

CELL NOTES
for Andrew Price's talk on 13 April 2008

LIFE IN THE OVERLAP

1. Introduction. The big picture

- ◆ In the beginning, God creates everything, including man, to live in right relationship. Things are as they should be
- ◆ Man chooses independence and disobedience. The result is that death, suffering and corruption enter creation. This affects not just man but all of creation (Romans 8:18-25)
- ◆ But God does not give up on his creation and reaches out to man, showing the way back to right relationship with God, each other and creation
- ◆ Israel's role was to demonstrate how one nation could live under the rule and provision of God. But Israel's prophets point to a time when messiah, the chosen one, will come to judge all the nations, bringing justice and peace to all the world, establishing the kingdom of God on earth (e.g. Isaiah 2)
- ◆ Jesus comes, announcing that this long awaited kingdom is near. His disciples recognise him as messiah.
- ◆ But Jesus refers to the kingdom of God as something present (Matt 12:28, 21:31) but also future as in the Lords prayer ("your kingdom come"). Why is this?

2. The overlap

- ◆ We live in a time where one age is passing away (1 Cor 7:30-32) and a new one, God's kingdom, is displacing it. We see clear evidence of the kingdom of God (the death and resurrection of Jesus the messiah, transformed lives and miracles, the holy spirit poured out) as well as the evidence of sin and death (wars, poverty, sickness etc).
- ◆ This time is sometimes called the last days, and it is clear that the writers of the new testament believed that they were living in the last days e.g. Heb 1:2, 2 Pet 3:1-14. Rev 1;1
- ◆ When Jesus comes again the Kingdom of God will be visibly over all things and there will no longer be any sickness, death or injustice. But we live in the overlap, an in-between time where the age that is passing and the new age are in tension
- ◆ This is a time of struggle where "the kingdom of God has been forcefully advancing and forceful men take hold of it" (Matt 11;12)

3. How do we live in the overlap? Three of the things we need to live in these difficult times are

- ◆ Hope
- ◆ The Holy Spirit
- ◆ Fellowship/community

4. **Hope.** For the Christian, hope is a confident expectation based on the knowledge that God is faithful and that God is good. In Matthew chapters 24 and 25 Jesus stresses us that we need to be ready, keep watch and live in expectancy of his return. Our expectations of the future govern the choices we make now. Are our priorities and decisions in line with the watchful expectancy Jesus asks us to have?
5. **The Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit being poured out is in itself a sign that we are in the last days (Acts 2;14-17)
 - ◆ We need the gifts of the spirit (prophecy, tongues etc) and the fruits of the spirit (love, joy, peace etc) if we are to be able to live as God wants us to live
 - ◆ We are either guided by the Spirit or by our old selfish ways
6. **Fellowship/community** (Acts 2:42-47)
 - ◆ Discipleship is not individualistic. Much of our learning comes as we work and live closely with other disciples. This is often painful as we face up to our selfishness and weaknesses
 - ◆ The way we behave towards each other is a sign of whether we are disciples of Jesus or not (John 13:35)
 - ◆ Revivals and great upsurges of Christian faith often lead to a re-emphasis on community as in Acts, the early monastic movements, Wesley's class meetings, the cell church movement and the house church movement . In small groups we encourage, challenge, teach, and learn from one another
 - ◆ Church can be a community of hope - in a society where isolation and despair seem to be growing. But for this we have to be a community
7. **Points for discussion**
 - ◆ How has being ready for Jesus' return affected the way you live?
 - ◆ How has the Holy Spirit affected your life in the last year?
 - ◆ Who is your community?