

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

The Importance of The Kingdom of God **Selected Passages**

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PowerPoint Presentation included: Yes

SermonAudio Blurb: Opinions abound regarding the Kingdom of God but often those opinions are without the foundation of serious study. Sadly, what is such a wonderful doctrine becomes something that can create anger and factions within the church rather than promote joy and expectant hope. In this excursus from Acts it is hoped that we can learn what is the Kingdom of God and why it is important to love and know. In the process we will spend a lot of time looking at passages that are often simply overlooked by too many.

I. Introduction.

- A. We saw in Acts 1 that Jesus spent a significant amount of time teaching the Apostles about the Kingdom of God.
 - 1. One of the points I sought to make in this is that it was important for them to understand and therefore it is something we ought to understand as well.
 - 2. I then showed you a few passages that indicate that there was a clear, biblical expectation that God would restore Israel as a nation and that Jesus Christ would reign over it and the rest of the world in a very real sense.
- B. What I want to do over the next several sermons is to develop this idea with you.
 - 1. I ask that you make sure to follow with me as we go through the various bible passages in this study. Unlike most studies this one covers a large amount of bible texts and can get confusing.
 - 2. Passively listening will only frustrate you.
 - 3. The kingdom of God has multiple facets to it and this makes it complex for many.
 - a. We tend to want things simple and straight-forward but it is seldom the way the bible develops any major doctrine.
 - (1) Examples would be salvation or the doctrine of sin.
 - (2) As you grow as a Christian you begin to realize that the idea of salvation is both individualistic and corporate. You begin to learn what you have actually been saved from.

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You begin to learn the many benefits that are attached to salvation. And the list goes on and on.

- (3) It is fine to say that when you place your trust in Jesus you are saved from your sins. But it is hardly a true description of what salvation is in the bible. And in times of great trouble it is good for your soul to know more of what it means to be saved.
- b. When we approach the bible and theology from a purely self-centered perspective then we have little time the serious work of thinking as God intends for us to do.
- (1) In the short run that is not very painful. But given time it simply stunts your growth and leaves you vulnerable to much trouble and error.
 - (2) Every one of you is interpreting everything that takes place every moment of every day of your life. But do you do it well? Is it grounded and defined and shaped by sound theology?
 - (3) The writer of Proverbs describes wisdom as the great treasure to find and to pursue. In Proverbs 1 wisdom is personified as a woman and calls for those lacking wisdom to learn from her. To not know her is to not be prepared when trouble comes for you will not know what is right and good and proper.
 - (4) In a similar way learning theology well does the same thing. It is a way to help you interpret what is happening in your life and in the world. It gives meaning to the massive number of events that flow by you every day.
 - (5) 2 Corinthians 4:7-11 is a good example of how theology defines ones reactions and conclusions. Let me show you just a few:
 - (a) The treasure in vs 7 is the gospel and the hope and meaning it brings.

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- (b) The earthen vessels is us as fallen, sinful humans. It is a term of weakness and of no account. This is God's design.
 - (c) God works through and in our weakness so that the glory of His power is seen rather than ours. This changes how we pray. From "rescue me out of my hardships" to "let me shine forth your glory and gospel in my weakness." It helps make sense of why so often struggles seem to abound.
 - (d) We must learn to see that the gospel is supposed to be seen in us. But also that **it will be seen against the backdrop of our weakness rather than our skills and strength**. Therefore we cannot keep waiting until we are better and stronger to display the gospel, but in weakness we speak it to others.
 - (e) But the promises of the gospel bring purpose and hope. And so while we suffer in many different ways perhaps, we are able to endure well. We are not broken, not struck down, and such.
 - (f) We then begin to grasp that every pleasant day is a gift and that every hard day is also from the hand of God. We are to expect to be handed over to death for the sake of Jesus. And we are to expect to be inadequate to the task of evangelism.
- (6) In a similar way we can consider the Kingdom of God---it is like the gospel. It gives us an ability to interpret the world and events around us.
- C. So today I want to give us five reasons why understanding the Kingdom of God is worthy of your time and attention. Why there is incredible value in knowing about and living in light of the Kingdom of God.

II. The Importance of Kingdom of God.

- A. First, if you do not understand the Kingdom of God then Matt Miller's sermons through Luke will not make proper sense. And the same is true of the other gospel accounts.

