

The Kingdom:

Matthew 6:10

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Luke 17:20-21 ESV

(20) Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed,

(21) nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

General Introduction:

I would like to start this morning looking at the whole concept of the kingdom of God.

I want to start by addressing the question, what is the Kingdom?

And over the coming weeks touch on topics like:

- Who can enter the kingdom?
- What the characteristics of those who live in this kingdom?
- The Laws of the Kingdom
- Our Roles in the Kingdom

Now I need to acknowledge that I am drawing extensively upon George Boardman's book, my own "Now to Next", and Rick Godwin's work along with a range of other sources.

A word of warning.....

For some of you this will be very liberating,
for others it be anti-climatic,
for others still you will be ticked off at me because your sacred cow is a hamburger.

But it is what it is.

Specific Introduction:

We all heard phrases like-

Lets Build the Kingdom

Or

We are advancing the Kingdom

Or

Kingdom Builders Ministries

Or

Building Business to Build the Kingdom

But every one seems to have a different take on what this Kingdom is.

As a result of an article we may have read, or a sermon we may have heard, we have formed different views as to what the Kingdom of God is.

A pastor may tell you it is the church.

A non local church based ministry will declare that they are about kingdom work.

A business will tell you that the reason they make money is to give it into this kingdom.

There are whole denominations that will tell you that they are ushering in the kingdom.

My aim is to rectify that situation.

I will attempt by God's good grace to give you a clearer understanding of what is the kingdom of God and along with that help prepare you to take your place and play your role in seeing this incredible thing established.

Kingdom of God, or Kingdom of Heaven?

So, what is this thing called the Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven?

Well, it is not a really bad pseudo – religious movie with Orlando Bloom. (Who makes a much more believable elf than he does a warrior or pirate)

The term Kingdom of Heaven or Kingdom of God are interchangeable terms in the New Testament.

Matthew uses the phrase 'Kingdom of Heaven', while Mark and Luke use the term 'Kingdom of God.'

From the reading of scripture we gather that the Kingdom of God is a vitally important term and concept for us to understand.

- We are told that we cannot enter it unless we are born again.
- So our conversion buys us entrance, which makes it an incredible place because of the price that was paid.

- We are told that our faith must be childlike to inherit it.

- We are told that not everyone who acknowledges Christ will enter it.

- Jesus told us to pray that His Kingdom would come.

- And in fact Christ told us that He has given us keys to enter it.

- Paul continues this theme in his epistles urging people to repent and that the time of ignorance has past and there will come a time when the dead shall rise and enter into this Kingdom.

So we really should know what it is.

Now as with all doctrine that has become confusing, it really isn't confusing, and it is really not that complicated, we just have to believe what we read.

It has been made confusing by people for two primary reasons-

1. They don't understand it
2. They don't want to believe it

For case in point look at the doctrine of healing.

If you simply read scripture as it is, if you read the words on the page, then you know you simply lay hands upon the sick and God gets involved.

You have to work really hard and long to mess that up.

It is the same with the Doctrine of the Kingdom of God.

Now I say doctrine and some of you hear "Ambien".
I apologize for your previous experience.

Doctrine simple means:
Set of guidelines or
Body of ideas correctly taught

So what we are going to do is look to the Word as best we can through scriptural goggles and not denominational goggles.
Through Scriptural goggles not experiential goggles.

The Kingdom in the Old Testament:

All the way through the Old Testament,
the prophets,
the psalmist,
the patriarchs,
they all talk of and had prophesied
this great Kingdom whose architect and builder was God.

Now there are many references, I will only highlight a couple.

Gen 3:15

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

Gen 12:1-3

*Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. **2** And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. **3** I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*

2 Sam 7:12-13

*When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. **13** He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.*

Isaiah 9:6-7

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. **7** Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

The Kingdom in the New Testament:

And then we crossover into the New Testament and now we move from it being heralded as a future event to being proclaimed as manifest in their midst.

So it went from the foretelling of it coming to the proclamation of His arrival, to the manifestation in their midst

Luke 1:33

33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

Matthew 3:1-2

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Mark 1:14-15

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Two terms:

There are two Greek terms used in the New Testament so frequently that to ignore their occurrences would be to ignore a large portion of the teaching of Christ and His Apostles.

