

Sunday 19 October 2008 - King's Centre Christian Church, Sheffield, UK

The Kingdom Triangle

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Intro

Continuing to remind ourselves of some core values and truths about what it is to be a follower of Jesus, and a lover of God the Trinity in the 21st century. A couple of weeks ago we looked together at the foundation of being in a covenant relationship with God – and we shared communion together in response.

Marjorie and I are very aware at present of a spiritual shifting going on, and we feel an urgency from the Lord to press into Him, His presence, power, peace – both as individuals, and also as a community in KC. It feels almost like 2 tectonic plates are rubbing against each other and we're all experiencing the ground shocks – global financial crisis, fear entering normal British people's hearts perhaps for the first time in a generation. The real threat of job losses, lower personal wealth, instability ahead.

Now is the very time to focus on the fundamentals. To remind ourselves that we if we follow and trust Jesus, then the reality is that we are citizens of heaven. (Phil 3:20, Eph 2:19) The reality is that we don't have to be tied to the systems and economics of this world, because our family line has its roots and its future in another world (John 18:36) – God's realm, where nothing is impossible, and short term fluctuations of fortune matter a lot less than we might think.

"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17)

- God's realm – his kingdom – is a place of peace regardless of circumstance.
- A reality of joy even in adversity.
- A life on planet earth lived out abundantly – life in all its fullness – regardless of being rich or poor
 - because we can be in good relationship with our creator and lover – God the Trinity

So today we're going to look at the kingdom of God – where our true citizenship lies. We're going to explore together what it means to live everyday life in the light of the amazing reality – supernatural reality – that we answer to a leader who sits beyond the storms of human life – yet cares intensely about them and has made you and me part of the plan of salvation to turn them around.

READING

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Matt 28:16-20 - Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

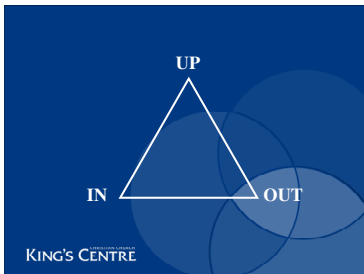
Reminder – 2 threads of bible & Christian life

Kingdom & Covenant are the 2 threads running through the bible, the Christian existence. 2 sides of the same coin. The DNA of scripture. The complete picture of who God is, and what he wants us to do and be about. When we integrate these 2 themes, we find a complete identity in how we relate to the world.

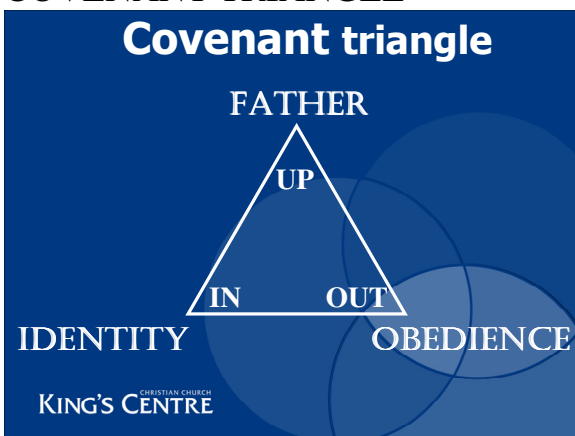
Covenant – our free relationship of love with God.

Kingdom – our responsibility and opportunity to work on behalf of the King and extend his rule

LIFESHAPES TRIANGLE REMINDER (see www.lifeshapes.com)



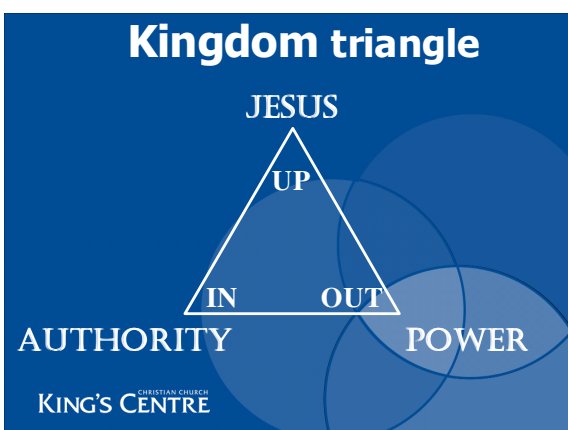
COVENANT TRIANGLE



What is covenant?

- The free invitation to relationship with God the Trinity. Where God is our loving Father. Where our identity is that of children of God, invited in to share – to be heirs, inheritors, of the good things of God in everyday life.
- The right response to such free, radical love of our Father is obedience in return. Like keeping the marriage covenant, we enter into an agreement to follow God in life and live by the best rules for living which he sets (and the scriptures are our main source for these).
- Covenant is the WHO – the BEING
 - Kingdom is the WHAT – the DOING

Today – Kingdom Triangle



Up – Jesus

Jesus is the centrepiece of the kingdom of God. The bible says, Jesus is the king (John 18:36-37; 2 Tim 4:1; 2 Peter 1:11; Rev. 1:5). He chose to come to earth as a mere mortal, to introduce, to inaugurate, the rule of God in the hearts and minds of humankind.

