

The Kingdom of God

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 1st April 2012

Intro-

- My dream of Switzerland, Bedford, King's Arms.
- Daniel had dreams which came true in a remarkable way- dreams about the Empires of the world that would emerge from his day onwards.
- A key part of His visions & dreams and also the dream he interpreted for the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar was the revelation of a kingdom yet to come which would be the most supreme kingdom the world had ever seen and ever will. This kingdom is the Kingdom of God.

Read Dan 7:1-14

God's Kingdom is Supreme

- The picture from verse 9 onwards is a courtroom scene with the supreme king of the universe judging the proceedings.
The world seems to be obsessed with who the greatest is- hence world empires. At school- 'My Dad's bigger than your Dad' scenario. Before this picture you have had 4 world empires competing for position and power, but they all must answer to the ultimate superpower- God. God as supreme ruler seen here in:
 - 'Ancient of Days'- title for God- only God is truly eternal- Alpha & the Omega.
 - Glory of God- seen in the whiteness of His garments and hair as well as the fire in His throne and it's wheels. My dream about God's glory. Paul sees risen Lord brighter than the sun, Jesus on Mt. Transfiguration, Ezekiel's vision & John's vision in revelation, Moses's face shining.
 - The throne He sits on- speaks of His kingship, majesty. He deserves to be king as He is the creator of all. There are wheels on His throne- Ezekiel saw these wheels and said they were full of eyes- God is all seeing and all-knowing, the wheels speak about His omnipresence- only He is truly everywhere. No nation or individual can escape from His gaze.

My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes.- Jeremiah 16:17

..He (jesus) began saying to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. "But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. "Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops. -Luke 12:1-3

- V10- Books are opened. In Rev John speaks about our deeds being recorded in books & other scriptures mention that we will all be judged by God:

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. (NASB) Rev. 20:12-13

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment . . . (NASB) Hebrews 9:27 .

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (NASB) 2 Cor. 5:10

- The beast is judged and thrown into the river of fire- the Beast is one of the 4 empires- first there is Babylon, then Medo-Persia, then Greece and finally Rome. This beast is seen as relating to Rome- there is the rebellious horn which speaks against God and persecutes His people. This aspect of the beast is what God brings into judgement. This is the spirit of the antichrist- that which opposes Christ- seen after the Greek Empire when Antiochus Epiphanes persecuted Israel, seen when the Romans destroyed the temple in Jerusalem under Titus in AD 70, but also to be seen again when the AntiChrist is revealed before Jesus returns. This picture here may relate to any of the last 3 or perhaps all of them. John mentions a similar scene with a lake of fire and the beast being thrown into it- speaks of Hell- the judgement of God against sin.
- **Application**-Are you ready to meet God? The message of John the baptist and Jesus was 'repent for the Kingdom of God is near'. When the Spirit of God moves our own mortality and the brevity of life strikes us, as does the need to get right with God.
- Decisions we make in life our and priorities are best evaluated in the light of eternity.
- Make the world aware that we will all one day stand before God.

God's Kingdom operates differently to the world's

- If we look at the kingdoms seen in this dream of Daniel's we see vast Empires with a desire to take over the known world. We have Babylonia who destroyed the temple in Jerusalem and exiled the Jews for 70 years. We have the Medes and Persians under Cyrus who took Babylon, but released captives, including the Jews, but later almost wiped the Jews out under wicked Haman (saved by Esther's bravery). We have the Greek empire under Alexander the Great who made it a personal ambition to take over the known world and spread Greek culture everywhere. Then we have the Roman empire with their military might taking over the world and at the time of Jesus ruling Israel.
- The Jews were waiting for this promised Kingdom to come to deliver them from the Romans. They had read the prophecies of Daniel and others about the Messiah-anointed One- King. They expected military might like King David.
- Jesus came in humility- born in a stable, raised in Nazareth (a nobody's town) by poor parents, condemned by the people's and sentenced to the lowest of death's- it didn't seem like the next world empire they were expecting.
- Jesus however came as the King of love to save the world. He was a gift from the Father, the Ancient of Days, to save us and reconcile us to Himself that we would truly be part of His kingdom by voluntarily surrendering to Him. This is the world domination that God has- militantly capturing people's hearts.
- Q. Has He captured your heart? Look at what sort of a King Jesus is- Pilate said Ecce homo arch in Jerusalem, where Pilate presented Jesus to the people-

Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold, the Man!" - John 19:5

Without sin, yet suffering for us. Ridiculed, mocked. This is the true King of glory, our creator, whom all nations will worship (Dan 7 v 14) and yet He was willing to wear a crown of thorns, have a titillus placed round his neck with His crime 'king of the Jews' (later nailed to the cross he had to carry). He was ridiculed, beaten, stripped naked and nailed to the cross. People made fun of Him being a supposed king as He died there. He did this for us- this is our King of Love. After the Passion

of the Christ the cinema just sat there, dumbfounded and in awe of the sacrifice of love shown by Jesus- it hit them. There are moments in this life when we glimpse how loved we really are, just like Lazarus was by the saviour- 'behold how much he (loves us)'.

- In Jesus we see 2 extremes- He is the greatest- He is the King of the universe and yet He went the lowest- none will ever go as low as He was prepared to go for our salvation- and that is what it took to save us- He is the sort of King I would want to follow. The sort of perfect King that Isaiah saw from a distance when He described the root of Jesse growing up and the spirit of wisdom etc resting on this King.
- **Application-** Have you been captivated yet by His love? Have you voluntarily surrendered your heart to Him? Are you willing to tell others of this greatest love?

God's Kingdom is ever-increasing

- God's Kingdom came at the arrival of Jesus, but it is still coming today and yet will also come in the future. It is the rule and reign of God- this is the Kingdom of God.

Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." Lk 17:20

- God's kingdom comes when someone gets saved, healed or delivered. These are signs of what is happening in Heaven happening on the earth.
- In Heaven there is no sickness, demons do not have power to harm. When Jesus or the disciples cast out demons and did miracles He said this was the Kingdom of God coming:

But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Lk 11:20

As you go, preach, saying, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Matt 10:7-8

- Of the increase of
- **Application-** realise the Church will never fade away- the Kingdom is increasing
- World mission

Summary

- God's Kingdom is supreme
- God's Kingdom operates differently to the world
- God's Kingdom is ever-increasing

Song: Blessing & honour

The Kingdom of God part 2

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 15th April 2012

Intro-

- Previously spoke on Dan 7:1-14 where Daniel has a dream about vast Empires which would come upon the earth. In this dream Daniel saw that ultimately God was in charge and that God's kingdom was the ultimate kingdom which was to rule all kingdoms. In the dream the head of God's kingdom was one like the Son of Man- we noted that this was Jesus and that His kingdom was :
 - Supreme over all other kingdoms.
 - Different to the Kingdoms of the world working through captivation of the heart rather than enforced submission.
 - Ever-increasing through the message of the gospel preached by the Church throughout the world.
- Today we will turn to the New Testament and follow on this theme, noting that it is the crux of the message that Jesus brings and that we are to bring.

Read Matt 3:1-2, 4:17, 4:23, 5:3,10

'Repent...' (4:17)- Repentance opens the door to the Kingdom of God.

- Background- 400 years of 'silent years' waiting between Old and New Testament. Over 300 prophecies of the promised King in the Old Testament, thousands of years awaiting fulfillment. Years of oppression under Egypt, Canaanites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Samaritans, Greeks, Romans- this was a burnt out people desperate to see their promised king and his kingdom appear.
- John the Baptist appears with these words which break the silence and increase the expectation suddenly 'repent for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand!'
- John in 4:3 is described as one who prepares the way for the king, making crooked places smoothed over for the king's chariot to ride on- like the people I witnessed in Sierra Leone filling potholes in the road after the rains had washed the previous filling away.
- This road-filling ministry is one of repentance- repentance is the preparatory work for the kingdom of God to break in- repentance opens the door to the king and says 'you are welcome!'
- Both John the Baptist and Jesus start with this command to 'repent'- 3:2, 4:17, but also in Acts Peter starts off the preaching of the good news with it Acts 2:38. If we want to see God coming with power in our lives repentance is a key. At times of revival there is a strong element of repentance. Pensacola meetings, preaching of Steve Hill- people wailing over their sin. Steve exposing sin characterised lifestyle from the front, like John the Baptist & Jesus revealing men's hearts, making them squirm. The Holy Spirit comes to convict people of their sin. Conviction is a sign of God's kingdom coming. We are to expect it.
- Conviction may or may not lead to repentance- it depends upon whether the person hardens or opens their heart. Conviction is not repentance. Repentance- metanoia- 'after' 'thought'- a re-think, a change of mind. It implies a change of mind resulting in a change of direction. In Hebrew the word 'Shub/Shuv' meant a turning around, an about-turn regarding behaviour. This is repentance- realising you have been going down a wrong path and turning around drastically.
- The opposite of repentance is either willful rebellion or self-justification. 'It was the woman's fault that you put here with me.. it was the serpent's fault'.

- The Bible says to confess your sins to each other (James 5:16)- it takes a guts to humble yourself and admit you are wrong or have done wrong.
- **Application-** guard your heart- keep it soft before God and people. Be humble. Listen to correction from others, be quick to admit when you have messed up. Be teachable. Be accountable.
- Like David did at the end of psalm 139, ask the Holy Spirit to shine His search-light into your life to reveal any areas He wants to work on.

'..for the Kingdom of Heaven...' (4:17)- The Kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God in our lives.

- The kingdom of Heaven is the Kingdom of God- in Matthew's gospel, written to Jews, the word 'God' is changed to 'Heaven' out of reverence for God. A reason for this may well be cultural respect to reach fellow Jews with the Gospel- like when Paul said 'to the To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews'. (1Cor 9:20). Even today out of respect for God's name the word God is written G-d.
- The kingdom of God means God ruling and reigning in people's lives.
- The kingdom is not the Church, the Church are the subjects of the kingdom of God- we are the ones that God reigns over.
- However, the Kingdom of God is expressed through the Church. This is God's chosen way to express His rule and reign, not only to the world but to the principalities and powers- Eph 3:10 says through the Church the wisdom of God is displayed. Eph 3:21 says 'to God be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever'. The Church is God's instrument of glory which Christ died for 5:25. It is the Church which has had the great commission to go into all the world proclaiming the kingdom message.
- Some people today erroneously use the term 'Church' as a negative word, as if it is an irrelevant over-religious organisation which is unnecessary to what God is doing today. Some don't want to appear partisan by joining a particular group of Christians, whereas they view the word 'Kingdom' as being a positive word, saying that they are 'anti-Church' but 'pro-Kingdom' and prefer not to be tied down to any local body. This is claptrap. Inability to commit to a local body of believers is usually a sign that all is not well spiritually. It shows an inability to surrender to the King. When we are becoming isolated from other believers or moving from Church to Church it is actually the Lord we are struggling with. Maybe we have been wronged and there are areas we need to sort out with individuals in the body so that we can move on. Maybe we need to put something right ourselves.
- Jesus often referred to Himself as the Son of Man- one reason why He did this was to identify Himself as the fulfillment of Daniel 7- He is the King promised whom all nations will one day worship.
- Up until this time the message had been the Law and the Prophets. Now came a radical change- the King had appeared on the scene and nothing would be the same again, so the message becomes the Kingdom of God!
- He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. He fulfilled over 300 prophecies about Himself. Also He fulfilled the Law by living perfectly without sin. Rather than people relying on their own ability to keep God's laws Jesus came to live a righteous life for them- perfect righteousness as well as pay for their sin- this Kingdom message was radically different- people were to stop trusting in themselves and start trusting in Him. Mark 1:15 puts it this way- '.The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel'. The other side of the coin of repentance is faith. Jesus came to save those trusting in Him. He is the King with the power to save. 'Believe in the gospel'- gospel means 'good news'- the good news is that what we could not do Christ did for us- He fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law,

but also, by His Spirit enables us to live holy lives empowered by Him. But it is also good news because a victory is won- God's kingdom is greater, more powerful than the kingdom of the enemy and the enemy is defeated! The gospel is like the proclamation at VE day- it is good news! It is better than hearing you've won the lottery!

- When the King shows up things change- He carries authority, His rule and reign are seen to be demonstrated. Injustice is sorted, the oppressed are released- there are signs of His kingdom invading the kingdom it breaks into.
- Matt 4:23-24 show the effects of Christ's Kingdom breaking in- the sick are healed and the demon-oppressed are set free. In Matt 6:10 in the Lord's prayer we are called to pray for the kingdom of God to come and God's will to be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. In Heaven there is no sickness, pain, sorrow, oppression, sin etc. Therefore when the Kingdom comes to earth and invades earth wherever Satan has spoiled people's lives there is breakthrough- people are healed, saved, delivered. This is what we are to expect when the Kingdom comes.
- **Application-** Fellowship is an important part of the Kingdom of God – make it a priority.
- We are to expect the gospel to be more than just a message- as we tell the good news expect signs to follow- Paul felt the gospel had only been fully preached when signs and wonders followed '...by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.' Rom 15:9

'My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. '(1Cor 2:4-5).

- Have faith in the King. He has authority to set us free from captivity, bring healing, empower us to overcome and He has delegated authority to us to set others free and see people healed.

'...is at hand.' (4:17)- The Kingdom has come and will come.

- There are 2 aspects to this- distance and time.
- First, 'at hand' means physically near to you- you can reach out and touch it. If translated from Greek into Hebrew it conveys a concept of being near intimately- in fact the Hebrew idiom to go near is used of sexual intimacy between a husband and wife (Gen 20:4; Lev 18:6, 14; 20:16; Deut 22:14; Isa 8:3; Ez 18:6).
- This means that when God's Kingdom comes we have a 'God-encounter'- it is like Jacob in Bethel Gen 28:16- 'Surely God is in this place and I didn't realise it'. Where we go we take the presence of the Lord. We are a dwelling place of the Lord by His Spirit:
And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Eph 2:22)

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? (1Cor 3:16)

What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." (2Cor 6:16)

so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, (Eph 3:17)

- Let's be more aware of the presence, closeness of God then in our lives. God is not far from us, but with us. Jesus was called 'Emmanuel'- 'God with us'. We bring the Kingdom wherever we go.
Secondly, 'at hand' can mean related to time. Mark 1:15 again says- '..The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel'. The waiting was seen to be over- the King had come! It is important to our practise that we understand when the kingdom actually comes.
- In scripture the kingdom is said to have come already:

But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. Lk 11:21

"The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. Lk 16:16

- It is also said to be still to come in the future:

So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Lk 21:31

While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. Lk 19:11

- What are we to make of this? Basically the Kingdom did come with Christ's first coming, and is still coming now, but will manifest fully at His second coming.
- Show Phil Moore's diagrams from Newfrontiers paper on 'A Healthy Theology of Healing' to illustrate 5 viewpoints on the Kingdom and how they relate to expectation regarding healing.
- **Application-** believe for Kingdom manifestation in the here and now, but also don't put all your eggs in this basket- keep an eternal perspective also on life-we will have fully restored bodies in glory- hold onto both truths.
- When praying for healing remember that all sickness for Christians will be healed- we are praying for a manifestation of what will happen anyway- this should help faith levels as well as keep hope alive when healing isn't always instantaneous.
- When healing does not happen it doesn't mean that God doesn't love us, it also doesn't necessarily mean our faith is at fault. Develop a positive view of praying for healing and of our God's wonderful desire and ability to bring healing. Bring any previous disappointments to Him and surrender what we do not understand to Him.

Summary

- Repentance opens the door to the Kingdom of God.
- The Kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God in our lives.
- The Kingdom has come and will come.

Song: *Say the Word . Who is there like You?*

The Kingdom of God part 3

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 22nd April 2012

Intro-

- In part 1 spoke on Dan 7 where Daniel has a dream about vast Empires. Noted the kingdom of God would be the greatest of all Empires, starting small but filling the earth, captivating heart's through God's love.
- In part 2 spoke on 'Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand'- John the Baptist's & Jesus' message from Matt 3 & 4. We spoke on the importance of repentance and faith to open the door to the Kingdom. We defined the Kingdom as the rule and reign of God and looked at the effects of this- Heaven invading earth. We looked at the Kingdom as both the presence of God physically 'near' us, as well as relating to time- that the Kingdom came with Christ's first coming, is continuing to come now, and will also come in the fullest sense when Christ returns.
- Today we will look at one of the signs of the Kingdom of God coming- deliverance from demonic bondage, and what this means to us today.

Read Luke 11:14-26

Deliverance is a normal part of God's Kingdom coming- 'And He was casting out a demon'-v14

- Funny way to start a sentence about anyone- 'And He was casting out a demon'- written as if it was not a rare occurrence but something that happened often in Jesus' line of work. Dealing with demons was a significant part of the ministry of Jesus and also the early Church. Jesus sent out the 12 with the message:
'as you go preach saying 'The kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.' (Matt 10:7-8)
Therefore casting out demons was linked to God's kingdom coming.
- The coming of God's king would mean the crushing of the serpent's head-
*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 3:15
- The ancient rabbi's knew the messiah would mess up Satan's rule from their study of scripture and they tried to visualise what this would look like in reality. An ancient commentary on Is 60:1 which mentions 'arise shine your light has come' said this light was the light of the Messiah, the same light which had shone at creation and was being kept under God's throne for when the Messiah would be revealed. The commentary went on to say that Satan enquired for whom this light was being kept and the reply came from God 'For Him Who in the latter days will conquer you and cover your face with shame' (Yalkut vol 1. Par. 363, p.99c onwards).
- Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. 1John 3:8
- Is 61:2 said that the coming of the Messiah would include the mission:
'to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound'
- Who is Satan, and what are demons and are they real? Every N.T author mentions demons somewhere in their writings apart from writer of Hebrews and even then Satan is mentioned. Satan/Lucifer not like our cartoon caricature of him with horns and pitch fork but originally thought to be a chief angel created by God who later sinned. Pride caused Satan to rebel against God as king before the fall of mankind-

Is. 14:12-15 (Originally spoken of the king of Babylon, but thought to refer to the

origin of Satan, here called Lucifer).

Ezek 28:12-17 (Originally spoken of the king of Tyre, but also thought to refer to Satan).

Satan was unsuccessful in his attempts to de-throne God, he was cast out of Heaven:

Rev 12:9 (Satan cast out of heaven). Luke 10:18 (Jesus saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven).

- Jesus said about a Lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt 25:41). Demons then are angels, fallen angels like Satan who followed him in his folly.
- The Devil and his angels try to oppose the work of God. They try to detract worship away from God. They oppose mankind and especially the Church. They lie and deceive. They want to ruin and control lives through bondage, sickness and other means. They try to gain access into people's lives through the doorway of sin and deception and try to get people addicted.
- The word 'demon' is a very emotive word, provoking a variety of reactions in people. For Christians there are two extremes to avoid. The one extreme is to have an unhealthy interest in demons, seeing them in every situation and blaming them for everything. The other extreme is to not believe in their existence or to deny their effects in people's lives. Jesus avoided the two extremes and so should we.
- In a modern, scientific culture there is a tendency to not believe in what we cannot see or prove and this can influence us today, but more and more in a post-modern culture people are trying out things related to the New Age and the occult and 'giving things a go'. Demons operate in both cultures, quite happy to work 'under the radar' in a modern culture ruining people's lives undetected and also happy to entice people into a place of bondage in an experimental culture. It is when the kingdom of God comes that their true nature is manifest. This happened in the ministry of Jesus when demons shouted out 'we know who you are'. As the kingdom comes through us we can expect more manifestations of demonic activity reacting- Stoneleigh person screams out. My testimony of seeing friends delivered when I first became a Christian.
- People panic about being possessed by a demon. The bible uses the word *daimonizomai* which means 'to be demonised'. This does not mean to be fully possessed but is a scale. We are influenced by demons to varying degrees from oppression to compulsion to possession.
- For Jesus to do His job effectively He had to deal with demons as they were opposing God's rule and reign. There is a clash of two kingdoms when the Kingdom of God comes and God is not going to loose.
- **Application-** What are your views on Satan/demons/demonisation? Do you veer more towards obsessed or more towards not interested or unbelieving? Are there any changes you need to make by looking again at what the Bible teaches?

Deliverance demonstrates that Jesus is King- 11:20 'if I cast out demons by the finger of God then surely the kingdom of God has come upon you'

- Messianic miracle. Jesus' kingship is demonstrated by His authority over demons
- The usual ways that demons were cast out contrasted with the authority of Jesus
- Baal Zeboul/ Baal Zebub (Beelzebub)- used as a reference to Satan. Originally was an idol in Philistine city of Ekron (2Kings 1:2-3, 6, 16 where King Ahaziah falls through lattice and enquires of this idol if he will recover, only for the message to be intercepted by Elijah who says 'no because you went to an idol for the answer'). Baal Zebub meant 'Lord of the flies' – 2 possible meanings- either a deliberate biblical distortion of Baal Zeboul, 'Lord of the high place (heaven)' so that the followers of the idol are the flies and the idol is the dung, or it may have actually

been 'Lord of the flies' indicating a belief that the idol had the power to dispel disease and thus expel flies.

- Jesus turns the accusation around. He asks who their followers (sons=followers, like sons of the prophets) expelled demons by- i.e. what authority and results do they have? Ancient Hebrew ways involved reciting scripture, blowing the shofar, using rituals, fumigating the demons out, using the name of God, finding out its name and coaxing it out. The scribes and teachers of the law are contrasted with Jesus as they did not speak with authority (Matt 7:29)- they would quote a list of views of various other rabbis. The 7 sons of Sceva:

And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.

Jesus said about a divided kingdom not standing- sure, one or two demons might choose strategically to leave a person for the greater gain of getting someone to put their trust in a false teaching, but it would be suicide for Satan's kingdom to do this wholesale wherever Jesus and the gospel went.

Acts 19:11-17. The 'finger of God'- from Exodus- the pagan Egyptian magicians acknowledged God's authority more readily than those critical of Jesus here.

- Jesus has overcome the strong man- to plunder someone's goods first you need to overpower them, and to do this you need the greater strength. Not an equal competition- not dualism heresy or yin yang equal and opposites- Jesus is sovereign. God is sovereign. Horror films etc. give distorted impressions of the power of evil compared to God's power.
- The ways that demons get a foothold in people's lives
- The victory of the cross against sickness and bondage-

And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Rev 12:11

'It is finished'.(John 19:30)

- Through the cross Jesus made a spectacle of all principalities and powers -Col 2:15 the term 'made a spectacle' here means to despoil, to strip of power, parade your spoils, make a public show or spectacle (it is the term used to describe what Joseph wanted to avoid with Mary when he had in mind a quiet divorce rather than making a spectacle of her). Paul says Jesus triumphed over these powers. This is an amazing picture which needs explanation:

John MacArthur comments that 'triumph...is a technical term, and it had some very significant meaning in the Roman world. The Romans had what they called, "a triumph." It was the highest honor that could ever be paid to a victorious Roman general. When the Roman government gave a general a triumph, that was the ultimate. Before any Roman general could be granted a triumph, he must have achieved certain things. He must have been the actual commander-in-chief in the field, and not a secondary leader; the campaign that he engaged in must have been completely finished; the region which was conquered completely pacified, and the victorious troops brought home. Furthermore, according to Roman history, 5,000 of the enemy, at least, must have fallen in one engagement so that it fell into the category of a slaughter. Furthermore, as a result of this campaign, a positive extension of Roman territory must have been gained, and not merely a disaster retrieved or an attack repelled. And the victory must have been won over a foreign foe, and not in a civil war. Triumphs didn't happen very often. But in an actual triumph, the procession of the victorious general marched through the streets of Rome all the way to the capitol. And you can even read about the sequence of that march and the order of the people in the parade itself. First, there came the state officials and the Senate-- always the politicians. Then there came the trumpeters, who were heralding what was coming. Then came the spoils taken from the conquered land, carted along. For example, when Titus conquered Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the seven-branched candlesticks, the golden table of shewbread, the golden trumpets were carried through the streets of Rome in his triumph. Then there came some painted pictures of the conquered land and some models (can you believe it?) of conquered citadels and conquered ships. Then there followed the white bull, which was going to be offered as a sacrifice to the gods. Then there came the wretched captives, the enemy princes, leaders, and generals in chains, shortly to be flung into prison and, in all probability, to be executed. Then there came the, what were called lictors, or punishers, who were beating these people with rods. And then

there came the musicians. And then there came the priests swinging their censors with the sweet-smelling incense burning. And then came the general himself after all of this huge entourage. He was in a chariot drawn by four horses, he was clad in a purple tunic embroidered with gold and palm leaves, and over it a purple toga marked out with golden stars. In his hand he had an ivory scepter with a Roman eagle on the top of it, and over his head a slave held the crown of Jupiter. And after him rode his family. And finally, at the very end, came the army wearing all their decorations and shouting, "Triumph! Triumph! Triumph!" I mean, it's a pretty impressive scene. And all this massive procession moves through the streets of the city, all decorated and garlanded with flowers all shouting and, along the edge of the road of course are these mobs of people cheering. It was a tremendous day -- a day which probably happened once in a lifetime. That is the picture in Paul's mind.' (Triumphing Over Discouragement in the Ministry)

- **Application-** Believe that Jesus is powerful enough to set you or anyone else free. Repent of any wrong teaching or views you have picked up through horror films or false religions etc. Get prayer and deliverance if you need it. Get rid of anything that is against the Lordship of Christ. Confess and rejoice in the victory of the cross.
- Are you fearful of demons? Get a biblical perspective and refuse to be afraid- Jesus has all authority and He is in you- remember He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world 1John 4:4.

Deliverance is a part of the work of harvesting we are called to join Christ in gathering in- 11:23, (compare with 9:49-50, 10:1-3, 9, 17-20, 22)

- The teachers of the law were criticising Jesus for casting out this demon and for His ministry of deliverance so Jesus says 'He who is not with Me is against Me' in response to this. Earlier He had said the opposite- 'he who is not against us is on our side' when the disciples tried to stop someone casting out demons in Jesus' name because he was not one of them (9:49-50) . In effect what Jesus was saying was the teachers of the law should have been joining in this ministry, but rather than joining in they were opposing it. Jesus also uses the picture of harvesting- He had just sent out the 72 (in chapter 10) saying 'The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest'
- John Wimber said this: 'The disciples expelled demons. We advance the Kingdom of God in the same way: overthrowing every contrary spirit in the name of our King. Too many Christians do not know how to deal with demons. They are afraid of evil spirits. They do not understand the scriptural basis for our authority and power over them. We can and ought to treat evil spirits ruthlessly- binding, rebuking, and casting them out whenever we encounter them. Authority over demons is power that Christ freely gives Christians'.(1985 Power Evangelism pg 100, John Wimber, Hodder & Stoughton).
- And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." Mark 16:17-18
- But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8
- **Application-** Learn more about deliverance ministry. Get prayer yourself for stuff. Do Freedom in Christ. Choose not to tolerate the work of demons in your life or the life of others. Take authority that Christ has given you and exercise it where it is needed. When praying for people don't be afraid to take authority over any demonic manifestations. Ask for help if you need it.

Deliverance comes so that lasting change can take place- v26 'the last state of that man is worse than the first'

- Spoken of in response to their rejection of His miraculous signs pointing to Him being the Messiah- illustration from a deliverance situation of an individual applied to the generation that turned it's nose up at Christ- in Matthew 12:45 'so shall it be with this wicked generation'
- It would be better not to have known the way of righteousness
- A dog returns to it's vomit
- **Application-** We all too quickly forget the grace of God to us in setting us free. Testify about it, remember it. Worship, praise for it.
- Right relationship with Jesus is key to maintaining healing and deliverance- walk with God & don't give the devil a foothold.

Eph 4:27 'do not give the devil a foothold'- word means a 'beachhead'. Once an army has a beachhead it can bring in reinforcements then advance. Another term would be stronghold. Satan wants to build strongholds in our lives- we are not to let him. Be accountable.

- Know (and believe and confess) the truth, the truth will set you free. -John 8:32
Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. James 4:7

Summary

- Deliverance is a normal part of God's Kingdom coming
- Deliverance demonstrates that Jesus is King
- Deliverance is a part of the work of harvesting we are called to join Christ in gathering in
- Deliverance comes so that lasting change can take place

Song: *There is power in the name of Jesus*

The Kingdom of God part 4

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 1st July 2012

Intro-

- In part 1 spoke on Dan 7 where Daniel has a dream about vast Empires. Noted the kingdom of God would be the greatest of all Empires, starting small but filling the earth, captivating heart's through God's love.
- In part 2 spoke on 'Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand'- John the Baptist's & Jesus' message from Matt 3 & 4. We spoke on the importance of repentance and faith to open the door to the Kingdom. We defined the Kingdom as the rule and reign of God and looked at the effects of this- Heaven invading earth. We looked at the Kingdom as both the presence of God physically 'near' us, as well as relating to time- that the Kingdom came with Christ's first coming, is continuing to come now, and will also come in the fullest sense when Christ returns.
- In part 2 spoke from Lk 11:14-26 on deliverance being part of God's kingdom coming. Deliverance is a normal part of God's Kingdom coming. Deliverance demonstrates that Jesus is King. Deliverance is a part of the work of harvesting we are called to join Christ in gathering in. Deliverance comes so that lasting change can take place.
- Today we will look at another sign of the Kingdom of God coming- the ministry of healing.

Read Luke 9:1-6

The king, Jesus, has delegated authority over sickness to His people- v1 '..gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases' (Matt 10:1 says all/all manner of diseases)

- What has this got to do with the Kingdom of God? Well, a King comes with authority and here the King delegates His kingly authority to others to administer His kingdom on His behalf. Sickness is an enemy to the Kingdom of God. When the sick are healed in Jesus' name the kingdom is being established on earth as in Heaven. There is no sickness in Heaven.
- In the name of means 'in the authority of'. We heal in the name of Jesus. Jesus healed in the name of the Father to role model the ministry to us:

Jn10:25- "Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me." Jn14:10-"Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works."

- **Application-** if we really believed we had been given authority over sickness how would we speak to it? Notice in scripture Jesus & disciples speak healing authoritatively to people often rather than praying (James says the prayer of faith heals).
- The Apostles delegated authority to heal- here the 12, later the 70/72.
- **But healing not just for Apostles. Characterises apostles (2Cor 12:12 signs, wonders, miracles) but not limited to.**
- **Elders** called to pray for the sick:

Jas5:14-15- "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the **elders** of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."

- Stephen & Philip were **deacons** (Acts 6:5). Stephen the deacon did great wonders & signs among the people Acts 6:8 (must have included healing). Philip the deacon healed many lame & paralysed Acts 8:7. Ananias 'a certain disciple' (Acts 9:10) lays hands on Saul to be healed (Acts 9:12, 17-18),
- Moreover, **all believers** are promised the authority to heal by Jesus:

Jn14:12- ""Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father."- it is clear from the context and also from the way 'the works' is used elsewhere (e.g John 10) that Jesus is referring to miracles including healing.

These signs will accompany those who believe:

Mk 16:17-18 "And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

- Then Jesus **commissioned His church** to do the same and sent His Church out in power- this is the Great Commission- Mt 28 (although does not mention healing here the gospel message we are to bring involves bringing healing as we will see later).
- A big reason the Holy Spirit comes is to enable us to witness in power so that signs like healing can happen through us- Acts 1:8
- **Healing isn't just for those with gift of healing.** Evangelist=gift, but all called to tell the good news, but some particularly gifted in it- same with healing- some move more powerfully than others in this realm.
- Leave results to God, but do your bit- pray

The kingdom message we preach is meant to be accompanied by healing- v 2, 6, 11

- 9:2- He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick
- 9:6- So they departed and went through the towns preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.
- 9:11- He received them and spoke to them about the Kingdom of God and healed those who needed healing.
- In these verses both Jesus and the disciples both preached and healed. Some churches into healing, some into word- we need to do both to be biblical Paul said 'fully preached gospel':

Rom 15:19 "in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."

A demonstration of the Spirit's Power:

1Cor2:4-5-"And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."

Jesus said 'don't believe me unless I do works of my father':

John 10:37-38 "Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."

- Importance of healing for evangelism- confirms message, many converted as result- Acts, today

The kingdom message should stir up faith for healing- v 2, 6, 11

- The content of the message seemed to lead to faith for healing in these verses (2,6,11) so what is the content they may have brought?
- **The King who breaks yokes**
Notice that in verse 6 preaching the gospel is the same as verse 2 preaching the Kingdom of God- our gospel message presents Jesus as the promised king who sets people free. In the Street Bible He is wonderfully nicknamed The Liberator.
- OT prophecies about KING/MESSIAH/ANOINTED ONE releasing yokes, healing-

Messiah breaks oppression:

Is9:4- "For You have broken the yoke of his burden And the staff of his shoulder, The rod of his oppressor, As in the day of Midian."

Anointing breaks the yoke:

Is10:27- "It shall come to pass in that day That his burden will be taken away from your shoulder, And his yoke from your neck, And the yoke will be destroyed because of the anointing oil."

God anointed Jesus to heal oppressed:

Acts10:38-"how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him."

Define Messiah - anointed one -Anointed king sets the captives free- anointed one, king, oil, empowered, king invades and liberates- Cyrus called 'anointed one' & he set Israelite captives free to go home & build temple:

Is45:1-"Thus says the LORD to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held-- To subdue nations before him And loose the armour of kings, To open before him the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut:"

John wanders if Jesus is the Christ/Messiah & Jesus reminds him of His credentials- breaking the yokes off people:

Lk7 :19-23- "And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to Jesus, saying, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" When the men had come to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'" And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

Jesus broke not the yokes of slavery to the Romans but the yoke of sin and bondage to spiritual oppression and also sickness.

- **Healing comes through the finished work of Christ on the cross for us.**
- Honeymoon all inclusive wrist band - cross - ticket to liberty. As we understand more we get more freedom. 'It is finished' - no more to do- cannot add anything. Died for all our sins + sickness's + oppression etc.

This includes healing our emotions. He became for us a man of sorrows:

Is 53:3- "He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him."

He bore our griefs + sorrow:

Is 53:4-"Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted."

- Includes emotional problems - trauma, anxiety, depression, rejection, shame-'my God, my God why have you forsaken me' (so we are not).

For inner healing see also:

Is 61:2-3- "To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."

As well as for our sins Jesus died for every aspect of our healing including physical:

Is 53:5- "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed."

Chastisement of our Peace=Shalom =well, happy, friendly, welfare, health, prosperity, peace (Prince of Peace)

- **Stripes** --- weal, blueness, bruise, wound
- **Healed** --- Heb. RAPHA= to mend (by stitching)i.e. cure - be made whole and healthy.

Matthew applied this verse to healing ministry of Jesus:

Mt 8:16-17- "When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND BORE OUR SICKNESSES."

- **The Brass serpent** in scripture is a type for the cross & hints that there is healing through the cross:

Num21:8-9 "Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived."

Jesus quoted this passage as prefiguring His cross:

Jn3:14- "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up"

Snake in the desert- people looked & were healed. People had spoken against Moses & God & serpents bit them & many died. Moses had to make a brass snake on a pole & raise it up & all that looked at it were healed. Although Jesus speaks about this referring to our salvation surely there is a healing element seen here as well. All Christians will be ultimately fully healed through the cross in their resurrected bodies, but there is also provision for healing in this life.

- **The Greek word SOZO.** Healing is connected to salvation- the Greek word 'sozo'- can mean saved, healed, delivered:

Sozo=Saved

Act4:12- "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (sozo)."

Sozo=Healed

Woman bleeding:

Mt9:21- "For she said to herself, "If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well (sozo)."

Mt9:22- "But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well (sozo)." And the woman was made well (sozo) from that hour."

Jairus's Daughter:

Mk5:23- "and begged Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed (sozo), and she will live."

Many healings:

Mk6:56- "Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well (sozo)."

A blind man:

Mk10:52- "Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well (sozo)." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road."

A lame man:

Acts 4:9- "If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, (sozo)"

Healing in the Church:

Jas5:14-15- "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save (sozo) the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."

Sozo=Delivered

Legion:

Lk8:36- "They also who had seen it told them by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed. (sozo)"

- However, very importantly, if we are not healed in this life it doesn't mean we will not be saved & it doesn't mean God doesn't love us. We can't stretch the healing/salvation connection too far- if we are healed in this life it's a bonus. We live in a fallen world with mortal bodies that are wearing out- there is a greater glory to come & there is a right time to die and we will all be healed in glory, so the cross will bring us all a full healing. Also everyone that Jesus raised from death or healed is now dead- they had a temporary fix until the full fix in glory.

Healing is not limited to a religious building- v6- they went through the towns preaching the gospel and healing everywhere

- Here Jesus is planting a seed principle for the growth of the Church- you don't have to be in a Synagogue to hear about God or to get healed by Him.
- Let's be willing to speak out the good news to others wherever they may be but also to pray for healing.

Summary

- We have authority to heal.
- Gospel message to be accompanied by healing.
- Gospel message to be releasing faith for healing.
- Healing not limited to location.

Song: Say the word

The Kingdom of God part 5

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 1st July 2012

Intro-

- In part 1 spoke on Dan 7 about the kingdom of God becoming the greatest of all Empires, starting small but filling the earth, captivating heart's through God's love.
- In part 2 spoke on 'Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand'- the rule and reign of God coming to earth through King Jesus.
- In part 3 spoke from Lk 11:14-26 on deliverance being part of God's kingdom coming.
- In part 4 we looked at the Kingdom of God coming through the ministry of healing.
- Today we will look at another aspect of God's Kingdom coming- signs and wonders.

Read John 2:1-11

Miracles are 'signs'- v11 'signs'

- What is a 'sign'? Greek word sēmeíon – a sign (typically miraculous), given especially to confirm, corroborate or authenticate.
- Sēmeíon is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament Hebrew סימן ('Ot) a sign, mark, token; a physical sign pointing to something or a miraculous event.
- It can mean simply a sign or mark – e.g. God put a mark on Cain- Gen 4:15
- It can mean the sign of a covenant- rainbow – sign of Noahic covenant Gen 9:12-13. Circumcision- sign of Abrahamic covenant- Gen 17:11; Keeping the Sabbath- sign that Israel belonged to God- Ex 31:13.
- But it is usually used of God's miracles- plagues of Egypt were 'signs'- used many times in Exodus. These signs showed the Egyptians that God was Israel's king and that He was more powerful than Pharaoh and the Egyptian gods

'if they don't believe the first sign they may believe the second' (Ex 4:8)

- Prophets also confirmed prophecy with 'signs'-

Is 7:14 Isaiah to Ahaz- the virgin will give birth to a son & his name will be called immanuel & before he is old enough to know right and wrong the coalition against Judah (Israel & Syria) will fall and the threat will be from Assyria instead;

Isaiah had at least 2 sons (3 if you include immanuel as his) who had prophetic names as signs confirming prophecies he made: Shear-Jashub ('a remnant shall return') and Maher-shalal-hash-baz ('hurry to the spoil' or 'He has made haste to the plunder!'):

'Here am I, and the children the LORD has given me. We are signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion. (Is 8:18)'

King Hezekiah's life was to be extended 15 years & Jerusalem to be kept safe from the King of Assyria and this was the sign:

"This is the Lord's sign to you that the Lord will do what he has promised: I will make the shadow cast by the sun go back the ten steps it has gone down on the stairway of Ahaz." So the sunlight went back the ten steps it had gone down. (Is 38:7-8)

- Can also refer to signs done by of false prophets (i.e. Satan is a mimic).

For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Mt 24:24); See also Mark 13:22; Rev 13:13; 16:14; 19:20; 2 Thess 2:9.

- What is the difference between a sign and a wonder (first used in Ex 7:3)? None. It is just Hebrew parallelism- the same thing spoken of in two ways- a miracle is a sign and a wonder to us, a sign which makes us wonder. In fact, the LXX translates Ex 7:9 which has the Hebrew word 'wonder' with the Greek word for 'sign', showing perhaps that they were considered the same.
- This particular sign was a miracle- v9- 'the servants who had drawn the water knew'. The servants could see this was a miracle- 6 water pots with 20-30 gallons each- huge amount of wine! Top quality wine too!
- **Application:** A sign is like a signpost pointing to something- The stars are for signs- Gen 1:14 (i.e. navigating signs, signs of what season we are in). Miraculous signs are a signpost showing us God's kingly glory- v11 the disciples saw the sign and put their faith in Jesus- they rightly interpreted it. Jesus rebuked those who were unbelieving in His generation by saying that they could interpret the weather based on signs in the sky but they couldn't interpret the times they were living in.

Amongst the Olympic opening ceremony last night there was a snippet of a clip with Michael Fish who became infamous in the wake of the Great Storm of 1987; a few hours before the storm broke, on 15 October 1987, he said during a forecast: "Earlier on today, apparently, a woman rang the BBC and said she heard there was a hurricane on the way... well, if you're watching, don't worry, there isn't!". That evening, the worst storm to hit South East England since 1703 caused record damage and killed 18 people.

- The purpose of a sign is to point to Christ- don't be obsessed with them and don't ignore them either:

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:38-40)

"Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test." And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:11-14)

- Don't become superstitious- thinking that everything is an 'Omen' that is believing in Fate controlling our destiny, however, when God wants to say something He will use signs in conjunction with His Word and godly counsel and the witness of His Spirit. Be wise. Not every weather pattern is a message from God.
- The 'sign on the car', the 'congratulations for trying something new' for me were signs that God highlighted- learn to listen to the Lord.
- Satan can mimic- just because something comes true it doesn't mean it's a sign from God – test the spirits- what is the message and to what is the message appealing to: my flesh, or my spirit? Is it bringing glory to Christ?

Jesus' life was full of signs- v11 'beginning'

- The Messiah was the King who was promised and He needed to come with some sort of proof that He was the promised King they were expecting. As God had previously authenticated His kingship to Israel through the Exodus using miraculous signs (as well as miracles through the Prophets) it would be logical for the promised King to be validated with signs and wonders.
- This miracle was the beginning of the signs- i.e. Jesus had a whole lifestyle of signs and wonders. Note, however, there were other signs previous such as the shekinah

glory manifesting at His birth, the sign of the star, the prediction by the angel that the shepherds would find a child wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a manger. But this marks a new phase in Jesus' life- moving into His time of ministry.

- The miracles of Jesus were a sign. Miraculous catch of fish (a sign that Peter would catch many men for God), coin in fish mouth (a sign that God is able to provide), walking on water, calming storm, feeding of 4,000 & 5,000 (a sign that Jesus is the Bread of Life). Transfiguration.
- The healings of Jesus were a sign that He was sent by the Father- see John 8:29,42 'sent' (verse 58 I AM!); 9:4 'sent', 9:7 Siloam means 'sent' (He was sent by Jesus to 'sent' and came back seeing- the blind see and those that claim to see can't see that He is sent of the Father! God has a sense of humour!).
- The dead raisings- signs that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life .
- The prophecies of Jesus were a sign- Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple within a generation & it happened in AD70. He predicted His betrayal, denial, arrest, sufferings, death and resurrection on the 3rd day.
- The resurrection (and subsequent ascension into heaven) was the culminating sign and the key sign of His being the King- witnessed to by over 500 people over a 40 day period, people touched him, chatted with him, ate with him. Paul states that this is God's declaration that Jesus is God's Son- Rom 1:4.
- **Application-** Have you responded to Christ yet? Have you understood the signs? If these signs are true (which they are) we can't live the same. We can't live for ourselves any more. If you have responded to the Gospel have you forgotten the amazing miracles of provision and healing that Christ did? He is able to do them now.