They are 'Basileia' and 'Ecclesia.'

Now these words are used very purposefully, and these words used are totally different.

Basileia-

The first is the word 'Basileia' which is translated 'Kingdom.'

This term is used 153 times in the New Testament.

The word Basileia or kingdom is used 119 times in the Gospels, 8 times in Acts and only 18 times across the epistles, and the book of Revelation.

Ecclesia-

The second is the word 'Ecclesia'; it is translated 'church.'

It is used 74 times.

Only twice in the book of Matthew, but 18 times in the book of Acts, and the other 56 times across the epistles and the book of Revelation.

Let me repeat that.

Basileia or kingdom is used 153 times in the gospels, 8 times in acts and only 26 times in the epistles.

Where as the term church or Ecclesia is used only twice in one of the gospels, yet it appears 18 times in Acts and 59 times across the rest of the New Testament.

There is an obvious pattern for their use.

Basileia or kingdom is a word more often used by Christ.

Ecclesia or church is a word of the apostolic era.

Let me put it to you another way;
The Kingdom was established by Christ but was made manifest by the Apostles in the form of the Church.

The Kingdom or Basileia of Christianity is a spiritual organism, the Ecclesia or the church of Christianity is an institutional organization.

The Basileia or Kingdom is divine;
The Ecclesia or church is human.

The Basileia, the Kingdom is the goal of Christianity,
The Ecclesia or church is the method of Christianity.

The Basileia is God's aim;
The Ecclesia is God's means.

Christ came to establish the Kingdom, then withdraw so the Apostles could establish the church.

What the Kingdom of God is not:

Let us have a look at misconceptions held about what is the Kingdom of God.

Jewish Misconceptions;

The Jews of the day looked for a kingdom and interpreted the prophecies as being the manifestation of a literal, actual territorial nation.

They longed to have a nation established under God where the monarch was an absolute ruler and their territory was worldwide.

They saw the capital as Jerusalem, its people as being Jewish, its King a descendant of David.

The three wise men came looking for the 'King of the Jews.'

Nathanial called him the King of Israel.

John himself, depressed in prison, asked if He was 'the one' that would come and deliver the nation.

Judas betrayed Christ because He did not live up to his political expectations as a military ruler.

John, Judas and the rest of the Jews thought this Kingdom was going to be socio-political in nature.

Three Christian Misconceptions of the Kingdom:

Kingdom and Church are not the same thing.

The Kingdom of God and the Church

Or

The Kingdom of God and some form of Christian ministry are not the same thing.

Christ preached on one, the Apostles established the other.

We can not establish that thing which is only divinely possible; we can only build that thing which is humanly possible.

We can not build the kingdom; we can only enter or inherit it.

Replacement Theology:

Replacement theology essentially teaches that the church has replaced Israel in God's plan.

It teaches that the church is the replacement for Israel and that the many promises made to Israel in the Bible are fulfilled in the Christian church, not in Israel.

So, the prophecies in Scripture concerning the blessing and restoration of Israel to the Promised Land are "spiritualized" or "allegorized" into promises of God's blessing for the church.

The look at the promises of Israel being a great nation and in a sense say...*Fools you killed Jesus it is our turn now...The Church is now God's favorite.*

While God may be focusing His attention primarily on the church in this dispensation of grace, God has not forgotten Israel and will one day restore Israel to His intended role.

The church has not replaced Israel in God's plan.

Now I am not encouraging Messianic Judaism, which is a total waste of time and very popular in Texas.

Why on earth would we celebrate holidays established by the law when Christ is the fulfillment of the Law?

Blow your shofar all you want, but neither call it music or spiritual warfare.

Kingdom Now Theology:

There is a brand of modern theology called 'Dominion Theology' or 'Kingdom Now Theology' or 'Covenant Theology'.

It basically says that society should be reordered according to the laws that govern the Israelites and that we should see the establishment of a literal Kingdom of God an earthly thron politically and even in some cases with military means.

It says that we are 'God's covenant people, Joel's Army, and that we need to see the Kingdom of God established on the earth today.

And we will do this by taking over the spheres of influences in the world, namely education, medic, politics, social, business and this is the way that we will see the Kingdom of God established on earth.

The error with this one is that they are making the same mistake that the Jews were making in seeing and believing that this '*Basilleia*' is a physical Kingdom, was one of bricks and mortar, one of politics and economic might.

They are doing what Judas and the John the Baptist did, they are limited their understanding and grasp of the Kingdom of God to the parameters of a socio-political vehicle.

At worse it is an attempt to humanize God and deify man.

In a sense what people who adhere to this theology are saying is that God has lost control of the world and He needs our help getting it back.

That God will not come back for a world that is not dominant by Christian influence and they, in a real sense, deny His sovereignty.

Now here is a prime example of why you need to know your church history.

You can recognize error if you have seen error before.

2+2 does not equal 5

How do you know that?

Because you have seen it thousands of times before and you simply recognize the error.

Let's look at the error in history.

4th Century:

In the 4th century in an attempt to increase the size of the church, Constantine merged the Roman Government with the Roman Church decreeing that God now had an Empire and that this empire would turn everyone into Christians.

In fact what they did was merge pagan ritual with Christian teachings in an attempt to placate the locals.

He wanted to establish the largest socio-political system in the world at that time.

What this led to was an increase in adherents and a decrease in spirituality.

Crusades:

The crusades were an attempt by the Catholic Church to exercise military might as holy writ. The French, then the Holy Roman Empire wanted to restore Christian control over Jerusalem, to crush the Muslims and to gain political and economic power in the world for the church.

It didn't work and we are still getting a bad rap for it today.

1800's:

Jumping some centuries here,
In England in the 1800's, the British Empire was at its height.

The English believed that England was called to rule and dominate across the world the politicians believed and the church preached that the British Empire would wrap up history and the millennium would start.

They even went so far as to say that they were the lost tribe of Israel and part of God's chosen people.

1940's and 1950's until today:

In the 1940's and 1950's Dominion Now theology reappeared as the 'Latter Rain' movement.

These believed that the "latter rain" will bring God's work to completion; that the Church will be victorious over the world and usher in Christ's physical kingdom.

They taught a doctrine of "the manifest sons of God."

Namely that the Church will give rise to a special group of "over comers" and these would become like generals, modern day Apostles who will receive spiritual bodies, becoming immortal and help guide the Church into all that Christ wants.

Now although they were originally a Pentecostal movement and they were declared heretics in 1949 by the assemblies of God.

They were embraced by John Wimber and the Vineyard churches and a group who called themselves the Kansas City Prophets.

These modern day apostles never denied the teaching of the Latter Rain; they refined it and embraced it.

It has been repackaged recently and its headquarters here in Southlake.

It is currently doing the rounds renamed as the 7 mountains theology. Now you can't make a silk purse out of a pig's ear, and you can't make good theology out of bad.

What all of these errors have in common is the same one that Christ confronted....The Jews through the Kingdom was a socio-political institution that would restore them to military might and world dominance.

Now do not hear what I am not saying.

I believe that as Christians we should be desiring to influence people and nations at the highest level.

But I don't think I need to invent a false theology and substitute it for a Biblical mandate of going into all the world and turning it upside down.

Call it what it is and leave it alone, don't bedazzle it.

So let us dispel this error before we go on:

Let's address the two main misconceptions of the Kingdom being either an ecclesiastical organization or a government position or party.

Luke 22:24-30

A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. 25 And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. 26 But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. 27 For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves. 28 "You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, 29 and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, 30 that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

We have here a very typical human exchange.

The followers of Christ are sitting around on the eve of that they believe was the establishment of His Kingdom trying to work out who would be the greatest once it was made manifest.

Now we may laugh at that, but remember the Jews all thought that this kingdom was about to become a physical empire so they're lobbying for positions and rewards.

Now picture this, they had just entered Jerusalem to the cry of thousands saying “Hosanna.” Which means ‘please save us.’

So thousands of people were lined up shouting ‘Jesus please save us.’
‘Jesus save us now.’
‘Jesus our deliverer, our Messiah.’

Then Jesus retired to an upper room with those men he had been training that rightfully thought they would be the twelve princes of the twelve provinces of the coming kingdom.

Jesus then says that His time had come and He is about to enter His Kingdom.

And the boys got excited and started to talk about who is going to do what and who will be whose leader and who was going to be whose boss.

And in response He makes reference back to a discussion He had earlier with them.

