



BAND of BROTHERS – WEEK 8: Ambassadors to the King

FALL 2021

*“...you are a **chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**” – 1 Peter 2:9 ESV*

- **We have established the idea of what the Kingdom is**

- Something that we are looking forward to
- Something that Jesus brought
- We are sons and daughters of the kingdom

“The Kingdom of God is God’s love poured out on degraded humanity. It is Christ on the cross dying for the sins of the world... It’s men’s acknowledgement of God as their father and becoming his sons and daughters.” – Song Nai Rhee

- If we are in Christ, then we are citizens of the kingdom of God

*But **we are citizens of heaven**, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.* – Philippians 3:20 NLT

- **Kingdom Identity**

- The Kingdom of God is what should determine our identity
- So much of today’s world tries to find its identity in something else

*For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. They are headed for destruction. **Their god is their appetite**, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth.* – Philippians 3:18-19 NLT

- They pursue other gods:
 - Politics
 - Sports
 - Work

- Other People
- Reputation (me)
- All of this is fleeting and can be destroyed with the snap of a finger
- The Kingdom of God is eternal and everlasting
- Through the Gospel, we receive our identity as Kingdom citizens
 - We don't obtain or achieve it, it is given

"We're drawn into a new family—one that's bound together by something stronger than our biological genes. Through the cross, God reconciles us to himself and into his family... By grace we are adopted by God, given access to God, and called to be ambassadors of God." – Jeremy Treat, *Seek First*

- This is the crux of being a Kingdom citizen

- **Our new identity**

- Who are we?
 - We are **adopted**

*God decided in advance to **adopt** us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ.* – Ephesians 1:5 NLT

- Don't miss what this adoption means
 - We are full heirs of the coming Kingdom
 - We are given all of the rights that come with being a citizen of the Kingdom
 - We are undeserving recipients of God unconditional love

- We are those with **access to the King**

*"Let us then **with confidence** draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* – Hebrews 4:16 ESV

- As the Father's adopted children, we have full access to Him

"We can enter into conversation with him freely and with fully confidence that we are accepted and heard. Why? Because we know that we're approaching a "throne of grace." We know that this king rules from his throne with love and mercy." – Jeremy Treat, *Seek First*

- We can **CONFIDENTLY** approach our Heavenly Father
 - Because we have been adopted through the grace of God
 - As a son and a citizen of the Kingdom you have constant access to the King

- We are His **ambassadors**

*“For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So **we are Christ’s ambassadors**; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!” – 2 Corinthians 5:19-20 NLT*

- Adoption and access are the **internal** roots of our identity
- Being an ambassador is the **external action** of our identity
 - An ambassador serves on behalf of his king and nation
 - He serves as a representative or proxy
 - That is our role for Christ, but on a much higher level

*“... you are a **chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**” - 1 Peter 2:9 ESV*

- Our ambassadorship includes serving as a **royal priest**
- Many places in scripture refer to God’s people in terms of royalty, but it is often followed by connections to priests
- We are priest-kings (“Royal Priesthood”)
- This illustration is best understood in the mind of a 1st-Century Jew
 - Priests were charged with “working” and “keeping” the Temple
 - The same role Adam was given in the Garden
 - Priests were God’s representatives and mediators to men on His behalf
 - We play the same role today
- A word of caution
 - Peter uses titles commonly associated with Israel
 - After Israel’s rejection of Jesus, God started accomplishing his purposes through a new people
 - Those people make up the Church
 - This does not mean that the Church has replaced Israel in the plan of God

“...this does not mean that the church is Israel or even that the church replaces Israel in the plan of God. Romans 11 should help us guard against that misinterpretation. ... The functions that Israel was called into existence to perform in its day of grace the church now performs in a similar way. In the future, according to Paul, God will once again use Israel to bless the world.” – Edwin Blum

- **The life of an ambassador**
 - Our new identity and calling as ambassadors come with a cost

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. –Matthew 5:11 BSB

“Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers.” – Matthew 27:9 NLT

- Consider the lives of Peter, John, and Paul

Peter	John	Paul
Called to be an Apostle - Matt 4, Mk 3, Lk 5	Called to be an Apostle - Matt 4, Mk 3, Lk 5	Called to the Gentiles - Acts 9
Brought before the Council - Acts 4	Exiled to Patmos - Rev 1:9	Suffered persecution - 2 Cor 11:23-28
Crucified upside down (64 AD)	Boiled in oil, then exiled (100 AD)	Beheaded (64 AD)

- The life of an ambassador is not glamorous
- And being a citizen of the Kingdom is not a cake walk
- Christ warned His disciples in advance

*“Behold, I am sending you out as **sheep in the midst of wolves**, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.” – Matthew 10:16-17 ESV*

- The role of an ambassador for Christ has not changed
- We have a demanding and difficult role to perform

- **Dual citizenship**

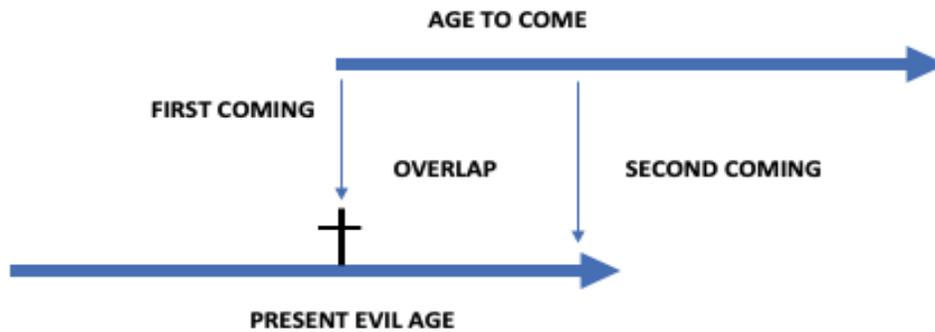
- All of this is who we are as Kingdom Citizens
 - We are adopted into the family and Kingdom of God
 - We are given access to God
 - We are ambassadors of the one true King
 - We have dual citizenship
 - We are physical citizens of an earthly realm
 - But we spiritual citizens of the “now/not yet” Kingdom of God

