then they should be inconsequential to born-again believers.

What do we mean by inconsequential? Example:

The paramedics are called to an accident on the highway. When they get there they find a man half in and half out of the driver door of his car. He is unconscious. He has a big scratch on the side of his face and his left arm is broken. His right leg is ripped apart by the dash and an artery is pumping blood out of his body at a great rate. What is inconsequential about this man's injuries base on what we see here? There are two, and maybe 3. The scratch on the face is inconsequential; the broken arm is inconsequential. The unconscious condition may or may not be, but based on the blood squirting out of his leg, everything is inconsequential at the moment except that problem.

In the same way, the Holy Spirit teaches us in these writings that earthly things are inconsequential when we begin to examine the things of the Kingdom of God.

What is the lesson in this for us:

A. Don't place meat and drink things too high on your priority list

They are too high on the priority list of our lives when the getting of them is allowed to drive both our motives and our actions.

They are too high on the priority list when they become something that causes a rift between family, friends, brethren, or others.

B. Assign meat and drink things priority only when we can relate them to things of the Kingdom
when is this? When those things can actually further the things of the Kingdom
When those things are made to enhance the things of the Kingdom

What do we mean? I'm going to use a concrete example: Diane and I get some grocery supplies from her sister's church from time to time. We don't need the stuff. But we find people who do. It's just plain groceries like everybody uses to sustain the body...to keep themselves fed. But they become an object to further the Kingdom when we use them that way.

Lets take the same kind of groceries now and put them in our own body, then use that body to both worship and serve Christ. They become consecrated to the Lord.

The Kingdom of God is not the meat and drink (or any other earthly possession or usage item), but the meat and drink can become something which furthers the things of the Kingdom.

The exact opposite was happening with the controversial meat and drink that Paul writes about in this text chapter.

II. Next we find what the Kingdom IS made of: The first is righteousness

righteousness is both the main frame and the outer covering of any manifestation of the Kingdom
righteousness is what should be seen when someone goes looking for the signs or evidences of the kingdom

This righteousness which we think of in relation to the imputed righteousness of Christ has implications of equity (fairness; justice).

It is God's intent that we show forth righteousness

Rom 6:13 Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are **alive from the dead**, and **your members *as* instruments**

of righteousness unto God.

III. Next we find that the Kingdom IS peace:

Inside the boundaries of God's great kingdom there is not war

Inside those boundaries we know that there is tranquility, protection, things that calm the soul. God's children, being in the Kingdom should study how to possess that peace, tranquility, calmness of soul.

I noted during the last few nights that the news is focusing on the uproar in Pakistan over the assassination of Bhutto, the former Prime Minister. When you look at that video footage you are struck with the agitation, the unrest, the rebellion, the building violence, the anger and the mourning.

Now contrast that with a look across the field out yonder, or the scene as it must be right now down on the square at Camden. In comparing the two we can make a contrast between the world outside God's Kingdom and that which lies within His Kingdom.

IV. Last, we find that the Kingdom IS joy

Again, this is one of the foundation characteristics of the Kingdom

Diane and I have learned that different areas of the country have different personalities. Each area seems to have a different attitude. When we were in Maryland, we met some nice people who were friendly, but we both agreed that overall the place was cold and inhospitable. When we came to TN it wasn't long til we were talking about how friendly everybody was everywhere we went. Regional characteristics.

In just the same way, **Joy** is a characteristic of the Kingdom

It is the intent of God that we as citizens of the Kingdom be able to partake of the joy of His Kingdom.

Phil. 4:4 "rejoice in the Lord, **always**; and again I say rejoice."

Rom 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all **joy and peace in believing**, that ye may abound in hope, **through the power of the Holy Ghost**.

1Pe 1:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye **rejoice with joy unspeakable** and full of glory:

Gal 5:22 But the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, **joy**, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

1Th 1:6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with **joy of the Holy Ghost**: