

The Kingdom of God

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- We are going to begin a study of John in August, so until then, we get the freedom to dive a little deeper into other topics that are timely, relevant and important to the church.
- I asked myself, what would be a timely, relevant and important topic to study together? Selfishly, I also get to pick a topic that is extremely timely and relevant to me.

Our main Scripture today is Hebrews 13:12-14.

- You thought we were done with Hebrews.
- Hebrews is so rich and even over 9 months we only skimmed the surface. In our study of Hebrews, we were introduced to the kingdom of God, and chapter 13 concluded with the kingdom of God. And so, today we will get to dive deeper into the subject of the kingdom of God. We will look to Scripture to see what it says about:

1. The Kingdom Promised

2. The Kingdom Inaugurated

3. The Kingdom Advanced

4. The Kingdom to come

- Today, I will present a lot of Scripture and a few words of my own to order the connections.

Hebrews 13:12-14 So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through His own blood. ¹³Therefore let us go to Him outside the camp and bear the reproach He endured. ¹⁴For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

The Big Idea

God has promised an eternal kingdom. God has inaugurated His kingdom through Jesus. God has entrusted His people to advance the kingdom. One day He will bring His kingdom to completion. Therefore, we should prioritize investing our lives into things that will last forever.

- My objective is always to divide the Word and to find applications to challenge us to grow. Today, I hope the Scripture will challenge you to re-consider the priorities of your life.
- I would guess that most of us were probably introduced to the thought or concept of “the kingdom of God” when we learned the Lord’s prayer.
- Matthew 6 starting in verse 9, Jesus is teaching His disciples how to pray saying: “Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name, your **“kingdom come, your will be done,”** on earth as it is in heaven.

So, what is a “kingdom?”

According to the dictionary, a Kingdom is a realm that has a ruler who is sovereign.

- The Bible begins with God exercising absolute sovereign rule over all He made. God alone is King.
- In Genesis 1:27-28 God created man and told him to fill the earth. God delegated His authority to have dominion over the earth.
- God gave man free will and man chose to sin against God’s rule. Satan gained influence and is even described as the “ruler of the world” in John chapter 12 and the “prince of the power of the air” in Ephesians 2. Satan is a created being and never was an equal with God. Scripture never says that Satan was a legitimate king over creation in the same sense God is king.

The Kingdom Promised.

- **Hebrews 1:1** says that God spoke to our fathers by the **prophets**,
- God has always maintained ultimate sovereignty. God has a plan to redeem His people from the consequences of sin and He has a plan to

establish His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. God spoke through the prophet Daniel saying:

Daniel 2:44 And in the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever,

- History has shown the rise and fall of earthly kingdoms in Babylon, Egypt, Rome, the British Empire and the kingdom of America we celebrated last week.
- God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.
- The prophet Daniel describes a vision of the coming of the king.

Daniel 7:13-14 ¹³“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,

- The Son of Man is given dominion over the kingdom.
- God again speaks through Isaiah prophesying of the coming king.

Isaiah 9:6-7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon^[a] his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and **forevermore**. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

- The Messiah's government will have no end.
- In our study of Hebrews chapter 11, “the Great Hall of Faith,” we remember Abraham and his offspring who died in their faith believing that the universe was created by the word and believed in the promised kingdom.

Hebrews 11:9-10 ⁹By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

- Abraham looked for a kingdom whose builder is God.

Hebrews 11:39 ³⁹And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

- They are heroes of the faith and examples to us for they never stopped believing, they passed on their faith to the next generation and they died in their faith, believing in the promise of God.

As declared in Hebrews 1, God spoke to our fathers through the prophets foretelling a promised kingdom and coming king.

The Kingdom is Inaugurated

The kingdom arrived because the King arrived.

- We see in Luke the birth of our Savior.

Luke 1:31-33 The angel Gabriel spoke to Mary saying, “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and **he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.**”

- Following Jesus’ baptism and temptation in the wilderness, He announces His ministry saying:

Mark 1:14-15 Now after John, (*John the Baptist*) was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom of God is at hand**; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Later in Jesus's ministry, **Luke 17:20-21** (Jesus) Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, ²¹ nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' **for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.**"

- The king and the kingdom of God is in our midst.
- Our King came in flesh and blood so He can relate to our position. According to the sacrificial system given by God to Moses, requiring a life to atone for our sin, our King suffered and died outside the camp and rose three days later overcoming death.

Hebrews 2:14-15 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

- We have good news! Our King has come and the power of death has been defeated!

Hebrews 12:28 THEREFORE, let us be grateful for **receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken**, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

- Paul and Timothy encourage the Colossians telling them:

Colossians 1:13-14 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and **transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son**, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

- Believers in Christ, you and me, have "ALREADY" been redeemed, death has been defeated, our sins forgiven, and we have been transferred to His kingdom.

The Kingdom is inaugurated, we are kingdom citizens

It is now time for The Kingdom to be Advanced.

- This is where we live. We live in the “**Already**” – but “**Not Yet**” church age.
- Jesus’ work is completed, He is seated at the right hand of God and He is our high priest. Our sins are forgiven, death is defeated, and the Spirit and the power of the living God resides in us.
- But we also live in the “**Not yet**” – Sin remains, suffering and physical death remain and Christ is preparing His Kingdom that is Yet to come..
- We are invited by God to participate with Him, to join Him, in His Kingdom work.

What does it look like to participate with Him in advancing His Kingdom?

- This is where we will focus our study today. This is where we as Christians are called to live our life.
- In Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, He addresses all the things that captivate our hearts and minds causing striving and anxiety. He addresses our physical needs in what we eat, drink and clothes we wear and tells us “your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

- So, put away the anxiety, resist the temptation to put all your efforts into striving after the things of the world. 2X “Resist the temptation to put all your efforts into striving after the things of the world.”
- There are too many things that I could list to illustrate advancing the kingdom. I will present to you the four things that, I believe, form the foundation for all kingdom advancing actions and can help direct the priorities for my life and yours.

Number 1: Seek first the King. Seek first His righteousness. And you will discover His Kingdom.

- Exchange the anxiety from striving for material things for Jesus. Seek first the King and His righteousness.
- Meditate on the Scripture and let God’s word influence EVERY area of your life.

Number 2: After Jesus washes the feet of His disciples, He gives them the next instruction to participate with Him to build the Kingdom.

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

- Matthew records Jesus giving a similar instruction to a Pharisee seeking to trap Him in a question:

Matthew 22: 37-40 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

- The second thing we can do to participate with Jesus in advancing His Kingdom is to: love one another.
- Seek first the King and love one another.
- We could stop here as this would encompass the many characteristics of what it looks like to build the kingdom, but I will add a couple other specific instructions we are given to participate with Him to advance the Kingdom.
- Let’s look at the last command that Jesus gave to His disciples:

Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^[b] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- What does it mean to make disciples? What is a disciple? The word disciple means followers and learners.

- Discipleship starts with **evangelism**. Each of us are uniquely created and gifted by God. We are citizens of the kingdom and should be distinctively different from those who do not know Christ and His righteousness. As we live our lives in community with family, friends, neighbors and co-workers we should exercise our gifts.
- If you enjoy serving others, then serve. If you are gifted at leading others then lead. If you are gifted at administration then use your gifts. If you are funny or serious, a teacher or a student, a salesperson, engineer, accountant or operations person use your gifts to the best of your ability. In whatever way you express your God-given gifts, tell your story. Declare the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light and recruit souls to the Kingdom.
- The text goes on to say we are to teach them to observe and follow the life that Jesus taught His disciples.
- **Number 3:** Make Disciples. Tell your kids, tell your friends, tell your community and tell your co-workers about our King. Teach them to seek first the King, to study His word, to follow His teaching, pursue His righteousness, and they will discover the King and His Kingdom.

Number 4: Let me take you back to the second part of Hebrews 12:28.

Hebrews 12:28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, **and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.**

- We have a kingdom that cannot be shaken.
- Jesus' work is completed, He is seated at the right hand of God and is our high priest. Our sins are forgiven, death is defeated, and the Spirit and the power of the living God resides in us.
- What is the natural response to the grace we have been given in the Already?

We worship with reverence and awe. There are many acceptable ways to worship God. In my last two messages we covered 8 characteristics of what it looks like to worship with reverence and awe from our Scripture.

1. Let us worship by loving one another

2. Let us worship Him by honoring our marriage.
3. Let us express our worship by putting our faith and trust in God, keeping our lives free from the love of money and material things.
4. We worship Him by imitating the faith of those who spoke the Word of God to us.
5. We worship Him by resisting false teaching.
6. We worship Him by “Going to Him.” Count the cost and gaining Christ.
7. We will worship Him with the fruit of our lips
8. We worship Him by “doing good to others.”

So, what does it look like to participate with Jesus to advance His kingdom?

1. Seek the King first.
 2. Love one another.
 3. Make Disciples.
 4. Worship the King.
- I am a list guy. Nearly every day, I re-write my list and get great pleasure by crossing tasks off the list. I often look at my list and write a separate list entitled. “WRM.” What Really Matters. I think this is a What Really Matters List. This is a list that will still matter in a thousand years.
 - Not an exhaustive list, but I think it is a good foundation to join in the work He is doing to **Advance His Kingdom.**

The Kingdom to Come.

Believers in Christ are already citizens of the kingdom.

Philippians 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself.

Colossians 3:1-4 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²**Set your minds on things that are above**, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in

God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

- We are kingdom citizens.
- So set your minds on things above. On “kingdom things.” Things that will matter in a thousand years.
- Christ will return and He will establish His Kingdom forever. Jesus tells His disciples:

John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again** and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

- Julie and I took the Perspectives class. It is a really good class that I would encourage all of you to take. It is a class to inform, instruct and invite you to participate in world missions. One of the verses they cite to motivate Christians to proclaim the gospel to the nations is Matthew 24:14.