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1. From the beginning to the end of that book the kingdom is in focus.
 2. Luke 1:32-33; 4:43; 7:28; 8:1, 10; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 21:31; 22:29-30.
 3. These are but a few of the many passages in that book. As you read through Matthew you will also see constant reference to the Kingdom of God as well—only he chooses the term Kingdom of Heaven.
- B. Second, it helps define the interpretation of major portions of the bible.
1. Starting in Genesis 12 you get statements over and over about God’s plan to do something that will shake the world. This covenant is huge and controls so much of the Old Testament.
 - a. In Leviticus 26:40-42 we see the statement that if the nation of Israel will confess their sin against God then He will relent of His punishment. Then in verse 42 we read, *“I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land.”*
 - b. Over and over you will see promises by God to restore the nation to their land. When you see that it is vitally connected to the covenant He made with Abraham.
 2. On into the historical books of the Old Testament there then develops promises regarding the throne/kingdom of David and how it is to be an eternal throne.
 - a. The books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles relate the failure of the people to obey and follow God.
 - b. We see in the creation of God’s visible kingdom on earth in and through the nation of Israel. They were God’s people.
 - c. But even as they rebelled and were exiled and brought into captivity and slavery to the other nations the prophets would speak of another day that was to come.
 3. Repeatedly the Psalmists will reference the coming King. We call those Messianic psalms. The Psalms also make reference to God’s faithfulness to His covenant and this is looking at covenants such as the Abrahamic and Davidic.

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4. The prophets cannot be understood well if you don't understand the Kingdom of God. Over and over and over they mix words of judgment with words of the Kingdom.
 - a. Not only was there the promise of a coming kingdom that would cover the earth; but there was the promise of the coming King who was the anointed One of God. He was the chosen one, the promised Savior.
 - b. You will read many places in the prophets where YHWH is seated in Jerusalem. That the nations shall come and worship Him. Where the enemies of Israel are vanquished. But where sin is still present. These speak of a time yet future where Jesus Christ will reign on earth prior to the re-creation of all things.
 - c. Easily 2/3s of the bible is connected with the Kingdom of God and probably even more which explains the next point....
- C. Third, it helps explain the over-arching plan of God.
 1. (PowerPoint slide goes up here)
 2. We talk a lot about the story of the gospel in the bible. We could do the same with the Kingdom of God. In fact it is hard to separate the two in many ways.
 3. It is what unifies the Old Testament and New Testament.
 4. It is what explains the workings of God and so many of His commands.
 5. Some argue that it is the grand unifying theme of Scripture.
 - a. Over and over we see the declarations of God's sovereignty which is simply another way of saying His "kingship."
 - b. Part of the confession of true faith in Jesus Christ is that He is "Lord." It is a statement of kingship.
 - c. At the center of all things in the bible is God and His rule.
 - d. The Psalms declare over and over again that God reigns.
 - e. In the beginning it is the Creator-King making all things that exist. And the way that reign would work out was through humanity as His image-bearers. Remember the creation mandate? They were to rule over creation and subdue it. This is kingdom theology.

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- f. From there the bible simply unfolds the reality of man's failure to honor and obey God; the promise God gives to bring salvation and redemption; and the promise and coming of the true King, Jesus Christ.
- g. Then at the end of time as we know it we read of the "throne of God and of the Lamb" in Revelation 22:3. And in vs 5 it says that they, the Father and Son, shall reign forever and ever.
 - (1) But we tend to think about salvation as a person thing that we gain. We get eternal life and we get forgiveness. Which is true.
 - (2) But as you read through the bible you should take notice of how expansive the idea of salvation and restoration really is.
 - (3) In Genesis 3:15 we have the first promise of one who would come and destroy the power of the Satan, sin and death.
 - (4) In Genesis 11 we have God scattering the nations throughout the world.
 - (5) Then you come to Genesis 12 and the covenant with Abraham. But notice how huge it is. It is not, "I will save you Abraham." It is, "I will make you a great nation." But even more He then said to Abraham, "and in you all the nations shall be blessed."
 - (6) (If you want to do an interesting study just search for the word "nations" and then consider each use of it in the prophets. It is quite fascinating and enlightening.)
 - (7) Turn to Micah 4:1-7 to see the nations, kingdom and King in view there. This is another aspect of the Kingdom of God that we have yet to see.
 - (8) And as you continue to read you keep seeing this large, worldwide work of God to redeem and restore all things to a proper state again.

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(9) And that is what we just saw in Revelation. God reigning and sin, Satan and death abolished. And a new heavens and earth for eternity.

- D. Fourth, it is to give you hope and expectation.
1. This point is tightly connected to the prior ones.
 2. From Genesis through Revelation there is a constant drum beat of expectation and hope.
 3. Imagine what went on in the minds of Adam and Eve, having sinned. Imagine the confusion and fear when for the first time they experienced shame and hide from their Maker.
 - a. Imagine them living and watching the world they were to oversee and bring dominion to, instead become broken, twisted and evil. Imagine them burying their son Abel, murdered by another son Cain.
 - b. As children and grand-children and great, great, great grand-children were born, sinned, rebelled, murdered, raped, lied and resisted God and righteousness they must have ached and sighed with great and deep pain.
 - c. But remember that they were given a promise that one day One would come who would destroy Satan.
 - d. They raised their sons and daughters with that hope.
 4. But imagine the devastation of the Flood. The sheer destructive reality. The massive number of deaths. I
 - a. Imagine how alone Noah and his family must have felt when they stepped off of the ark.
 - b. Yet God met them and made covenant with them and all of the creation that this sort of judgment would not again occur. Hope.
 5. Imagine what Abraham must have experienced having a God he did not know come and call to him to come and follow.
 - a. To hear that he would become a great nation.
 - b. To hear that God would be his provider and protector.

