

THY KINGDOM COME

Pt 1: The Gospel of the Kingdom

Do you ever go through your day picking up a song and it stays with you, you can't seem to keep from humming it or singing it? My purpose this morning is to begin planting a word in your mind that you can't get rid of. I want you to think about the kingdom. As we go through this series, I want us to understand the kingdom. Ultimately, I want us to live in the kingdom with full awareness of that reality, experiencing the full benefits of that reality. Jesus came proclaiming the kingdom. In our series on heaven what struck me was this phrase: The kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. Last week, I asserted that we don't think about heaven enough. Thinking about heaven in the future is the same as thinking about the kingdom today.

Mark 1:14-15 (NIV)

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. [15] "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Jesus is just beginning his ministry. He has just been baptized, he has struggled with Satan for 40 days in the wilderness, he comes back he starts preaching. And the very first thing Jesus talked about, the most consistent thing Jesus talked about was not salvation, not the cross, not loving your neighbor. The one thing Jesus was most focused on was proclaiming this: the time has come, the kingdom of God is near. That phrase, "the kingdom of God" is found 53 times in the New Testament, almost exclusive to the Gospel of Matthew. The phrase, Kingdom of Heaven is synonymous with Kingdom of God. Kingdom of heaven is the Jewish form. Matthew's target audience were Jews. He used the phrase 32 times. Kingdom of God is the Greek form found more often in the gospels of Mark and Luke and the writings of Paul. They mean the same.

Matthew 4:17, 23-24

¹⁷(A) From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ^(B) "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

²³(A) And he went throughout all Galilee, ^(B) teaching in their synagogues and ^(C) proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and ^(D) healing every disease and every affliction among the people. ²⁴So his fame spread throughout all ^(E) Syria, and ^(E) they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and ^(G) pains, ^(H) those oppressed by demons, ^(I) epileptics, and ^(J) paralytics, and he healed them.

For three years as the Son of God walked the face of this earth; he had a message and he had a ministry. There was something he proclaimed. And what he proclaimed was authenticated or confirmed by what he did. And all of it is summarized in this passage. Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom – that was his message.

And Jesus came healing the sick and one specific activity in verse 24 says, oppressed by demons. Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons. Jesus would often encounter someone possessed or oppressed by demons. Did you know that until Jesus showed up there are no recorded encounters with the demonic realm? When Jesus showed up, Satan showed up in full force because Jesus was ushering in a new kingdom.

The Kingdom Is

We live in a kingdom crazed culture. Everyone of us look for opportunities to get ahead, we vie for the upper hand, we look for the advantage. In the corporate world dominating the competition and creating a monopoly in the marketplace is what the company is after. Since the organization of human societies nation has sought dominance over nation. In the days of Jesus the Roman empire eventually covered the entire civilized world and subjected it to the values and principles of Rome. Imagine the excitement and anticipation when Jesus shows up and proclaims a new kingdom and the ultimate disappointment when that kingdom fails to fulfill their preconceived notions.

1. The REDEMPTIVE REIGN OF GOD

We learned over the past few weeks is that heaven will be a restoration of what God had created in the first place.

Genesis 1:26-28

Beginning in verse 26 we have God creating man in his image. Nothing else in creation compares to mankind.

²⁸And God blessed them. And God said to them, ^(E) "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Everything the God desired for man was in the garden of Eden. It was on earth. It was perfect; no death, mourning, crying or pain. Man had intimate fellowship with God. And what's more God had given man dominion over the earth. Satan came along and deceived Adam and Eve and they sinned. And the relationship with God was broken AND the dominion of earth was taken away. Referring to Satan, Isaiah 14 says,

Isaiah 14:13 (NIV)

You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven;

I will raise my throne above the stars of God;

It has always been Satan's intent to usurp God's authority and to replace God's kingdom with his own kingdom. For a time he gets to do that on earth. From Genesis 3, on; death, sorrow, mourning and pain is the experience of mankind who now live under the new king. Jesus called him the prince of this world. Satan had taken over dominion of the earth and mankind, you and me, became slaves to sin; in bondage to the kingdom of darkness. Along came Jesus, which the Apostle Paul called the second Adam to redeem and restore the dominion that was stolen.

