

Osaka International Church

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Joyfully Anticipating Heaven and Our Resurrection

Philippians 3:20 – 4:1

Pastor Kevin Shepherd (Ikoma International Chapel)

Intro

* Good morning... I'm so happy to be able to share some words of hope from God's Word with you all today!

Chris Momose told me that he had a wonderful time of fellowship with you last week, and now I'm also blessed to have the privilege!

You've doubtless noticed from our message slides that, at Ikoma International Chapel, we've been focusing on this theme of joy as we've been studying Philippians.

I was looking at your website this week and noticed that Pastor McKenna's New Year's message was also from Philippians 3... and he noted that this letter is about "the Christ-like mind that brings Christian joy".

Now that 2016 is half over (already!), what's the reading on your joy meter? Full? Half-empty? Running on fumes?

I hope that this message will help us to more eagerly anticipate the bright future awaiting those of us who follow Jesus... and fill us to overflowing with great joy!

* I'd like to begin by telling you about how, in 1951, Florence Chadwick became the first woman to swim the English Channel both ways... and in doing so smashed the 24-year world record by more than an hour.

* [ARROW] The next year, she set off from Catalina Island in a bid to swim to the shore of mainland California, about 26mi/42km away.

She swam for fifteen hours, and then a thick and blinding fog set in.

Tired and freezing, Florence begged to be taken out of the water along the way... but her mother, in a boat alongside, told her she was close and that she could make it.

She swam for another hour, but then physically and emotionally exhausted, she finally gave up and was pulled out of the water.

* Once up in the boat, she discovered that the shore was less than a mile — perhaps just 1000 meters — away.

At a news conference the next day she said, "All I could see was the fog..."

* I think if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it."

I share this story because I think that same thing can easily happen to us in our lives of faith.

Even if we've experienced record-breaking victories in our walk with God... there are times when we get so tired that a blinding fog can surround us.

We lose sight of where we're going and we sometimes want to give up.

I wonder if anyone here is looking ahead to your future and feels like this?

Paul wrote Philippians while he was a prisoner in Rome... and in spite of his terrible circumstances, Paul has not lost sight of his goal.

And he is writing this letter to encourage the believers in Philippi, who were going thru very difficult trials of their own.

I think he wanted to help the Philippian Christians to see through the fog of their troubles by painting a very clear picture of the finish line that they needed to be striving toward.

Biblical Case for the Resurrection

* And, in doing so, Paul wrote the passage that we'll be looking at today...

3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself. 4:1 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

* Now, there are many important things here for us to consider about the nature of Heaven... including a number of misconceptions which may get cleared up for some people as we go.

Now let me be quick to add here that I don't claim to have everything figured out about the nature of Heaven...

* But 1 Corinthians 2:9 gives us a wonderful promise...

...no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him.

Our human minds cannot conceive of how amazing our experience in Heaven will be!

But even with much opportunity left open for "sanctified imagination"...

There actually IS a lot that we can know from Scripture!

Background of Philippi

So let's dive in with some historical background of the place where the recipients of Paul's letter resided.

* [MAP] Philippi was a Roman colony in northern Greece, located on the main route connecting Rome with the eastern Roman Empire.

And like colonies in more recent history, it was doubtless an example of a ruling power – in this case, the emperor of Rome – oppressing people in another country.

In 42 B.C. – about 100 years before Paul arrived – Philippi was the setting of a great battle in the Roman civil war that had broken out after the assassination of Julius Caesar.

After winning this battle, the new Augustus Caesar found himself with a lot of soldiers in northern Greece with nothing more to do.

So he gave them land around Philippi and rebuilt the city to make it a colony of Rome.

He placed retired soldiers there to ensure loyalty to Rome and essentially established it as a military outpost.

By the time Paul arrived on the scene, Philippi was a mix of families descended from those original Roman colonists and indigenous Greek families who resented the Latin-speaking elites who had taken over their city.

The Philippian colonists were proud of being Romans, and they tried to organize Philippi's civic life to be as much like Rome as possible.

* [PIC of Caesar] One big component of this was their establishment of the imperial cult — the emperor Caesar was to be worshipped as savior and lord.

In fact, back in this era, people would have to declare their allegiance to Caesar as lord to gain access to Roman cities throughout the empire.

We are Citizens of Heaven

So, with this background in mind, let's take a look at today's passage.

* First of all, Paul declares in Philippians 3:20 that "***our citizenship is in Heaven***".

I think that many of us automatically think he means, "...and therefore we have to tough it out here on Earth until we can go up to Heaven where we really belong and live there forever."

Has anyone else besides myself ever assumed this meaning of the phrase?

But I've come to realize that this thinking is actually totally backwards!

* [MAP w/arrow toward Rome] If people in Philippi said, "We are citizens of Rome", they wouldn't have meant that they were all looking forward to going to Rome to live there forever.

* [MAP w/reversed arrow toward Philippi] No, the purpose of a Roman city in a colony like Philippi was to bring the rule of Rome to northern Greece...

It was to expand Roman culture and influence there.

And what if there were a local insurrection, or an attack from the 'barbarians' to the north... what would they do?

They would hope and pray that their emperor would come from Rome to Philippi to defeat their enemies and establish their city with the glory of Rome herself.

* So this is the context for Paul's words to the church in Philippi in v.20...

Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christians are citizens of Heaven, the Kingdom of God...

And the ultimate purpose of God for every church in the world is to play a part in bringing the rule and reign of God **to our world...**

* Jesus taught us to pray to this end in the Sermon on the Mount, right?

9 "Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven.

So churches are to be like little colonies, working to expand the Kingdom of God by bringing His influence to the places where we have been deployed.

We represent the true King, and he has entrusted us with this message as ambassadors of His Kingdom...

* In 2 Corinthians 5:19-20, Paul writes,

...in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

We proclaim that Jesus is the true and good King, joyfully sharing the Good News of His Kingdom coming to Earth and calling others to come under His lordship!

Now let's look at a couple of other things about Heaven in v.20...

The Present Heaven

First of all... where is Heaven?

* Earthly citizenships are in specific places, like Rome, or Japan, or in my case, the United States.

But you may be wondering, "So just where exactly is this Heaven place anyway... and what is it like?!"

* We often default to thinking of Heaven as being somewhere up above the clouds, or out in the universe somewhere.

We come up with vague images like this because the Present Heaven is something that we cannot perceive with our natural human senses.

But while we can't physically locate it or sense it, we can know from the truth of God's Word that Heaven exists.

We also instinctively know that there is something beyond the grave.

* Ecclesiastes 3:11 declares that...

[God] has put eternity into man's heart.

Let me pause here for just a minute to ask any friends here who do not identify as Christians...

Have you ever experienced that sense of eternity in your heart... that there is something, or Someone, that transcends what we can perceive with our physical senses?

Have you ever visited a temple or shrine and, reaching out to connect with something higher than yourself... but as you reflected on it in bed that night, you experienced the deep emptiness of realizing that there was really nothing there?

That those gods are unable to hear, and powerless to answer?

Have you watched news reports of grave injustice or horrific violence... and felt your soul cry out for justice and peace?

In watching the news just this week, we all instinctively know that there is a terrible brokenness, and a profound emptiness, in the natural ways of our world.

We all long for the day to come when righteousness and justice will finally rule and reign.

Though most in our world don't realize it, this is a deep subconscious longing for the righteousness and justice of God's kingdom to come!

What is a surprising hope for many people is that, one day, this absolutely will be manifest here on Earth!

But to be included in this kingdom, we must turn away from our sinful ways of living and receive our Creator's forgiveness for our sins.

We must step down off the throne of our lives and submit ourselves to the reign of King Jesus... the only truly good and righteous King.

If you have never done this and would like to know more about this Good News, please talk with a trusted Christian friend.

* [BLANK] You know, when thinking about going to Heaven, I think many people don't think much beyond this generality, and just kind of leave it hanging right there — "We'll go to be with Jesus in Heaven, where we'll live happily ever after, The End"... right?

But there's SO much more to this story!

We don't have time to go into great detail this morning, but I'd like to at least talk about the basics of what "going to Heaven when we die" actually means for Christians.

We will better understand this when we realize that there are actually two "Heaven"s...

The first is the "Present Heaven" is where the soul, or 'true essence', of a Christian will go after death.

It is a disembodied state, as our dead body is left behind here on earth and our spirit goes to experience joy and peace in the presence of Jesus.

Here is a passage that is familiar to many of us, Jesus speaking to His disciples in John 14:1-3...

*** 1 "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also."**

A wonderful promise, isn't it!

But many people mistakenly believe that this is our ultimate eternal destination, and therefore pretty much the end of the story.

