



BAND of BROTHERS – WEEK 6: The Nature of the Kingdom

FALL 2021

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

.– Romans 14:17 ESV

- **What kind of Kingdom did Jesus come to bring?**
 - What were the Jews expecting?
 - An **earthly** kingdom ruled by a human king
 - A **political** kingdom governed by justice and righteousness
 - A **military** kingdom backed by a powerful army
 - An **influential** kingdom marked by peace and prosperity
 - A **Jewish** kingdom that would have no end
 - The Jewish concept of Messiah (Mashiach)
 - He will be... a descendant of David
 - a great political leader
 - a great military leader
 - a righteous judge
 - a man, not a god or demi-god
 - When would the Messiah come?
 - At a time when he is **most needed**
(because the world if marked by **sinfulness**)
 - At a time when he is **most deserved**
(because the world if marked by **righteousness**)
 - Common views of His coming in Jesus' day:
 - The Messiah will come if all Israel...
 - ...repents in a single day
 - ...properly observes a single Sabbath or properly observes two consecutive Sabbaths
 - The Messiah will come in a generation...
 - ...that is either totally innocent or totally wicked
 - ...that has lost all hope
 - ...or filled with children who disrespect their parents and elders

- What is He waiting for?
 - “We deserve to be saved!”
 - 1st-Century Jews saw themselves as faithful
 - They worshiped Yahweh alone (no idols)
 - They observed all the feasts and festivals
 - They obediently offered the required sacrifices
 - They fasted, prayed, and offered alms
 - Jesus had a different viewpoint
 - “*And why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God? For instance, God says, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and ‘Anyone who speaks disrespectfully of father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, ‘Sorry, I can’t help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.’*” – Matthew 15:3-5 ESV

 - “*In this way, you say they don’t need to honor their parents. And **so you cancel the word of God for the sake of your own tradition.** You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. **Their worship is a farce,** for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.’*” – Matthew 15:6-9 ESV
- Their worship of God was a farce
 - According to His Sermon on the Mount... (Mt. 6)
 - They were prone to **hypocrisy**
 - They were characterized by **materialism**
 - Their lives were marked by...
 - ...**anger** ...**unrighteousness** ...**greed**
 - ...**lust** ...**dishonesty** ...**pride**
 - They were **unloving** and **lacked compassion**
 - They suffered from spiritual blindness
 - In him was life, and the life was the light of men. **The light shines in the darkness...*** – John 1:4-5 ESV

 - ...the light has come into the world, and **people loved the darkness rather than the light** because their works were evil.* – John 3:19 ESV
 - They had misplaced priorities
 - They desired **emancipation**, not **redemption**
 - They sought freedom from **Rome**, not **sin**
 - They wanted **societal change**, not a **Savior**
 - They were seeking **revenge**, not **repentance**
 - Their goal was **justice**, not **justification**
 - And they were missing an opportunity

He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds. – Titus 2:14 NLT

But... "his own people did not receive him." – John 1:11 NLT

- They misunderstood the King and the Kingdom
 - They sought a human solution to a spiritual problem
 - Essentially, they were looking for heaven on earth
 - And this had been going on for centuries

“The kings of Israel had enjoyed the best preconditions for success. They ruled a nation that had been chosen by God. The nation’s constitution had been written by God himself. Their laws were perfect since they were of divine origin. God had promised to be with them and protect these kings, yet the kings still turned out to be failures. A just society was beyond their reach, as it has been for every political leader who has tried to institute it.

“It was not enough for political leaders to have God’s backing. It was not enough for them to have his help. To establish God’s rule was not something humans could do, not matter what God did to empower them. This is why the political process will never be ultimately successful.

“Humans are not capable of accomplishing the goal of a just society, no matter what tools they are given or have at their disposal. Humans cannot usher in utopia. They cannot establish a genuinely good rule, the rule of God. They cannot bring salvation to earth.”

