



WEEK THREE

THE KINGDOM OF GOD



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INTRODUCTION

My son Matteo just turned two. This means that he is starting to enjoy cartoons...which means that the ball game that I want to watch is often taken over by the Disney Channel. He recently saw one of the biggest hits of all time, the movie *The Lion King*. Now while this movie has been out since 1994, I had never seen it (at that time, I was too busy being a “cool” long-haired high school kid who played drums in a rock band). But things changed this past summer when Matteo discovered it. Since then, it’s been playing on a continuous loop in our living room (please don’t judge my parenting style...y’all know you’ve been there). Of all the iconic songs in this movie, one that struck me is young Simba singing, “Oh, I just can’t wait to be king,” as this young cub anticipates assuming the throne upon his father’s death.

Monarchies often work this way, where a future king is born and waits to rule after his father. However, the **Kingdom of God** is very different. God established His Kingdom through the reign of His Son, Jesus, who has been given all authority in the physical and spiritual realms, through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

*Jesus is not waiting to become king, because
He has already been enthroned as King!*

So, while the heir apparent to an earthly throne (like Simba) might spend his youth singing in joy while hoping for his crown, Jesus does not. Jesus is not waiting to become king, because *He has already been enthroned as King!* Since the Christ Event, there has never been a day when Jesus merely sat around singing, “I just can’t wait to be king” because He ascended to His throne 2,000 years ago.

This week we will spend time looking at the biblical concept of Kingdom. We will see that Jesus instructed His followers to pray for God’s Kingdom to come in the future and that the Kingdom of God has already been **inaugurated** in the first coming of Jesus. And because God’s Kingdom has *already* come, we—the **people of God**—have a crucial role to play in the spreading of this Kingdom to **the world**.



“Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

MATTHEW 6:10



UNDERSTANDING

The Original Context of the Petition

YOUR KINGDOM COME

When we read the New Testament (and the Gospels in particular), we are often captivated by the events associated with Jesus: His birth, miracles, death, and resurrection, etc. These historical accounts are certainly amazing, but the events themselves are not the main theme of the Gospels. The main theme of the Gospels centers on Jesus' Kingship and the coming of the Kingdom of God. In the Lord's Prayer, we are told to pray for God's Kingdom to come because this was Jesus' mission and His ministry focus. The better we understand the biblical Kingdom, the better we will understand why Jesus would ask that we pray for its coming.

The term *kingdom* refers to the extent of a king's **sovereign** dominion, rule, authority, and power. The Old Testament actually doesn't use the term "Kingdom of God," but the concept is certainly there to describe Yahweh's rule over the nation of Israel, and how they were to represent Him to the world. Now God is certainly King of all the **earth** (2 Kings 19:15; Ps. 29:10; 99:1-4; Isa. 6:5; Jer. 46:18), but He's specifically known as **Yahweh**—the **covenantal** King of Israel (Exod. 15:18; Deut. 33:5; Isa. 43:14-15). So when Jesus brings up the Kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), He's not bringing up a new, abstract, or random idea. No, He's teaching something at the heart of the biblical story.

"...we make request that God's will may be more fully made known to us, wrought in us and performed by us..."⁹

THE EXPECTATION OF KINGDOM

Jews living in Jesus' day had a certain expectation about how God was going to bring His Kingdom through His **messiah**. Let's take a quick look at how the expectation of a messiah developed (from the Old Testament to the first century). Back in 2 Samuel 7:8-17, God promised Israel a messianic-king through the line of David.¹ However, the nation eventually fell into chaos and split; the Assyrians destroyed the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC, and the Southern Kingdom fell to Babylon in 587/586 BC. The fall of Israel's Kingdom actually happened through Yahweh's divine judgment, as God's people continually broke the covenant by worshiping other gods and neglecting proper care of one another. Israel's **sin** cursed them into exile—casting them out of their land and placing them under the oppression of pagan kings.



THE KINGDOM OF GOD— NOT AS EXPECTED

The Gospel of Mark opens with an Old Testament quote from the book of Isaiah: **“Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight!’”** This is Kingdom language!

However, God provided hope. Passages like Isaiah 2:2 declare that **“It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of Yahweh shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it.”** Yes, God will re-establish His Kingdom, and not solely for Israel, but for all the nations. God will send a special King from the line of David: **“Behold, the days are coming, declares Yahweh, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and He shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land”** (Jer. 23:5).

Around 539 BC, the Jews were allowed to return from Babylonian exile to the land of Israel. However, for centuries, they experienced opposition from foreign enemies (like Greece and Rome). By the first century, an expectation developed, that God would: send His messiah to rule from the throne of David, create a strong military, and make Israel great again. This concept is known by scholars as the *messianic expectation*.

Israel lived in anticipation of the promise given to the prophets about the coming of her messiah. She eagerly awaited God’s vindication as they lived under the hopeful expectation of deliverance from evil Rome. Israel expected a national and militaristic messiah who would establish God’s Kingdom and rule from the throne of David. This messianic kingdom would bring peace and justice to the world—God’s people would be vindicated, and their enemies destroyed.² Unfortunately for Israel, their vision of God’s Kingdom did not match the reality of God’s Kingdom.

Mark is quoting Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1³ which are Old Testament passages where God came in judgment to set matters straight among His people.⁴ In doing so, God would provide salvation for Israel, restore His *temple*, and cast judgment upon the wicked religious leaders of that day.⁵

The phrase **“a messenger preparing the way”** refers to the *ancient near eastern* custom of sending a messenger ahead of a visiting king to inform the community of his coming, pave the way, and remove any barrier for the royal visit.⁶ In Mark 1:4, we learn that John the Baptist was the messenger preparing the way for the Lord, doing so by baptizing for repentance and the *forgiveness* of sin (1:5).

Mark presented royal imagery about who Israel should expect—Yahweh! Then in Mark 1:9, we meet Jesus. Jesus began His own ministry going through the region of Galilee, **“proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel!’”** (Mark 1:15).

John is the messenger who prepared the way for Yahweh, and Jesus is Yahweh, who had finally come (in the flesh) to deliver God’s covenantal people! This was good news—*royal news*—that God’s Kingdom had come, not just in theory but in reality (Mark 11:10; Luke 19:38).

“The ‘kingdom of heaven’ is not about people going to heaven. It is about the rule of heaven coming to earth.”¹⁰



1 How would you summarize the “Kingdom of God” based on this section?

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND

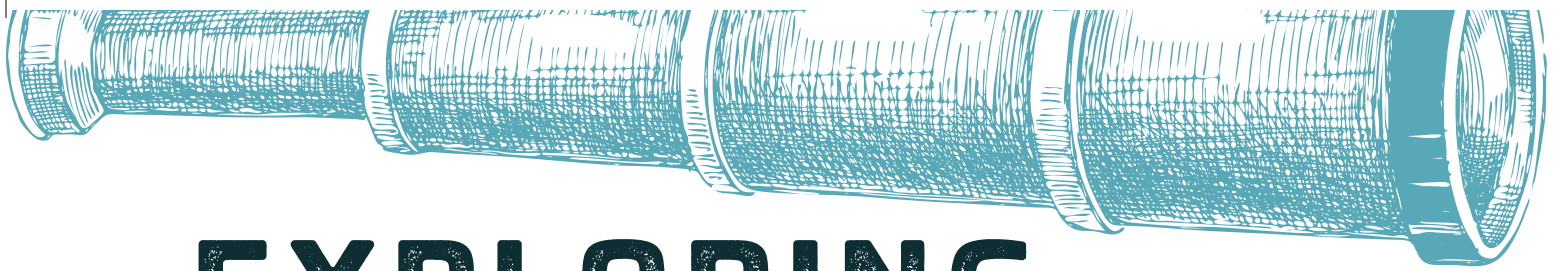
Mark records Jesus preaching the good news by saying, “**the kingdom of God is at hand**” (1:15). The phrase *at hand* (in Greek) has the idea of something approaching, moving into space and time.⁷ In other words, when Jesus declared that the “**kingdom of God is at hand**,” He did *not* make a mere prediction that God was going to do something in the distant future—rather, He declared that God’s Kingdom had already come. The Kingdom had arrived because its King (Jesus) had arrived!

Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom had come (Matt. 4:17), but He also taught His disciples to pray for its coming. But why should Jesus’ followers pray for something that had already come? When commanded to pray “**Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven**,” Jesus’ followers would not have heard this as a *petition* for God’s Kingdom only to come in the future, or for them to sit back and enjoy some sort of cloudy-heavenly afterlife. No, they would have understood it as a prayer acknowledging the inauguration of God’s Kingdom, because the King had come. The Kingdom of God, at its basic level, is *the rule and reign of Christ* (which began 2,000 years ago), and so to pray for God’s Kingdom to come is not about its coming into existence, but for it to “come more completely.”⁸

2 What was Israel’s expectation for a messiah?

3 What is the significance of the phrase “*the Kingdom of God is at hand*,” and when did God inaugurate his Kingdom?





EXPLORING

The Biblical Theology of the Petition

WHERE IS GOD'S KINGDOM?

We oftentimes think of God's Kingdom as a distant, future, end-times event, when we will live with no sin, suffering, or evil in a perfect garden-paradise known as the **New Heavens** and the **New Earth** (Rev. 21:1-4). While we can all cry "amen!" to our anticipation of the **consummated** Kingdom, where God's people will live in our glorified bodies in the eternal presence of God, we can't ignore the inaugurated Kingdom that was established 2,000 years ago.

In this section, we'll discuss how God's Kingdom has already arrived through Jesus, who is currently reigning as King! But the story doesn't end with the mere knowledge of Jesus' kingship, because God's continued presence and established Kingdom currently exists in the world through His temple. And this temple is made up of the people of God, who have been empowered by the Holy Spirit. This means that God's temple-Kingdom is here now and is spreading across the globe like an overgrown plant taking over the world.

JESUS IS ON THE THRONE

The clearest passage on Jesus' authority is found in Matthew 28:18-20, where He declared that "**all authority on heaven and earth has been given to me...**" Notice how He spoke in the past tense ("**has been given**"). Jesus didn't say that he had been given "some authority," or that all authority "will be given," or that He has all authority in **heaven** but only "some on earth." No, He declared that He has ruling-kingly authority *in heaven*, which is the domain of God and His special presence, as well as *on earth*—the place where evil kings and the **devil** dwell. In other words, all of creation is Jesus'. His Kingdom has been inaugurated, and while we await His consummation (where He will wipe out all evil), we cannot forget that Jesus sits on the throne *now*—not merely in some sort of theoretical way, but with all the authority of a cosmic-king!

The kingship of Jesus becomes the main theme of Matthew, which is emphatically declared at the close of the book (28:18). Therefore, it makes sense that through Jesus' ministry, He would teach His disciples to pray about God's Kingdom. But it wasn't merely Matthew's Gospel that spoke of God's Kingdom; the entire New Testament is centered on that theme and how Jesus fulfills this petition of the Lord's Prayer.

...we cannot forget that Jesus sits on the throne now—not merely in some sort of theoretical way, but with all the authority of a cosmic-king!

For instance, John reported that Jesus knew that, “...**the Father had given all things into His hands...**” (John 13:3). According to Paul, when God raised Jesus from the dead, Jesus was seated at God’s “...**right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion...**” (Eph. 1:19–22). And in Philippians 2:9–11 he declares that, “**God has highly exalted [Jesus] and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**” Peter declared that Jesus had “**gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him**” (1 Pet. 3:22). These passages, along with many others, declare that Jesus started His rule as King at that time. The New Testament writers, through their experience and the inspiration of the Spirit, were not waiting for Jesus to become King—they knew that Jesus already was King.¹¹ God’s Kingdom had come!

JESUS’ KINGDOM IS AT HAND

Contrary to modern “faith healers” and “prosperity gospel teachers,” the miracles of the Gospels weren’t a guide to teach us how to do evangelism today.¹² Instead, the miracles were largely a proof, a witness, that what Jesus was preaching was true—He indeed had dominion over the natural world and the spiritual realm. It was as if He was saying, “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is here. Don’t believe me? Check out this miracle!” Those amazing miracles definitely validated the cosmic-shift regarding who was in charge of the world.

Jesus, according to the Gospel accounts, spent His ministry primarily teaching that the Kingdom of God had arrived in Him. While we oftentimes limit Jesus’ earthly accomplishment to His giving us eternal life through the cross, the New Testament actually tells of a much fuller accomplishment of His ministry: *the defeat of the devil through the coming of the Kingdom*. One of these great defeats is recorded in two places: Luke and Revelation.

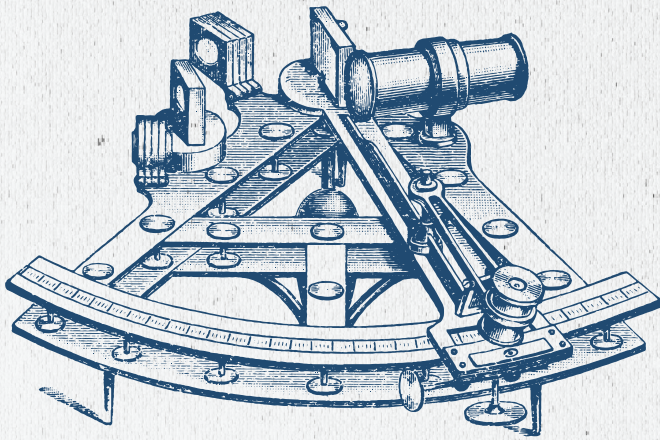
Revelation 12 describes the defeat over the devil, where it is said that Satan and his demons were fighting a war in heaven but were defeated and thrown down to earth (Rev. 12:7–9). And because of this victory over Satan, “**salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come**” (Rev. 12:10).

Now you might be thinking, “wait a minute, Vinnie, you just quoted Revelation, and I thought that Revelation was all about the future?” There certainly are future-telling events in the book of Revelation (especially in Chapters 21

and 22), but not everything in the book is something we’re waiting for. But don’t take my word for it, I’m only saying this because Revelation 12 is something that Jesus said happened in *His* lifetime.

Let’s compare Revelation 12 with Luke 10, where we read that Jesus sent out seventy-two of His followers to proclaim the Kingdom of God and heal the sick (Luke 10:1–12). The seventy-two returned and were ecstatic about their experience, reporting to Jesus that, “**even the demons are subject to us in your name!**” (Luke 10:17). Jesus goes on to explain why mere humans could have such awesome authority over the devil. He says, “**I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and overall the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you**” (Luke 10:18–19). Why did Jesus and His followers have such authority over the devil? Because God’s Kingdom had come!

Jesus told His followers that if one can cast out demons, it is because “**the kingdom of God has come upon you**” (Matt. 12:28, Luke 11:20). This was good news for Jesus’ followers, as they had a tangible experience (and taste) of what the Kingdom of God is like—a world with an impotent Satan! Jesus brought the Kingdom of God to earth. And through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, He defeated the devil. Jesus became the second and better Adam (Rom. 5:12–21), who didn’t give in to the serpent, but overcame and defeated him.



GOD'S GROWING KINGDOM-TEMPLE

If we remember from last week's lesson (cf. p. 33), Jewish people thought of heaven not as the place where people go when they die, but as God's special dimension in the created order.¹³ While God is completely **omnipresent**, heaven is when and where God reveals Himself to the world in a special, covenantal way. Heaven is the presence of God's Kingdom. In a sense, it is the ultimate temple. So, to discuss the Kingdom of God means we have to talk about temples, because the temple is not only the center of Kingdom activity, but is how God makes Himself known to His people, as He invites His people to serve as priests.

The first time we see God's earthly Kingdom is in the **Garden of Eden**, where Adam and Eve had direct access to God in His garden-temple. They walked and dwelled where God walked and dwelled, because God desires to dwell with His people (**Lev. 26:11-12**). We also see how Yahweh makes Himself known to His creation (specifically in His Kingdom) through places like the **tabernacle** and the temple (**Solomon** or **Herod's Temples**). But one of the most beautiful chapters in the Bible is Daniel Chapter 2, which describes how God has an ultimate plan for His Kingdom. He will dwell with the entire world, turning the whole earth into His temple-kingdom.

It is through Jesus that God has overcome the devil and the evil empires of the world, and has begun to multiply and fill the earth with His eternal Kingdom!

GOD'S PLAN FOR AN ETERNAL KINGDOM-TEMPLE

In this story, Daniel interpreted a dream for the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel described a **"great image"** (2:31) that was made up of four different components, with each one representing a different kingdom of the ancient world: Nebuchadnezzar/Babylon was the **head of gold** (2:32, 35, 38); the Medo-Persian Empire was the **chest and arms of silver** (2:32, 35, 39); Greece was the **middle section and thighs of bronze** (2:32, 35, 39); and finally, the Roman Empire was the **legs of iron with feet that are part iron and part clay** (2:33, 35, 40-41).¹⁴ This great image symbolizes something horrifying—a hybrid creature, made up of powerful materials, and having national dominance over the rest of the world. This represented a significant problem for God's people. However, we learn the solution to this problem: a new Kingdom will arrive to destroy the great evil image—as a **"stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image in its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces"** (2:34). For something to be **"cut by no human hand"** means that its origin is from God. While the true unveiling of this dream would have been a mystery to Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel, its meaning has been clearly revealed to us in the person of Jesus—*Because Jesus is that eternal stone!*

It is through Jesus that God has overcome the devil and the evil empires of the world, and has begun to multiply and fill the earth with His eternal Kingdom! Through Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and then ascension to the right hand of the Father, God's enemies have been defeated; He has inaugurated His Kingdom and **"all power on Heaven and on earth has been given to Him"** (**Matt. 28:18**). The dream ends with a beautiful scene, in which this inaugurated Kingdom, after destroying the great image, **"became a great mountain and filled the whole earth"** (2:35).

*Wherever the Spirit of God dwells
the temple of God is present.*

**WHEREVER JESUS'
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”

JESUS IS THE TRUE KINGDOM-TEMPLE

Daniel 2 gives us a foretaste of how God has conquered (and will continue to conquer) the world and established His Kingdom through Jesus, the true temple and King who destroys His enemies, and whose Kingdom is like a mountain that fills the earth. John's Gospel reveals the climax of the biblical temple when Jesus declares, **"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"** (John 2:19). On the surface this is a ridiculous statement, as the (second) Jerusalem temple had **"taken forty-six years to build"** (2:20). But the Jews did not understand that Jesus was **"speaking about the temple of His body"** (2:21).

The temple was significant, as it was the center of Jewish life and the physical marker of God's Kingdom on earth. For first-century Jews, the temple was heaven, the place where God came to earth and dwelled with His people. By declaring Himself to be "the temple," Jesus claims deity. Jesus is God's presence on earth. When the world experienced Jesus, they experienced God walking among them (like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden). This is the point that Yahweh makes to His people: He wants to continue to dwell (to walk) with them. And so, in Jesus, we find the reality that Leviticus 26:11–12 is happening! God had made His dwelling among His people when Jesus walked among them. This is why Jesus can claim to be the true temple of God in John 2:19–22, because He embodied what it meant to bring heaven to earth.

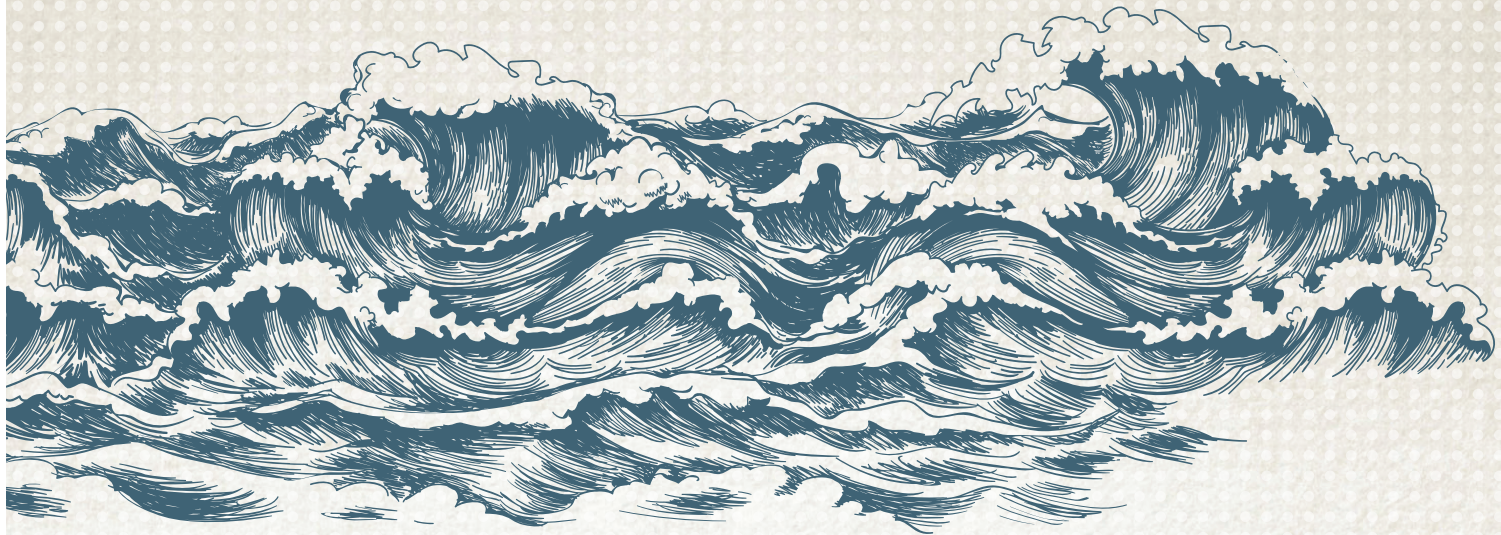
Jesus is the **"stone that was not cut by human hands"** (Dan 2:34). When He overcame **death** and raised to life as the true temple of God, he defeated sin and the devil, thus ensuring that His eternal Kingdom would never be destroyed and would take over the entire world. But God's Kingdom doesn't take over the world by military force, the way pagan kingdoms do. Instead it takes over the world by a Messiah—who has overcome His enemies by becoming like a slain-lamb (Rev. 5:6–9)—and through His followers—who are indwelled by the Spirit of God and spread the gospel of Jesus! This is how the Kingdom of God will overtake the world.

"By casting out the devil and his forces, Jesus was accomplishing the latter-day defeat of Satan that Adam should have accomplished in the first Garden."¹⁵

THE PEOPLE OF GOD AS THE KINGDOM-TEMPLE

After His resurrection, Jesus spent some time with His disciples and then ascended from earth and sat down at the right hand of the Father's throne (Acts 1:1–11). Immediately following this, He sent the Spirit of God to indwell His people (Acts 2:1–4).

Now throughout the Bible, the concept of the "temple" has less to do with a physical structure and more to do with how God is making Himself manifest to people (e.g., the Garden of Eden, the burning bush, the tabernacle, Solomon's Temple, etc.). Therefore, a simple definition of the temple can be "the special place where God dwells with His people." This was most emphatically experienced in the person of Jesus, who completely embodied what it meant for God to dwell with His people. But when Jesus left earth, He didn't leave His people as orphans, or without the temple, or without God's Kingdom (John 14:15–31). He sent His Spirit into the lives of the people of God, creating a temple that is still active and alive in the world today (1 Cor. 3:16–17; 6:12–20).



HOW GOD IS BUILDING HIS KINGDOM

Jesus' departing instructions to His disciples were, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age”** (Matt. 28:19–20). Jesus can command this because through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, He is now the world's King, and can rightfully claim the world as His own! This is what makes the gospel such good news.

Jesus' followers are now empowered to go into the entire world and make disciples of the nations. Wherever Jesus' disciples are, the Spirit of God dwells—and wherever the Spirit of God dwells, the temple of God is present. And because the temple is the centerpiece of the Kingdom, we can see how God's Kingdom (via His temple) is growing to expand and take over the entire world (Dan. 2:35)! Therefore, Jesus—the stone not cut by human hands—is an eternal Kingdom and eternal temple, which is best displayed to the world through His people. God's Kingdom will take over the world as a temple-kingdom for Yahweh.

*“And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known”¹⁶*

CONCLUSION

The Kingdom of God is the great theme of the Bible—from Genesis 1 through Revelation 22. God’s goal in creation was to dwell with His people—something that was lost at **the fall (Genesis 3)**, but something regained when God made Himself known through His temple in the Old Testament. Then, when God took on flesh and stepped into His own creation in the person of Jesus, He demonstrated the ultimate temple (**John 2:18–22**), thus *inaugurating* His eternal Kingdom.

Following His ascension to the Father (**Acts 1:6–11**), Jesus sent His Holy Spirit to dwell in His people forever, making them the temple of God (**1 Cor. 3:16–17**) as they live in His earthly Kingdom. And because the people of God have been made into a temple-kingdom, we have a responsibility in how we engage the world as ambassadors for Christ (**2 Cor. 5:20**).

While the first century expectation was that God’s Kingdom would be an instrument of social and nationalistic reform for Israel (to wipe out Rome), the Kingdom of God actually looked much different. This ultimately led many Jews to reject Jesus, as He did not meet their expectations. This is because the good news that Jesus proclaimed was not good news to people who placed the kingdoms of this world above the Kingdom of God.

God’s people embrace the gospel. And this gospel—the good news—is that God’s Kingdom is here through its King, Jesus. And being citizens of this Kingdom means we have an active role to play as the King’s subjects—we don’t sit around idly. The people of God play a role in building God’s Kingdom—we are ambassadors of the King, ambassadors, who also serve as priests and kings. And so we pray for God to continue bringing His Kingdom, and then we look to see how God is working in the life of the church (as His ambassadors) to accomplish His Kingdom work.



1 What is the purpose of a biblical temple?

2 How has God most clearly revealed Himself (and His temple) to the world?

3 How does God plan to spread His Kingdom through the world?



APPLYING

The Christian and the Petition

YOUR KINGDOM COME

“...the gospels are consciously telling the story of how God’s one-time action in Jesus the Messiah *ushered in a new world order*¹⁷ within which a new way of life was not only possible but mandatory for Jesus’s followers...Jesus’s followers now have a mission, indeed a mission that goes way beyond anything they had during Jesus’s lifetime.”¹⁸

I grew up in the Lutheran Church, where we would recite the Lord’s Prayer on a regular basis. I always thought that the phrase “**Your Kingdom come**” was a way of begging God to bring His Kingdom. However, the more I study the Bible (and church history), the more I realize that this prayer isn’t us begging for God to do something in the future. This prayer is acknowledging what God’s already done in Jesus, and what He’s continuing to do through His people. The more I realize the centrality of the Kingdom of God in the New Testament, the more excited I get when reading the Bible, and the more my eyes are opened to the responsibility that we have as citizens of God’s Kingdom now. And this provides me with a better idea in how to pray for God to act in the world ([Eph. 2:19](#); [Phil. 3:20](#)).

If you are a true follower of the Messiah, then you’ve been given the Spirit of God. And if you’ve been given the Spirit of God, then you have been made part of the temple of God, and have the duty to live as a member of God’s Kingdom now.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU

God's Kingdom is not the church, but the church is definitely a result of the Kingdom.¹⁹ God has chosen to inaugurate His Kingdom by sending His Son to live, die, rise from the dead, and then ascend to the right hand of God's throne where He rules and reigns. Because Jesus would not leave His disciples as orphans, He sent them another Helper (**John 14:15–31**), the Spirit (**Acts 2:4**), who empowers God's people to carry out their mission as they expand the Kingdom to the entire world.

One purpose of the church is to demonstrate to the world what the Kingdom of God looks like. This is because Jesus has established and equipped the church with the task of evangelizing (preaching the good news to) the world. And through preaching and establishing the local church, we have a tangible glimpse of the Kingdom.²⁰

So what does the Kingdom of God look like? Just read **the Beatitudes** in Matthew 5:3–12. The Kingdom of God looks like people who are rich in spirit; people who have been comforted from mourning; people who are merciful, and pure in heart, and make peace. Since we've been given new **hearts** and the Spirit of God (**Ezek. 36:26–27**), we have the ability to follow God's **law**, which has been written on our hearts (**Jer. 31:33**). Through the Spirit, God's people are allowing the world to experience the Kingdom.

Jesus said in Luke 17:21, **“the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”** The phrase **“is in the midst”** is written in the present tense, and pertains “to a specific area inside or within something.”²¹ We're not waiting and looking for the Kingdom, because it is available now!²² If you are a true follower of the Messiah, then you've been given the Spirit of God. And if you've been given the Spirit of God, then you have been made part of the temple of God, and have the duty to live as a member of God's Kingdom now.

And so when we pray, *Your Kingdom come*, we are collectively praying for God to empower us to live in a way that best reflects Jesus' ethics. We are praying for God to make us people who reflect the Sermon on the Mount. This is the way that heaven will come to earth, as we demonstrate what it looks like for God to have delivered us **“from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of God's beloved Son” (Col. 1:13).**

KINGS IN GOD'S KINGDOM

The book of Revelation is a great book for Kingdom living—not merely for the future, but for Christians living over the past 2,000 years. We see this at the beginning of the book, where John writes that Jesus has **“freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father” (1:5–6)**. Look at the tenses used here: he *freed* us (past) from our sins...and *made* us (past) a **kingdom of priests**. God's people, at any point in history after the cross, serve as priests in God's Kingdom (on earth), because, Jesus is the **“ruler of kings on earth” (Rev. 1:5)**.²³

Brothers and sisters, you and I currently live on the earth as priests in God's Kingdom, because God's Kingdom has already been inaugurated in the person of Jesus. While we're waiting for the fullness of the Kingdom to come at the end of history, we can't ignore what God has already communicated to us—that His followers have a place as kings in this Kingdom—from Paul living in 60 AD, to Thomas Aquinas in 1250, to Martin Luther in 1500, to Corrie ten Boom in 1945, to you and me in 2020! Christians have God's Spirit living inside of us, which means we are collectively God's temple, and so we serve God as priests and kings in His eternal Kingdom.

CLOSING

“Let Your Kingdom come” is not a passive statement or request for God's people to impotently sit in a recliner and wait for some distant, far-off coronation ceremony to solve all our problems. Rather, it's the acknowledgment that God's Kingdom has already arrived in the person of Jesus, and that His followers are invited into the process of demonstrating to the world what that Kingdom looks like. So, just as an ultraviolet light reveals an invisible message written with a special dye, the people of God reveal (to the world) the King who currently sits on His throne, even though it's not a visible throne located in a geographical center. This is what we pray for any time we petition God for *Your Kingdom to come!*

*This prayer isn't us
begging for God to
do something, it's
acknowledging what He's
already done in Jesus, and
what He's continuing to do
through His people.*



1 Coming into this week, what was your understanding of “the Kingdom of God”? How often do you pray for God’s Kingdom activity?

2 Read through the Beatitudes (**Matt. 5:3–11**), and then through the rest of the Sermon on the Mount (**Matt. 5–7**). So much of what Jesus teaches seems impossible, and it is if we are not empowered by the Spirit. However, because we’ve been given God’s Spirit, we can live like this. What are some ethical commands that Jesus taught that you could specifically ask Him to help you grow in?

3 What are specific ways that you can pray for God’s Kingdom to come now? And how might you play a role in what God is doing in the world?

WEEK 3



PRAYER

The Kingdom of God

We pray for God's Kingdom to continue to come, realizing that it was inaugurated by Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension. One day it will climax in the New Heavens and the New Earth, when God makes all things new (Rev. 21–22). As servants of His Kingdom, we serve as ambassadors to our King.

King Jesus,

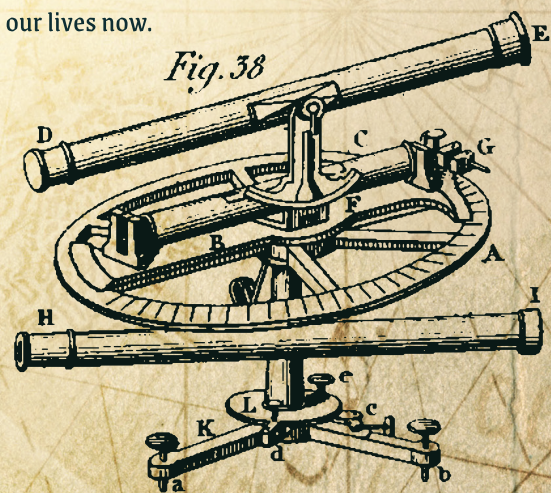
As we pray for your Kingdom to come, we rest in the assurance that at this very moment, you are ruling with all power and authority over this world. This brings us great comfort when we look around and at times, become discouraged at the wickedness of the world.

We look forward to the day when this present evil world is gone, and we can enjoy your perfect presence in your glorious Kingdom. Until then, we thank you for the gospel: that through Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension, you have provided victory for your Kingdom when you defeated the enemy. Continue to empower us as a local church to accomplish your work, and be a light to the world.

Give us the boldness, faith, and wisdom through the Spirit as we make disciples of all nations. Illuminate our minds as we study your Word so we may have a better understanding of your will. We pray as a church body that we will be unified in our mission to reach our community, and world, for Christ.

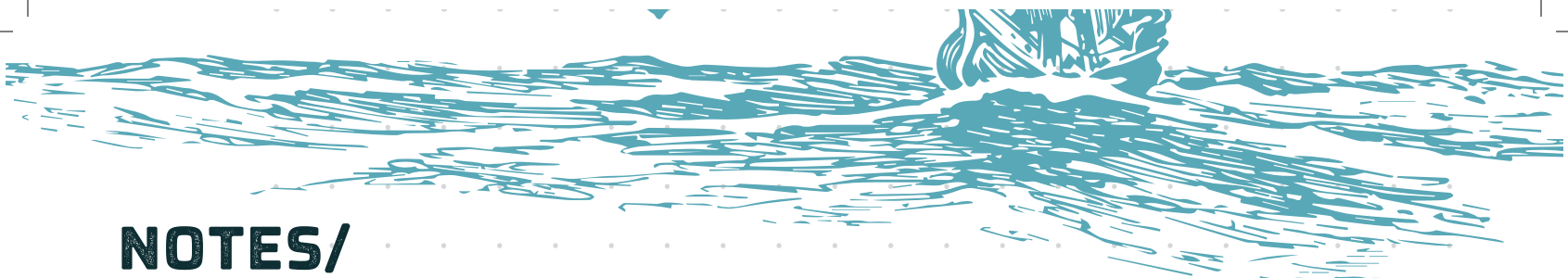
May your Kingdom be exalted, both in the future and in our lives now.

Amen



ENDNOTES

- 1 For more information about how the Messiah is connected to David/Jesus, read Week 6 of the 2019 GHCC study, *Covenants*.
- 2 *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013).
- 3 This is called a “composite composition.” It might seem like modern plagiarism (by not citing a source), but in the ancient world this was an acceptable way of quoting.
- 4 The NET Bible: Text Notes, Dallas, NET Bible Press, 2003.
- 5 Smith, Ralph, L., *Word Biblical Commentary: Micah—Malachi* (Waco: Word Books, 1984), pp. 327–328.
- 6 Verhoef, Peter, A., *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Haggai and Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987). p. 287.
- 7 Bauer, Walker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, Third ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).
- 8 NIV Zondervan Study Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).
- 9 Pink, Arthur, W., *An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982). p. 163.
- 10 Wright, N.T., *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels* (New York: HarperCollins, 2016). p. 43.
- 11 For more passages about Christ currently ruling as king, see: Matt 9:6; 11:27; John 3:35; 5:27; 13:3; 17:2; Rom. 14:9; 1 Cor. 15:27; Phil 2:9–10; Col. 2:10; Heb. 1:2; 2:8; 1 Pet. 3:22.
- 12 While much could be said on this topic, the theology of modern-day miracles is not my point here (we would affirm that God certainly can, and does, do miracles today). Jesus’ miracles are a validation for Jesus’ declaring Himself to be the King of God’s Kingdom.
- 13 Wright, N.T., *Mark for Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004). p. 232
- 14 Among biblical scholars, there are two main interpretations/identifications for the four nations that make up the “great image.” The first option (what we propose) is *Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome*. The second option is *Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece*. Regardless of the identification, we all acknowledge that *the stone that destroys the great image and expands across the world into its own eternal kingdom is Jesus*.
- 15 Beale, G.K., Kim, Mitchell, *God dwells among us: expanding Eden to the ends of the earth* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014). p. 91.
- 16 Miles, C., Austin. *In the Garden*, 1913, Public Domain.
- 17 If you’re reading this endnote, you just read the words “new world order” in a church publication, and might be heavily breathing into a paper bag. Before we race down the dark-hole of conspiracy theory, let’s try to remove the stigma of 1990s politics and understand the point that the author is trying to make. In light of who Jesus is and what He has done (namely, becoming *King of His universe*), God has very much brought in *a new world order*. Because the Creator and Ruler of all things is staking a claim to what is rightfully His—there is indeed a new world order, and it is political, because it is God’s Kingdom that has come to overthrow evil: even evil governments.
- 18 Wright, *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels*. p.118.
- 19 *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, 3rd Edition*, ed. Daniel Treier (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017). p. 468.
- 20 Akin, Daniel, L., *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014). p. 763.
- 21 Bauer.
- 22 The NET Bible: Text Notes, Dallas, NET Bible Press, 2003.
- 23 The book of Revelation has many references to God’s people serving as rulers of the world (see passages like 2:26–27; 3:21; 5:10).



NOTES/ PRAYER REQUESTS

*God's Kingdom
has already
arrived in
the person of
Jesus, and...His
followers are
invited into
the process of
demonstrating
to the world
what that
Kingdom looks
like.*