Matthew 20:25-28

*But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. **26** It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, **27** and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, **28** even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

Like no other King:

George Boardman in his reflections on this verse says,

It is as if He is saying:

‘Yes I have a kingdom,
but it is not a kingdom of politics
but a kingdom of brotherhood.’

‘Yes I have an aristocracy,
but it is not an aristocracy of command,
it is an aristocracy of service.’

‘Yes I have a parliament,
but it is not a house of eldest sons,
it is a house of equal brothers.’

Then not being content to leave His statement as mere theory in their minds He drove the example into their heads by doing something no king would ever do.

He gathered a bowl and towel and did the job of washing feet.

Now this was a task reserved for the lowest household servant or slave.

He was not implementing a new custom,
He was driving home a new truth.

My kingdom is not of this world, I am not like other kings.

He wanted to make sure that for the rest of their lives they would have a living example of what this new kingdom was all about.

One of the last memories they would ever have of Him would be Him bent over their feet covered in the dust and dung of the highway washing and serving them.

What He was giving them was the metaphor that captured His life and represented His Kingdom.

A picture of serving one another.
Bringing comfort to one another, honoring and preferring one another.

There is nothing in the words of Christ or the actions of Christ that speak of His earthly political rule or the earthly political rule of the church in the coming generations
In fact, the absences of those elements say a lot in and of itself.

We are told to submit to the authorities that are in place as if they were put there in the Sovereign Grace of God for our protection.

This kingdom that He had come to establish was for greater.
Its impact far more important than a political party.
He was trying to accomplish and establish something that could not be established by a military force.

Like no other kingdom:

Let's have a look at some scriptures that validate this point.

Colossians 1:16-19 ESV

(16) For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him.

(17) And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

(18) And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

(19) For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, The Son of God came to restore all things to the Father. He restored man's relationship to God.

Here is a tremendous verse that speaks of the rule and reign of Christ.

Now where does it speak of the rule and reign of Christ in an earthly kingdom?

He speaks about the ruling and reigning of Christ in the hearts of men.

Here is another

2 Corinthians 5:18-21 ESV

(18) All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;

(19) That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

(20) Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

(21) For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

We read that we are in fact ambassadors of this Kingdom of God.

What are we ambassadors of?

The reconciliation of God and man.

Here is another.

Romans 14:17

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

This kingdom is something far greater than something that lines your stomach, than a political position or a successful business or a career in the arts.

Here is another.

Matthew 6:31-33 ESV

(31) Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

(32) For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

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

So again this kingdom can not be a be material things...we are told that the material realm is separate from the kingdom realm.

One final one for this morning.....

(Luke 17:20, 21 NKJV)

Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; "nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

Signs to be observed is how the ESV puts itOcular Observation.

There were no kingly ceremonies.

No pomp, no parades.

No military takeovers.

You can't see this Kingdom.

There are no visible signs.

It is not a business.

A ministry.

It is not here or there....but where is it?

He was not the messiah that they wanted, but the messiah that they needed.

The Kingdom of God is within you.

That is inside of you.

So what is this Kingdom?

The Kingdom is not a physical kingdom.

The Kingdom is not an occupation.

The Kingdom is not a socio-economic force.

And this is why it is fundamentally important that you see and understand why Christ emphasis the Kingdom and His Apostles emphasized the church.

Because the vehicle he left to establish the kingdom in the hearts and minds of men and women is the church.

To be about Kingdom Business is to do *what Jesus did*.

Mark 1:14

Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,

And what Jesus *told us to do*.

Matthew 24:14

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

The Kingdom of God is the good news.

It is simply the greatest thing that has ever happened in the history of man, it is the restoration of the relationship between God and man.

The Kingdom of God is God's reign in man's heart through Jesus Christ.

Simply put, the Kingdom is God's redemptive action through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 6:10

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

The will of God in heaven is to reconcile man with Himself.
The Kingdom coming is making this manifest.

This Kingdom of God is not about what is done by you but what is done to you.

It is not some good news, or established by the preaching of the good news, but the Kingdom is **the** Good News itself.

That is why it is good news.

That is why it is glad tidings.

That is what is meant when Jesus answered the teachers and religious leaders of the day.

, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

To me this is the establishment of Gods rule and reign in my heart is the greatest thing that has every happen and the greatest kingdom to ever be a part of.