

KINGDOM VISIONARIES

PART 2: DAVID, THE PROPHETS, JESUS



T. M. MOORE

A ReVision Resource from The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Welcome to *Kingdom Visionaries Part 2*

Welcome to *Kingdom Visionaries Part 2*, part 2 of a 3-part series looking at the vision of the Kingdom of great Biblical leaders. *Kingdom Visionaries Part 2* is one of our *ReVision* studies in Biblical worldview.

These studies are designed for individual or group use. While you may derive much benefit from studying on your own, that benefit can be greatly enhanced by joining with a friend or a group to read, discuss, share, challenge, and pray for one another.

Take one lesson at a time, reading the Scriptures and narrative aloud, and pausing to reflect on and discuss the questions provided. Don't be in a hurry. Be willing to take more than one session on a lesson if it will allow you to delve more deeply into the subject matter.

If you're in a group, make sure you prepare for each study by reading through the lesson in advance and answering the questions in writing. Take turns leading your group. Let every member share in the privilege and responsibility of facilitating discussions. Group leaders should not feel like they have to "have all the answers." Their task is simply to lead the group through the readings and questions, and to help everyone participate.

These studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 David: Gift from God

“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son... And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever...” 2 Samuel 7.12-14, 16

From the beginning

It’s clear that ideas about dominion, kings, and a kingdom – even of a coming mysterious “Him-Whose-It-Is” King – were in the minds of God’s covenant people from the very beginning.

Adam and Eve understood that they were to exercise dominion, and that extending to all the creation. Abraham was promised that kings would descend from him, and he had at least one experience with a King of Righteousness and Peace to lead him to hope that such might be the monarchs who would be part of his legacy. His grandson, Jacob, prophesied of a coming kingdom for the people of Israel, and of a dynasty of kings, issuing from the tribe of Judah, that would continue until Shiloh appeared to rule all peoples. Moses further prepared the minds and hearts of the people of Israel for a king and kingdom by explaining that God would give them a king, and he would rule them according to His Law and for their good.

As we work our way through the Old Testament we can feel the momentum for and anticipation of a kingdom and kings building within the ranks of the people of God. Though certain tribes jumped the gun by wrongly naming Abimelech their king (Jdgs. 9.1-6), and though the people of Israel looked to the wrong tribe for the first king of *all* Israel – Benjamin instead of Judah – still, it’s hard to miss the fact that Israel expected a king and longed to be a kingdom, for this is what they understood the Lord had promised.

David and the kingdom

With the accession of David to the throne of Israel, the vision of God’s coming Kingdom takes on a new clarity and expansiveness.

I think it is safe to say that David’s vision of the Kingdom of God was grounded in the understanding of his forebears. David was a man of God’s Word. Thus, he would have been familiar with the ideas relating to a rule of God, through His people and over all the earth that previous generations of the people of God had glimpsed and pursued.

He would also have had the benefit of seeing at first hand the calamitous attempt of King Saul at establishing a rule over Israel on the strength of personality and wits alone. David would have filed this episode under the “how not to” section of his preparation for reign.

But it was God’s direct revelation to David, through the prophet Nathan, that began to precipitate in his mind a clearer and more expansive vision of what God was planning to do, and how (2 Sam. 7). In his response to God’s Word through Nathan, we can discern four general parameters of David’s understanding which, as we shall see, guides all subsequent development of the vision of God’s Kingdom.

The kingdom as a gift from God

First, David understood that the Kingdom God intended to establish with him would come from God as a gift to His people, as a manifestation of His covenant faithfulness (2 Sam. 7.21, 24, 27). The kingdom would thus be of heavenly and eternal provenance, and in its giving would convey the intentions of its Giver, for His

eternal purposes and economy.

Second, and as a consequence of the first parameter, this Kingdom would be rooted in and dependent upon eternal verities – truths and conditions existing in and emanating from a realm not of this world (vv. 21, 22, 25, 28). David would not be free to rule as he pleased. Rather, as Moses had earlier shown, the Word of God would be the guiding light of David’s reign.

Third, God’s intention for His Kingdom was that it should come to expression *on earth* and engage all the nations of the world (vv. 19, 23). This would come about through the agency of God’s king who would also be, in some mysterious sense, God’s son (v. 14).

Finally, there was to be continuous and vital interaction between God and the people to whom He would give His Kingdom, so that they might discern His will, know His presence, protection, and provision, and glorify Him in all their Kingdom activities. And central to this presence of God with His people would be the work of God’s king and son (vv. 23, 27, 29).

Now the idea of a king and kingdom began to take real shape. From David on, God’s covenant people would know what to anticipate, what to hope for, and what to seek with respect to His promised king and kingdom.

We’ll want to examine each of these parameters a bit more, looking to the psalms of David to see how his understanding developed as he sought and served the Lord throughout his reign as King of Israel.

For reflection or discussion

1. How do you understand the Kingdom of God? What is it? How do we relate to it?
2. Do you think we should be able to discover ways of seeking and entering the Kingdom of God by looking at kings like David and Solomon? Can you give some examples?
3. What did it mean to David that the promised Kingdom would come as a gift from God? How should that instruct or counsel us?
4. T. M. notes that “there was to be continuous and vital interaction between God and the people to whom He would give His Kingdom, so that they might discern His will, know His presence, protection, and provision, and glorify Him in all their Kingdom activities.” What are the implications of this for us?
5. What are your goals for this study? What do you hope to learn?

Next steps: Have you mapped out your [Personal Mission Field](#) yet? Jesus was sent to “bring near” the Kingdom of God, and we have been sent in just the same way (Jn. 20.21). Download the free worksheet and map out the boundaries of your sector in the Kingdom of God.

2 David: From Heaven on Earth

*The LORD said to my Lord,
“Sit at my right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”* Psalm 110:1

The Kingdom is a gift from God

David understood the coming Kingdom of God as an incredible, wondrous, mysterious, and glorious gift from God.

Who was he? And who was his household, that God should seek him out to be king over his people (2 Sam. 7:18)? Granted, God had declared through Jacob that a king and dynasty would descend through Judah to rule all the nations (Gen. 49:8-10), but there was no reason for David to think, growing up in a common household in Bethlehem, that somehow that blessing might descend to him.

The giving of God’s Kingdom to and through David is thus an *act of sovereign grace*. We can see David reflecting on the wonder and implications of this gift in various of his psalms.

God comes to His people, the King of Glory, to enter in among them and establish His good and perfect rule in righteousness and peace (Ps. 24). Their duty is to open to Him and submit to His rule, so that His blessings may flourish among them. He Who chose Abraham and graciously redeemed Israel from slavery was now intending to come to them and establish His rule of glory and power in their midst, through a king selected by His own sovereign grace and wisdom (Ps. 144:9-15).

As God had led Israel through the wilderness and the conquest of Canaan, now He would also establish His presence among them, receive their glory and praise, and continue to subdue the nations to His divine economy through the Kingdom He establishes with His people (Ps. 68). This unfathomable, good, and glorious gift is to be received with praise and thanks by Israel and all the kingdoms of the earth: “Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth;/O sing praises to the Lord...who gives strength and power to *His* people./Blessed be God!” (Ps. 68:32, 35)

This Kingdom is grounded in eternal verities and conditions

David understood the progress of God’s rule and blessings on earth to be the direct result of His rule in heaven, beyond the material plane, where He is seated in glory and power, exercising dominion over all the earth and all creation (Pss. 9:7-20; 10:16-18). God is unchanging; His rule is settled and fixed in heaven. Whatever may be His will there is what He intends to accomplish on earth as well – justice, righteousness, and abundant blessing for those who trust in Him.

God’s Kingdom is “an everlasting kingdom” and His dominion “*endures* throughout all generations” (Ps. 145:13). Changing conditions on earth, the indifference or rebelliousness of men, or even the unfaithfulness of His people do not change what God intends to do. His determination will be done on earth, as it is in heaven, for, as an eternal King, He will not suffer the wickedness of men to continue forever before His eyes.

David understood that the Law of God was thus critical for bringing the will of God to pass for the blessing of His people (Ps. 19). The Law of God encodes the mind and will of God. Only by reading, meditating on, studying, and obeying the Law of God could God’s people obtain all that He had promised them and all that He was resolved to do by bringing His eternal reign to bear on earth as it is in heaven. The prayer of God’s

people should thus ever be, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart/Be acceptable in your sight,/O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer” (Ps. 19.14).

The Kingdom is to have earthly expression

The rule of God, which David saw, was to be extended beyond Israel as a blessing for all mankind (2 Sam. 7.19). Centered on God’s rule from within the midst of His people (Ps. 24), the Kingdom God was establishing called for the subjection of all nations to the holy and righteous and good purposes of God (Ps. 2). God rules over and judges all the nations; those that submit to Him know true blessing and happiness (Pss. 9.7, 8; 33.10-12).

The King of this expansive reign is regarded as the Son of God (Ps. 2). He rules over the nations at the right hand of God, subduing His enemies and advancing His reign, through His obedient people, like the refreshing dew of the morning (Ps. 110). All creation comes under the rule of God and His King (Ps. 29), and wherever the rule of God spreads on earth, it brings prosperity, justice, and peace to the nations (Ps. 72).

David got it. The promised kingdom had come with him, at least, in some form. But there was more to come, a Kingdom that would extend to all the earth and all creation, and a King, seated at the right hand of God, Who would advance that Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Thus, the people of God should ever pray, “Give the king Your judgments, O God,/And Your righteousness to the king’s Son.” (Ps. 72.1)

For reflection or discussion

1. “On earth, as it is in heaven...” How does the rule of King Jesus operate in heaven? What are its effects? How do the “citizens” of heaven respond to and in it?
2. “My Kingdom is not of this world...” What were the implications of this as David understood them?
3. “The Kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power...” How would David have explained this to the people serving with him in the kingdom of Israel?
4. Mediate on Psalm 2 and Psalm 110. As indicated here, what did David “see” for the Kingdom beyond his own day?
5. Meditate on Psalm 24. What does this suggest about the relationship of Kingdom citizens to their King?

Next steps: Read through Psalm 72. This is David’s prayer for his son, Solomon. But can you also see in this psalm how David was glimpsing the Kingdom as it would come under our Lord Jesus Christ? Talk with a friend about your observations. How should this prayer affect the way you “rule” your “sector” of the Kingdom – your Personal Mission Field?

3 David: The Coming King

*Give the king Your judgments, O God,
And Your righteousness to the king's Son...
He shall have dominion also from sea to sea...
And blessed be His glorious name forever!
And let the whole earth be filled with His glory.* Psalm 72.1, 8, 19

This Kingdom flourishes through the interaction of heaven and earth

The psalms of David testify to the nature, importance, and power available through the communion God enjoys with and among His people.

As we read through these psalms we see that God speaks to His people and guides them in His way. They cry out to Him, and He hears and delivers them. He offers them precious and magnificent promises. They pursue those blessings by resolving to obey His Word. He delivers them from their enemies and hears their cries for renewal when they have drifted from Him. He spreads a banquet table for His people, in the very presence of their enemies, so that, as they feast with Him, none shall make them afraid, and none shall thwart the purposes of His divine economy.

All these blessings rest especially, and ultimately, with the King Whom God has chosen to set over His people (Pss. 2, 110). As the people love and serve their anointed King, they are able to go forth and proclaim His rule and bring the blessings of it to all the nations of the earth.

And nowhere is the grand, all-ruling, eternal plan more fully developed than in Psalm 72, David's prayer for God's King and His Kingdom.

Solomon and beyond

While Psalm 72 is first of all a prayer for Solomon, who inherited David's kingdom and led it to its greatest heights of glory, it is more than that. It's not difficult to see that, in Psalm 72, David is seeing beyond Solomon down the far stretches of history, to the unfolding of a Kingdom under a King Who is God's own Son, and Whose rule will bring blessing to the whole earth.

Let's take a quick look through this glorious psalm.

David foresees the King and Son of God ruling according to His Law, bringing righteousness and justice to even the poorest and oppressed (vv. 1-4).

His Kingdom is without end; He will rule as long as time continues (v. 5; cf. Is. 9.6, 7), and His reign will bring blessing like the dew and refreshment like a spring shower to all the earth (vv. 6, 7).

Under His rule righteousness and peace will flourish (v. 7; cf. Rom. 14.17, 18). His enemies will fall at His feet and people from every nation will come to praise, honor, and serve Him (vv. 8-11).

He will shepherd the poor, deliver the oppressed, and save the souls of the needy (vv. 12-14).

He will live and reign continuously, and the wealth of nations will flow to Him, along with the praise and prayers of the peoples of the world (v. 15).

The creation itself will blossom and bear abundant fruit, and those who dwell in cities will prosper with those who dwell in the countryside (v. 16).

His Kingdom, once established, will endure forever, and all peoples are called to bless and praise His holy name (vv. 17-19).

A framework for future development

Psalm 72 represents David's clearest insight to the coming King and Kingdom of God. He brings forward all the thinking and hopes of the people of Israel and expands them into a horizon that reaches to the end of time and beyond. David's psalms, and especially Psalm 72, teach us, as they taught Israel for generations, to think, pray, and work for the promised Kingdom of God (Matt. 6.33).

David, like no one else before him, established a framework for thinking about the nature and purpose of God's Kingdom, and for setting the hearts of God's people to seek that Kingdom as their highest priority.

As we turn next to the prophets, then to the Lord Jesus and the Apostles, we shall see, with increasingly clarity, how the outline of the Kingdom, which David described, becomes fuller and more complete as the history of God's redemptive work continues.

For reflection or discussion

1. How would you describe the *character* of the Kingdom David foresaw in Psalm 72?
2. How would you describe the *conditions* the Kingdom brings to those it reaches?
3. How would you describe the *consequences* of the Kingdom's coming – what difference does it make?
4. Meditate on Romans 4.17, 18. Is Paul describing the same Kingdom that David foresaw? Explain.
5. “David, like no one else before him, established a framework for thinking about the nature and purpose of God's Kingdom, and for setting the hearts of God's people to seek that Kingdom as their highest priority.” In the light of Matthew 6.33, do you think we should spend a bit more time looking to David for guidance in fulfilling Christ's command? Why or why not?

Next steps: Meditate on Matthew 6.33. As you think about seeking the Kingdom as the highest priority of your life – seeking it in your Personal Mission Field – how does David's vision in Psalm 72 inform your prayers, planning, and practice? Ask a church leader or pastor to help you think this through.

4 The Prophets: The Gathering Storm

*“Then the kingdom and the dominion,
And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven,
Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.” Daniel 7.27*

The folly of kings

It may have been that David and Solomon set the bar of expectations so high in ancient Israel that the very greatness of their success bred the disasters of Israel and Judah in the generations that followed.

Certainly one of the main lessons to be derived from the monarchic period of Israel’s history is that the Kingdom God intends to establish, and over which He will rule, cannot be defined by the parameters and protocols of a merely earthly realm. While Israel achieved an almost unprecedented measure of greatness, splendor, and prosperity under David and Solomon, subsequent rulers, for a variety of reasons, failed to realize the same height of success. And internecine fights, fueled by idolatry and the lust for power, hastened the ultimate disintegration and destruction of both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of the people of Israel.

All this was very discouraging to the Israelites and their rulers. They had come to understand through the patriarchs and Moses that God was planning a great and expansive kingdom in which His people would know His blessings and extend them to all nations and peoples. For nearly a century, under David and Solomon, their hopes must have soared as they participated in the wealth, power, safety, and prestige of the Davidic Kingdom.

The prophets in the kingdom

But as it all began to unravel, their hopes of realizing all that God had promised must have begun to dwindle.

Into that situation, as the folly of human rulers tore to shreds the kingdom fabric of Israel, the prophets of God began to point His people to larger horizons, grander vistas, and even more expansive promises of Kingdom realization. They seemed to say to the people of Israel, “Not here. Not this king. Not these vain, material hopes. But there, farther along, in a coming day, under an eternal King – there is where the blessing will be known!”

While we cannot look in detail at the many specific insights given the various prophets concerning the promised coming of the Kingdom of God, I want us to consider, in this installment and the next, five aspects of their collective vision which fueled the hopes of the faithful and laid the groundwork for the greatest events the history of humankind would ever know.