Jesus is still doing signs today- v11 'beginning'

- The signs of Jesus being the Christ are to continue in the Church
- Tongues of fire at Pentecost and rushing wind- manifestations of the shekinah glory, just as burning bush.
- These 'signs' shall accompany those who believe- not only healings but signs:
Mk 16:17-18, 20 "And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.
- The early Church doing miracles-

"And through he hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people." (Acts 5:12)

" Paul and Barnabas speak boldly in the Lord, who bears witness to His word of grace, granting signs sign and wonders to be done through their hands." (Acts 14:3)

"Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds." (2 Cor. 12:12)

"in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." (Rom. 15:19)

Paul was unaffected by a fatal snake bite. Paul and Elymas (Acts 13:11). Peter and Ananias & Sapphira (Acts 5).

- Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-32)- signs and wonders in Heaven and on earth. Peter's sermon in Acts saw a fulfilment of this prophecy as being the miraculous signs of Christ (Acts 2:22) and also God's promise of the Spirit (verses 33, 38-39) which they were then experiencing and is promised to all believers. Peter's understanding was that from Jesus onwards it was a fulfilment of this promise from Joel about the age of the Spirit when signs and wonders were to be the order of the day. We don't

need to tarry and wait for Jesus to be glorified- He has been glorified and the gift of the Spirit is to all who believe. We are temples of Christ, He dwells, tabernacles in us, not a physical building. We are to expect manifestations of His glory increasingly- if the Old Covenant was glorious how much more the New!(2Cor 3 & 4, especially 3:8, 18 & 4:6)

- That Signs and Wonders are to be part of the End-Time Church ministry is seen from Revelation- 2 witnesses with signs and wonders ministry empowered to witness using signs and wonders similar to Moses and Elijah- Moses witnessed against Gentiles (Egypt) using plagues to say 'let my people go', Elijah witnessed to Israel to give up idolatry to Baal using no rain for 3.5 years. Surely this is a picture of the end time church preaching repentance (sackcloth), being witnesses of Christ and doing signs and wonders as testimony to the truth of the message.
- Today- various strange signs that some accept and others struggle with.
- Gold dust. Gold teeth. Gold in Bibles. Precious stones. Oil coming out of Bibles. Glory cloud manifestations (e.g. Bethel). Raining inside buildings
- Mike Pilivachi- his friend who was an intercessor, very quiet man, didn't have a platform, but had oil running out his hands when the anointing came on him.
- Earth signs & heaven signs- wars, earthquakes, signs in the heavens- Jesus said about signs on the earth- wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilences- we are seeing these in our day- these are all 'signs of the times'.
- The sign of the Son of Man appearing on the clouds of Heaven when He returns in glory is His final sign to mankind, but then it will be too late for those who have rejected His previous signs, and many will mourn when they see this sign- Mt 24:30
- **Application-**

'Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil' (1Thess 5:19-22)

To this we could add 'do not despise signs and wonders' but test everything and hold fast to that which is good- hold fast by drawing closer to Christ, responding to Him.

- See the signs in the earth, but don't be obsessed or complacent- use evangelistically, preach the Gospel.

Summary

- **Miracles are 'signs'**
- **Jesus' life was full of signs**
- **Jesus is still doing signs today**

Song: Water You turned into wine

The Kingdom of God part 6

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 19th Aug 2012

Intro-

- In part 1 spoke about the kingdom of God becoming the greatest of all Kingdoms.
- In part 2 spoke on the meaning of 'Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand'.
- In part 3 spoke on deliverance being part of God's kingdom coming.
- In part 4 we looked at the Kingdom of God coming through the ministry of healing.
- In part 5 we spoke about signs and wonders being pointers to Jesus as king.
- Today we will look at another aspect of God's Kingdom coming- Good News being preached to the Poor.

Read Lk 4:16-21 (our passage today); **Lk 6:20; Lk 7:19-23** (see also Is 61:1-2a Matt 5:1 Matt 11:2-6)

Jesus was anointed for a purpose- v18 'To preach the gospel...'

- Jesus quotes here from Isaiah 61:1-2 which was known to be a Messianic prophecy and He also adds a bit from Is 42:7 as it is related (it speaks about opening blind eyes and also leasing prisoners). Rabbis would sometimes string related texts together from the Old Testament- this was called a 'String of Pearls' and it is a technique Paul uses in Romans 3 verses 10-18 where he strings together similar themed texts from Scripture to show that we are all sinners.
- What Jesus is doing here is giving His mission statement from scripture and stating that He is fulfilling it and that He is the King that Isaiah predicted- the Messiah.
- If we look at the passage in Isaiah we see it predicts one who is anointed- this is the Messiah- it means 'Anointed One'. Anointing speaks of a king- they used to anoint a king with oil- hence in 1Sam both Saul and David were anointed by Samuel. Sometimes the king was not referred to as king, but simply 'the anointed one'- David called Saul 'The Lord's anointed'. The word 'anointed one' in Hebrew is 'Mashiach' ('Messiah') and in Greek is 'Khristos' ('Christ'). When we say 'Jesus Christ' we are really saying that we believe Jesus is the King that God promised to send through the hundreds of prophecies in scripture.
- Jesus could have just come to the Earth and enjoyed the anointing of God, basking in the glory of the Holy Spirit, but it says here that He was anointed for a purpose. It is right to enjoy God's presence and to love being filled with the Holy Spirit, but if that is all that happens then we are not allowing the Kingdom of God to come in the fullest sense. We are filled for a purpose- we are filled to spill- to reach others for Christ.
- The purpose of Jesus' anointing is stated here- His mission is to preach the gospel to the poor. The word 'gospel' means 'good news'.

Barnes notes- To preach the gospel to the poor - The English word "gospel" is derived from two words - "God" or "good," and "spell," an old Saxon word meaning "history, relation, narration, word, or speech," and the word therefore means "a good communication" or "message." This corresponds exactly with the meaning of the Greek word - "a good or joyful message - glad tidings."

- The Septuagint (Ancient Greek version of the Old Testament) translated the word used in Isaiah 61 for 'preach the gospel' (*בָשֵׁר bâš'ar*) as *Εὐαγγελίσασθαι* (*Euangelisasthai*) – this literally is 'to evangelize'. Put simply Jesus' mission statement was to evangelise. Jesus is the master evangelist and He left the splendour of heaven to evangelise the earth- to spread the Good News. God's Kingdom comes when the gospel is preached. - Jesus came to herald this good news, bringing God's rule and reign to earth through the gospel and we continue

today by preaching the gospel. The message is that to those waiting in captivity a stronger King has come and beaten the oppressing Kingdom holding them- they are free to go home. It is like listening to Churchill announcing the end of the war on the wireless. In ancient times a herald would bring this good news and how welcome it would be. We are the heralds and we bring the message that King Jesus has overthrown the enemy on our behalf. As a herald, have a look at your feet and tell yourself that they are beautiful!

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7)

for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Rom 10:13-15)

and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. (Ephesians 6:15)

He said to them, "Go into all the world, and preach the Good News to the whole creation (Mark 16:15)

- If this is the mission of the King, then when His Kingdom comes we should expect that people hear the gospel is preached. Although Jesus did many signs and wonders, cast out demons and healed many He always taught people God's truth as He did so. At times Christians go out and pray for the sick and see them healed but don't fully give a gospel message or show people what they must do to be saved. We are not to be shy or weary of preaching the gospel.
- **Application-** when was the last time that you preached the gospel to someone? Have you practised what are the main points to cover when preaching the gospel?

Jesus came for the poor- v18 'To preach the gospel to the poor'

- Surely this is a bit of a shocking thing to say, that Jesus came for the poor, but here it is plainly stated that He had Good News for the poor, so the key question becomes what does this verse mean by poor? Does God not also love the rich?
- To find out we need to go back to Isaiah where Jesus was quoting from. In Isaiah 61:1 the Hebrew word for poor is עֲנָוָן anav. This word can be translated poor, afflicted, humble, meek, depressed (figuratively), in mind (gentle) or circumstances (needy, especially saintly) - lowly. Most of the time however it is translated as '**humble**'. It is the word used to describe Moses in Numbers 12:3- Moses was very humble,(anav) more than any.

Is 66:2 gives us the meaning:

Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble (anav) and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word. (Is 66:2)

- A Jewish person would have this understanding of the word 'poor' in this context- it means one who is humble before God- one who recognises that they are spiritually bankrupt without God's help. One who is desperate to hear God's good news. It is to these hungry people that Jesus is drawn- that is why in the beatitudes Jesus starts by saying 'blessed are the poor for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven'. Matthew provides the context by explaining what type of poor person is in mind- the 'poor in Spirit' i.e. the humble that Isaiah referred to.
- What Jesus is saying is that we are blessed when we choose to surrender to God. This can happen to someone who is really proud, or anti-God- suddenly they get a revelation of their need of Him- as the Apostle Paul did. He described himself

formerly as an arrogant man (1Tim 1:13) but He encountered God and realised his need of God's grace. It can be an encounter with God, or being made aware of His Word (which James 1:23-24 says is a mirror showing us what we are really like). God's holiness is seen in His Law (e.g. the 10 commandments) and making people aware of God's law can lead to an awareness of sin:

...I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." (Rom 7:7)

...through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Rom 3:20)

So then, the law was our guardian (schoolmaster/tutor) until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. (Gal 3:24)

- Paul begins his letter to the Romans by making both Jews and Gentiles aware that God is angry with sin and will bring all sins into judgement on the day of judgement. Only after he has made all aware that they are sinners does he bring out the cure-Christ's sacrifice for us. Sometimes we are too quick to tell people about God's love without any mention of God's justice and it can leave people indifferent to God as they don't see any need for Christ's sacrifice of love on their behalf.
- Through our prayers and through the preaching of the Word God will, by His Spirit, bring conviction of sin and reveal the need for God's mercy. Conviction can only come through the Spirit (John 16:8-11), but the Spirit will use our words to bring conviction to people as we share what the Bible says. I find that making people aware that God is all-knowing, all-seeing and that there is no sin He will overlook, and there is a day of judgement coming where we will all have to give account is very useful for helping people see their need for a saviour. Also the reality of eternity in Heaven or Hell makes people wake up to the importance of the message and the wonderful gift of life and forgiveness through the cross.
- Often though it is the materially poor who already realise their desperate need of the grace of God and the materially rich who are apathetic about God. Hence Jesus said 'how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God'. It is hard Jesus said but all things are possible with God. The rich are at a disadvantage as they can have a tendency to being comfortable and putting their trust in their wealth rather than God. Hence Jesus teaching that you cannot serve both God and money- you will love one and hate the other. In fact a huge percentage of the teaching of Jesus was dedicated to warning people about the dangers of living for money. We live in one of the richest countries on the planet, even though we are going through a financial crisis. We too need to show people the foolishness of living for money rather than living for God.
- **Application-** Dr Michael Brown (who was greatly used at the Pensacola revival where many came under the conviction of sin when Steve Hill preached) wrote a book 'It's time to Rock the Boat' where he accused the Church today in the West of preaching an 'easy-believism' Gospel which has no teeth. Does the gospel you preach have teeth? Have you ever had a discussion with someone about Hell/the day of Judgement?
- The Hebrew word for 'poor/humble' also means 'afflicted'. In times of revival there are reports of people coming under extreme conviction of sin, like they are being dangled over the fames of Hell. When I was in Pensacola people were wailing over their sin and running to the front to get saved. Are we complacent about our own sin? Have we become comfortable ourselves? Has money or have the creature comforts of the West (TV, computer, clothes, house, holidays, car, garden etc.) made us apathetic towards a true zeal for God or towards preaching the gospel?

Jesus came to proclaim Jubilee- v19 'To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD'

- 'The acceptable year of the Lord' in verse 19 reminds us of the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:8-55). This was at the end of 7 cycles of 7 years=49 years. Therefore in the 50th year there was to be a special celebration. Its climax was the great Day of Atonement. This was marked by the blowing of trumpets (a ram's horn, shofar).
- In fact our word 'jubilee' comes from this occasion. The Jewish word is 'yobel' which in turn derives from yobhel, meaning 'ram'.
- Debts were cancelled and all Hebrew slaves were set free and all land returned to its original owner or owner's family. This was a divine protection over the people of Israel so that poverty would be eradicated. After being slaves for so long in Egypt and then under Joshua moving into the promised land each family was allotted a portion of land. Every adult male among them became a land owner. This land was a permanent possession that could never depart from his family. If a man became poor he could sell part or all of his land, but only temporarily. It would always revert to him or his descendants at the year of jubilee. Also if he had to sell himself to another as a slave in order to pay off his debts he had to be released in the year of jubilee. God announced through Isaiah that when the Messiah comes it is like the year of Jubilee.
- God's social security system for Israel was aimed at eradicating poverty. It says in Deut 15:4 'There should be no poor among you'. However, Israel didn't keep to what God had said and this was one of the reasons for the captivity. As Isaiah says:

Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah! "The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?" says the Lord. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. (Is 1:10-17)

"Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the house of Jacob their sins. For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them. 'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?' "Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter —when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. (Is 58:1-10)

- God doesn't prefer the poor (He shows no favouritism)- but He stands up for them and fights their cause and He hates injustice and lack of fair-play in the world. He loves us all equally, and that is why when any of us suffers in any way- be it material poverty, exploitation, abuse of any kind, discrimination, stigma, denial of education, homelessness, addiction God takes notice. If He even cares about sparrows, how much more is He going to take up the cause of the poor and the oppressed? Although the gospel is for all, those that are suffering in this world are particularly on God's heart and they should also be on ours.
- When God's Kingdom comes justice happens- the King sorts out injustice.

- Jesus could have come and demanded that we serve Him, however He deliberately chose to come to this earth differently, as our servant. He came relating to the poor and oppressed, He was intentionally incarnational in His approach in order to get through to those who were poor and oppressed.
- Jesus left the riches and glory of Heaven to come to earth. He could have chosen the perfect body but Isaiah says 'He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him'. He could have been born in a palace, but He was born in an animal's feeding trough. Jesus chose to be born into a poor family- His parents could only afford the poor people's sacrifice of a turtle-dove at Mary's purification. He was described by Isaiah (Is 53) as being a tender plant growing out of dry ground (i.e. His background was poor and impoverished). He grew up in Nazareth- a despised place. He left His work to preach the gospel and had no place to lay his head (Luke 9:57-58). He ate only due to the hospitality of others and what people gave to Him. He had no possessions except His clothes. Despite living in poverty He had a purse kept by Judas to raise funds for the poor. He challenged the rich young ruler to sell all He had and follow Him because Jesus lived on nothing. His disciples had also left everything they had to follow Him. He advocated people selling their possessions and giving to the poor to develop purses in Heaven. How is our purse in Heaven doing? This scripture sums up how Christ lived:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. (2 Corinthians 8:9)

- Jesus hung out with the dregs of society and got a name for it- 'friend of sinners'. He hung out with tax collectors, lepers, prostitutes, beggars, Samaritans, uneducated fishermen.
- How 'incarnational' are we willing to be to reach the lost? Are we willing to identify with the poor?
- Our understanding of God's grace to us will reflect in how gracious we are to others. The early Church really grasped just how much Christ had given up to make them rich and so naturally they became gracious to one another. The result was that they fulfilled God's Kingdom intentions for Israel in Deut 15:4 that 'There should be no poor among you'. Luke it is thought deliberately uses this terminology when he says in Acts 4:34 that when they shared their possessions 'nor was there anyone among them who lacked'. The grace and kindness of Christ had achieved what Law could not.
- Our view of the Kingdom will reflect our actions- if we believe that Christ has just come to bring justice to the oppressed but believe all will be saved anyway because God is love then we will never preach the gospel. If we believe that Christ has come to save the lost but is not that concerned about their physical welfare or needs then we will preach the gospel but be uncaring about people's needs. Liberal theology and Evangelical theology have dominated these two extremes at times. At times Evangelical Christians have shied away from the 'Social' Gospel as they see such a compromise in message that the Liberals have brought. However we need to be like Jesus and the early Church- firing on all cylinders- preaching the Gospel AND caring for the poor and afflicted- this the Kingdom coming to earth. In Heaven there is no poverty and we need to bring that aspect of God's reign and Justice here to Earth.
- As we look to have our first building let's make sure that we use it along with our other possessions to God's glory, and we can do no better than using it to reach out to the poor. We need wisdom as we do this as we live in a culture dependant on benefits and so many people are not able to manage the little money they have wisely, hence debt builds up. Handouts are not always the answer (they sometimes

are though) but helping people find work and restoring dignity are important. Teaching lifeskills etc. can be very helpful. For that reason CAP money handling and CAP centre would be a great use of the building as well as a place people can come for all sorts of counsel and referral for help with life-issues.

George Müller (1805-1898) had heard that Bristol had very poor sanitation, and soon after Müller arrived, the city was devastated by an epidemic of cholera, and many hundreds of people died. He visited the sick people, trusting God to keep him from catching the disease. So many people had died that there were hundreds of orphans with no-one to care for them; many were reduced to begging in the streets. George Müller wanted to do something to help, and it was this that started his life's work for God. Through the power of prayer, together with action George made a difference. He never once asked anyone for money, but brought his prayer requests to God, and saw answers. In his life he cared for 10,024 orphans. He was well-known for providing an education to the children under his care, to the point where he was accused of raising the poor above their natural station in life. He also established 117 schools which offered Christian education to over 120,000 children, many of them being orphans.

John Wesley. (1703 – 1791 used in the Methodist revival). During his years at Oxford, Wesley was known to give the bulk of the stipend he received from home to the poor. As the leader of the Holy Club, he devoted much of his time and resources visiting and providing for the needs of the imprisoned and poor people of Oxford. He gave away so much of his small income that Wesley's mother, Susanna, was known to have expressed concern for his health and well-being. She was concerned that John was not eating enough because he was giving his money away.

Wesley lived all of his life on the annual sum of £29. Even when his earnings increased substantially in later years, he always gave the balance to the poor.He knew the gospel of grace could not be received in the midst of such hopelessness. Therefore, Wesley resolved, in the interest of grace, to remove the barriers erected by the world to the hearing and receiving of God's saving Word. Along with collecting food, clothing, fuel, and medicine for the poor, Wesley was among the first to provide them with the means for lifting themselves out of poverty.

First, he established access to free health care. Wesley offered free medicines, modern treatments for various ailments, and information on home remedies to people who otherwise would have no access to medical care or were easy prey for quacks.

Secondly, Wesley developed a system for assisting people in finding jobs. If he could not find employment for someone, Wesley would create work for them.

Third, Wesley created a sort of credit union designed to help the poor out of debt. People could obtain money interest free for three months to pay off creditors who were known to charge exorbitant interest rates. The interest free loan could then be repaid as the borrower was able; thus keeping many breadwinners out of debtor's prison. The loan fund helped people out from under the burden of debt and the threat of prison while the employment service helped the same person secure the means for repaying the loan while providing for their family's needs.

In addition to these self-help services, Wesley also provided educational assistance by teaching people to read and write; thus increasing their likelihood of achieving self-sufficiency.

However, Wesley's most important contribution to improving the life of the poor in England is the effect he had in helping to change attitudes toward poverty and the poor. Wesley's greatest contribution was his demystification of wealth. He helped debunk the notion that the poor were poor because they were lazy and dishonest. The common belief among the middle and upper classes and the poor themselves was that the poor deserved to be poor. Wealth was a sign of divine favor and poverty was a sign of divine disfavor. Through preaching and advocacy, Wesley helped to soften the hearted-hearted and dispel the prejudice of the day:

Is it not worse for one after an hard day's labour to come back to a poor, cold, dirty, uncomfortable lodging, and to find there not even the food which is needful to repair his wasted strength? You that live at ease in the earth, that want nothing but eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand how well God has dealt with you—is it not worse to seek bread day by day, and find none? Perhaps to find the comfort also of five or six children, crying for what he has not to give. Were it not that he is restrained by an unseen hand, would he not soon 'curse God and die'? O want of bread! Want of bread! Who can tell what this means unless he hath felt it himself? I am astonished it occasions no more than heaviness even in them that believe!

Therefore, John Wesley's ministry was entirely with and for the poor. He saw solidarity with the poor as solidarity with God in Jesus Christ..... Wesley's ministry with the poor was also aimed at the comfortable middle and upper classes who were, he hoped, made to feel uncomfortable by his preaching and witness.

At Wesley's death in 1791, the Methodist movement in England had become predominantly a middle-class endeavor. The movement that started among the poor and oppressed helped to lift many out of poverty. However, once free from the slums, the former poor adapted many of the same middle class attitudes that contributed their former suffering. Many turned their backs on their poor sisters and brothers. Wesley

lamented this fact in a later sermon written after he had traveled the circuit of Methodist societies across England....In it he offers a stinging critique of the Methodist's growing neglect of their heritage:

O ye that have riches in possessions, once more hear the word of the Lord! Ye that are rich in this world, that have food to eat and raiment to put on, and something over, are you clear of the curse of loving the world? Are you clear from the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life? Do you "put a knife to your throat" when you sit down to meat, lest your "table should be a snare to you"? Is not your belly your god? Do not you seek happiness in dress, furniture, pictures, gardens, or anything else that pleases the eye? Do not you grow soft and delicate, unable to bear cold, heat, the wind or the rain as you did when you were poor? Are you not increasing in goods, laying up treasures on earth, instead of restoring to God in the poor, not so much or so much, but all that you can spare? Surely, "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven."!

- One billion children—one out of every two in the world—live in poverty. One hundred and twenty-five million infants who die each week, most from easily-preventable causes. 640 million live without adequate shelter. 400 million have no safe water. 25,000 die every day of hunger and hunger-related causes—one person every 3 ½ seconds, most are children.
- Band Aid, when 1 film shown of children starving to death everyone suddenly realised what it was all about and shut their mouths and wept. The gospel is good news to the poor (Is 61:1) and that includes the materially poor, not just the comfortable middle-classes. Jesus said when we do something for the least of His children we do it for Him, and that in the great judgement the mercy we have shown in this life will determine our eternal destiny (Matt 25:31-46).

