

Community Church Huddersfield
Roots of Restoration Notes

Session 2 – Heaven on Earth: The Kingdom of God

1. What do we mean when we speak of the Kingdom of God?

- a. It is not a geographical region nor a political realm.
- b. It is God's *right to rule*. It is God's rule in action – wherever God's will is being done.

your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
(Matt.6:10)

- c. It is a *reign* more than a realm – but it is a *spiritual realm*

'..a reign without a realm in which it is exercised is meaningless. Thus we find that the Kingdom of God is also the realm in which God's reign may be experienced....
(Eldon Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, p.22)

- d. God's total order of life

'Most of us think of kingdoms as geographic entities, physical realms with boundaries and defences and treasuries. But the kingdom of God is a rule, not a realm. This is the declaration of God's absolute sovereignty, of his total order of life in this world and the next

(Charles Colson)

- e. The advance of the Kingdom therefore will mean:
 - i. People born again
 - ii. Lives transformed so that people become who God intended them to be - more and more like Jesus
 - iii. Bodies being healed
 - iv. God's power being displayed
 - v. Marriage and families being restored and built up
 - vi. Whole communities being impacted by God's love
 - vii. Justice being established
 - viii. Nations and ethnic groups being reconciled
 - ix. Leaders and lawmakers coming under the influence of God's righteousness and wisdom

2. The Kingdom is distinct from the Church but the Church is central to the advance of the Kingdom.

'There can be no kingdom without a church - those who have acknowledged God's rule - and there can be no church without kingdom; but they remain two distinguishable concepts; the rule of God and the fellowship of men'

(Eldon Ladd)

- a. Kingdom = the rule of God
- b. Church = the fellowship or community of people who have come under that rule (disciples)
- c. The church, in the power of the Spirit and with the gospel of truth is the means of extending and advancing that Kingdom throughout the whole earth – and so achieving the purpose of God.

'..the Church is God's agent for establishing his Kingdom. It is the primary means by which he is accomplishing his reconciling purpose. Therefore, the Church is inseparable from God's cosmic design to sum up all things in Jesus Christ - the essence and goal of the kingdom.'

(Snyder)

3. The rest of this study will examine four truths about the nature of the Kingdom, and its advance and impact in the world.

4. First we need to understand the essentially spiritual nature of the Kingdom

- a. Read Daniel's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2 – it speaks of God's everlasting Kingdom

A rock cut out but not by human hands

(Daniel 2:34)

- b. The Kingdom of Heaven

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

(John 18:36)

The Kingdom is not advanced by force

The seed of the Kingdom makes increase of itself (Mark 4:26-29)

You have to be born from above to enter this Kingdom (John 3:1-12)

The Kingdom is not primarily advanced by changing laws but by changing hearts.

- c. It is about the quality of life lived in the Holy Spirit

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit

(Romans 14:17)

5. Secondly, we must understand the progressive dynamic of the Kingdom – the Kingdom has come and is yet to come!

- a. The Kingdom is spoken of as being something we enter in the future

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

(2 Pet.1:10-11)

(See also Matt.7:21; Luke 21:31; 22:15;; Matt.25:34)

- b. It is also spoken of as something we have already entered

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves

(Col.1:13)

(Matt.11:11-14; 12:28; 23:13)

- c. And we are told that the Kingdom is continually advancing

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.

(Matt.11:12)

- d. There are then three stages of the Kingdom's coming:

- i. Initial
- ii. Progressive
- iii. Ultimate

- e. This both reconciles and challenges the expectations of Jesus' generation and many subsequent generations

- i. Some expected a military and political Kingdom in history similar to David's Kingdom
 - ii. Some expected an apocalyptic Kingdom (a heavenly, otherworldly Kingdom revealed at the end of time) – based on the prophecies of Daniel.
- f. It should also challenge our thinking now.
- i. We don't expect to get the fullness of the Kingdom now in terms of a perfect Christian utopia. Wheat and weeds grow together (Matt.13:24-30; 37-43)
 - ii. But nor do we project it all into some mystical future.
- g. It is the key to understanding what Jesus called the mystery or the secret of the Kingdom (Matt.13:11; Luke 8:10)

The new truth, now given to men by revelation in the person and mission of Jesus, is that the Kingdom which is to come finally in apocalyptic power, as foreseen in Daniel, has in fact entered into the world in advance in a hidden form to work secretly within and among men.

(Eldon Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*)

- h. It means that the future age to come has already penetrated this present age in which we live.

The powers of The Age to Come have penetrated This Age. While we still live in this present evil Age and while Satan is still the god of This Age, we may taste the powers of The Coming Age.

(Eldon Ladd)

- i. We live in the overlap of the Ages. We live in the future now!
- i. We experience the future by the Holy Spirit
 - He is the first-fruits of the harvest (Rom.8:23)
 - He is the deposit of our full inheritance (2 Cor.5:5)

6. Thirdly, it is good to realise the truth of the unstoppable advance of the Kingdom

- a. The dream in Daniel shows the small stone shatters the statue that represents the worldly kingdoms and then fills the whole earth – this is the picture of God's all conquering and everlasting Kingdom.

the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

(Daniel 2:35)

- i. The mountain of the Lord is exalted higher than all other mountains

In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

(Isaiah 2:2-4)

- ii. The church as the Kingdom community will be the greatest influence in our world

- b. Jesus communicates the same truth in the parable of the seed and tree.

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."

(Matthew 13:31-32)

(See also Dan.4:9-12)

- c. Jesus is bringing **all** his enemies beneath his feet (1 Cor.15:25-26)
- d. **All things** are being brought under his authority (Eph.1:10)
 - i. We should recognise that true spiritual *authority* is central to Kingdom
 - ii. Life in *community* is central to the expression of the Kingdom in our world
- e. The Kingdoms of this world **shall** become the Kingdom of God and of his Christ (Rev.11:15)
- f. The knowledge of God's glory **will** cover the earth as the water covers the sea (Isaiah 11:9)

- g. Therefore we can and should expect great progress of the gospel, the growth of the church and the advance of the Kingdom
 - i. We don't have to be intimidated by our enemies or apologetic about our faith
 - ii. We can be positive in our approach to life and to the world

7. Finally, we need to understand the pervasive influence of the Kingdom

- a. In one of his many parables about the Kingdom, Jesus compares it to yeast. (Matt.13:33).

"The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."
(Matt.13:33)

- i. The main point is that it goes through the whole dough – it permeates every part
- b. Some of the images of the advance of the Kingdom indicate that God starts with the small and seemingly insignificant – a small rock, a mustard seed, some yeast.
 - i. This counters any arrogant triumphalism
 - ii. God chooses the things that are not to shame the things that are
 - iii. God can use ordinary people to do extraordinary things
 - iv. The seemingly insignificant have the greatest power to change the world
- c. We should never underestimate the power of influence
 - i. We are to be dispersers of blessing (Gen.12:2-3)
 - ii. Seed-sowers, not weed-pullers!
 - iii. Actively engage in the world
- d. The Kingdom of God is going to get everywhere
 - i. Homes and schools
 - ii. Streets and marketplace
 - iii. Universities and businesses
 - iv. Urban and rural areas
 - v. Every world – of commerce, of education, of media, of medicine etc.

Trevor Lloyd
Community Church Huddersfield
10/11/06

