

# The Kingdom of God is Among Us!

## Part 1: Introduction

### 1. Overview

- a. Many centuries before Christ, when the nation of Israel was constituted on Mt. Sinai, the people accepted God as their King.
  - i. *"Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a **kingdom** of priests and a holy nation."* (Exodus 19:6)
    1. We talked a bit about this last week in the context of the Levites as priests because the people rejected the call to be priests.
  - ii. But the people also decided they wanted a king. *"We want a king over us," they cried. "Then we will be like all other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles"* (1 Samuel 8:19-20). God was displeased. *"It is not you they have rejected," he told the prophet Samuel, "but they have rejected me as their king"* (1 Samuel 8:7)..
  - iii. **God had always desired to create a kingdom of priests and to be their King.**
    1. God's own people rejected God's plan. *But it never changed God's intention.* He is intent on building His Kingdom – an invisible one inside people's hearts and lives that **becomes visible as it changes them from the inside out!**

### 2. Facts:

- a. The term "Kingdom of Heaven" or "Kingdom of God" is mentioned over 100 times in the New Testament alone. Yet most churches today don't even talk about the Kingdom, much less understand it. They dismiss it and simply say we are in the "Church age."
  - i. In fact, Jesus never preached the gospel of how to get to heaven. He preached the gospel of good news of the Kingdom of Heaven. Paul also preached the gospel of the Kingdom.
  - ii. The phrase 'Kingdom of Heaven' is used 31 times in the gospel of Matthew and zero times in the other gospels. The phrase 'Kingdom of God' is used only five times in Matthew, but is found 47 times in the Mark, Luke, and John (NASB).
  - iii. If this is such an important truth that Jesus preached it over and over... why haven't we heard about it? **Could it be that the enemy has twisted the gospel into "fire insurance" instead of a lifestyle of surrender to King Jesus?**

### 3. Matthew 3:1-3 *"In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"*

- a. John was sent to get people's attention.
  - i. He was sent to prepare the hearts and ears of men for the truth that they would encounter!
  - ii. People needed something to let them know the times in which they were living were unique and special. Otherwise, they would be oblivious to what God was doing.
  - iii. Let me illustrate:
- b. **A man sat at a metro station in Washington DC and started to play the violin; it was a cold January morning. He played six Bach pieces for about 45 minutes. During that time, since it was rush hour, it was calculated that thousands of people went through the station, most of them on their way to work. Three minutes went by and a middle aged man noticed there was musician playing. He slowed his pace and stopped for a few seconds and then hurried up to meet his schedule. A minute later, the violinist received his first dollar tip: a woman threw the money in the till and without stopping continued to walk. A few minutes later, someone leaned against the wall to listen to him, but the man looked at his watch and started to walk again. Clearly he was late for work. The one who paid the most attention was a 3 year old boy. His mother tagged him along, hurried but the kid stopped to look at the violinist. Finally the mother pushed hard and the child continued to walk turning his head all the time. This action was repeated by several other children. All the parents, without exception, forced them to move on. In the 45 minutes the musician played, only 6 people stopped and stayed for a while. About 20 gave him money but**

continued to walk their normal pace. He collected \$32. When he finished playing and silence took over, no one noticed it. No one applauded, nor was there any recognition. No one knew this but the violinist was Joshua Bell, one of the best musicians in the world. He played one of the most intricate pieces ever written with a violin worth 3.5 million dollars. Two days before his playing in the subway, Joshua Bell sold out at a theater in Boston and the seats average \$100. This is a real story. Joshua Bell playing incognito in the metro station was organized by the Washington Post as part of an social experiment about perception, taste and priorities of people. The outlines were: in a commonplace environment at an inappropriate hour: Do we perceive beauty? Do we stop to appreciate it? Do we recognize the talent in an unexpected context? One of the possible conclusions from this experience could be: If we do not have a moment to stop and listen to one of the best musicians in the world playing some of the best music ever written, how many other things are we missing?

- i. **The reason that John the Baptist went before the Messiah was to prepare men's hearts and ears and eyes to be ready so they wouldn't miss the treasure from heaven that had come down into their midst!**
- ii. Can you imagine how many people saw Jesus, came to Jesus, listened to Jesus, and were touched or healed by Jesus? Probably tens of thousands in Judea and Galilee.
- iii. I wonder, however, how many refused to slow down, change the priorities of their lives or recognized that the Messiah was in their midst. **Many more missed him than recognized Him.**
  1. Many of us may have an image in our minds about what Revival (God in our midst) looks like. Our church and other Christians in our community have been "preparing the way" through prayer, fasting, worship, and expressions of unity.
  2. But we have to be careful that we don't let our preconceived notion of what revival looks like because we may be looking for something else than God!
    - a. Revival at its core is the Kingdom of Heaven becoming active in our realm!
    - b. Revival is when the Kingdom of Heaven becomes real in people's lives.
    - c. Revival is when the presence of God is ENCOUNTERED.
    - d. We have boiled church down to hearing about God instead of "encountering God."
- iv. The Kingdom of God consists of a supernatural encounter – a collision between two worlds – The revelation of the extravagant heart of the Father God for people. Every encounter, every miracle is a revelation of His nature. It is in that revelation, an invitation to relationship with the Father!

Let's look at John's message which said, "*repent, for the kingdom of God is near*"

4. **Repent: --metanoeo--to think differently or afterwards, literally, "change your mind."** About what?
  - a. About priorities in life. What is important to you and why.
    - i. What gets you out of bed in the morning?
    - ii. What ignites your passion, your fire and your excitement?
      1. Sports? Cav's, Indians?
      2. Your Career?
      3. Your Possessions?
      4. Your Leisure?
      5. Your Hobbies?
    - iii. What do you most look forward to doing when you have time and money to do it?
  - b. These "priorities" are the "former kingdom" – the kingdom of this world that competes with the Kingdom of God.
    - i. Folks spend their entire lives pursuing these temporary things, placing all they have on their altars in order to bring some measure of meaning to their lives.

- ii. They will build their business over an entire lifetime. Or they will race home to watch their favorite sports team or to work on their sports car or to get onto Ebay or to work in their garden.
- iii. Their lives are consumed like dry wood by their passions and nothing but ashes remain when all is said and done.
- iv. And then...once in a while, God sends someone or something with a message, ***“Change your minds, change your priorities, because eternity is coming near!”***
- v. He shouts...***“Change your minds about the priorities of life and about what you are living for because the reign and rule of God is about to be revealed and RELEASED into your life!”***

**c. What causes you to examine your priorities?**

- i. I prayed with a man this week who has been diagnosed with colon trouble, he is afraid it is cancer. (tell the story of how he didn't have much use for God until now).
- ii. What is important to you? Will it take a terrible life change to cause you to have a mind change? Unfortunately, it is too often the case.

**5. Jesus had only one message, mandate, and mission -- the return of the Kingdom of Heaven to earth.**

- a. Now, collect and examine everything you have been taught about why Jesus came to the earth, why he lived and died and place those teachings under the umbrella of this central truth that Jesus came to establish the Kingdom of Heaven upon the earth.

- i. What does this mean as it relates to what He did...

- 1. When He died for our sins?
- 2. As He sent the Holy Spirit?
- 3. As He did miracles, healings and exorcisms?
- 4. Preached and taught
- 5. Made Disciples
- 6. Gave the Great Commission?

- ii. It means that these were necessary to bring the Kingdom of God to earth (into men's lives!)

- 1. Too often we disconnect these “events” from the big picture of the Kingdom of God.
- 2. We focus on each one of these things as one of them is the goal of God's work...but they are all a means to God's mission on earth...to establish His Kingdom on earth in people.

**6. Now, I am hoping that this sermon series will disturb you. In fact, I am praying that this sermon series will so trouble you that you go home and get out your bible and start looking up verses and passages and read everything the bible has to say about the Kingdom of God. I pray that you might see with fresh eyes and hear with fresh ears, the truth that God said would change the world.**

- a. Jesus began His ministry by preaching ***“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near”*** (Matthew 4:17). He preached the same message as John when he began his ministry. But as you will soon see, he changed his message to the ***“good news of the Kingdom of Heaven.”*** (Mt 4:23).
- b. We will discuss this next week. We will answer the question, “Why the change? What did he mean?”

**7. Luke 17:21 Jesus explains to us that “the kingdom of God is within you.**

- a. WE (YOU) are the TEMPLE OF GOD”.

- b. **You see the Kingdom of Heaven is not about where we are to live, but where God lives.**

- i. The Kingdom of Heaven has often been reduced to a place where the dead shall receive their reward.
- ii. However our reward is God and each other.
- iii. Is there any reward greater than God Himself? No! Because when you got Him you got everything!

## 8. Application:

- a. What happens when the kingdom of God collides with earth? (not an asteroid). Supernatural invading the natural? God shows up, literally and changes everything! Whatever He touches look more like heaven when He is done with it. It is what Jesus did when He was here.
- b. So why should you let God rule in your life? Why should you rearrange your priorities so that the reign of God can rule in you?
  - i. First of all, because you were designed for this purpose.
    1. God loves you and wants to make you whole. His purpose in sending Jesus was to RESTORE YOU TO A RIGHT, PERFECT RELATIONSHIP WITH HIMSELF.
    2. Sin (that self-led life) has left you with a hole in your heart that you will try to fill with stuff – and always come up empty. Sin broke that perfect relationship. Sin consists of a self-led, self oriented life.
    3. God sent Jesus to pay the price your sin deserved and to make you whole.
    4. When you come to Jesus Christ and receive the forgiveness of sin, you become a brand new person in your spirit, you experience a rebirth.
    5. God makes you whole. The Kingdom of God comes and with it comes God. When God comes, He does good things, because He is good! He's always in a good mood? **(do you believe that?)**
  - ii. Second of all: we know that God made you to live in and through you. He advances His kingdom in you and through you. It is how God restores His reign in all the earth. Last week we called this the priesthood of the believer!
    1. Israel didn't understand this, and most of the time we don't either.
    2. We need to learn to say to God, "all you need is me!" Because He is waiting for you to give yourself to Him!
    3. **Each one Reach one** – are you reaching someone? Are you praying for someone? If you lost your card, there are more!
- c. God has a design for making your life work right. He designed you. He knows that if you will let Him reign in you that your life will change.
- d.

### Prophetic Word (Bob Jones)

A man (and well known prophet) named Bob Jones awoke one night at midnight...his heart was in atrial fibrillation – it was beating 133 beats a minute. As he realized it, God spoke to him in a prophetic way that "our hearts are out of harmony with His heart." Psalm 133:1 came to his mind, "Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity."

A few weeks later, he underwent a procedure that shocked his heart back into rhythm. The doctor said he would only be unconscious for 2 minutes. When he would awaken, his heart would be fine. When he woke, he asked his wife when they would start, and she replied, "oh, they are done already." It happened so suddenly that he didn't even realize it. His heart has been beating at 64 beats a minute ever since.

- a. God desires to "shock" our hearts back into rhythm with His.
- b. Don't wait for the painful shock...submit to Him, give yourself to Him...today. Maybe you have been in that painful place...and you recognize it. Today is a day when you can make it right.