The prophetic vision of the coming Kingdom of God grows like a gathering storm – a storm of drenching grace and glory – throughout the prophetic literature, leaving the Old Testament to close, at least for the faithful, with a powerful expectation of the soon and sudden appearing of a glorious, divine intervention in the affairs of men and nations: the coming of God’s Kingdom, and of His promised King.

God's authority

First, the prophets reminded the people that it is vain to hope in earthly kings, or to consider that a mere earthly kingdom could contain all that God has promised for His people. The vision of the prophets is one in which, first of all, the faithful of Israel are reassured that God Himself is King. He rules from His throne in heaven, and His power extends to all nations and peoples. In Daniel's vision, the Ancient of Days presents the Son of Man with a Kingdom, and He, in turn, hands it over to the saints of the Most High God. And though they are tormented, opposed, and oppressed as they struggle to realize this great gift and calling, in the end, they prevail, as all kingdoms and authorities of men come under the power and authority of the Most High God.

Such a vision would have been necessary in view of the continuing ravages and losses Israel and Judah experienced at the hands of repressive and violent regimes. It might have appeared to many that God was not as powerful as these earthly kings and their gods, for He seemed unable to defend Israel or Judah against their attacks (Habakkuk). Indeed, even His temple, the very dwelling-place of God on earth, was destroyed and plundered by Nebuchadnezzar in a deliberate attempt to vaunt his own majesty and might over the God of Israel (2 Chronicles, Daniel).

But prophets like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jonah, Amos, Habakkuk, Nahum, and more made it clear to all the faithful that the sins of the nations – particularly those committed against the people of God – did not escape the notice of Jahweh. In His way and time, they prophesied, He would reassert His authority and power over all the nations of the region, and all the peoples of the earth, in order to demonstrate His justice and might and to validate His claim of sole allegiance and exclusive worship.

Thus, the first point in the message of the prophets was a call to faith, a summons to Israel to focus their hopes beyond this world into the heavenly realm, where even in their day God was preparing events that would turn the world upside down in time.

For reflection or discussion

1. What happened to cause the people of Israel to “lose sight” of the Kingdom David envisioned? How should this warn or counsel us today?
2. What is a prophet? What was their role in the Old Testament? Are there prophets in the Church yet today (Eph. 4.11)?
3. “Into that situation, as the folly of human rulers tore to shreds the kingdom fabric of Israel, the prophets of God began to point His people to larger horizons, grander vistas, and even more expansive promises of Kingdom realization.” Do we need men and women to fulfill the role of prophet in our day? If so, in what ways would they be like the prophets of the Old Testament? How would they be different?
4. Meditate on Daniel's vision in Daniel 7.18-27. Is Daniel describing our day? Why or why not?
5. Do we need a “call to faith” with respect to the Kingdom of God in our day? Explain.

Next steps: Meditate on the Lord's Prayer, especially as He commands us to pray for the coming of God's Kingdom. What should you expect that to “look like” in your Personal Mission Field? What challenges do you face as you seek the Kingdom there? What additional equipping do you need in order to fulfill your calling? Talk with a pastor about these questions.

5 The Prophets: The King and His Kingdom

*“Then the kingdom and the dominion,
And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven,
Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.” Daniel 7.27*

The faithfulness of God

As the promises of Abraham slipped through the fingers of God’s wayward people, even the faithful among them must have wondered if God had changed His mind, and His covenant were no longer valid. Had the people of God at last and finally forfeited their privileges, and the promise of a kingdom, through their unbelief and disobedience?

The second major point in the message of the prophets relates to the faithfulness of God. As the prophets continued to preach and write during this period, they made it abundantly clear that, central to the coming renewal of God’s rule over the nations was a revitalizing of His covenant relationship with His chosen people. A day was coming – as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and Zechariah foretold – when God would make a new and lasting covenant with His people, would send a new King and Shepherd to rule and keep them, and would once again extend His blessings through His people to the Gentiles, even to the extent of *including* the Gentiles among the chosen people of God (Hosea, Amos).