– Sigurd Grindheim, *Living in the Kingdom of God*

- Yet, even today, some still think we can
- But did Jesus’ coming change this state of affairs?
- Did He come to usher in a just society?
- Was His mission to bring heaven to earth?
- Is that what the Kingdom is all about?

- **The Sermon on the Mount** – Matthew 5-7

The Beatitudes:

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, **for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**”* – Matthew 5:3 ESV

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, **for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**”* – Matthew 5:10 ESV

blessed – *makarios* – fortunate, well off, happy

- Isn’t this what they all dreamed of?
- Isn’t this what they hoped the Messiah would bring?
- But Jesus was saying it was the inheritance of...

...the poor in spirit ...the pure in heart
...those who mourn ...the peacemakers
...the meek ...those who are persecuted for being righteous
...those deprived of righteousness for **theirs** is the kingdom of heaven

None of this made sense

It was counter-**intuitive** and counter-**cultural**

His words were **unappealing** and **unconvincing**

This describes the **less fortunate**, not the **fortunate**

- A reversal of fortunes
 - To the Jews ...poverty was a curse from God
 - ...mourning was the result of suffering for sin
 - ...meekness was a sign of weakness
 - ...a lack of righteousness brought death
 - ...mercy was the privilege of the powerful
 - ...purity of heart was humanly impossible
 - ...peacemaking was a sign of compromise
 - ...persecution was to be avoided at all costs
 - A different kind of righteousness
 - Jesus was a different kind of King
 - Offering a very different kind of Kingdom
 - Demanding a different kind of righteousness
 - And modeling a different brand of blessedness
 - Jesus preached a message of **repentance**
“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” – Matthew 4:17 ESV

*“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent** and believe in the gospel.”* – Mark 1:15 ESV

repent – *metanoēō*

- We tend to think of repentance as a change in behavior
- Yet it literally means “to change one’s mind”
- But about what?
 - The nature of God
 - The reality of sin
 - The means to righteousness
 - The role of the Messiah
 - The character of the kingdom
 - Their understanding of reality

*“For I tell you, unless your righteousness **exceeds** that of the scribes and Pharisees, **you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.**”* – Matthew 5:20 ESV

- He wasn't complimenting the righteousness of the Pharisees
- To Jesus, these men were hypocrites

"...practice and obey whatever they tell you, but don't follow their example. For they don't practice what they teach." – Matthew 23:3 NLT

- Jesus was talking about **quality**, not **quantity**
- He wasn't demanding **more** righteousness
- He was alluding to a **radically superior** righteousness

exceed – *perisseuō* (per-is-syoo'-o) – to be pre-eminent, to excel

- He wasn't **raising** the standard – He was **replacing** it
- Man's righteousness is insufficient

*We have all become like one who is unclean, and **all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment...** – Isaiah 64:6 NLT*

*I no longer count on **my own righteousness** through obeying the law; rather, **I become righteous through faith in Christ.** For God's way of making us right with himself depends on *faith.* – Philippians 3:9 NLT*

*...**this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ** to all who believe. There is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. – Romans 3:22-24 BSB*

- **A different kind of Kingdom**
 - **Entry** into the Kingdom would be radically different
 - And **life** in the Kingdom would be as well
 - But the Jews had a difficult time accepting this
 - They preferred their own notions of the Kingdom
 - And the same is true today
 - Biased perceptions
 - The Jews had strong opinions about the Kingdom
 - So do we
 - But they tend to be filtered through our own world view
 - We can easily turn the Kingdom **of God** into a Kingdom **for** and **about man**
 - We end up defining the Kingdom to fit our preferred agenda

The kingdom as...

eschatological hope: the future kingdom

personal spiritual experience: the interior kingdom

mystical communion: the heavenly kingdom

institutional church: the ecclesiastical kingdom

countersystem: the subversive kingdom

political state: the theocratic kingdom

Christianized culture: the transforming kingdom

heaven on earth: the utopian kingdom

(From *Models of the Kingdom* by Howard A. Snyder)

- There's some aspect of truth in all of these
- They all ask the same basic questions about the Kingdom:
 - Is it future or present?
 - Is it individual or communal?
 - Is it spiritual or physical?
 - Is it gradual or climactic?
 - Is it up to God or man?
 - Is it the Church or something else altogether?
- Answers in Acts
 - What did the apostles teach post-Pentecost?