A kingdom means it has a king and that it has an area of authority where the king rules. Jesus' mission is to extend that rule into every human's heart. So that the life and love of God has reign, has first place, in every human creature whom God created in the first place – and ultimately, in creation itself too (Rom 8:18-21).

Jesus' message is – this good news, this good life is available NOW, it's within touching distance, to all who choose to go for it. That's what Mark 1:15 means: "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

This kingdom life is 'at hand' – close enough to touch. Jesus embodied that life, and as we follow his example we really can live the same life.

Or as Dallas Willard puts it

'All the preliminaries have been taken care of,' he said, 'and the rule of God is now accessible to everyone. Review your plans for living and base your life on this remarkable opportunity.' (*Divine Conspiracy*, p.15)

What is the kingdom life? Jesus' instructions are simple, yet revolutionary to the world around us:

- Matt 10:7-8 "As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."
- It's dynamic. It's about setting people free to be everything God intends them to be.
- Its about putting right, situations which are wrong – like sickness and the work of Satan
- More than anything, it's about GOOD NEWS!

IN – Authority

Jesus, our mentor and model in human life – acted with great authority, as he extended the kingdom of God into dark lives and situations.

Mark 1:22 "The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law."

Greek - The word in Greek for authority is *exousia*¹. It can be defined as unrestrained right or freedom of action. It means to exercise one's right. The right of a king to rule is because of his authority (exousia). The word can also mean the authorization of an officer or a messenger to carry out a specific task.

Jesus passed the same authority to his disciples

- Matt.10.1 - He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.
- [on the return of the 72] Luke 10:19-20 - I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but

¹ For more on Authority see: <http://www.sbl.org/wbs/kingdom/Week9/kgw9.shtml>

rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (eg. rejoice that you are in covenant)

In Luke 10 Jesus explains that we have been given authority (exousia), which is the right to use God's power to tread on serpents and scorpions.

Think of it this way. A police officer who directs traffic does not have the power to stop a car because it is much bigger and more powerful than he or she is. However, a police officer does have the authority to stop a car by merely raising his hand. The government & ultimately, the Queen, has delegated their authority to him. **We all have the delegated authority of Jesus, the king of Kings, to bring in his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.**

If we're honest, I know that a lot of Christians are really quite low on confidence.

- You know God the father loves you, and you've known his forgiveness for your own sins or failings.
- But after that, living the Christian life beyond the confines of your own head or heart – beyond the safety of other Christians – you find that hard.
- You're not, in your heart, convinced that God WILL turn up, that the Christian life really HAS got the power and truth behind it to make a difference to another person or their life situation.
- Perhaps you hear the stories of others in KC who have had the courage to pray for others and seen them physically healed – and you still doubt it.
 - Or you're pretty sure that it wouldn't work if you tried it.

If that's the case, I suggest that is because you haven't yet grasped the truth of your identity.

We need to grasp just what it means to be covenant partners with Jesus Christ – brothers & sisters in the same family as the Almighty God, with the full force of the king of kings behind you.

Jesus told his disciples 'do not be afraid' on a number of occasions – with good reason.

- Firstly, he knew our first response to stepping out is often fear – of the unknown, of other people's reactions.
- But Jesus also knew His own identity – and therefore our identity - as covenant children of God. He had no need to be afraid.

Why don't we need to be afraid? What is our identity?

- Heirs of the multiple covenant promises, which began with Abraham (Gen 12; Gal 3:29, 3:7-9, 4:7, 4:28; Eph 3:6)
- Sins forgiven (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14, 2:13), made right (justified) in God's sight
 - Therefore I no longer live, but Christ lives in me (Gal 2:20; Eph 2:22) because I'm clothed with Christ (Gal 3:27) and hidden with Christ in God
- Blessed already with every spiritual blessing (Eph 1:3, 3:19)
- Given the fullness of Christ (Col 2:10)
 - Gift & Access to the incomparably great power of God (Eph 1:19)
- With the Armour of God for protection and offensive action (Eph 6:10-17)

So 'Doing the Stuff' of the kingdom is only a matter of using the authority which has been given us as members of the family of God, the authority to be about the work of Jesus in everyday life.

- You and I have the authority to use his Holy Spirit power to bring the Rule of God, the kingdom of God, into this world on a daily basis.

- The authority is in us – its part of our DNA. We are ambassadors of the king (2 Cor. 5:20) – **we’ve just got to learn to live like it!**

Robbie testimony

OUT – Power

When Jesus was baptised he was filled with the spirit of God. When he returned from his 40-days in the desert to begin his earthly ministry and call the kingdom of God into being, Luke 4:14 says “Jesus returned to Galilee in the **power of the Spirit**, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.”

The Greek word for "power" in these & many other verses is *dunamis*, which means "force" or "miraculous power," according to Strong's Greek Dictionary². Same root from which we get the word ‘dynamite’.