Col. 1:13 (NASB)

For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

When Jesus came to earth, he invaded a hostile kingdom. When Jesus was proclaiming the kingdom of God, he was in essence declaring war on the kingdom of darkness. Many of you have either read Ann Frank's Diary or watched a movie on that subject. For years Ann's family hid in the corner of an abandoned part of a factory; huddling in fear that they would be discovered. Millions of Jews lived in terror and in bondage to a kingdom intent on their destruction. Can you imagine the hope that captivated them when they heard of an invasion force being mounted against their oppressors? When Jesus showed up, it was like God planting a flag on earth and declaring for the whole universe to hear, "I declare this place to be mine."

They had hope.

2. A FUTURE HOPE

Revelation 22 talks about the throne of God being established.

Rev. 11:15 (NIV)

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

Jesus told the disciples that he wouldn't celebrate the Passover again until they met in the new kingdom. Jesus made it clear that there was a kingdom in the future.

But he also made it clear that there was a kingdom in the present.

3. A PRESENT REALITY

The kingdom of God is a present reality. And this was the confusion and frustration; to many the kingdom wasn't looking like what they had envisioned.

Luke 17:20-21 (NIV)

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, [21] nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."

Or is in the midst of you. Remember the movie: Back to the Future? This is the period you and I are living in today: the kingdom of God present but not fully realized. That's what Jesus was proclaiming; a future kingdom now made present. Question,

What is the Gospel of the Kingdom?

The word, 'gospel' means good news. And kingdom means, well, kingdom. If you have a kingdom, then you have a king, that means authority. The gospel of the kingdom is:

The GOOD NEWS That GOD REIGNS

Last week was the 66th anniversary of D-day (June 6, 1944). Many historians view this as the beginning of the end, breaking the back of the Nazi regime and ensuring their defeat. But it wasn't until May 4, 1945, nearly a year later that the peace treaty was actually signed, declaring the end of conflict. Soldiers continued to die for the cause between D-day and V-day. In our own civil war, Americans continued to die after General Lee's surrender simply because they didn't know the war was over.

This is the period we're living in: Jesus has declared victory over an enemy that just will not give up. He's still a roaming lion seeking those he can devour.

Jesus had a message and ministry. For three years Jesus taught about the kingdom.

Jesus **TAUGHT** the Kingdom

We'll start in Matthew 5, in the Beatitudes: verse 3 and verse 10. The poor in spirit and the persecuted have the kingdom of God for their inheritance.

20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds^(AI) that of the scribes and Pharisees, you^(AJ) will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 6:10 Jesus taught us to pray:

"Our Father in heaven,^(Q) hallowed be^(R) your name.^[a] **10**^(S) Your kingdom come,^(I) your will be done,^[b]

33 But^(AY) seek first^(AZ) the kingdom of God and his righteousness,^(BA) and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 7:21

21^(Z) "Not everyone who^(AA) says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will^(AB) enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who^(AC) does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

All through the gospels Jesus talked about the kingdom, illustrated the kingdom in parables and demonstrated the kingdom through miracles. All that he taught he confirmed through signs and wonders.

Jesus **CONFIRMED** the Kingdom

He demonstrated the kingdom through the deliverance from sickness and demonic oppression. People wonder, "If Jesus had the power to heal why didn't he heal everyone?" And the answer is that wasn't the purpose of his mission. It was a confirmation of His mission. Jesus came to proclaim the rule and reign of God over the dominion of darkness. In Matthew 12, Jesus finds himself in a confrontation.

Matthew 12:22-30

22^(A) Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. **23**^(B) And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" **24** But when the Pharisees heard it, they said,^(C) "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." **25**^(D) Knowing their thoughts,^(E) he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. **26** And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? **27** And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul,^(E) by whom do^(G) your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.