* However, the Greek word used here for “rooms” or “dwelling places” is *moné* (μονή), which denotes a temporary lodging place.

It was only used to indicate something like a wayside inn used for rest on a journey, and never as the final destination itself.

* This is the “Paradise” that Jesus referred to in addressing one of the dying thieves from the Cross in Luke 23...

42 And [the thief] said, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” 43 And He said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

* In his book *Surprised by Hope*, British theologian N. T. Wright says that

“...Paradise is here [in Luke 23:43] ... not a final destination but the blissful garden, the parkland of rest and tranquillity, where the dead are refreshed as they await the dawn of the new day.”

So the souls of Christians who die before Jesus’ return will be at rest in His presence in this place which we can refer to as the “Present Heaven”.

So what, then, is our ultimate *final* destination?

While we can’t perceive a specific physical location of the Present Heaven, Scripture is very clear about where the Future Heaven will be.

Jesus will come to us

* Let’s take a look again closely at v.20...

Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...

Notice that we are awaiting a Savior *from* Heaven...

A Savior who will come to His colonies here on Earth to fully establish His Kingdom throughout the world one day.

This is consistent with the way that God has always related to humankind.

In Genesis 3 we read of how God came from Heaven to walk with His created beings, Adam and Eve, in the garden of Eden here on Earth...

God’s presence was with His people the Israelites in various ways throughout their history.

And then in the Gospels, Jesus, God incarnate, came from Heaven to walk amongst us... we call Him Immanuel, meaning “God with us”.

And finally, as recorded in Revelation 21:2-3, Jesus will come from Heaven again to establish His Kingdom...

* ***I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the***

tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.

This is the ultimate final marriage of Heaven and Earth, as God brings the full rule and reign of His Kingdom to Earth.

This will be a new world completely purged of sin and its terrible effects...

* Revelation 21 continues on, saying...

4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

This will be the wonderful fulfillment of what we long for as we pray...

“Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.”

God’s Kingdom coming began with Jesus’ arrival on Earth the first time...

And His Kingdom will one day come as it bursts forth in its fullness and we begin that next phase of our eternal life living here on a newly recreated Earth.

There are many interpretations, and much debate, regarding the timeline and sequence of various end-times events...

But however this process works out, the final outcome is very clear — Jesus will one day reign here on a recreated Earth – the New Earth – which will be filled with His glory and righteousness!

This was all confirmed and sealed by Jesus’ resurrection, which we will now look at as the firstfruits of what is yet to come for us.

Our Resurrection Bodies

* So, picking up from v.21, we read that for Christians, whose citizenship is in Heaven... Jesus will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body.

* Paul had already hinted at this just earlier in Philippians 3:10-11, which Chris spoke on last week, where he wrote about wanting to...

...know [Christ] and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

* And now in v.21, Paul spells out plainly what attaining this resurrection from the dead entails.

Our lowly, mortal bodies will be transformed to be like Jesus’ glorious and immortal body.

And this isn’t just an obscure comment that Paul has dropped in here...

Christian belief in resurrection from the dead is based upon plain teaching found all throughout the entire Bible.

* In fact, in one of the earliest Old Testament writings, Job declares...

**25 I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand on the earth. 26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; 27 I myself will see Him with my own eyes —
I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! (NIV)**

(Is your heart yearning for this within you today?)

So resurrection is found in very early Jewish belief and carries on throughout the entire New Testament.

And the major Christian creeds state: "I believe in the resurrection of the body."

But it seems that many Christians today don't fully understand this, or affirm it as a literal future reality.

* In his book entitled *Heaven*, Randy Alcorn says this:

"Christians tend to spiritualize the resurrection of the dead, effectively denying it. They don't reject it as a doctrine, but they deny its essential meaning: a permanent return to a physical existence in a physical universe. But this is self-contradictory. A non-physical resurrection is like a sunless sunrise. There's no such thing. Resurrection means that we will have bodies. If we didn't have bodies, we wouldn't be resurrected!"

To begin with, I'd like us to look at the big picture, so we can be clear on how things will play out for those of us who have our hope in Christ.

The most comprehensive overview of our post-mortem fate as Christians is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, where Paul writes the following...

*** 13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.**

Of course, the phrase "fallen asleep" is a euphemism for death.

Now continuing from v.16...

*** 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.**

So, while we don't know when this will happen, Paul gives us the order of events here...

* Christ will return, or appear, at what is commonly referred to as His second coming.

* At that time, the bodies of all believers throughout the ages who have died in Christ will be raised and reunited with their souls in their new resurrection bodies.

* And then any Christians who are still alive here on Earth at this time will be caught up, and our bodies will also be instantly transformed into the same kind of body that those who died before us have received.

Some people wonder "What about those whose bodies were cremated?"

This is a good question... especially in Japan.

* In studying the human genome, scientists have discovered that *everything* needed to generate a unique human body is precisely encoded in our DNA...

So it's possible to imagine that only a single cell containing our DNA is all that would be necessary for our bodies to be regenerated at the resurrection!

And, of course, God originally created everything out of nothing, so He can recreate any body that once existed even without the original DNA if He needs to.

The most detailed passage of Scripture dealing with our resurrection bodies is 1 Corinthians 15.

I think this is one of the most important chapters in the New Testament... so please be sure to take time to study it!

It's a long chapter, and we don't have time to look at all of what Paul wrote regarding the resurrection here, so we will just consider these representative verses.

*** 20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a Man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at His coming those who belong to Christ.**

*** 40 There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. ... 42 So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.**

*** 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.**

What we see in these verses can be summed up this way:

* Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead first, and all who die in Christ will be resurrected later when He returns.

* There are two kinds of bodies — heavenly bodies and earthly bodies — and these are referred to as “perishable” bodies and “imperishable” bodies.

* And also as “natural” bodies and “spiritual” bodies.

* And believers who are still alive here when Jesus returns will be changed in an instant and receive the same kind of imperishable, resurrection body as those who died in Christ.

What was Jesus' Resurrection Body Like?

You may have noticed that Jesus' resurrection has been referred to several times as the “firstfruits” of what is to come for we who follow Him.

This, of course, refers to the very first taste of the harvest, which assures us that there's more of that good stuff coming!

Or, while it may be hard to imagine on a hot July day in Osaka... we might think of it like this- seeing flowers poking through the snow, as a sign that winter is nearly over and new life is coming soon!

Now, in order to understand what our resurrection bodies will be like, let's take a look at some Scripture that reveals what Jesus' body was like after His resurrection.

In Matthew 28:9, after Mary Magdalene and the other Mary had gone to the tomb and found it empty, Matthew records this...

*** 9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.**

So we see that after His resurrection, Jesus had a physical body that the women recognized as being Him... and that He could be touched.

In Luke 24:39, we see Jesus' response to His disciples when they were freaked out, thinking that He was a ghost. Jesus said...

*** 36 As they were talking about these things, Jesus Himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" 37 But **they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.** 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See My hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch Me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."**

Jesus then went on to ask for some food...

*** 40 And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. 41 And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 **They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and He took it and ate before them.****

...so we can know that a resurrection body is able to eat.

*** And in John 20:27, we see Jesus appearing to the disciples again in His body, which Thomas could touch, saying...**

[Jesus] said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see My hands; and put out your hand, and place it in My side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."

And Thomas' reaction makes it very clear that he was convinced that Jesus had been raised physically from the dead, for he exclaimed...

*** "My Lord and my God!"**

What will Our Resurrection Bodies be Like?

Although there is quite a bit we will never know about clearly until we see the Lord face to face,

we can be sure that our bodies will be like Jesus' body after He rose from the dead.

*** Because Philippians 3:21, along with many other passages, states that...**

...the Lord Jesus Christ ... will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body...

We can understand that we will be resurrected to perfect versions of our own original bodies...

to bodies that have been set free from the curse of the Fall and sin...

to bodies that will never again experience sickness or disease.

I'm sure many of you know of Joni Eareckson Tada, a quadriplegic artist, who says this in her book *Heaven: Your Real Home...*

* "I still can hardly believe it. I, with shriveled, bent fingers, atrophied muscles, gnarled knees, and no feeling from the shoulders down, will one day have a new body, light, bright, and clothed in righteousness — powerful and dazzling. Can you imagine the hope this gives someone spinal-cord injured like me? No other religion, no other philosophy promises new bodies, hearts, and minds. Only in the Gospel of Christ do hurting people find such incredible hope."

Why Will We Have Glorified, Resurrection Bodies?

We don't have time to go into detail here about why we need to have resurrection bodies, but I do want to touch on the topic.

For now, simply put, we will need bodies like Jesus' resurrection body because the Lord has planned many things for us to do in the future.

* We know that we will not be spending eternity in heaven up in the clouds somewhere playing harps.

