

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

Week 1 - Day 1: The Kingdom Family

I still remember one of the songs we used to sing in kids' church growing up--"King of Kings and Lord of Lords; Glory..*clap*..hallelujah!" This was one of those songs that would go faster and faster until we kids would fall in a heap, giggling and laughing at how silly it all was. Looking back, I think I took two things away from those kinds of songs...(1) it should be FUN to be in church and (2) sometimes we don't pay attention to the words; only to the fun.

I wonder if that's true of us as adults today--do we pay attention to the words? Even if the words are *work* to understand? Are we into following Jesus if it's fun, but we get out once it is work? This week, and indeed all small group season, we are going to be digging in to some WORDS. That means some specific words (like kingdom), some sections of Scripture (sampling from the whole of the Bible), and some words here on the page in our readers. Let me encourage you to keep with it--these readers are just designed to help illuminate the truth in the Word of God, so if you skip our writing to focus on the Bible, that's the main thing!

But I do hope our words help illuminate the Word, and this word "Kingdom" might need some unpacking. We're using that term here in basically the same way that children's song above does--**to show that Jesus is Lord**. That means He rules, He reigns, He is the authority, and He is worthy of glory and worship. The term doesn't imply a system of government, whether within or outside of the church. Jesus is still King even though we don't have a king today. He was still King even when David sat on the throne of Israel, and He was still King even when Moses was wandering, nation-less, in the wilderness.

I love Jesus' Kingship because he treats the Kingdom like a family. We're not subjects to do his bidding and finish His tasks; we are co-heirs! Look at how God explains this to Abraham, the very first time the seeds of Kingdom were planted:

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Here, that word we translate "nation" and that word we translate "family" are almost two sides of the same coin: God promises to build a people centered around relationship with Him, where He serves as ruler and king. And, through that relationship with Abraham's nation, all the families of the earth will be blessed. That relationship with God filters out through Abraham and his descendents into relationship with the whole world!

This is what kingdom means: God's rule, in God's place, over God's family of people.¹

For Abraham, that meant faith and starting a family. For Moses, it meant trusting God to liberate him and his people from slavery in Egypt. In Moses' time, it was hard to see God as king when Pharaoh was the one on the physical throne, but God set them free and called them out as a special people:

Exodus 19:5-6 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

Here, God moves the language from family into that of the kingdom, but I think He still means the same thing. He's talking about a people for whom relationship with God is at the center. There's still a movement from relationship with God for one's own sake to that of a mission in the world. The priesthood is one designed to take that knowledge of God and spread it to all the world. This is why we see the gospel mission in Acts 1:8 encompassing not only Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, those lands that the nation-state of Israel sat on, but also the ends of the earth! There's a movement from local to global, from personal to family, and from the Kingdom of Earth to the Kingdom of Heaven!

That's what this series is all about: how can we take the definition of Kingdom (God's rule, in God's place, over God's family of people) and help make that true of our world today? How can we make God's Place *every place*? How can we make God's people *all people*? How can we share the Good news that Jesus is Lord *with everyone*? How can we, as the Lord's Prayer states, bring His Kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven?

In part, that's up to us! We are His ambassadors, called to live out a changed life and bring His peace and His presence here. Where we are, God's people are. Where we are, God's place is! Where we are, God's rule should be! How can you be an ambassador for Him this week? Can you move into a space where God and His mercy is needed? Can you speak to a situation where God and His peace is needed? Can you submit to something in your own life where Jesus and His Lordship is needed? What is He calling you to do to bring His Kingdom as a part of His family? May you do that with boldness and grace this week!

-Buz Hannon

Share the Gospel: God's kingdom can be defined as God's rule in God's space over God's family of people! As part of God's kingdom, we are his priestly ambassadors called to make God's place every place and God's people all people by sharing the good news that Jesus is Lord!

¹ Patrick Schreiner, *The Kingdom of God and the Glory of the Cross*, Short Studies in Biblical Theology (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 18-20,

Personal Observations, Reflections, and Prayers: