

The Kingdom | Session 1

Kingdom Come pt.1 | Mark 1:14-15

- 1) When Jesus began his ministry his first message was clear: “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

The Hebrew word for Kingdom Malkuth and the Greek word for Kingdom Basileia translate the same, contrary to what we might think they are not about a place but rather God, means the exercise of Kingship his reign, rule, sovereignty and authority.

Discuss the implications of the Kingdom being God himself and not a place?

- 2) At creation we see Satan bringing sin and death to humankind through their disobedience. In succumbing to temptation Adam and Eve gave away the authority God had given them to rule, which brought in the era of the dominion of darkness. Read Galatians 1:4.

How do we see the outworking of this Present evil age in our lives and society?

- 3) When Jesus came to earth God eternal perfect Kingdom broke through. In other words, into this present evil age the age to come arrived and therefore since the birth of Christ we have been living in the end times. Read Ephesians 2:15-23

What does this scripture tell us about the age to come?

- 4) There is a mystery to the Kingdom.

Jesus said the Kingdom of God is near, in other’s words it will come and it’s coming immediately. He later said to the Pharisees “behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” Jesus through His teachings, including the parables tells us the Kingdom of God will be delayed. Theologians sum it up like this “The Now and Not Yet of the Kingdom”. How might this help us have a biblical framework for suffering?

- 5) Jesus said we must enter the Kingdom of God “Repent and believe the good news!” Read Colossians 1:13-14. Discuss how this verse sums up what happens when we enter the Kingdom of God. How does the eschatological emphasis of the Kingdom (the end times) spur you on to share your faith, knowing that entrance to the Kingdom of God is not automatic, it must be entered by repentance and belief in Jesus and Lord and Saviour?

The Kingdom | Session 2

Kingdom Come pt. 2 | Luke 4:14-21

Kingdom Lifestyle

- 1) Read Luke 3:21-22 Jesus Baptism. It is good to remind ourselves that being the Lord's 'beloved' is central to our faith. What encouragements and challenges do you find in having a loving, intimate relationship with the Lord?
- 2) Read Luke 3:15-18 and 21-23
Here we learn that the arrival of the Kingdom of God is good news and bad news. The good news is Jesus will baptize us with the Holy Spirit and fire (v16). The bad news (v17) is that Jesus' birth, death and resurrection is the start of the end times, pointing to both heaven and hell and the urgent need for us to repent and believe, the judgement of God is coming. How does this knowledge shape the way you live as a child of God?
- 3) Here at HTL we use the term the **BIO** of a Disciple - **B**efore God Daily, **I**n Community, **O**n Mission. If someone were to read your specific BIO as a follower of Jesus, what would they learn about you and how would they see Jesus?

Kingdom Mission

- 4) Read Luke 4:14-21. This scripture is the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy (61:1-2) and is known as Jesus' mandate to the world. We see how Jesus lived out his mission as we read the gospels. Jesus both taught and demonstrated the Kingdom of God in signs and wonders. He commissioned us and gave us the authority to do the same. For the purpose of this study we are going to focus on healing. Now read Isaiah 53:4-5.

We know suffering now because we live in THIS PRESENT EVIL AGE, and the presence of the AGE TO COME now brings healing and freedom. We live in the now and the not yet of the Kingdom at the same time. A triumphalist view holds to the view that scripture says all should be healed. A defeatist view of scripture would limit 'healing' to spiritual healing. Neither are right. Derek Morphe says:

"The truth is that whenever someone is healed, it bears witness to the fact that the Kingdom is here. Whenever someone is not healed, it bears witness to the fact that the Kingdom is not yet here... Ultimately the only way to explain what does and does not happen is to understand the already and the not yet of the Kingdom."

- 5) How then should we receive scripture and Jesus' mandate? How might your understanding and conviction determine your response to healing for yourself and praying for others.

The Kingdom | Session 3

The Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount | Matthew 5-7

The word blessedness sums up the Hebrew concepts of salvation and wholeness. It doesn't just mean emotional "happiness", it's about our status and standing with God: **Deep divine favour and approval, flourishing and thriving in God's grace.**

The beatitudes demonstrate the values of the Kingdom of God which are opposite to the world - they invert them. It's important too that we remember the Hebrew way of seeing life doesn't split the physical and spiritual.

1) Read Matt. 5: 1-12

What do the beatitudes tell us about our posture before God? How do you understand the promises contained within them in terms of the now and not yet of the Kingdom?

2) Read Matt 13-16

We are to be salt and light, influencing the world through sharing the gospel, good works and visible righteousness. What is the Lord saying to you as an 'influencer'?

3) Having said he did not come to abolish the Law or Prophets but came to fulfil them, Jesus says: "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of God."

Six times Jesus says "You have heard... but I say", he is speaking of the righteous Christian lifestyle we are called to. Verses 21-48 have the following headings: Murder (Anger), Adultery (lust), Divorce, Oaths, Eye for an eye (retaliation) and Love for enemies. Choose one of these to reflect on together.

Chapter 6 & 7:1-12 continues to address giving, prayer, fasting, priorities and relationships.

Select one or two passages to discuss the implication of the righteous lifestyle. How do they invert the world's values?

4) Read Matt 7:13-23. Verses 21-23 often cause Christians to fear and question if they might be one of those to whom Jesus will say I never knew you. Verse 21 tell us the answer - we do the will of the Father. Take time to discuss this. What might God be saying to you?

The Kingdom | Session 4

Clash of Kingdoms | Matthew 12:22-32

When reading stories of deliverance and spiritual battle, there are two dangers we can face. On the one hand, we could deny the existence of demons and on the other hand we could see everything as demonic and as a spiritual battle. We therefore need discernment; we need to know our enemy. Take a few moments to reflect on how we can ensure the right balance.

- 1) There are two battles and conflicts in this passage:
 - a. *Direct conflict*. Read verse 22. Every time demons in a human being met Jesus, the demon had to leave the person. It's the same today. Why and what does this mean for us as followers of Jesus?
 - b. *Hidden Warfare*. Read verses 23-23. We see two responses to this miracle, positive and negative. The response of the crowd to this deliverance led them to the revelation of who Jesus is as the Son of David. However, the Pharisees went into doubt which led them into wrong thinking. Hidden warfare often begins in the mind and therefore this is the main conflict we struggle with. How might you question things well? What do you do about those things that 'pop in your head' bringing confusion and temptation? Remember that the problem is not having the thought but entertaining it.
- 2) Read verse 23. What does it mean for the Kingdom of God to come upon a person and how have you experienced this?
- 3) Read verse 30-32. These verses can be hard to understand and has been the subject of debate for many years. The ultimate sin is to deny our need for Salvation and therefore we cannot be born again of the Spirit of God. Forgiveness therefore is rejected and we cannot be forgiven. Read verse 30 again. How can you gather for Christ, and not be like the Pharisees who were scattering?

The Kingdom | Session 5

Kingdom Growth | Matthew 13:1-9, 31-33

In Matthew Chapter 13, Jesus used everyday imagery to show us how the Kingdom of God comes, grows and expands. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus words have HUGE potential: 100, 60, 30 fold. In the Parable of the Mustard Seed, the seed becomes a tree: 1,000 fold up scaling.

- 1) Read verse 19. Here, we see growth comes through Jesus' spoken word at that time and for us, the written words of Scripture. How are you engaging with Scripture across the week? A strong survey suggests that reading the Bible four or more times a week sees a significant increase in one's growth. How has this been your experience?
- 2) When sharing the Parable of the Sower Jesus was speaking to a crowd which included including the 12 Disciples, other followers who were present and fellow Jews. Interestingly, the Disciples asked Jesus why he spoke in parables, to which Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah, who was himself addressing the people of God.

So often we relate this parable to non-believers and the receiving salvation, but to do so misses the deeper truth that Jesus' words are for salvation and sanctification - this parable is directed at us. His words are 'seed' that lands on the soil of people's hearts. The problem isn't with the seed it's with the soil.

- Verse 4 - The hard ground represents hard hearts, cynical hearts. Those who don't believe the word, receive it or are ambivalent to it.
- Verses 5-6 - The rocky ground is the shallow heart. Surface joy, fair weather Christians. Those who are happy to receive Jesus as Saviour and what he can do for them, rather than Jesus as Lord with focus being all about him.
- Verse 7 - The thorny ground is the divided heart, distractions that choke the seed of Jesus' words and put him in second place.

Of the above, which type of soil might you be at the moment? How should you address this? How can you help others?

- 3) Read Verse 8. Good soil is possible by the Spirit of God. Read Verse 1-23, how has your understanding of the Kingdom of God and growth developed through these studies?

The Kingdom | Session 6

Unshakeable Kingdom | Hebrews 12:18-29

- 1) Read verses 18-21. In these verses Mount Sinai is depicted as the Mountain of Fear. Read Exodus 19 for the background to understand why. This explains David's reasoning in the Psalm of Ascent: Psalm 24:3-4. What does this tell us about the character of God and our relationship with him?
- 2) In comparison we have the mountain of faith, Mount Zion. Read verses 22-25. This mount is both present and future, we see this in the language used echoing the book of Revelation. How does the following make this the mount of faith, not fear?
 - a. The church of the first born whose names are written in heaven
 - b. God, the judge of all men
 - c. Jesus the mediator of a new covenant and his sprinkled blood
- 3) 'Stirred and shaken'. Read verses 25-27. Our hearts should be stirred into response now. Read 1 Peter 2:9-16 and discuss what this response looks like.

Read verses 26-27. These speak of the shaking to come. What does this tell us about the future of the Kingdom of God and his promise? How does this make you feel and what response does it provoke?

- 4) Read verses 28-29. Note the present tense, "we are receiving a Kingdom that cannot be shaken". This is the now and not yet of the Kingdom of God, the age to come in this present evil age. The writer calls us to worship God acceptably with reverence. How do you worship God knowing he is an all-consuming fire? Spend time worshiping him now.

Kingdom of God | Session 7

Kingdom Here! | Revelation 21:1-4

Whilst we live in this present evil age, the age to come has broken through, which means we are living in the end times. The prophetic revelation of Chapter 21 is speaking about the end of the 'end times', painting a picture of what the Kingdom of God in its fullness will be like.

1) Verse 1: *Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*

What excites you about a new heaven and a new earth?

2) Verse 2: *I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*

Before a bride and groom are married, they get to know each other. Do we know what God likes and how to communicate with Him well? Do we pursue purity? As the Bride of Christ how are we revealing the Kingdom of God now?

3) Verse 3: *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*

Read John 15:16. We have been chosen! How does this help us understand God dwelling with us now? Reflect on your experiences and how this inspires your faith and walk with God. What does this mean for how we dwell with God now?

4) Verse 4: *'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'*

How do we have a foretaste of the Kingdom now? What does this mean for us as we seek to live as Kingdom Disciples? How is this good news for the world?