Tony Campolo has once said 'It would be good for you to have a child you sponsored standing up for you on the day of judgement'. We know we are not saved by works, but as James points out- faith is accompanied by works (James 2:14-26).

I have a dream of a people who minister God's love, help and healing to the lost, poor, sick, forgotten, unloved, bound, abused, and lonely. I dream of a people who speak God's prophetic voice in our community, seeing God's justice established. I dream of a people who feed the hungry and comfort the grieving. A people whose faith is demonstrated by action. A people known as generous, and giving. I dream of a people who have Jesus' compassion for those who are captives and set them free to serve the Lord.

Half of the least-developed countries are also the least evangelized, leading one observer to note: "The most dominant impression one gains from looking at the world in this way is that the poor are the lost (lost from God's saving work in Christ) and the lost are poor."

- Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? (James 2:5).
- Micah 6:8 says 'He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God'.

Summary

If we want to see God's Kingdom coming we need to continue the work the King came to do:

- **Jesus came to evangelise**
- **Jesus came for the poor in spirit**
- **Jesus came to bring Jubilee**

Song: O Lord the clouds are Gathering/ The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord

The Kingdom of God part 7

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 19th Aug 2012

Intro-

In previous sessions we have spoken about the kingdom of God:

- Being set to become the greatest of all Kingdoms.
- Being 'at hand'.
- Being seen in deliverance, healing, signs and wonders and in Good News being preached to the Poor.
- In this last part, part 7 we will look at the ultimate realisation of the Kingdom- the return of the King! We will look at the answers to four questions- when is the King returning, what are the signs, how is He returning, and why is He returning.

Read Mt 24:1-44

When is the King returning?- 'no one knows'-v36

- Look at 24:3. Jesus' disciples were wanting to know when He was to return. However, they ask not just one question but two or possibly three. When will these things be (i.e. the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem)? What will be the sign of your coming? When will be the end of the age?
- Christians differ on the last 2 questions, but the first question had a fulfilment in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed the temple and we should bear this in mind when we look at Jesus' answers to these 3 questions. It would seem as if the horrific events which happened in AD 70 were an indication of how things will look at the end and so Jesus answers all three questions as if they were one.
- There is something about us as humans in that we are fascinated by the question 'when is the end going to come?'
- Christians and cults through the ages from the early Church onwards have tried to set a date for the end of the world and Christ's return, usually related to the time in which they were living:

In 1890 the Christian Herald (circulating to .25 million people at the time) suggested the year 1900 was the latest possible date for the consummation of the age.

In 1974 Hal Lindsey in 'The Late Great Planet Earth', a book very popular amongst Christians at the time, on page 43 suggested 1988 could be the date Jesus would return.

The Jehovah's Witnesses in 1889 said that 1914 would be the return of Christ. When that didn't happen they, in 1918, said that 1925 would mark the resurrection of the dead. When it didn't happen, in 1968 the return of Christ was predicted as 1975*.

Certain years spark the imagination- turn of the century- such as the year 2000, with the much feared 'Millenium bug'. Lately it is the year 2012 which has concerned many, hence the feature film by the same title.

- So, what does this passage have to tell us about the date Jesus will return, as this is part of the disciples question in 24:3? Jesus replied in 24:36 that no one knows when He will return, not even the angels, only the Father knows. Why did Jesus tell us this? So that we should not try to set a date on it as some have done and failed. We should believe Christ or we are opening ourselves up to error and deception.

What are the signs He is about to return?

- Although Jesus did not give a date as to His return He did however want to answer their question as to what would be the sign of His coming and of the end of the age.

He said there would be a number of signs and we should learn to read them, just like reading the signs in nature to determine the seasons (in v32 summer is known to be close by the sign of the fig tree branches becoming tender and putting forth leaves). If it's important to recognise the season of summer approaching how much more important it is to recognise the end of the world approaching? So what are these signs that Jesus gave?

- **Deception- v4-5, 11, 23-26**
- Jesus tells us this sign to protect us from deception- a bit like a warning about counterfeit money going around/bogus callers/email cons. Once informed you are on the lookout for it.
- False Christs appearing- Matt 24:4-5, 11, 23-26
- Man who went into a meeting and said 'I am God'.
- False prophets, cults, new age, false religions. Increase in counterfeit signs & wonders- Mt 24:24; Rev 13:13-14; Rev 16:13-14; 2Thess 2:9-10- check out the teaching and philosophy behind the healing- not all healing is by God's power- e.g. Spiritualism, acupuncture, rikkeh healing etc.
- Anti ('against', 'opposite', 'in place of') Christs- deny deity and manhood of Christ either subtly or in outright rebellion- 1John 2:18-23; 1John 4:1-6; 2John v7. Empties cross of power if Jesus is not man and God. Antichrists:

Antiochus Epiphanes IV (called himself 'theos epiphantes'='God is manifest' and coins minted as such, but nicknamed by others 'epimanus'='madman'). 1 & 2 Maccabees describes his deeds. He ruled the Selucid Empire of Syria from BC 176-164. After being humiliated and forced to leave Egypt, Antiochus's vengeance was quickly turned upon Jerusalem. He killed over eighty thousand men, women, and children and sold forty thousand into slavery (2 Macc. v. 5-14). He persecuted the Jews and forced Greek culture -outlawed Torah, circumcision, Jewish sacrifice (punishable by death) and desecrated the Temple sacrificing a pig on the altar, turning it into a brothel and a temple to Zeus. This was the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel 8:9-26 (esp. V11-14); 11:21-35- (esp v31). Judas Maccabeus overcame this and won back the temple rededicating it- Hannukah. Antiochus' cruelty can be seen in this quote:

'Throwing them headlong with their infants off of the highest wall in Jerusalem, Antiochus killed two mothers who had circumcised their children in defiance of the law. He also cut out the tongues of a mother's seven sons and after that had each of them roasted alive on a flat iron' (2 Macc. vii. 3-5)

Before Jerusalem and its Temple and inhabitants were destroyed by Titus' army in AD 70 the Christians were warned by an angel and by remembering Christ's words to flee (Mt 24:16) and fled to Pella (in the Decapolis, Galilee). The Romans caused the daily sacrifice to cease and, not in Titus' intentions, an unruly soldier burned the temple.

Bar Kochba ('son of the star' -messianic title from Numbers 24:17 'star shall come out of Jacob') was hailed in a revolt against the Romans in 132-136 AD as the messiah after the failed Jewish revolt against the Romans in AD70. However, he failed and over .5 million Jews were killed and the diaspora became a reality.

The antichrist as a person- Matt 24:15. In 2Thess 2:1-10 'Lawless one/man of sin/son of perdition', goes into God's house and proclaims himself as God. Some see in this the rebuilding of the Jewish temple on the temple mount.

- **Birth Pains/traumatic events in the world- Matt 24:6-8**
- Jesus tells us this sign for us not to be fearful -God has not abandoned the world, and these things don't mean it's the end- however, Jesus is coming soon
- Sarah in labour- huge pains- investigated -hardly dilated 'we don't call these pains, just "tightenings"- Man who stars on B.T adverts during an interview- 'yes I am having a baby soon, when the wife starts screaming'
- 'The end is nigh'- doom and gloomers -Jesus said 'the end is not yet' Mt 24:6. Mt 24:8- beginning of sorrows- word 'sorrows' means 'labour pains.'
- Increase in wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilences (HIV, SARS, MRSA, swine flu, bird flu, B.S.E). Signs in the heavens and on earth -see Lk 21:25-26-'signs in the

heavenlies'- global warming- increase in hurricanes, Katrina, tornadoes Burma Cyclone, 'sea and waves roaring', floods, tsunamis

- The world will get troubled by these signs- Jesus said 'see that you are not troubled'- Mt 24:6. We understand that this world is temporary and passing away for the permanence of Heaven. The curse against us due to sin affected our fabric- earth.
- Final signs- the heavenly bodies will be shaken- Matt 24:29- stars falling etc. Just prior to Christ's return.

- **Worldwide Persecution- v9**

- Jesus tells us this sign for us not to give up our faith when we are persecuted
- All nations will hate you- Matt 24:9. This will result in betrayals v10 and v12 'the love of many will grow cold'- i.e. a falling away of those semi-committed to Christ.
- The characteristic of the anti-Christ will eventually be persecution of the saints- Dan 7:25, Rev 13:7 'It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation'..13:10 'He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.'

CHRISTIANS - THE MOST PERSECUTED PEOPLE GROUP ON EARTH

By Anthony Browne, Europe correspondent of the Times. Rising nationalism and fundamentalism around the world have meant that Christianity is going back to its roots as the religion of the persecuted. There are now more than 300 million Christians who are either threatened with violence or legally discriminated against simply because of their faith — more than any other religion. Christians are no longer, as far as I am aware, thrown to the lions. But from China, North Korea and Malaysia, through India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, they are subjected to legalised discrimination, violence, imprisonment, relocation and forced conversion. Even in supposedly Christian Europe, Christianity has become the most mocked religion, its followers treated with public suspicion and derision. I am no Christian, but rather a godless atheist whose soul doesn't want to be saved, thank you. I may not believe in the man with the white beard, but I do believe that all persecution is wrong. The trouble is that the trendies who normally champion human rights seem to think persecution is fine, so long as it's only against Christians.

- More Christians died for their faith in the twentieth century than at any other time in history, says Christian Solidarity International.

Italian sociologist Massimo Introvigne estimates that there were 105,000 Christian martyrs in 2011, "between 287 and 288 martyrs per day: twelve per hour, or one every five minutes," was a conservative estimate that could be adjusted up or down. Others have estimated that the average number of Christians martyred per year could be very much higher than this, in the region of 130,000-160,000.

- Jesus gives this sign so that we don't give up our faith when we are persecuted, even if it leads to death (as in many nations today).

- **Worldwide Effectiveness of the Gospel-v14**

- Jesus tells us this sign as an incentive for us to share our faith
- **All Nations-v14** This gospel preached in all the world- Matt 24:14; Rev 14:6. With signs and wonders- 2 witnesses Rev 11-Moses & Elijah.

At slightly less than 2 billion, Christianity makes up about a third of the world population and approximately the same as the two next largest religions combined; Islam and Hinduism. Christianity is also the only religion represented in all 238 surveyed countries.

The largest religion (Christianity) is approx. 68% larger than the second largest religion (Islam) and 246% larger than the third largest religion (Hinduism). (Source- Christian World Encyclopedia)

- Rev 7:9- all nations, tribes, peoples, tongues and they have come out of the great tribulation i.e. suffered in the persecution-Rev 7:14.
- Both happen at same time- Church thrives under persecution- just as at start so as at end, only greater- Jesus saved best till last.
- **Israel- 23:39** Israel will recognise Jesus as the Christ- Matt 23:39
- Temple left desolate (23:38) because they didn't recognise Christ. Won't see Christ

until they are ready to receive Him- i.e. Christ will come back (2nd coming) when the Jews are ready to receive Christ.