Matthew 24:14 ¹⁴And this **gospel of the kingdom** will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and **then the end will come**.

- Towards the end of John's life, he receives a vision of the end and coming Kingdom. He describes 7 trumpets of judgment. The final trumpet announces the final coming of the King to rule and reign over His Kingdom forever.

Revelation 11:15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”

- Following the final judgment at the throne of God, John describes the coming kingdom.

Revelation 21:1-5 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

- Like the bridegroom that goes to prepare a home to receive his bride, so Jesus is preparing a place and at the time appointed by the Father will come for His bride.
- He will return to dwell with the saints, He will return to make all things new, there will be no more sickness, pain, suffering and death and He will rule and reign forever.
- “For these words are trustworthy and true.

The Kingdom of God

- 1. The Kingdom was promised to the prophets**
- 2. The Kingdom Inaugurated with Jesus**
- 3. The Kingdom is advanced under His authority through His church**
- 4. The King is coming to rule and reign forever.**

We are not waiting for heaven to come but we are living as citizens of an unshakeable kingdom investing our time, our talent, and our treasure in things that will last forever.

Do you ever read Francis Chan? He has a way of asking questions that penetrate your heart. I pulled a few questions related to the kingdom to consider. Let me start by reading Francis' contrast of worldly living and kingdom living.

"You feel trapped in meaningless routine and everything in you knows you were created for more. Life might be fun and relationships might be good, but you know something deeper is missing. You sense that you were created for more. You want to experience a deeper communion with God where the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit is flowing thorough you undeniably. You want to touch God rather than merely talk about Him. You long for a knowledge of God that goes beyond your intellect, the kind of deep knowledge that only comes from experience. This happens only when you are on His mission. His love and power flow through you to others as you seek to bring them into His kingdom. There is nothing like it, and there's no other way to get it."

– Francis Chan

Questions to contemplate:

- Do you recognize the foolishness of seeking fulfillment outside of Him?
– Things of the world will never fully satisfy our flesh.
- If God's kingdom came more fully through my life or your life, what would have to change first? – Are you "distinctively" different?

"Do you really believe that what you believe is really real" - *The Truth Project* – Del Tackett

- Our actions reveal what we actually believe to be real.
- Your actions are the most reliable indicator of what you believe to be really real.
- Am I advancing the kingdom, or merely “coasting” through Christianity?
- Who am I actively calling to submit to the King? And Francis Chan challenges us saying, “You should sit down with your spouse tonight and figure out how to structure your lives around the command to make disciples. This command should dictate everything about your life: where you live, where you work, where you spend your money, how you spend your time – everything!”
- Is my church, IS VCC, functioning as an outpost of the kingdom, or as a comfortable religious setting?
- We are called to advance the kingdom.

What does advancing the Kingdom mean to me?

I am currently at a transition in my life. I have raised my children, they are living independent lives in NY, Alabama and Colorado. My sister and her family have moved to Dallas. My grandparents have passed away. My father has passed away, and my mother has moved to Dallas. I have sold my business. I have become a grandfather. Naturally, people ask me what is next?

I have given it considerable thought and prayer, and my answer has been generally to join others to build the kingdom. To join a ministry that the Holy Spirit is clearly blessing and working to advance the kingdom.

This message is timely and very relevant to me, and I hope that it is to you also. As I contemplated what it looks like to participate in building the kingdom in my life, I return to the same verse I have referenced in my previous messages during our study in Hebrews and is the verse I was challenged to conform my life to a few years ago by my friend Steve Woodrow and is one I that is often on my mind and I cannot escape.

Philippians 3:10 (Answering the question what it looks like to **gain Christ**).....¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death,

So, as we conclude our study today and as I consider my own mission, what now does advancing the Kingdom look like to me?

- To seek first the King and His righteousness, to love and serve other people, to make disciples, to worship Him and know Him and the power of His resurrection, that I would be sanctified through hardship, that I would die to self-interest, and live out the life He has given me confident of God's work in me and satisfied in Him alone.

A kingdom is a realm that has a ruler or king who is sovereign.

- Are there areas in your life you have not surrendered to the King?
- Is the King of Kings ruling and reigning over every area of your being?
- Are there areas in your life where you are still sitting on the throne?
- What does following Christ and advancing the kingdom look like in your life?
- I am 100% convinced and I am telling you that you will never be completely satisfied until you submit 100% to the King.
- The King has come so that you might have life and have it more abundantly, far more abundantly than we can ask or think.
- This is not the prosperity gospel. The times I have been most satisfied have been the times I have the least material things. But I was fully living in obedience to my calling.
- This is where I hope to spend the 4th quarter of my life.