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- c. And that through Abraham all the nations would be blessed.
6. Imagine the prophet Nathan, when the Word of the Lord came to him and spoke the words of what we know as the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7.
 - a. Imagine as Nathan spoke to that man David and told him these words, *“When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”* (2 Sam. 7:12-13)
 - b. What a promise! What hope! Though David would die, his throne and kingdom would remain. And one day One would be raised up by YHWH himself to rule and establish his kingdom. And this kingdom shall never pass away.
 - c. Beloved, the whole of Israel lived in hope and expectation of the covenants with Abraham and David.
7. God raised up Israel to be His nation and witness to the rest of the world.
 - a. He granted them the revelation through His prophets.
 - b. He granted them forgiveness and access to Him through the priesthood and sacrifices.
 - c. He granted them His blessing and care like no other people.
 - d. He showed them what it looked like to be in a covenant relationship with Him through the giving of the Law of Moses.
 - e. But He promised them through Moses that they would fail and be led captive due to their sin. But that God would then atone for their sins.
8. All the prophets told of the day the Messiah, God’s chosen instrument, would come. And then they were silent.
 - a. 400 years.
 - b. And then came John the Baptist who announced that the promised Messiah had come.

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- c. The people did not merely come to get their personal sins forgiven. They came to be forgiven because they wanted to participate in the kingdom of God.
 - d. Look how this works out in the early part of Luke:
 - (1) 1:68.
 - (2) 2:25.
 - (3) 2:38.
 - e. Then notice how it works out in the end of Luke and the time of Jesus on this earth.
 - (1) Luke 23:51.
 - (2) 24:31.
 - (3) Acts 1:6.
9. And now, in the Church, we find the Apostles telling us to look forward to that day when Christ returns, fulfills the Old Testament promises and establishes His kingdom.
- a. We are called to live a life that is consistent with the Kingdom of God, *“so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.* (1 Thess. 2:12)
 - b. In 2 Thessalonians 1:4-5 Paul speaks of how the promise of Christ’s coming kingdom is entered through perseverance in suffering for His Name sake here and now.
 - c. In 2 Timothy 2:12 Paul assumes that our desire is to reign with Christ in His kingdom and because of that right desire we are called to endure.
 - d. And finally in 2 Timothy 4:18 the promise of the Kingdom is Paul great hope as he lies imprisoned, awaiting his execution.
10. In 1 Corinthians 15:20-26.
- a. We will deal with this more in a later sermon.
 - b. But here notice the connection between the first Adam and Jesus Christ. He is to undo all that Adam destroyed (20-21)

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- c. Then, looking forward to the day of resurrection (23).
- d. Then comes the “end.”
 - (1) Notice how before the end comes Jesus must reign (25).
 - (2) And the length of that reign is until all enemies are dealt with (25c).
 - (3) And then the kingdom of the Son is given over to the Father (25b).
- e. This is our great hope that Jesus will overcome and destroy death in the fullest sense of the word. And this is to be done in His Kingdom.

III. Conclusion.

- A. As we deal with this subject we will at times be looking at some complex thoughts and ideas from the bible.
 - 1. Be patient and listen carefully.
 - 2. Be cautious about making conclusions too quickly.
- B. There are different aspects to this Kingdom and there are two more aspects that are before all of us.
 - 1. We are looking toward the future earthly reign of Jesus Christ as described in Revelation 20 and several Old Testament passages.
 - 2. And then the final, eternal kingdom summed up in the new heavens and earth.
- C. Understand that not everyone here agrees with what and how the Kingdom of God operates.
 - 1. I am not interested in a long debate nor a lot of arguing. I will seek to interact with some of the key points of disagreement so I hope it will be of help for you no matter how you stand.
 - 2. In reality though, most have only a vague sense of what is involved in this important doctrine. And it is to you that these sermons are directed.
 - 3. My plan is to make a positive declaration of what the Kingdom of God is and show it to you from the scripture.

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4. If you have questions on what you are learning jot them down and give them to me. I believe most of them will end up being answered but in the end I am considering to answer questions and challenges and the end of this series.

Small Group Questions

- This is a very theologically and biblically dense series so the questions for this sermon are intentionally non-specific. If nothing else occurs in your group discussion ask each other what are the questions that have come to your mind at this point of the series? What are you most wanting to understand? Please communicate these to the pastor.
- Imagine you are talking to a friend who is a Christian about the Kingdom of God, how would you describe it to them at this point in time? Actually try telling a person next to you in the group what you would say. Try to use only 3-4 sentences to do so. What did you find out in this little exercise? Start your explanation with the sentence, “The Kingdom of God is”

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