All this would be a continuation of God’s gracious way of relating to His people. They had done nothing in the past to cause Him to set His favor upon them. In the present they were busy forfeiting that favor as many ways as they could. But though they were faithless, God was faithful, and He would not allow His promises to fall to the ground. Instead, the promises to Abraham would be renewed and expanded beyond anything God had ever declared before in a new Kingdom of grace and glory.

From heaven to earth

How could this possibly be? That must have been the question on the minds of many. How could anyone exceed the achievements of Solomon? And yet we see what happened to him and his kingdom after him. This introduces the third primary point in the message of the prophets. What Isaiah and Daniel helped the people of Israel to understand was that events in heaven were transpiring, and would transpire, which would bring to earth a King, sent from heaven, the very Son of the Most High, Who would inherit the throne of David, bring in the Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy, and extend the favor of God to all who submitted to Him.

A mere earthly kingdom could not fulfill all that God was promising. It would take an action of *heavenly provenance and character*, bringing divine authority and power in a *new* way to earth, so that the blessings of God might flow to and through His people in the days that were coming.

And that great coming event was somehow bound up with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God upon the peoples of the earth (Ezekiel, Joel). In the Spirit of God heaven would come to earth with power to transform the souls of men (Ezek. 36.26, 27) and to further the Kingdom and glory of God.

A divine King

Finally, the prophets insisted that all this hope and promise would be accomplished by the coming of One Who is the Son of Man, and yet a descendant of King David; the offspring of the Ancient of Days, for

Whom the Kingdom was being prepared, and yet the Lord of David and all the people of God. He would come to suffer and die but to rise again (Is. 53), in the process gaining a Kingdom which He would bestow upon His faithful ones to seek, attain, enjoy, and expand unto all the nations of the earth (Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah, Micah).

The faithful in Israel, upon hearing these promises and reading these visions, might have been put in mind of the promised “Seed of the woman” who would destroy the enemy of men’s souls (Gen 3.15), of the Shiloh Who was to come and for Whom the Kingdom was being prepared (Gen. 49.8-11), or of the Prophet and King that Moses had foretold and Nathan had revealed to David. Thus the ancient vision of a coming Kingdom would have been renewed and enlarged in these more precise promises of a King to come.

Prepare for the Kingdom

Whether it was to seek revival and renewal in the midst of decay (2 Chronicles), work for prosperity and fruitfulness while in captivity (Jeremiah), or build a humble and unadorned temple in anticipation of a greater temple to come (Haggai), the people of God were to be diligent and faithful, and to focus on the promised Kingdom, doing whatever the present required in order to prepare for it.

So the Old Testament closes with this gathering storm of divine blessing, growing on the horizon of the future. All this would break into human experience with the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Man and the King of Israel and the nations. It is to His vision of the Kingdom of God that we shall next turn our attention.

For reflection or discussion

1. Based on what you see in this lesson, how does the vision of the prophets connect with and enlarge David’s vision of the King and His Kingdom?
2. Why is it important that we understand the promise of the Kingdom as being a matter of *God’s* faithfulness, and not *ours*?
3. What do the prophets suggest about the relationship between the coming Kingdom and the Spirit of God (cf. Joel 2.28ff and Ezekiel 36.26, 27)?
4. What does it mean for us to be “diligent and faithful...doing whatever the present require[s]” as we seek the Kingdom of God?
5. The prophets foresaw a gathering storm of divine blessing. Explain.

Next steps: How can believers encourage one another in seeking the preparing for the Kingdom in their Personal Mission Fields? Talk with some fellow believers about this question.

6 Jesus: Kingdom Come

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” Matthew 6.33

Shiloh

Jacob had prophesied of his son, Judah, that God would establish a Kingdom under his oversight that would include Israel and all nations (Gen. 49.8-10).

From the beginning of creation, as we have seen, God was preparing that Kingdom for the day when “Shiloh” would come, when the Kingdom prepared for Him would belong to Him from that time forever.

