

What Was Jesus' Top Priority?

<u>Luke 4:42-43</u>: (NASB) ⁴²When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for him, and came to him and tried to keep him from going away from them. ⁴³But he said to them, I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.



Love one another as I have loved you. The kingdom of God is at hand. Bless those who persecute you. Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. These are just a few of the profound teachings of Jesus, but how do we determine which was most important? Many Christians have differences regarding priorities as we follow Christ. Can we say that loving each other takes priority over blessing those who persecute us? Can we say that self-denial takes precedence over recognizing the kingdom? How did Jesus see and apply all of these things? Did he focus on one thing more than others? If he did, which one? Should we do the

same? We believe Jesus did have one top priority, and we also believe his most important thing is also *our* most important thing.

The problem, Prioritize Like a Genius, brendon.com

Hey guys, it's Brendan. Let's talk about how you prioritize things in your life. How you prioritize your tasks, your activities, your responsibilities, your obligations, your days. Because it's kind of difficult these days to prioritize anything, because there's so many people coming at you from left and right with their notices, their messages, their texts, their voice messages, their emails, begging for your time, for your attention, for your energy. And most people, I hope this is not you, just give that away so freely. You give all of your attention to everybody else and to all the world's false emergencies and to all the world's needs, and all the messages, and the texts, and the timelines. And all of a sudden, your day is gone, and you had no sense of peace, or progress or vitality. I hope that's not you.

Starting with prophecy, was Jesus' top priority, his mission, revealed in the Old Testament?

<u>Isaiah 11:1-5</u>: (NASB) ¹Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. ²The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

Jesus was to be given God's influence to clearly guide him. Was following it his top priority?



³And he will delight in the fear of the LORD,

Jesus was to have the joy of his life come from reverencing God - was this his top priority?

And he will not judge by what his eyes see, nor make a decision by what his ears hear; ⁴but with righteousness he will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;





Jesus would judge based on an unbiased godly righteousness was this his top priority?

And he will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. ⁵Also righteousness will be the belt about his loins, and faithfulness the belt about his waist.

Jesus would execute judgment with the same godly righteousness and faith was this his top priority?

(We will continue these verses at our conclusion, as they will show us the results of Jesus' work.)

Could we say that Jesus' top priority pertained to life for all? The Jews saw life through the Law:

Luke 10:25-28: (NASB) ²⁵And a lawyer stood up and put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? ²⁶And he said to him, What is written in the Law? How does it read to vou? ²⁷And he answered. You shall love the Lord vour God with all vour heart. and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself. ²⁸And he said to him, You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.

Jesus sums up the way to live for this Jewish lawyer - to follow and fulfill the Law:

Matthew 22:35-40: (NASB) ³⁵One of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, testing him, $^{\overline{36}}$ Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law? $^{\overline{37}}$ And he said to him. Your shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹The second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.

Jesus AGAIN sums up the way to live according to the Law - so was this his top priority?

Life for all is a great "top priority," but it really does not come from keeping the Law. What needs to be added?

In any attempt to truly establish our highest priority, we need to step back to see the bigger picture. Let's say you are driving to a critical meeting, and you get a flat tire. What is your highest priority? The meeting. What is the most pressing *need*? Change the tire and get back on the road.



It IS about life, but Jesus elevates the approach.

"cq<u>biblep</u>odcast"

Some of our Facebook friends weighed in:



Thomas wrote: The MOST important thing Jesus did was to commit and submit to the Father's will, shown by being baptized in Jordan, which in 3 1/2 years of ministry led to finalizing on the cross at the Jewish and Roman directive.



Maria wrote: Sacrificing himself for the life of his people.

Aruna wrote: Jesus laid down his own will, <u>Hebrews 10:7</u>: Then I said, "Behold, I have come in the volume of the book it is written of me - to do Your will, O God.

(Combined accounts of Matthew and Mark):

Mark 10:17: (NASB) As he was setting out on a journey, a man (Luke adds that he was a ruler) ran up to him and knelt before him, and asked him, Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

<u>Matthew 19:17</u>: (NASB) And he said to him, Why are you asking me about what is good? There is only one who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.

Jesus' immediate response was for the ruler to keep the Law.

Those he ministered to were not yet walking in his footsteps, and until his sacrifice was complete, the only available way to life was through the Law.

But the young man realized there was more to it:

Matthew 19:18-20: (NASB) ¹⁸Then he said to him, Which ones? And Jesus said, You shall not commit murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; ¹⁹honor your father and mother; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. ²⁰The young man said to him, All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?

He was sincere in recognizing there was more than just the Law.

He knew his physical efforts to keep the Law were good, but not enough:

Mark 10:21-22: (NASB) ²¹Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me. ²²But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.

Keeping the Law + self-denial = being godly. Jesus plainly explains the self-denial aspect as necessary for life in this present world, but it was too much for this young man to cope with.

Facing your own mortality forces you to re-evaluate your priorities. — Paul Allen

(1))Stop prioritizing easy, Prioritize Like a Genius, brendon.com

• Now, the first idea I have for you is stop prioritizing easy. Stop prioritizing easy. A lot of people when they look at their To Do list of the day, they just start working towards the easy things. Knocking off the easy things. They think, that's going to get me some momentum. It'll get me into the day. I'll feel like I'm succeeding. And the reality is, it's making them less likely to actually do the things that count. And how do you know this? How do you know if you're guilty of that? You know it if your day feels like there's a lot of busy work, but there is an absence of your life's work.

Are we busy fulfilling our top Christian priority? We still have to provide for ourselves and our families. There is still laundry! How can we make it all work? Life does get in the way...or does it? The busy things we have to do should not be done in absence of our highest mission. Sometimes things are really important, like the flat tire on the way to a meeting. The meeting is still the most important thing, but we have to fix the tire as a pressing need.





Jesus made it plain to all what was required for those who would become Christians:

<u>Luke 9:23-24</u>: (NASB) ²³And he was saying to them all, If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, he is the one who will save it.

Take up his cross daily and follow me - Jesus' listeners would have known that symbol was a graphic image of the torture and humiliation of a painful death. They were being asked to raise their game to a whole new level.

Jesus not only told us about self-denial, he showed us HOW to do it:

<u>Luke 22:41-42</u>: (NASB) ⁴¹And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and he knelt down and began to pray, ⁴²saying, Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will, but Yours be done.

Remove this cup - Jesus did not want to be crucified as a blasphemer of God but acquiesced.

The rest of the New Testament verifies the absolute necessity of self-denial:

<u>Romans 8:13</u>: (NASB) For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

For self-denial to work:



Our most important priority never changes, but managing our most pressing needs is in constant flux. It is through handling these things that our top priority stays in focus.





Was self-denial Jesus' highest priority? No, but it certainly was a <u>major and</u> <u>necessary commitment</u> in the accomplishing of his highest priority.

Self-denial is big, but there is more!

Does our top priority come down to our treatment of others?

When we think of Jesus, we cannot help but think of selfless love. The way he lived and the way he died show us an unwavering commitment to humanity. This is arguably the highest and most noble cause ever accomplished in the entire history of humankind. But was it Jesus' mission and top priority?



It IS about life and also about self-denial, which is manifested through love.



Love first starts with God:

John 3:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

God's love was for His beloved human creation. He did NOT create us in vain; rather, He created us for a purpose - the purpose of a family that would and could function on different planes of existence.



"cqbiblepodcast" Alexandra writes: Telling us the commandment of love. Matthew 22:36-40: Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law? Jesus replied: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

> Aruna writes: Jesus opened the narrow way to life and gave us access to the truth as an aid to walk the narrow way which leads to life. John 14:6: I am the way, the truth, and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me.

> Ruth writes: He gave us the new commandment of love and set an example of all the fruits and virtues for us to follow.

These are all good! We are not minimizing any of these priorities but are trying to establish the absolute top priority of Jesus.

This next text gives us a huge insight into Jesus' most important thing - his **ULTIMATE MISSION:**

Romans 5:6-8: (NASB) ⁶For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

How is it that Jesus is the one who died to show God's love? Jesus was overwhelmingly loyal to God's will, and therefore what the Father loves unconditionally, Jesus loves unconditionally. The two cannot be separated. There is strength and power in unconditional love.





John 15:12-14: (NASB) ¹²This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you.

Does THIS translate into our top priority - our own mission to be like Jesus in our love for each other? That one lay down his life for his friends - these are very powerful words.

Action expresses priorities. — Mahatma Gandhi

Are we living a life of selfless love? Do we act like the person who has love for his brethren and everyone else?



CQRewind (1)) Prioritize progress, Prioritize Like a Genius, brendon.com

• The opposite of stop prioritizing easy, is to prioritize progress. Things that actually move the needle of your life forward. Things that actually contribute in ways that you find meaningful and significant and fulfilling. And you know you deserve that, but sometimes you get caught up, right? You have just been caught up in everybody else's hot mess. And your life thus became a hot mess. It's not because you are, it's that you were just doing the easy things to please people. Because you know that's easy, "I'm going to please some people today." But what we need you to do is say, "What would significantly move me toward my dreams today?"

What would significantly move me towards my faithfulness and fuller discipleship today? Are we living these things?

Alongside of the *love one another* command, Jesus also showed us how to love those who stand against us. What better way than to die for their sins?

Think about the divisions created by world politics. Compare with Jesus' words:

<u>Matthew 5:43-45</u>: (NASB) ⁴³You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

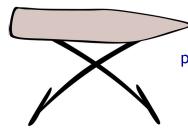
It is easier to love those who love you back, those with whom you have more in common. It is hard to love those who despise you, those who will laugh when you fall. How do we love them? Jesus died for the Scribes and Pharisees who persecuted him daily.

For us, loving our enemies can be expressed in the way we live as a result of their disdain for us:

Romans 12:19-21: (NASB) ¹⁹Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord. ²⁰But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing so you will heap burning coals on his head. ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

This gives us a principle of high priority for our world that frequently contradicts our Christianity. How do we handle such contradiction? With grace, godliness, righteousness and mercy. This is easier said than done!

Life needs to be lived, including time for personal Bible study, prayer life, going outside and being in awe of God's creation. There are busy things we need to do, like cooking, cleaning, laundry, all the things that have to be done. Homes must be maintained. We have to work to earn money to pay our bills. These are all like the flat tire that needs attention.



We have to find a way to make our love for God and His way and His will remain important, even while we perform mundane tasks.





A phrase I often say is, "Do the most important thing at any given moment." What is the most important thing right here, right now? I might have a thousand things on my mind, but when my little granddaughter grabs me by my finger and wants to play with her toy, I need to give her my full and undivided attention. We have so many competing things going on, but we can use balance to get to our top priority.



The ability to recognize our most pressing wants is key. Are they in line with our highest priority? Do these <u>wants</u> warrant a lot or a little attention? Can they be <u>needs</u>? Sometimes, but sometimes wants are just distractions.



Was love Jesus' highest priority? No, but it sure was a central element in ALL he did.

Where else could we possibly go with this? How much higher can a priority be than selfless love?

Let's be sure to understand the process. Just because we are saying that sacrifice and love are not the highest priority does not mean they are not a part of the highest priority. What we are driving at is the biggest picture possible. If we see THAT picture, we see Jesus' mission.



Life, self-sacrifice and love for all; these all bring us to someplace specific.

<u>Matthew 6</u> was part of the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus spent a lot of time teaching about our high priorities for life.

Here is what he taught about high priority prayer:

Matthew 6:7-10: (NASB) ⁷And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. ⁹Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Praying for God's kingdom to come is second only to honoring God Himself. It seems like a lot of Christian denominations do not talk about the kingdom, even though it is described in the New Testament at least 80 times.



Matthew 6:26-28,32-34: (NASB) ²⁶Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? ²⁷And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? ²⁸And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin...³²For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows

that you need all these things. ³³But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness - is this it?

Everything we do must be done in the context of seeking





This is one of the verses that changed my life and helps me put everything in its own order. Whatever it is I am doing, am I being righteous in the moment? Am I playing with my granddaughter in such a way as to be glorifying to God?

The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities. - Stephen Covey

If the kingdom of God is one of our priorities, how is it scheduled into our life?

Stop prioritizing false emergencies, Prioritize Like a Genius, brendon.com

The second thing is stop prioritizing false emergencies. Just because someone put it on your plate today does not mean you need to reply to it today. Unless it is, again, your job in customer service to reply back within 24 hours. But that is not for everybody. We fall in this false collective belief that we all have to reply to the text on the second we receive it. That we gotta return the call the second it comes in. We don't. The more that you're doing what the world tells you or asks of you, frankly, the sad thing is, the more you lose your life. You lose yourself in it. You become a pleaser or a placater. You become a person who is just so busy all the time; you're wiped out. You know what I'm talking about. You cannot prioritize other people's emergencies. And here's what you need to do. Learn to say no. But what is helpful to people is you living your truth, is you serving your highest good in this world, not everybody's speedy, needy request.

Things happen in our lives that seem really big in that moment, but part of maturity is learning how to recognize what is important. True emergencies are rare.