The Pharisees didn't have any other explanation so they come up with this unfounded and unreasonable idea that Jesus has a demon or is a demon himself. And Jesus exposes their irrational argument. I mean, that's silly. Why would an army fight against itself? **28** But if it is^(H) by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then^(I) the kingdom of God has come upon you.

I am demonstrating that what I say is true by the fact that I have power over the dominion of darkness.

29 Or (J) how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man?

Whose the strong man? The strong man is Satan. What is the strong man's house? It's this world, the dominion of darkness. And, what's the plunder? If Jesus is going to plunder Satan's house, what's he after? He's after you and me.

1 John 3:8 (NASB)

the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

What are the works of the devil – well, in a word – it's sin. Sin, in essence is rebelling against the rule and reign of God. Where does sin come from? It comes from Satan.

Hebrews 2:14 (NIV)

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil--

Where does the power of death come from? It comes from Satan. Remember what Jesus said, the thief comes to kill and destroy. I came to give life.

How Do I Experience the Kingdom?

Right now you and I are engaged in a spiritual conflict between two kingdoms. Jesus came to initiate the beginning of the end for the dominion of darkness. His message was plain and clear cut. And yet it was so profound that people have misunderstood it and worse rejected it for two thousand years. It reaches to the very core of who you are. It leaves nothing untouched.

Mark 1:15 (NIV)

"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

The gospel of the kingdom that Jesus preached is simple: believe. The gospel of the kingdom that Jesus preached is profoundly difficult: repent. Paul told the Philippian jailor, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved." Most of you in this room are in this room because you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God. And a lot of us just stop right there. But you have to ask another question: what does it mean to believe? Jesus said, repent and believe. Believing starts in the mind. You evaluate the claim, you examine the evidence – you weigh the material and you make a decision with your mind. Repentance flows out of the conclusion that your mind just made. Repentance is evaluating the proposal, examining the evidence, weighing the material and then, changing your mind. You've heard the phrase, you are what you eat. Well, listen, you do what you think. Repentance is changing what you think. And if you've changed what you think, you will change what you do.

I'll give you a rather poor example: For a lot of years I "believed" I could play golf. You've heard me talk about this before. After several years of disappointment and frustration I was faced with reality that confronted me with a decision. I could be a golfer or a Christian, but I couldn't be both. Now, I have nothing against the sport, this isn't about golf, it's about me. I believed one thing at one time but then I came to believe something else. But it wasn't enough just to believe it. I had to repent. With what I now believed, I had to live out what it meant to believe it. Here's the problem we're all faced with: we want to be a golfer and a Christian, pardon the analogy. We want to live in both kingdoms, don't we? To experience all the rights and privileges associated with the kingdom you need to make a resolute decision.

1. A RESOLUTE Decision

Jesus said no one puts a hand to the plow and looks back? Jesus made no concessions to the distracted or reluctant. I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back.

2. A COSTLY Decision

Jesus always challenged men and women to consider the cost before signing up. The rich young ruler couldn't do it. To him, the sacrifice was too great. And what's so compelling about that experience is that Jesus let him go. Jesus would tolerate no divided loyalty.

3. An ETERNAL Decision

Jesus said: whoever confesses me before men, I will confess before my father in heaven. What Jesus does with you in the future kingdom will be reflected in what you did with him in the present kingdom. Jesus didn't just proclaim a message, he confronted us with a choice.

Bottom Line: I HAVE A CHOICE

And Jesus makes no apology: He confronts us with decision. You see, the problem with Americans is we're accustomed to calling the shots. In American, the government is subject to the people. But not so in a kingdom. In a kingdom, the people are subject to the king. I want us to understand what it means to live in the kingdom of God. Next week; I'm going to talk about how to become a member of this kingdom. Jesus told Nicodemus you must be born again, we're going to talk about what that means. The following week, we're going to talk about spiritual warfare. You and I are living in the midst of a great battle between the dominion of darkness and the kingdom of light. We are mere pawns in a supernatural conflict. We're going to learn what that means. And then further into it we're going to understand what it means to live in this kingdom with all the rights and privileges afforded those who choose Jesus as their king.