“Shiloh” is an interesting word. In the Hebrew it appears to be a contraction of three words – “who”, “to”, and “him.” I think an accurate way of translating Shiloh would be something like, “Him-Whose-It-Is.” Jacob foresaw One coming for Whom the Kingdom from God was being prepared, with Whose arrival the Judaic dynasty would cease (“*until* Shiloh comes”) but the Kingdom would continue.

David also foresaw this day, when God, through the prophet Nathan, promised him that He would establish on David’s throne a Son Who would reign forever. David subsequently came to see this King seated at the right hand of the Father and ruling from heaven over all the earth (2 Sam. 7.13; Pss. 110, 72).

We have seen that the prophets also foresaw this coming One. They understood, if only incompletely, that the Kingdom of God would be given to One like the Son of Man, Who, in turn, would give that Kingdom to the saints of the Most High God, who would possess it forever (cf. Dan. 7.18-25).

Into that rich background of Kingdom anticipation, Jesus came, proclaiming the Kingdom of God, asserting Himself to be the Son of David and King of Israel, and calling His people to renew their vision of the Kingdom and to devote themselves to pursuing it.

During the days of Jesus’ earthly sojourn, the Kingdom of God was His highest priority. He intended that it should be ours as well.

We can see the primacy of the Kingdom in the mind of our Lord Jesus Christ in three ways. We’ll look at the first of these in this and our next installment.

Proclaimed and taught

The first words of Jesus’ ministry announced that the long-awaited Kingdom of God had come near to men (Matt. 4.17). It had come near to them in the Person of the One Who embodied it and would formally receive it when at last His work was done, and Who had come to bestow that Kingdom on His followers through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

The vast majority of Jesus’ teaching revolved around some aspect of the Kingdom of God. The Sermon on the Mount introduced this teaching, the parables “colorized” it and made it vivid, His life and work embodied its purity and power, and His forty days of teaching after the resurrection provided a Kingdom exclamation point to the end of all His earthly instruction.

Nothing occupied the teaching of Jesus as much as the Kingdom of God. Men were to understand that the promised Kingdom had come near; it was “at hand” and even “within” or “among” them. The promised

interaction of heaven and earth had begun with new power and consequences, and men must prepare themselves accordingly.

They must see the Kingdom as more valuable than pearls or treasures, more enduring than the world, and more certain than any political regime with which they might be familiar. The Kingdom had come like a mustard seed, but it would grow to include all peoples and nations, to cover all the earth, and to bring all the promised blessings of God to those who believed and were born again through faith in Jesus Christ.

The first rule of following Jesus

With the coming of Jesus history took a new turn. God's eternal covenant purposes began to unfold in dramatic and powerful new ways, which the coming of the Holy Spirit would confirm, vivify, and enlarge.

If the first rule of buying real estate is "location, location, location," the first rule of following Jesus Christ is "Kingdom, Kingdom, Kingdom."

There is not an aspect of the instructional curriculum of our Lord that was not devoted to describing, promising, and commanding the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is the focal point and foundation of all the teaching and preaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot know Jesus apart from entering His Kingdom, but to enter it, and to realize all the promise of our citizenship there, we must seek that Kingdom as our highest priority in life.

For reflection or discussion

1. We might say that Jesus came to "bring near" the Kingdom of God. How does that work of bringing the Kingdom near relate to what we saw in David and the prophets concerning the Kingdom?
2. Meditate on John 20.21. If Jesus "brought near" the Kingdom, what are the implications of this for us? What does this mean for you personally?
3. Do you think Christians today see the Kingdom as valuable in the way Jesus taught? Why or why not?
4. Do you agree that the "first rule" of following Jesus is "Kingdom, Kingdom, Kingdom"? Why or why not?
5. What does it mean to "seek" the Kingdom Jesus brought near?

Next steps: Do you agree that the first rule of following Jesus is "Kingdom, Kingdom, Kingdom"? Why or why not? Talk with another believer about this question.

7 Jesus: Seek the Kingdom

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” Matthew 6.33

Pray for the Kingdom

We’re continuing to look at the *primacy* of the Kingdom of God as Jesus taught and lived it.

Jesus commanded His disciples to pray for the coming of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 6.9, 10). We may note three specifics about this particular command.