- Luke 5:17 says that the *dunamis* power of the Lord was present for healing the sick: "One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And **the power [dunamis] of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.**"

The outward dimension of the Christian life – is supposed to be fuelled by the dynamite power and presence of God’s Spirit living in us, and through us overflowing into others.

- The same spirit by which Jesus was able to see miracles daily
- The same spirit by which God created the earth
- The same spirit given freely to everyone who believes in Jesus

So Jesus was sure of his covenant identity, and therefore his God-given authority. And he acted in the dynamite power (*dunamis*) of the Holy Spirit to bring in the dynamic kingdom of God.

- Matt 10:7-8 “As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.”

Jesus turned this kingdom ministry over to us in the Great Commission.

- Matt 28:18-20 "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
- After we become Christians, we need to receive this *dunamis* power in order to continue Jesus' evangelism and healing ministry until He returns.
- Jesus needed it. The apostles needed it. The Christians in the New Testament needed it.
- We need it. **We need to receive and be continually filled with the Holy Spirit – on a daily basis, if we are to operate in Jesus’ power & authority, to bring the good news of the kingdom to our neighbours, friends, and colleagues.**
 - Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power [*dunamis*] when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will **be my witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
 - Paul = 1 Corinthians 2:4-5: "My message and my preaching were **not** with wise and persuasive **words**, but with a **demonstration**

² For more on Dunamis see: <http://www.layhands.com/HealingTrainingCourse2.htm>

of the Spirit's **power** [*dunamis*], so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's **power** [*dunamis*]."

- The best way to win people to Jesus is not mere words, not a persuasive argument, it's to live a life that demonstrates the *dunamis* power of God.
 - This is exactly what Jesus told us to do in the Great Commission

Make space in this season to be filled everyday with the presence of God – which is the power of God to change you and the world around you

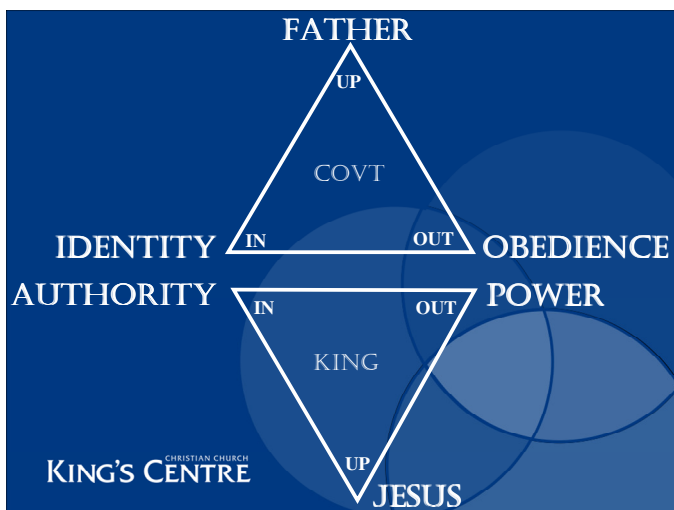
So we have dynamite power of the spirit given to every Christian, and the authority to use it. To light the touch paper, and set the world alight!

Triangles inverted

How can you and I live a daily life in which we operate in kingdom authority and power?

Like I've said before, **if you want to live for the kingdom – first live out of the covenant.** Kingdom & Covenant are so intimately related. Let's look at how.....

BRING THE TRIANGLES TOGETHER....



Covenant and kingdom are intertwined. They work themselves out together.

Sometimes **famous Christians fall** from grace because they have lots of power, but their character is lacking – **they don't address the Covenant side of life** – obedience to God's ways, through covenant community and accountability.

If you find you lack **authority** as a Christian – concentrate on your **identity**.

If you feel you lack **power** in your Christian walk – make every effort to improve your **obedience**

Once you work on the covenant triangle – the kingdom life will follow naturally. You can't help it!

- When you become aware of your identity and live a life following Jesus' ways – you naturally overflow in the authority and power of king Jesus you are following.

Response

You CAN live a life of kingdom authority and power rooted in the life and love of Jesus.

- You really can! It really is available to every believer
- You don't have to be a superman.
 - You just have to be a follower – in your heart and your action - of Jesus
 - You simply have to be obedient, strong in the knowledge of your true identity, rooted in the great love of our Father in heaven.

You enter the Kingdom & Covenant through the cross. God offers forgiveness and freedom, once and for all, through **the cross**.

- The CROSS is the great gateway, great power, to this covenant and kingdom. To forgiveness and freedom, to the promises of God, to relationship and hope.

CALL TO BECOME CHRISTIANS

TO existing Christians

- Will you commit to ask God for more of His Spirit – on His terms?
- Make space at this key global time for God to be top of the agenda?

- SOME – need to repent & return to the love of God the Father – embrace the covenant of friendship with God

- OTHERS – need to step up to the mark and take hold of the authority and power of the kingdom life – been timid or cruising for too long.