

Kingdom Theology

Themes of the Kingdom

Scriptures are filled with with the supremacy of Christ and his everlasting kingdom being established before the foundations of the earth. From the very first chapter and book of the Bible, God's original plan was to establish a kingdom within his people: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Gen. 1:28). God's intent from the beginning was for Adam and Eve to rule over creation as stewards of the earth. They were given the authority and dominion in the kingdom as his image-bearers. But as a result of men's rebellion and defiance of the good gifts of God, they were stripped of their divine rights and privileges that they once possessed completely. The kingdom that Adam and Eve once had was taken away by sin, giving access to the enemy to do his evil works. But God had a far greater plan to restore and reverse the curse of the Fall. Throughout the OT we trace the kingdom narrative God is rewriting through his chosen people. It speaks of the time to come when Israel will be restored and the prophecy fulfilled. We trace the hand of God as He keeps his covenant of promise to Abraham and his descendants. Despite their rebellion and stubbornness, in his mercy and faithfulness, God forgives and delivers his sons and daughters time and time again. Daniel's prophecy proved true when He spoke of an everlasting kingdom: "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed" (Dan. 2:44). God was creating an eternal kingdom unlike any other kings or priests had ever heard or seen before. This was going to be a sign for generations to come as God was establishing a people for himself.

The Hope of the world would come to restore the kingdom of heaven. Quite contrary to what the Jews expected, the Messiah would not come to overthrow the political superpowers and create a name for himself. Instead, his first words in public ministry had to do with the kingdom: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Mt. 4:17). From the initiation of Jesus’ ministry, there is no doubt that kingdom preaching was his missional framework. He is about the Father’s business. The Sermon on the Mount introduces the heart of Jesus’ ministry. He is beginning to mobilize a group of people who are about the kingdom. Set on doing the Father’s will, Jesus came to take back what was lost in Eden and return the keys of the kingdom to his people. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus paid the penalty of humanity’s sins once and for all and by doing so, restored the kingdom to the church so we can now do the very things He did and more. After Jesus’ ascension, the apostles begin to preach more boldly, this time with Spirit-filled power and authority as the sick are healed, evil spirits cast out, the gospel preached, and kingdom of God advances. This is seen in the Book of Acts and the Epistles as the message of the kingdom bears fruit and spreads throughout Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Throughout the OT and NT there is a distinct pattern of kingdom movement that takes shape in the lives of God’s people and continues to weave into the fabric of the church today.

Analysis and Biblical Defense

The kingdom is the reversal of the effects caused by sin and the Fall and the restoration of humanity back to God’s original purpose. This was accomplished by Jesus’ humanity, bringing heaven to earth and making us right with God through his death on the cross. By restoring the kingdom to his church, Jesus commands us to do the very things He did: healing the sick, casting out demons, caring for the poor, doing what’s right and just, loving our enemies, blessing those who curse us, etc. In living this way, we are proclaiming an unshakeable,

unmovable kingdom. Such a kingdom is countercultural, powerful, and driven by the Spirit of God. Jesus had power and authority to accomplish the work of God while on earth because he was sinless and fully reliant on the Father. He understood that He could not accomplish anything on his own (Jn. 5:15). In his mind, He is constantly asking what the Father is up to and partnering with Him to accomplish his will. The reason King Jesus has supremacy is because of his dependence on the Father: "...The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (Jn. 14:10). Even though He could have chosen to hold on to his divine rights as King, He chose to lay aside his crown and divine authority to be made like us, humbling himself to the point of death (Phil. 2). Taking back the keys of the kingdom, Jesus dismantled the hold that Satan had on our lives and shamed them on the cross: "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Col. 2:15). Christ has set us free from the law of sin and death. Only King Jesus has the power to reverse the curse that sin had on us. Only the spotless, blameless blood of the Lamb could atone for the wrongdoing of humanity. His sacrifice has conferred to us a heavenly kingdom. Before his death, Jesus already spoke of his supremacy and prophecy to come when He tells Peter, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Mt. 16:19). Thus, Jesus holds the rein as King and Messiah over all because of his incarnation and laying aside of his divine authority to partner with the Father to do his will on earth as in heaven.

Battle Between Light and Darkness

In a spiritual world, we are always giving away access. Although the Light of the World has come down to earth to redeem us from sin and condemnation, we are still in a spiritual battle

until the kingdom is fully restored. The enemy has power and control over this world, prowling around like a roaring lion seeking those who are disobedient and rebellious. As 1 Corinthians 4:4 says, “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” Because of hardened hearts, many who live in the kingdom of darkness believe this is all that exists. Unable to see the Light, we are blinded by the truth and hide in darkness when Christ has already made the atonement for our sins so we no longer have to live in shame and bondage, but rather in freedom and hope. This is why Jesus became our High Priest who removed the veil that once separated us from communing with the Father. He tore the veil so we could have immediate access to the Holy Spirit, entering his throne of grace with confidence. But those who live in darkness fail to see the newly established kingdom of God in their lives. They are blocked from living in his presence and enjoying fellowship with the Spirit. In giving access to the enemy, they deny their rights and privileges as children of the Light who have the keys to the kingdom and power over rulers and dominions in the heavenly realms, “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power” (1 Cor. 4:20).

This spiritual battle continues to affect us today as we partake in the Kingdom. As long as we are on earth, we need to be aware when we are giving access to the kingdom of darkness, whether in our rebellion, pride, bitterness, or unforgiveness we carry. If we are in the Light as He is in the Light, we will do the works He has called us to do. The key is abiding in the Vine and listening to what the Father is up to. By giving access to Jesus, we will be doing what the Spirit is doing, speaking his words, and acting in the authority of the Father for the advancement of his kingdom. It requires a dying to self and carrying our cross as Jesus commanded. To be aligned with the things of heaven requires us to dwell and soak in his presence. Like Jesus, we are to be

intentional to seek the Father's face everyday and find time to get away for a little awhile to rest, pray, and realign our hearts and minds with His will. This is what will distinguish us from the rest of the world: kingdom-mindedness and Spirit-filled disciples who are about the Father's business. The spiritual authority and power we carry along with the anointing and presence of Jesus will bring more people to Christ than our words or gifting ever will. By carrying his presence in my life, I become more aware of the Spirit's movement and what He is up to. By acting in my kingdom authority, I will do the very works Jesus did including healing the sick, casting out demons, and reconciling people back to God. Because at the end of the day, it is not about me but about pointing people to Jesus and inviting them to partner with the Holy Spirit in the Kingdom of Light. In ministry, the goal is to create a kingdom culture that is in alignment with the Word of God and what the Spirit is saying, actively using the gifts of the Spirit and spiritual authority. We are to carry out the ministry of Jesus by being co-laborers of Christ, recognizing that the kingdom is far greater and wider than anything we could accomplish on our own. I want to cultivate a deeper awareness of his presence where I become familiar to the voice of the Father and what He is currently up to, giving God full access to do whatever He wants in and through me. I need to practice living out my spiritual authority in Christ and not shy back in fear or insecurity because of selfish reasons. But instead to develop an active, consistent faith to believe in the impossible and have spiritual eyes to see the kingdom of heaven in every circumstance and encounter. I wonder what it'd look like if we take to heart Jesus' words that we will do greater things than He did? I think there would a major shift in how we do ministry and how we love and serve our community. I want to be about the Father's business and come into alignment with his will and plan for my life.