- Rom 11:15,25-27- their restoration means life from the dead, and the Lord will turn godlessness away from Zion.
- Israel mourning for the one they pierced as for an only son- Zech 12:10-13:2
- Ez 36 and 37- valley of dry bones becomes alive again- revival in Israel.
- Sealing of 12 tribes- Rev 7:4-8 144,000 sealed- 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes- after this saw multitude from every nation- 7:9. Also in Rev 14:1-5 contrasted with Rev 14:6- gospel to every nation. So God remembers the Jews.

• **Application-**

- So these are the signs of the end of the world & return of Jesus: Deception, World-Trauma, Worldwide Persecution, Worldwide Evangelism. However, when we get to glory Jesus isn't going to give us an end-times theology test- He will look at how we have lived. When He explained the end times to His disciples He summarised it with 'be ready', saying He would come as a thief in the night at an unexpected hour.
- A thief is sneaky, comes when can't be seen-
Guy who opened my door in early hours in nurses home at Pen-y-fal, guy who tried to break into social club with pillow, person who stole my bass amp off my back seat catching me unawares as I nipped into nurses home.
Will take the world by surprise (thief in night, Noah, Lot), but should not take Christians by surprise- live as those ready for it.
- 1Thess 5:4 Paul says 'But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.' Paul then goes on to say that because we belong to the light we should live that way, like Christ is about to return (that's how the early church lived, how much more so now!) sober and alert rather than asleep- i.e walk as a Christian.
- However, Paul finishes by saying to put on the 'breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation for God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore, comfort each other and edify one another, just as you are doing.' (1Thess 5:8b-11). Being alert as a Christian includes having an unshakable assurance of salvation- that our salvation does not depend on us but on Christ- we live a life of good works to glorify Christ, but we depend on His good work on the cross rather than on ourselves- this is putting on the helmet of salvation- it is a revelation of the gospel of grace.

How is the King returning?

- **As king-** v30 'with great power and great glory'. Came as a babe in a manger first time, His return will be as the King in glory- hence this is His kingdom coming in its fullness- all the miraculous signs and wonders in the Kingdom of God were just the starters- this is the main course!
- **Publicly-** v27 'as lightening is visible from one end of the heavens to the other'- all to experience it, not secretive- i.e. all will see it. **V31** 'with a great sound of a trumpet'- the loudest sound you will ever hear- loud enough to wake the dead (literally!) 1Thess 4:16- 'The Lord Himself will descend with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.' People in a deep sleep can sleep through thunder storms- this will be louder! Don't be fooled by weird rumours that Jesus has already returned, secretly, 'to the outer heavens'. We don't need to worry about missing it, we will know when it happens- every person in history, the good and bad will be there.
- **Bodily-** v30 'the Son of Man will appear'- son of man means a human being (as well as the title from Daniel about the man whom all nations will worship). He is with us now by His Spirit, but one day He will bodily be with us. 'Coming' in verses 3, 27,

37,39=*Parousia*- the physical presence, especially of a king. We love His Spirit with us now, but one day He will be physically with us! We will not need Spiritual gifts then- 1Cor 13:9-12 we will know Him fully, even as He presently fully knows us- we will be walking with Him as Adam & Eve did in the garden. Jesus was raised physically and ascended physically. There is now a physical person- Jesus, at the right hand of the Father in glory. He will physically descend in the same way He went up (see Acts 1:11)

- Because He was raised physically, so shall we be- a solid resurrected body! Believers who are left on earth when Christ returns will be changed in the blink of an eye into their resurrection bodies-1Cor 15:51-52 . Jesus will bring with Himself all who have died 'in Him' and they will be raised first 1Thess 4:14-18

Why is the King returning?

- **For His people-** v31 'to gather His elect from the four winds'. Jesus is coming back for His bride- becoming a Christian in this life is just the engagement, the wedding is on its way! He is coming to take us to Heaven- John 14:2-3 'In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.'
- **To judge the world-** v30 'all the tribes of the earth will mourn'- what people think they have got away with will be revealed on that day of judgement. A true king brings justice- He will bring justice in punishing those who have rejected Him and mercy to those who have trusted in Him. The results will be Heaven and Hell.
- There will be varying rewards in Heaven for Christians according to how they have walked with the Lord- whilst some have built very deep purses in Heaven, others will have their works burnt up and enter heaven as one being snatched through the flames.
- The defeat of Satan will be fully implemented, sin will be eradicated once and for all. 2Thess 2:8 the lawless one (the Antichrist) will be consumed by the breath of Jesus' mouth (like a candle blown out) and destroyed by the brightness of His coming (like the shadows fleeing when you flick a light on).
- **To renew all things-** v29 'the stars will fall from the heavens'. In Isaiah 65:17 it says "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind". In Rev 21:1 it says 'Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away...' and Rev 21:5 says 'Behold I make all things new'
- "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." Rev 21:4

Summary

As a response to this teaching, let's live this day and every day as if Christ is returning today. Let's place our confidence in His work of salvation for us, but let's not be complacent- let's live our lives so that we are not ashamed at His coming.

In this last part of the series on the Kingdom of God we have answered:

- **When is the King returning?**
- **How is the King returning?**
- **Why is the King returning?**

Song: *There is a day*

*Available on many websites but taken from <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/jehovah.html> which reads: The 1889 issue, "The Time is at Hand," page 101 states, "The battle of the great day of God Almighty (Rev. 16:14), which will end in A.D. 1914, with the complete overthrow of earth's present rulership, is already commenced." This 1914 prediction of Christ's return never came true. Then the *Watch Tower* predicted that Christ would return in 1925. The 1918 issue of, "Millions Now Living Will Never Die," p. 89 states, "Therefore we may confidently expect that 1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the faithful prophets of old, particularly those named by the apostle in Hebrews 11 to the condition of human perfection." This proved to be another false prophecy. The *Watch Tower* made a third prophecy of the return of Christ; this one was to occur in 1975. The August 15, 1968, issue of, *Why Are You Looking Forward to 1975?*, p. 494, predicted the return of Christ in 1975. Once again the Witnesses were shown to be false prophets. If the Witnesses don't believe these articles are real, tell them to look them up in their church's library. Another interesting prophecy is found on page 154 of their book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*. Here they state, "Some of the generation living in 1914 will see the end of the system of things and survive it." Most of the 1914 generation are dead, and the few remaining are very old. In just a few years, the *Watch Tower* will again have another false prophecy. When presented clearly, the record of the *Watch Tower's* false prophecies is a very effective tool in witnessing to Jws.

Some background material for further study/reflection

Why do different Christians interpret the 'signs' Jesus speaks of in Matthew 24 differently?

- Scriptures about the end times pass through our lens of interpretation:
Car treasure hunt- getting clues and thinking you are doing well, but you are seeing what you want to see- each view of end times will see their clues come up due to their lens of interpretation. Car treasure hunts are tricky, as is trying to piece together information about the end times, especially because the book of Revelation is full of symbols- it's tricky, therefore we need grace where other Christians may interpret things differently to us.
- About 4 major schools of thought concerning the End Times and particularly in their interpretation of the book of Revelation (see Winkie Pratney & Barry Chant's book The Return, 1991 Sovereign World). This will, in turn, influence the way Matthew 24 signs are interpreted:
 - **Praeterist**- Latin *praeterie*='to pass/go by'. Praeterists believe the prophecies in Revelation have mainly been fulfilled already & they were written for that time. . 7 Kings of Rev 17= 7 Roman emperors, the harlot is Rome etc. Letters to the 7 churches=just to them. View favoured by scholars of more traditional churches.
 - **Historicist**- Historicists believe the book of Revelation= world history from Christ's first coming to His second coming. Time periods mentioned are interpreted as a day=a year. The letters to the 7 churches= 7 church ages from N.T to now. Need detailed knowledge of history. View popular during reformation. Antichrist seen as the papal system, the little scroll from Rev. 10 seen as the Bible, printed & distributed by the Reformers.
 - **Futurist (dispensationalism)**- Futurists believe God's dealings with mankind through history are divided up into dispensations (periods) of time. The major part of the bk. Revelation fulfilled at the end of the age. Figures for time periods are taken literally rather than day=year. Indefinite period of time between Daniel chapter 9's 69th and 70th year so the final seven years could happen at any time. View especially popular amongst Pentecostals.
 - **Idealist**- Idealists believe the book of Revelation does not refer to specific events but to principles of God's dealing in the life of His people. Events in the book are applicable to all generations and no specialist historical knowledge is necessarily required. This view is popular amongst a number of evangelical scholars.
- The most important aspect of our theology is that we believe in the return of Christ, not that we need to agree on each other's interpretations of the specifics. We need grace to share different opinions without dividing. Also, it is worth a look through other's lenses when we look at the end times to see if we can learn something.
- I don't fit into one camp but have aspects of them all- Praeterist regarding the letters to the Churches in Rev. Historicist in that I do not discount that parts of Revelation may be speaking about later times in history than the early church, but not necessarily always the very end. Futurist in that I think much of Rev speaks into the very last days and share some interpretations about the indefinite gap between the 69th & 70th seven (although I am not pre-trib, and think the trib will be 3.5 years), idealist in that I am amillennial and believe Rev. contains principles for all ages of the Church (although I am not a depressive amillennial- this gospel age is glorious and the gospel will bear fruit in all nations at the same time as persecution in all nations).

What is the immediate context of Matthew 24?

- Although the signs Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24 spoke of the signs of His return they also spoke of events which were about to affect that particular generation.

- Any text taken out of context is a pretext- we need to look at the context of the passage we are studying today and ask what was its context? The context is that Jesus knows that many in Jerusalem are plotting His death. He has just denounced the scribes and Pharisees for being hypocrites and shutting up the kingdom of heaven against men, not going in themselves and hindering others from entering (Mt 23:13). He has just pronounced judgement upon Jerusalem of that time ('this generation'- Mt 23:36) for their rejection of the King who had sent them many prophets in the past in an attempt to gather them like a nurturing hen, but they had killed the messengers and now they were about to kill the king Himself (Mt 23:29-39).
- Therefore Jesus predicts that within that particular generation (i.e. within 40 years) judgement would fall. The judgement would be the opposite of God gathering them like a hen- they were going to be scattered, because they refused to be gathered- 23:37. This hints at the warnings in Deuteronomy 28 about Israel being scattered from the land of Israel due to breaking covenant with God (although, encouragingly, God said in Deuteronomy 30 that He promised to bring them back afterwards when they repented).
- The judgement would also be that their temple would be desolate (23:38). This was literally fulfilled 40 years later in A.D.70 when the temple was sacked by the Romans after a very long and horrific siege where the Romans built a bank around the city and many inside starved to death. The warnings of Jesus to nursing mothers (24:19) became particularly relevant as people starved and there is even an account of a woman eating her child, as the Jewish historian Josephus records (Wars of the Jews, book vii., chap. ii.; see also Deut 28:53; Lev 26:29; 2Kings 6:28; Lam 4:10).
- So, Jesus' words had an initial fulfilment in A.D. 70 and also a short while later (132-136 AD) with the false Messianic figure, Bar Kochba who rallied many but was defeated by the Romans, resulting in the Diaspora, the scattering of the Jews throughout the world.