

Kingdom Series - Autumn 2005 - King's Centre Church
Week 1 – Introduction to the series (11.09.05)
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Why have we chosen to this topic for our first preaching series?

- It's the first thing Jesus referred to when he started his ministry. He announced the kingdom. (Mark 1:15 – “The time has come, the Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news”
- Understanding this theme has had a great personal impact of both myself & Marjorie
 - Last 6 yrs or so – major influence on our understanding of the gospel – and understanding of living Christian lives
 - Specific teaching from Todd Hunter, Dallas Willard, John Wimber & studying the parables
 - Glimpse of how *dynamic* the Xian life can be.
 - Changed our way of how we *share* the gospel with others – its become less about pushing people to ‘pray the prayer’ – its more about experiencing the ‘the power that raised Christ from the dead’ NOW – in real life, not just when you die. Life before death.
- Its what we, as Christians, are a part of. It's absolutely key to our day-to-day living, and to our eternal destinies. When we chose to become followers of Jesus, we chose to enter into this kingdom.
- The kingdom of God *should* encompass and effect every element of our lives
- But its also true, both for me and for you, that there are aspects of God's kingdom which are not part of our daily experience, and there are corners of our lives which are not 100% submitted to letting Jesus rule them
 - Perhaps because we've never fully got to grips with them – some things can appear mysterious, and fairly scary too (healing, deliverance etc)
- So, as we the Kings Centre seek as a community to become better followers of Jesus, and to making a difference for Christ in this world, the most obvious place to start by together studying and experiencing more of the Kingdom of God.

How do you like the sound of this?

Who would like their lives to include, and not just include but over-flow with things like this.....?

- Physical healing
- Joy
- Peace
- Miracles
- Social justice
- Racial harmony
- Solid finances which keep you in food and make a difference in the world
- A sense of hope – a reason to get out of bed in the morning
- A way to value and enjoy paid work
- Victory over demons
- Lots of self-control
- People raised from the dead
- Provision for all your *needs*

And now imagine that this lifestyle isn't just open to you personally, its open to everyone in the whole world equally. And we can share this 'good news' with everyone we meet on the bus or in Tesco's, and they can access it too.

Jesus said 'The Kingdom of God is near.' Its 'at hand'.

Its available to us, and Jesus sets out an invitation to us to become his radical followers, and to live lives full of those kind of benefits NOW. Like THIS WEEK!

- So hold onto that thought this morning. Its an invitation. Jesus says to us 'Come follow me'.
 - Are you up for it?
 - Do you want to be a part of the kingdom?
 - What can you and your friends in KC do to access more of this wonderful, bountiful, powerful kingdom and the HOPE it offers us?
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Today – an overview. A run-down something of what it means to be part of a kingdom, and then what it can and ought to mean for you and me on a personal, day-to-day level.

Theologically to begin with

Theologically, the Kingdom of God isn't something which Jesus made up, or plucked from the air when he started his ministry.

The concept of a kingdom is promised in the Old Testament, and is shown to have been met and inaugurated in the New Testament and beyond.

- The Jews were familiar with the idea of kingship and God ruling over his people.
 - It started with the 10 Commandments in the time of Moses
 - Then the nation was ruled by divinely appointed Kings – starting with Saul, David and Soloman
- And throughout the OT come many references to a time when there would be a perfect kingdom inaugurated from heaven.
 - The many prophecies (eg in Isaiah like Ch 61 & Daniel ch 2+7) look forward to a new order, when God saves his people (brings salvation), where he rules fully, and justice and righteousness replace inequality and sin
 - The OT also expected a time of judgement and wrath for those who were not meeting God's almighty expectations.
- By the time of Jesus, it had been 100's of years since the last of those recorded prophecies, and the Jews were thinking more along the lines of a political king coming to save them from the oppression of the Roman Empire.
- When Jesus started his ministry, the new kingdom was set in place.
 - With a bang – a massive power encounter of the power and kingdom of God vs. the power of the devil
 - All sorts of things kicked off – healings, deliverance, violence towards Jesus, and the disciples and others who, as Jesus remarked 'had ears to hear' realised that something major was upon them.
- That's the context for the NT writers
 - Expecting a kingdom to come (probably in a final act)
 - Realising it has begun with Jesus and writing from that context
 - Helpfully for us, laying out lots of examples of the kingdom life and its effect on others
 - Eg. Matthew's gospel CH 11-13 is full of Kingdom parables

What is a kingdom?

