

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 year 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 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?*