NOW

*From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven** is at hand.” – Matthew 4:17 ESV*

NOT YET

*For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the **kingdom of the Son** he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. – Colossians 1:13-14 ESV*



- So, how are we to live in “this age”?
 - Right now, we exist as sojourners or exiles

Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. – 1 Peter 2:11 NLT

- We have been living as exiles in a “foreign” land ever since the Garden
 - You can feel the longing to return to the peace that was felt in the Garden
 - That is what should motivate us cry, “Come Lord Jesus!”
- Living as temporary residents in this world will produce one of two temptations:
 - To check out (isolation)
 - To blend in (assimilation)
- **Isolation**
 - The state of the world can lead to a longing to escape
 - We attempt to form our own “society” or “culture”
 - But this is not our calling

God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!” – 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 NLT

- Isolation is unbiblical and impossible

*When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. But I wasn’t talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or are greedy, or cheat people, or worship idols. **You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that.** – 1 Corinthians 5:9-10 NLT*

- Consider the Pharisees
 - They were the “separatists” of their day
 - The word “Pharisee” in the Greek is derived from the Aramaic word פְּרוּשִׁים (peras)

- It literally refers to someone who is a separatist
 - They were unloving and arrogant
 - They showed no concern for sinners
- While we have been **set apart**, that does not mean we are to **separate**
 - It means that we should live set apart and distinctively different lives

...walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.
– Ephesians 4:1 ESV

...walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. – Colossians 1:10
ESV

Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world. – 1 Peter 2:12 NLT

▪ **Assimilation**

- This seems more and more prevalent today
- It was also a temptation for 1st-Century believers
- They struggled with **syncretism** – mixing their faith with Greco-Roman philosophy
- This only dilutes and diminishes the effectiveness of the Gospel

You happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a different Jesus than the one we preach, or a different kind of Spirit than the one you received, or a different kind of gospel than the one you believed. – 2 Corinthians 11:4 NLT

- The world's greatest need is Gospel **resilience**, not cultural **relevance**

▪ **Men on mission**

- Isolating and assimilating are the two extremes we should avoid
- What is the right posture? Where is the middle ground?
- We should faithfully live in exile

*“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But **seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile**, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”* – Jeremiah 29:4-7 ESV

- God was encouraging his people to lives of faithfulness even *in exile*
- They were to “seek the welfare” of their temporary home
- He wanted them to be influential and involved
- They were to make a difference
- And they were to live with **the end** in mind

*“For thus says the Lord: When **seventy years** are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, **to give you a future and a hope.**” – Jeremiah 29:10-11*
ESV

- They were in exile in a foreign land
- They were strangers and sojourners
- They didn’t fit in
- But God had a great future in store for them
- In the meantime, they were to live faithfully and influentially

- **Today**

- While the circumstance may seem different, we can learn a lot from that exile
 - We have been **set apart** but not **set off** or **separated**
 - We have a job to do
 - We have a mission to accomplish

“I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” – Matthew 28:18-20 NLT

Next Week: Kingdoms in Conflict

For Further Discussion

- Taking into consideration the context of Jeremiah 29:11, what does it look like for us to live faithfully as ambassadors in our current setting?
- What does it look like for us to live in this “Already/Not Yet” Kingdom?
- What are some ways in which you have tried to isolate from society or found yourself assimilating to the culture around you? What are the dangers of both?



WEEK 9 HOMEWORK: Kingdoms in Conflict

FALL 2021

For centuries, men have attempted to create institutions and ideas to serve as substitutes for the sovereign God of the universe. Rather than acknowledge God as King and submit to His righteous rule, mankind has repeatedly developed its own systems of ideological and ontological interpretation. Even today, we're being deluged by an endless array of social, scientific, governmental, and religious panaceas promising to solve all of mankind's problems.

- We are undergoing a seemingly endless assault of new ideologies and "isms" that offer a better hope for the future. Most are not new but are simply older concepts that have been updated and sanitized to make them more attractive to this generation. Read the following quote, then write down your thoughts.

"Ideology is a way to organize ideas and facilitate debate, not to provide meaning, purpose or answers to life's transcendent and fundamental questions."

– John Hart, "Is Ideology Becoming America's Official Religion?", Forbes

- Ideologies have been around since the beginning. They are mankind's attempt to make sense out of life, to explain the unknown and provide solutions to the problems associated with life on this planet. Read the following passage and then write down how it applies to our current state of affairs.

But you, my dear friends, must remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ predicted. They told you that in the last times there would be scoffers whose purpose in life is to satisfy their ungodly desires. These people are the ones who are creating divisions among you. They follow their natural instincts because they do not have God's Spirit in them. – Jude 17-19 NLT

- Take a look at Galatians 1:8-9. What does Paul have to say about anyone who preaches a “different gospel?”

If the Gospel is God’s plan for mankind’s redemption and the restoration of the world, in what ways are some of today’s ideologies and “isms” a different gospel?

- Read the following quote.
“What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself.” – Blaise Pascal

What are your initial impressions?

Based on what he says, why would adopting manmade ideologies be a poor decision for a Christian to make?

- Read Mark 7:1-8. In this passage, Jesus addresses the religious and cultural leaders of His day. What does He have to say to them and how might we apply this to those in the church today who want to substitute God’s commands with “man-made ideas?”