- All this talk of the 'kingdom' of God – so let's think about that more carefully. Because it is no accident that it's called a kingdom, and it's worth getting to grips with what this means for us to be part of it.
- Ruled over by a King
 - The King is not voted-in
 - God is the almighty king, maker of heaven & earth
 - He delegates responsibility for the good governance of earth to his people (Genesis 1-2)
- A kingdom has subjects
 - We do get the choice of being/not being subjects
 - But Jesus is quite clear that we are called to be obedient to the ruler of our kingdom. And radical obedience brings radical results.
 - Like the title of the book 'If you want to walk on water, you've got to get out of the boat'. Peter was willing to take the radical step of faith and obedience to Jesus by jumping out his small fishing boat into a stormy sea – and the result was radical [defying the laws of physics and gravity is fairly radical to me]
 - "if you love me, you will obey my commandments"
 - There is of course grace in abundance – we all fail at times and we all have off days, weeks or seasons and the invitation is still kept open, and God promises us that if we delight ourselves in him, he will give us the desires of our hearts (PSALM 37:4)
 - but – the 'goodies' of the kingdom come to those who are willing to pay the price to be full participants
 - The NT says 'without holiness no one will see the Lord' (Hew 12:14)
 - So it's an invitation, but an invitation to jump on board with 2 feet and get stuck in!
 - Maybe people here who know all this and used to walk in some of the Kingdom aspects I'm talking about – but aren't in the best place for it now. Invitation is open to you too.
- Has an army – like Kings of old
 - Both offensive (us in the battle) and defensive/protective
 - Gives out free armour (unlike the kings of old, who often used to require their squires etc to pay for their own weapons)
 - Ephesians 6
 - "Kingdom of Heaven has been advancing forcefully, and forceful people lay hold of it" (Matt 11:12)
 - "To say 'kingdom of God' is therefore to say something about power, battle, conquest and victory." (Derek Morpew p.14)
 - KC recent prophecies of us as a church really shaping up as an army, and the question of whether we are willing to follow the leader (who is Jesus) and follow his banners as it were
 - Also defensive – protection for the Kingdom's subjects from the enemy, from danger
 - The bible teaches of how God 'will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways' (Ps. 91:11)
 - As subjects of Jesus' kingdom we are assured that through his death on the cross he has already won the most crucial battle of all existence, and that the safest place to be for our eternal destiny is under his protectorate.
- A set of boundaries.
 - Geographical often, of authority, of responsibility too (eg. Can't be responsible for someone outside of the jurisdiction)

- When you travel outside of the United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland then you step outside of the protection which the UK offers its citizens – if you get into trouble on holiday in Greece you are at the mercy of the Greek police authorities and there is little that the UK can do about it
- So it can be with God. He has laid out boundaries for behaviour and belief and if we step over them, then there can be consequences to pay and we can expect to get picked off or shot-at by the enemy

So what is the Kingdom of God?

- Jesus – his life is our primary example
 - Proclaimed it and inaugurated it
 - Demonstrated it – with healings, deliverance, giving peace, proclaiming salvation
 - Embodied it – thru love, patience, mercy, compassion etc
- The extent of God’s effective rule and reign
 - In our hearts and lives and minds
 - ‘Love the lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength’ (Mark 19:29-31 Greatest Commandment)
- Available (equally, to all) and powerful
- The conductor and enabler is Holy Spirit (Gal 5:25 – “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit”)
- It is relevant to every area of our lives (if we allow it to be) – that’s the ‘extent’ bit
- Its an invitation and a confrontation (when we speak of the Kingdom breaking-in, it means something needs to be broken in the first place)

What does it mean for us?

We will explore some of the aspects of the kingdom over the coming series

- **Expect the unexpected.**
 - It is often called the ‘upside-down kingdom’ because of how apparently contradictory Jesus’ priorities are compared to those which the world sets forth
 - Its actually quite subversive and at times downright dangerous to be a part of
 - There is something very exciting about being part of it
 - – like the NT says ‘The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.’ (John 3:8) – It’s a roller coaster ride with thrills and spills.
- **It is relevant to every area of our lives (if we allow it to be)**
 - Besides J’s direct teaching about everyday life (money, possessions, family, giving, eating & drinking, living amongst the poor, hospitality, work etc) the values of the kingdom (kingdom values) are applicable to all the situations we encounter, every day!
 - Character,
 - attitude to responsibilities, necessities,
 - interaction with other people
 - the way we view our & other’s future
 - etc
- **It requires our all**
 - Suffering and sacrifice are on the agenda for those who truly seek to follow the ways of the kingdom
 - Don’t believe me – 2 Tim 3:12 – “everyone who wants to live a godly life will be persecuted”

- Those things which are idols in our lives need to be addressed
 - Jesus took the role of a servant when he inaugurated the kingdom – and it should be our role too
 - Jesus put it plainly – “seek first the kingdom of God” (Matt 6:33)
 - The Kingdom advances in **us** and through **us** when we **yield** to God. The more you yield the more you grow.
 - **It’s a great thing to be part of**
 - Remember the list I read
 - Being part of the kingdom gives you a **hope and a purpose** to life (not just death) like nothing else can
 - This is ‘good news’ !!
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What now?

Question for you is:

Do you want to be a part of it?

Remember God is full of GRACE

- It’s an invitation
 - Jesus’ never told a parable of ‘10 years hard labour’ – he spoke of banquets, abundance, free gifts
- Jesus has made the way for us – this is not about striving to be something we’re not