Several years ago, I was working in my office when suddenly everything started swaying back and forth. I was feeling nauseated. The building was creaking! There was an earthquake in Virginia, and we were feeling the aftershock 600 miles away. This could have been a real emergency that needed response. An email is not an emergency. We have to see through the fog of the tension of situations to calmly learn to deal with them.

Matthew 10:5-7: (NASB) 5These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Preach God's kingdom.



<u>Matthew 13:24</u>: (NASB) Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field...

Jesus used stories to teach God's kingdom.



Our highest priority is never a cause of stress or anxiety; rather, it is a source of joy. Stress and anxiety come from the pressing circumstances, choices and thoughts dominating our present day's experiences.

We need to see through our circumstances to hold onto our highest priority.



Was the kingdom of heaven Jesus' highest priority? No, but everything he did would lead to its establishment.

HOW DO WE FIND JESUS' HIGHEST PRIORITY?

What do all of these priorities have in common?

- <u>Life everlasting for all</u>:
 The Law could not bring it to imperfect humanity; Jesus had to.
- <u>Self-denial/sacrifice</u>:
 The only way for Jesus to pay the ransom for all and the only way to heaven.
- Love for all:
 The highest example of a character in the image of God Jesus showed it to us.
- <u>God's kingdom</u>:
 The culmination of all these actions in which Jesus led the way.

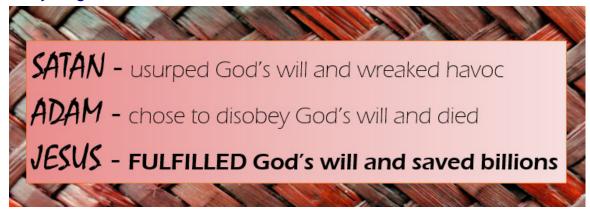
Every one of these comes from loving, following and accomplishing the will of the Almighty Creator.





It all comes down to doing God's (and only God's) will! Does that oversimplify a complex plan?

On the contrary, the highest priority of <u>loving and doing God's will</u> is the highest mission and priority that ANY being on any plane of existence can have! Everything else is beneath God's will.



The Old Testament (<u>Psalms 40:6-8</u>) told us he would come in the delight of his Father's will, quoted in Hebrews:

<u>Hebrews 10:5-7</u>: (NASB) ⁵Therefore, when he comes into the world, he says, Sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; ⁶in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have taken no pleasure. ⁷Then I said, Behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of me) to do Your will, O God.

Do we have such delight in doing God's will? Not in just being nice or getting along with people, but actually *doing* His will?

Jesus enters the synagogue in Nazareth and announces what doing his Father's will entailed:

<u>Luke 4:17-19,21</u>: (NASB) ¹⁷And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. And he opened the book and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord...²¹And he began to say to them, Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

The will of God for Jesus was to bring hope. Jesus knew his mission and told the people how it would be accomplished. Do we know ours?



When at a crossroads, ask, "Is this honoring God?" All pieces of life should line up underneath this purpose.



)) Start prioritizing freedom, Prioritize Like a Genius, brendon.com

• The last one's much more positive...and that is start prioritizing freedom. Start prioritizing your ability to gain more emotional freedom, physical freedom, social freedom, financial freedom, time freedom. I love looking at people's actual day agenda, and I say where in here is freedom? Where is your ability to do a 20-minute meditation, because it is going to make you feel alive, and back, and grounded, connected. You don't have anything where you prioritize your own psychology today. Where are you thinking about your strategic plan? Where are you thinking about the vision for your life? Where are you day dreaming and mapping if you need to do that? Where are you prioritizing your physical energy, because if you can have physical freedom from fatigue, you'll accomplish a whole lot more, even if your priorities are not always in whack.

Our mind should be in tune with that which is higher while we do mundane things.

After speaking to the woman at the well, he verified where his soul's nourishment came from:

John 4:31-34: (NASB) ³¹Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, Rabbi, eat. ³²But he said to them, I have food to eat that you do not know about. ³³So the disciples were saying to one another, No one brought him anything to eat, did he? ³⁴Jesus said to them, my food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to accomplish His work.

Jesus' first words: <u>Luke 2:49</u>: (KJV) Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

Jesus' final words: <u>John 19:30</u>: (KJV) It is finished.

DOING GOD'S WILL

Jesus' highest priority was and is to unequivocally, at all times, in all circumstances, and no matter what the consequence or cost, wholly accomplish his Father's will. Every other profound aspect of his life we talked about is simply a critical piece of that mission.