*But now the people [in Samaria] believed Philip's message of **Good News concerning the Kingdom of God** and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, many men and women were baptized.* – Acts 8:12 NLT

*Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, where they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that **we must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God.*** – Acts 14:21-22 NLT

Then Paul went to the synagogue [in Ephesus] and preached boldly for the next three months, arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of God. – Acts 19:8 NLT

*"And now I know that none of you [in Miletus] **to whom I have preached the Kingdom will ever see me again. I declare today that I have been faithful. If anyone suffers eternal death, it's not my fault, for I didn't shrink from declaring all that God wants you to know.**"* – Acts 20:25-27 NLT

*...and on that day a large number of people came to Paul's lodging. **He explained and testified about the Kingdom of God** and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Scriptures. Using the law of Moses and the books of the prophets, he spoke to them from morning until evening.* – Acts 28:23 NLT

*For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome at his own expense. He welcomed all who visited him, **boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God** and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. – Acts 28:30-31 NLT*

- Implications
 - At no point do Paul and the other apostles proclaim:
 - The Kingdom of the **Church**
 - The Kingdom of **this world**
 - The Kingdom of **Culture**
 - The Kingdom of the **Apostles**
 - The Kingdom of **Revolution**
 - The Kingdom of **Societal Reform**
 - The Kingdom of **Political Activism**
 - Because these all become **Kingdoms of Men**
 - We inevitably end up making it all about **us**
 - And we end up **playing god**
 - Attempting to establish **heaven on earth**
 - Trying to **create an Eden** of our own design
 - Believing we can fix culture through **social reform**
 - Expecting sinners to submit to our **moral standards**
 - Assuming that redemption is **our responsibility**

And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. – 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 NLT

Next Week: The Final Kingdom

For Further Discussion

- Why do we gravitate toward social and cultural reform over our divine mandate of reconciling lost men to God?
- Of the eight views of the Kingdom, which ones do you see as prevalent today, and why could they be a problem?
- In what ways do we end up making the Kingdom of God all about us and lose sight of its primary objective?



WEEK 7 HOMEWORK: The Final Kingdom

FALL 2021

In this lesson, we will cover the future description of the Kingdom and try to differentiate it from the current dispensation of the church age. We want to understand the difference between the kingdom inaugurated and the kingdom consummated. To accomplish this, we will explore the book of Revelation and its presentation of the new heaven, the new earth, and the new Jerusalem.

- Read Mark 14:25. What do you think Jesus meant by this statement?

What “kingdom of God” is He speaking of?

- Read Hebrews 10:37. What does the author promise about the second coming of Christ?
- For a description of Jesus’ second coming, read Revelation 19:11-16. 22:17-20. Write down what John describes as happening on that day? What is significant about the imagery he uses?
- Read Revelation 22:17-20. These are the closing verses of John’s book of Revelation. What does John say will happen to anyone who take away from the prophecies in this book?

What do his words convey about the importance of the content of his book?

To find out about the holy city and the tree of life that John mentions, read Revelation 21:1-27. Without worrying about what all the imagery means, simply write down all that John describes regarding the final Kingdom.

- Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. How does Paul describe the culmination of God's Kingdom?
- Read Hebrews 12:28. How does the author describe the kingdom? What makes it so unique?
- Read Revelation 20:1-10. This passage describes the Millennial Kingdom, the 1000 years when Christ will rule from Jerusalem on the throne of David. Read the following passages and write down how the events describes in Revelation 20:1-10 fulfill them.

Genesis 3:15

Genesis 12:1-3

Genesis 17:6

2 Samuel 7:12-16

Matthew 19:28

1 Corinthians 15:24-28