We will spend eternity on the recreated Heaven and Earth, joined together here on this planet.

We'll reign with Christ over the New Earth, where we'll be involved in meaningful and productive work that will be deeply satisfying.

* Randy Alcorn puts it this way...

"God will give us renewed minds and bodies so that we will be whole people, full of energy and vision, eager to undertake new projects for God's glory."

Standing Firm in the Lord

Then Paul ends his powerful admonition to press on and strain ahead toward the goal — with a holy dissatisfaction! — with the words found in Philippians 4:1.

* Because of the wonderful hope of Heaven and life on the New Earth in resurrected, immortal bodies... Paul charges us to "***stand firm thus in the Lord***".

In other words, in light of the certain fact that we will one day receive glorified bodies and no longer live in a world corrupted by sin...

Stand firm in your faith and press on toward the goal of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

* As the writer of Hebrews put it in chapter 12, verses 2-3, press on with your eyes fixed on Jesus so that you will not grow weary and lose heart when the race is hard.

Do you remember swimmer Florence Chadwick from the beginning of this message?

Well, her story didn't end with that defeat less than a mile from the shore.

* Two months later, she attempted her swim from Catalina Island to the California coast once again.

And, just as happened the first time, the thick cold fog set in and she couldn't see where she was going.

* But this time she made it!

And afterwards she said that while she swam, she kept a mental image of the shoreline in her mind.

And she shattered the record time of this swim for both women *and* men by two hours!

Waiting with Hope

* I quoted paraplegic Joni Eareckson Tada earlier.

In her book *Heaven: Your Real Home*, she relates the story of a day where, for the fourth time, she had to ask her secretary Francie to take her out of her wheelchair and put her into bed to adjust the corset that was pinching her.

As Francie was leaving that afternoon, she sympathized with Joni, quoting Romans 8:23...

*** 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but *we* ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, **groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.****

Joni writes that as she lay there meditating on this verse, she breathed this prayer to God...

*** "Yes, Lord, I do look forward to being whole, to having a body that will never know pain. But to be honest, what I really want is a new heart that doesn't want to resign or quit."**

Romans 8 continues on to say this about the redemption of our bodies...

*** 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.**

We can indeed look forward to the strong and vibrant bodies that we will receive in the future... I am certainly looking forward to mine!

How about you... what aspect of your new resurrection body are you most looking forward to?

And above that... how about your new heart, unburdened by the weight of temptation to sin?!?

In his first letter, the apostle John wrote this...

*** 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure. [1 John 3:2-3]**

So as we wait — like Joni — let's pray that the Spirit will help us to wait hopefully and patiently... and with an increasingly pure heart.

But, of course, it isn't God's plan for us to just sit around waiting and hoping for His kingdom to be realized on a recreated Earth someday in the future... far from it!

Because with our Heavenly citizenship come civic responsibilities.

And as we consider how we might apply this understanding to our lives today, I'd like for us to think about the following verses as we close...

* Jesus Himself said in Luke 4:43...

"I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose."

* Then in Luke 9, Jesus sent His disciples out...

1 And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

* The end of the book of Acts leaves us with Paul in Rome...

30 He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, 31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

* And Jesus tells us in Matthew 24:14 that...

14 ...this gospel [good news] of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

So here's the question I'd challenge you to prayerfully consider...

* How might you joyfully live out and proclaim the Kingdom of God right here in Osaka?

What would it mean, practically speaking, for OIC as a church to truly live and act as citizens of Heaven, bringing the influence of God's Kingdom to your local community?

I'd like to encourage us all to pray that our King and Savior would show us specific new ways that we might tangibly bring His kingdom to Earth.

As we consider this, let's sing the song "This Kingdom" together...

Closing Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, your Name is honored above all other kings and rulers.

We thank you that Your Kingdom will never end, and that we can look forward with joyful anticipation of Your return to be with us one day.

And we rejoice in Your resurrection, knowing that not only did You ultimately conquer sin and death...

But You also personally revealed the prototype of the resurrection bodies that You've promised to we who are trusting in You.

I want to pray especially for those of us who struggle physically and are especially awaiting the redemption of our bodies.

Please strengthen and equip us to be part of Your plan for bringing Your kingdom to Earth...

And show us how we might help to bring a taste of Heaven to Earth, even in this coming week, right here in Osaka.

It's for Your glory brought to our world — through Your Church — that we pray these things in Jesus' Name...
Amen.