Even in our failures and shortcomings our highest priority can shine. We are called to live by faith and grace by God, who KNOWS OUR HEART. Are we being nourished today?



Continuing the verses we began with, as they show us the results of Jesus' work - this prophecy is a tiny glimpse of the will of God - only able to be accomplished by the obedience of Jesus:

<u>Isaiah 11:6-9</u>: (NASB) ⁶And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. ⁷Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. ⁹They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Humankind will be obedient to His way. The most important thing is to honor God first. We need to find our mission of doing God's will in our life and walk purposely down that road.



For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!



Join us next week for our podcast on March 25, 2019: Ep. #1066: "Do I Seek God's Protection or Permission?"

Bonus Material!

You won't change until changing becomes one of your priorities instead of one of your options. — Sonya Parker

The Old Testament text from our last segment that was quoted in Hebrews:

<u>Psalm 40:6-10</u>: (NASB) ⁶Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired; my ears You have opened; burnt offering and sin offering You have not required. ⁷Then I said, Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. ⁸I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart. ⁹I have proclaimed glad tidings of



righteousness in the great congregation; behold, I will not restrain my lips, O LORD, You know. ¹⁰I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great congregation.





Helpful notes from a CQ contributor:

If we love something or take an interest in it, we will be motivated to learn as much as we can about it. So, our initial interest in God and His plan leads us to *study* to show thyself approved. (2 Timothy 2:15) The more we learn, the more we seek to know Him, His character and His teachings. The more we learn about and understand God's grace and love for us, the more our

love for Him grows, and this leads to a desire to reciprocate...how can I show my love for Him and appreciation for all He has done and continues to do? What can I do in return?

The answer?

- Matthew 16:24: (KJV) Take up your cross and follow me.
- Matthew 11:29: (KJV) Take my yoke upon you and learn of me.
- <u>John 12:26</u>: (KJV) If any man serve me, let him follow me...if any man serve me, him will the Father honor.
- Proverbs 23:26: (KJV) Give me thy heart; and let thine eyes delight in my ways.
- <u>Philippians 4:9</u>: (KJV) The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me these things do.

Daily we study God's word. We learn about His plan, about the kingdom - how it will transpire, how it includes everyone and what man must do to have a part in it. We learn about the two salvations and the importance of emulating Christ's character.

It is so important we remember Christ did not just teach with words. He lived and breathed God's teachings. He demonstrated through his actions and words and teaching methods exactly what the Lord requires of us. He demonstrated what love is and the effect and influence it will have on us and those we love. He taught us how to live and behave now, as though we were in the kingdom where all will learn of Him and all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest of them.

Interesting points about Jesus' use and frequency of the term kingdom of God:

(Source: The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible) The word 'kingdom' is found fifty-five times in Matthew; twenty times in Mark, forty-six times in Luke and five times in John. When allowance is made for the use of the word to refer to secular kingdoms and for parallel verses of the same sayings of Jesus, the phrase 'the kingdom of God' and equivalent expressions (e.g., 'Kingdom of heaven,' 'his kingdom') occurs about eighty times... These statistics show the great importance of the concept in the teachings of Jesus... There can, therefore, be little doubt that the phrase 'the kingdom of God' expresses the main theme of his teaching" (Vol. III, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1976, p. 804).



Studying the preceding references to the kingdom in the four Gospels gives us much understanding. Consider, for example, these points:

- The message Jesus commissioned his early apostles to teach is called the good news, or gospel, of the kingdom of God. (Luke 9:-2)
- Jesus used the same words to announce the message his church is to broadcast through the ages - the good news of the kingdom of God. (Mark 1:14-15, 24:14; Luke 8:1)
- The Gospels frequently summarize Jesus' teachings with the same terminology the gospel of the kingdom. (Matthew 4:23; 9:35)
- Jesus equated gaining salvation with entering the kingdom (<u>Matthew</u> 19:16,23-24), and he explained the loss of salvation in terms of rejection from the kingdom. (Luke 13:28)
- The message of salvation is called the word of the kingdom. (<u>Matthew</u> 13:19)
- The hope and comfort of a Christian are said to be in entering the kingdom. (Mark 10:15)
- The principal goal of a Christian is to seek first the kingdom. (Matthew 6:33)
- Righteous people are called sons of the kingdom. (Matthew 13:38)
- The undisputed theme of many of Christ's parables is the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 13:44-45,47)

