

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Week 6 - Day 4: Our King Triumphs

Doesn't death seem so final? With death, there is no more movement, words, wisdom, fun, affection, you fill in the blank. But if we look at those in our life who have died, does their story end there? There's got to be more, right?

I still remember the stories of the people in my life who have died. My grandpa Roger tried to show his grandkids how to do a two-person somersault. My Grandad would wash the ice off of a popsicle and sit with me on the front porch, My grandma would tell me how she used to do her chores when she lived on the farm. While they are gone, they are not forgotten. Their story will live on as long as people share it.

The death of Jesus on the cross must have seemed so final in the eyes of His followers. They probably asked how can the one who claimed to be the promised messianic king die? Didn't he claim to be God? Was he lying to us or maybe even crazy?

It turns out that Jesus' impact was only *magnified* after his death but not only through stories.

Through the Bible, not only are we lucky enough to see the story of Jesus' life on earth as the all-powerful king over all things and his humble death on a cross, but we also get to hear from those who witnessed His resurrection!

Luke 24:1-8 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " Then they remembered his words.

Jesus knew that he had to pay the ultimate price for salvation to break his family away from the bondage of sin. This would cost the King of Kings his own life. After he was buried, some of the followers went back to his tomb hoping to finish preparations for the body of Christ per their customs of the time. When they got there, something was different. Jesus was not there! Not only was Jesus not there but His followers were reminded that Jesus Himself told them the events that would happen including Him rising from death into life.

You might be skeptical about a real human being claiming to be God and raising from the grave. Is it necessary to believe in a resurrection to believe in the gospel of Jesus?

Yes! If the consequence of sin is death and Jesus remained dead, then it shows that sin and death reign above Jesus. It was all for nothing because Jesus, like the rest of the Old Testament saints, could not conquer the kingdom of the serpent. However, Jesus did rise from the grave and has defeated death and its kingdom! He rose from death back to life! That is good news!

Now, do you struggle with really knowing if this is all true?

John 20:27-29 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

You are not alone! Even some of the people who followed Jesus struggled to believe that Jesus was God and could live again. Here, Thomas did not even believe it when he saw Jesus appear in the same room. The truth is that Jesus knows our doubts. He tells Thomas to touch the scars where the stakes went through Jesus’ hands and the hole in His side from being pierced. It wasn’t until he could feel the flesh of Jesus that Thomas came to grips that what he was seeing was real!

Jesus also knew that there are going to be others like Thomas and then there will be those who believe Jesus was crucified, died, and rose just by reading the words in the Bible. Jesus said those who believed without seeing are blessed.

The good news doesn’t stop here! Jesus did not simply rise from the dead to prove He was who He said He was! After defeating the kingdom of sin, our king Jesus reestablishes His good and loving rule over His followers. He gives them a life-giving purpose to accomplish here on Earth and promises an intimate relationship with Him as they go!

Matthew 28:16-20 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Today, we call this the Great Commission. Jesus commands His followers to go out into their communities, towns, cities, and to the whole world telling people about who Jesus is and what He has done for the world. This also pertains to us as followers of Jesus. We are to go into our communities, country, and the world to share who Jesus was, is and will always be. We are to teach everyone how to live a life that is Christ-like and that brings glory to God.

The best news of the Great Commission is that Jesus is not telling us to go out on this journey alone, He will always be with us. How? Jesus' departure meant that the Holy Spirit could now be given to his kingdom family!

John 16:7-15 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Acts 1:6-8 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

The Holy Spirit would give his kingdom people the same kingdom power and authority Jesus had to bring the gospel of God's kingdom around the world. Everyone who believes in Jesus and allows him to be the King of their life receives his power through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings us hope and joy as we fulfill our God-given purposes; entering into a relationship with Him and being led by Him to spread His blessings and glory throughout the world.

The Holy Spirit sets us free from the kingdom of sin and makes God's kingdom rule a possibility again in our lives! Through the Holy Spirit we are brought from a heritage of sinners that started with Adam and Eve and adopted into the family of God's people through Jesus! The Holy Spirit quite literally turns our bodies into God's kingdom space where He resides *permanently!* This is the good news of Jesus; through him we exist under God's rule, as part of God's family, in the midst of God's presence wherever we go!

...but the good news keeps getting BETTER!

Acts 1:9-11 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Not only did Jesus pay the penalty of sin that we deserve, rise from the dead, and send us the Holy Spirit on this earth, but Jesus ascended into Heaven to sit on the throne as the living King over the earth at the right hand of God! Jesus reigns over all things!

What is the significance of this? You may be wondering if Jesus defeated sin and death, then why do we still experience sin in this world?

Here is where we can note that Jesus' salvation comes to us in the form of our spiritual state of being. Remember in Genesis that the ground, and therefore our flesh, was cursed by God in Genesis. This curse has not been reversed just yet. This does not mean we seek to escape this world, but look forward to when God restores it! 2000 years later, we can say that even in the midst of sin, this is where the story is heading! Jesus is and has always been on the throne at the right hand of God. Even when we suffer, we can look to the kingdom established over our souls and the kingdom coming to restore all of creation!

We do not know when Jesus will come and fix all of this brokenness in the world, but this passage in Acts tells us that He will return! And that is the final piece of good news!!

So what do we do until He returns? We love Jesus with everything we have and we love those around us in everything we do! Jesus Himself tells us what we are to do. We are to be His witness and to *make disciples*. How are you a witness of Jesus to your neighbors and coworkers. Do you share the reason why your life is different? More importantly, do you help others take that next step in their walk with Jesus? This week, help one other person take their next step. Maybe it is your nephew who has just put his faith in Christ, helping him understand the love of Christ. Maybe it is your next door neighbor who has been following Christ for a few years, teaching them how to share their faith with others. Whoever it is and whatever their next step is, help them take that next step. Share what you know so we can all follow Jesus better.

-Kyle Wilson

Share the Gospel: We cannot believe in Jesus without believing in His crucifixion, death, resurrection and ascension. Without each of these elements He would be just another man. Jesus was more than a man, He is God! He reigns as our king victorious over sin and death and will one day make things perfect! This is the gospel!

Personal Observations, Reflections, and Prayers:

