

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The Kingdom of God Explained by Jesus **Selected Passages**

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SermonAudio Blurb: A lot of people have thoughts about what is the Kingdom of God but seldom is there a clear sense of what the bible actually says. In the Gospels we have Jesus making many statements about it and by looking at these passages we can see the various ways that the King Himself describes and explains His Kingdom. The goal of this sermon is to open the eyes of the listener to various characteristics related to the Kingdom as shown in the gospels.

I. Introduction.

- A. We continue with our short series on the Kingdom of God.
- B. Last week we saw the way the gospels connected us back to the Old Testament and the covenants.
 - 1. The announcement and birth of Jesus Christ was not merely a unique moment in time.
 - 2. It was the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promises both to Israel and to the entire world.
 - 3. Note that it was the beginning. Not everything promised in the Old Testament about the coming King has happened. And even with the statements made by angels and people in the opening chapters of the gospels are not all fulfilled yet.
 - 4. What is forgotten to often is that the first coming fulfilled some prophecies and the second coming will complete the prophecies. We will see how that works in an upcoming sermon.
 - 5. What I want you to remember is that God made very clear promises and covenants with Abraham and Israel. God is faithful to His promises and we must learn to take Him at His word. We also need to resist the temptation to change what God said to fit what we think He actually meant.
 - 6. Finally, last week we saw that there were spiritual and physical aspects to the birth of Jesus. He came to save His people from their sin, that is a huge spiritual reality. But He also came to bring the enemies of Israel under His

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feet and to righteously judge them. This is a physical truth that is also very important.

- C. Today we will consider how the Kingdom of God is presented in the gospels, primarily by Jesus Himself.
 - 1. At times the Kingdom of God is “at hand.” And at other times it is yet future. And at other times it is in their midst.
 - 2. Sometimes it seems to be spiritual in nature. But then there is the idea of clear physical parts to it. Sometimes it seems to be only for Israel and other times it seems to be for Gentiles too.
 - 3. So we will look at many passages to begin to appreciate a key doctrine that is glorious and complex. The better we understand it and embrace it the more it will change our way of thinking and living.

II. Four Characteristics of The Kingdom of God.

- A. First, at the advent of Christ’s public ministry in some way it was “at hand.”
 - 1. In Matthew and Mark we have both John the Baptist and Jesus Himself declaring early on that the Kingdom of God/heaven is “at hand.”
 - a. So in Matthew 3 John the Baptist use it in vs 2. This was not one time occurrence, it captured the essence of his messages preached.
 - b. And in chapter 4 Jesus hears that John is now in prison it was time now for Him to enter fully into the public eye. And His words were the same, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (vs 17).
 - c. Mark records it a bit more fully in Mark 1:15, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”
 - d. Notice how the term “Kingdom of God” and “Kingdom of heaven” are used interchangeably. This is because terms summarize the message that was being preached over and over.
 - e. To understand what is meant by it is “at hand” requires one more lesson about the Old Testament covenants:
 - (1) If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers. . . . then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac,

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and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land. (Leviticus 26:40a, 42). [Note the reference to the land as well]

- (2) 2 Chronicles 7:13-14.
 - (a) Note again the if-then.
 - (b) As much as people want this to be a promise to claim for us in America, it is not. It is built on the covenant of God with Moses for the nation of Israel.
 - (c) The reason for vs 13 is the nation is in rebellion, part of the promises in the Mosaic covenant. And what happens is that because of sin they separate themselves from participating in the benefits of all the covenants, Abraham, Mosaic, Davidic, etc.
 - (d) What vs 14 says is that if they **repent**, then they will enjoy the **blessings** of the covenants. And it is worth noting again the reference to the land along with forgiveness of sin.
- (3) Israel, in the time of Jesus Christ and even now, was in rebellion and under the judgment of God. There is a way to be rescued/delivered/saved from that and it is through repentance.
- (4) Along with that promise, it also must be remembered that from the Old Testament point of view the next great event would be the coming of the promised Savior-King.
- (5) And it is in that context that John the Baptist and Jesus are saying, “Repent.” Why? “For the Kingdom of God is at hand.”
 - (a) If Israel, as a nation, repents, then the Kingdom of God will unfold. The King is present for it is Jesus.
 - (b) But the Kingdom blessings will not be experienced if they do not repent. No forgiveness of sin and no healing of the nation.

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- (c) So the idea of being “at hand” is not that it has come but that it is near; which is what the word actually means. It is a word that says something is imminent. So James 5:8 uses it thusly, “You too be patient. . . for the coming of the Lord is near.”
 - (d) The King of Israel is now revealed. Will Israel repent of their sin and rebellion and follow Him or not. Depending on how that plays out will determine the presence of the Kingdom.
 - (e) It is much like the offer of salvation to a person. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is sufficient to save any and all. But the requirement is that the person repent and place their trust in Jesus alone. The offer is a full offer of salvation but only if the requirement is met will that salvation be realized.
 - (f) Christ offered the kingdom to the people as a nation. But to receive it meant they first must receive Jesus as the promised Messiah and King. What follows in the rest of the gospels is the reality that they did reject Him, but that even that was part of God’s overall, sovereign plan.
 - (g) Luke 21:31 shows us something interesting. (Point out that now at the end of His time here the Kingdom of God is “near/at hand” once the things in vss above take place).
- B. Two, the Kingdom is marked by the removal of sin, Satan and death.
- 1. We say often here that these are the great enemies. None of us can defeat them and they stalk us at every turn. And these are the three that we also spend a lot of time denying in our minds. We don’t want to admit that we sin, though we do. We lie to ourselves that tomorrow shall come for each of us. And we don’t really believe that Satan exists, not really.
 - 2. We will deal with this in a different way when we talk about the earthly reign of Jesus Christ that is to come.

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3. What you need to understand is that over and over the Gospels show Jesus as utterly triumphant over these enemies and the things that are related to them....such as sickness and demonic activity.
 4. As Jesus did this miracles over these powers He was giving those around Him a preview, a glimpse, into what was waiting in the Kingdom. It was another way He was announcing the nearness of it.
 - a. Isaiah 25 speaks of the destruction of death.
 - b. Isaiah 35 speaks of the Kingdom as a time of healing and elimination of infirmities and disease.
 5. But even more than that, we see how nature responds to Him. And this is a glimpse into what awaits us as well. Nature is no longer in rebellion, the curse God gave to the earth due to sin will be lifted.
 6. This is not the Kingdom of God though. It is a preview of what will come when Israel embraces by faith and repentance their King. This is par of what the writer of Hebrews speaks of when he mentions some who have “tasted . . . the powers of the age to come.”
- C. Third, to participate in the Kingdom of God requires a new birth (John 3:3).
1. Do not confuse salvation with Kingdom of God. They are not the same and the Kingdom is bigger.
 2. Salvation is the prerequisite to enter it but Nicodemus would assume he was able to enter it. Jesus demolishes that idea.
 3. Notice vs 5 where He enlarges on this. What is meant by this is debated and Matt Miller and I take different positions.
 - a. Matt M’s, and many others, view says that it refers to Ezekiel 36:25-27 where it says, “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”
 - (1) The idea is that as a teacher of Israel (10) he should understand what Jesus meant.

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- (2) This looks to the day of the coming New Covenant. And it is expressed to the nation rather than individuals.
- (3) Nor is the imagery that of a birth.
- (4) Nor does the rest of the passage in John 3 develop this idea.
- b. My view is that it is a simple parallelism that is explained in vs 6. It is referencing to the need of a spiritual birth that occurs after physical birth.
 - (1) The born of the water parallels born of the flesh.
 - (2) The born of the Spirit parallels born of the Spirit.
 - (3) The point is that physical birth, something Jews are fiercely proud of, is not enough. There is a second birth that is Spirit wrought.
- 4. And the same for all here.
 - a. Some of you were born into a non-Christian home. It was full of brokenness and darkness. But God stopped that with you. He said that with you a new beginnings is to come about.
 - b. But for others here you are blessed with one or two parents who love Jesus. You grow up hearing the gospel. You memorize the Scripture. You participate in the life of the Church. But you are not saved by virtue of your birth. And you will not spend eternity with God.
- 5. From here on in the gospels you see Jesus doing certain activities and it is all to point to both Himself as King and glimpse of what the Kingdom of God would look like.
 - a. He is baptised by John who doesn't think he should be doing that. But Jesus insists (Matthew 3:14-15).
 - (1) Why? To "fulfill" or to bring to fulness all righteousness.
 - (2) What is meant by that? It is simply that John and Jesus are the two key figures who bring to pass the Old Testament prophecies of the coming King.
 - (3) In a sense this baptism is like an anointing which would be done for a new king. In the Old Testament the David was

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anointed and empowered by the Spirit. Here Jesus is baptised and is empowered by the Spirit.

- (4) And from this point forward Jesus would show perfect righteousness in all that He did, fulfilling what we could never do, which is perfect obedience.

b. He is tempted by Satan (Matthew 4).

- (1) Satan is the god of this age and he set up an opposing kingdom once sin entered the world through Adam's disobedience.
- (2) There is a heavenly war that occurs right now. The bible is filled with descriptions and declarations about it. I would have you go back to my sermons on Ephesians, Real Reality, to get a sense of how big this is.
- (3) But Jesus does what Adam could not do. He refused to give into temptation. And He showed that His kingdom would not bow to Satan's; rather, it would triumph.
- (4) and the Old Testament is filled with references to this great time in the future where Satan and his minions are cast away into destruction.
- (5) And throughout the gospels you will find Jesus confronting demons.
 - (a) In Matthew 8 they freak out when they see Him because they say it is not yet time, referring to their judgment.
 - (b) In Matthew 10 Jesus sends out the 12.
 - i) They are to announce that the Kingdom is at hand and they are given authority over demons and the ability to heal as proof.
 - ii) And chapters 11-12 show how Israel began to reject this call to repent and to believe, setting the stage for the great rebellion and arrest of Jesus.

6. Which moves us to our final point today. . . . Turn to Matthew 13.

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- D. Four, the Kingdom is a future event.
1. Though the King came to the people of Israel they did not repent. Though the actions and words and events surrounding Jesus show abundantly that He was the promise Messiah for whom they had waited, still in the end they reject and crucified Him.
 2. To be sure, according to Acts 2, this was not a surprise to the Lord for it all took place according to His predetermined plan. But the offer had been given by Jesus and it was rejected.
 3. By and large the people of Israel would die in their sins and the good news would go outward to the Gentiles, which is what Acts chronicles for us.
 4. And the time of waiting continues. And Romans 11 calls this time as a partial hardening of Israel “until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in.” Then, and only then, shall Christ return.
 5. So in Matthew 13 Jesus changes tack and notice what He starts to do in vs 3. He spoke in parables.
 - a. Why? Many use this to show the value of illustrations and defend sermons that are filled with stories and anecdotes, saying that Jesus did this.
 - b. But vs 11 gives us the reason He did so. It was to hide the truth, not expound it. By veiling it and not speaking in plain language the people were left to wonder what was meant and only if Jesus would explain it would the parables make sense.
 - c. Notice also what He says in vs 11. These things are “mysteries.”
 - d. And so divine judgment fell upon these people as He quotes Isaiah in vss 14-15. These people who waited so long and looked at Him so excitedly, ultimately walked away from their King and salvation was lost to them.
 - e. We will look at those parables next week.
 6. There is a key shift in the storyline that you will miss due to the many details in Matthew.
 - a. **“From that time** Jesus began to preach and say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand/near’” (Matthew 4:17).

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- b. “**From that time** Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day” (Matthew 16:21).
 - c. And so Jesus, nearing the end of His public ministry, looking now to the coming arrest and crucifixion says in Matthew 23:39, “For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”
7. So many passages we could look at but we will merely consider one, Matthew 25:31-34.
- a. This is part of the Olivet Discourse and much of chapters 24-25 are explaining what is to come in the future and what to expect.
 - b. It is very Israel-centric because it is addressing many things the prophets in the Old Testament spoke about as well as addressing His second coming.
 - c. He speaks of wars and rumors of wars. We hear about a key event called “the abomination of desolation, which Daniel spoke of in the Old Testament.
 - d. In 24:29-30 we read of a great tribulation and after that time that Jesus would return and rescues Israel.
 - e. But when we come to 25:31 we see that the Kingdom of God is still yet to come.
 - (1) “When” the Son of man comes.
 - (2) Sits on **His throne**. This is connected to the Davidic covenant. The kingdom will not happen until He is on His throne.
 - (3) Worldwide judgment of humanity. These are those living at that time. This is not the final judgment.
 - (4) And then He brings in the faithful into the kingdom.

III. Conclusion.

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- A. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14)
- B. When you believe the gospel and place your hope and trust in Jesus Christ you then receive the right to participate in the kingdom.
- C. We preach and tell people to believe in Jesus not just to have their sins forgiven. Rather it is because we want them to be able to enjoy eternity with God who made them, sustains them and saved them.
- D. The good news is that the King came to rescue His people from their sins. He took on their sin on their behalf. He died in their place. He suffered His Father's wrath instead of them. And He rose again destroying the power of death.
- E. And because they trust in who He is and what He did they, on the final day, will enter the Kingdom of God and find true rest, true joy, and true life.

Community Group Questions

1. How often do you think of the gospel in light of the kingdom? Why and why not?
2. What are you learning about the plans and purposes of God in this study on the Kingdom of God? What do you wish you might learn?