First, Jesus taught us to pray that the Kingdom would *come on earth* in the same way that it exists in heaven. This is completely in line with what we saw in David and the prophets. In heaven the Kingdom of God is a spiritual realm that reflects the righteousness and peace and joy in God’s Spirit all creatures enjoy within the throne room of Christ and God. We are to believe that Jesus intends His Kingdom to come among us in a similar fashion.

Indeed, Paul teaches that we can do no better, in serving God and blessing men, than to embrace the character of the Kingdom as the course for our daily lives and activities (Rom. 14.17-19).

Second, Jesus made praying for the Kingdom the *highest priority in our prayers* after praising and honoring God. The Kingdom is more important than our daily needs. The Kingdom is more to be desired than that our sins should be forgiven or that we should be rescued through temptation.

The Kingdom, moreover, *provides the incentive* for our prayers and the hope of their being heard and realized: “For thine is the Kingdom...” God has the power and the authority to grant our prayers, and He rules in righteousness, peace, and joy to do so.

Third, we are to pray for the Kingdom *“whenever” we pray*. Prayer for God’s Kingdom to come among us is to be part of all our prayers to God. “When you pray, pray this way...Your Kingdom come...” Thus Jesus not only commanded us to pray for the coming of the Kingdom, but to make that coming central to and of the highest import – next to praising the Lord – in all our prayers. Prayers that fail to seek the Kingdom, therefore, would seem to miss the point of the privilege of prayer.

Seek the Kingdom

Jesus taught the primacy of the Kingdom by His life and words, and He taught it by commanding us to seek its coming in prayer. Finally, Jesus asserted the primacy of the Kingdom of God by commanding His followers to *seek* the Kingdom, together with the righteousness of God, as their highest priority in all things.

The sense of this is that Kingdom-seeking must be not merely the *first* in the order of our daily activities, but *the defining motif* of all we think, say, and do.

This is just another way of saying that everything about us must be devoted to God as an avenue by which His rule of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit may flow from the courts of heaven to the chaos and uncertainty of everyday life, according to His Word, and in the power of His Spirit. Thus our Lord Jesus Christ is, through His Kingdom ambassadors, is reconciling all things back to God, making all things new, and calling all men to repent and believe the Good News.

Jesus is the greatest Kingdom visionary, for He came from where that Kingdom perfectly obtained, embodied its power and potential, and knew what He must do, having received the Kingdom, to further its advance on earth. All our understanding and seeking of the Kingdom of God flows from the Father, through Jesus and His Word, by His Spirit, into the time of our lives, and back to our Lord and King once again.

There is more

And yet there is more to learn from Jesus concerning why the Kingdom must be the highest priority in our lives as His followers. For, as we shall see, the Kingdom has come and is unfolding all around us. It is making progress on earth, like a growing stone (Dan. 2.44, 45), overcoming all obstacles and opposition to bring the beauty, goodness, and truth of God into the land of the living.

And while, for now, we may not experience as much of this glorious coming as seems to be promised, this is not for want of Jesus teaching, showing, and helping us to do so. It is rather because we, like those Israelites of old, are too easily satisfied with what our eyes can see and our ears can hear. We have little real insight to the unseen realm, where Christ rules in glory and power, and little taste for the kind of disciplined life seeking the Kingdom of God requires.

But as we continue looking into Jesus' vision of the Kingdom, and then turn to the Apostles in our final installments in this three-part series, perhaps we may be motivated and stirred in our hearts to higher aspirations and greater exertions of forcing our way, through all the madness and mundaneness of life, into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God (Lk. 16.16).

For reflection or discussion

1. What resources are available to Christians to help them in seeking the Kingdom of God?
2. What does it mean to seek the Kingdom in the everyday situations – the “madness and mundaneness” of our lives?
3. Jesus said we must “press” into the Kingdom, even “force” our way into it (Lk. 16.16). Why?
4. What's the most important lesson you've gained from this series?
5. How are you planning to put that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Next steps: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is the highest rating, how would you assess your daily life in terms of seeking first the Kingdom of God? Why did you choose that number? Can you think of one or two “next steps” that might help you to improve that number over the coming weeks and months? Share this exercise with a Christian friend.

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Thank you.