

## **It Ends with the Kingdom**

Well friends today we wrap up our Road trip through the Bible, and I think this has been a trip that many of you will remember judging by the all the feedback I've been getting about it.

Also you've been doing really well at remembering some of the sights we've seen along the way.

But as we finish off our trip today the question looms up before us – with all this traveling were have we ended up? Did we get anywhere? Does it matter?

Sometimes people say that the journey is more important than the destination, and some people say that it doesn't matter how you get there, just as long as you get there.

Well I want to show you that all we have gone through on this journey has been for the purpose of bringing us to our end destination of the Kingdom of God. The journey and the destination are intertwined, you can't reach the destination without the journey, and the journey prepares you for it.

## *The purpose for reading the bible*

So what we learn is that the main purpose of reading the bible is to end up at the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven.

So let me ask you a question to reflect on - why do you read the bible?

- Because I have too,
- Because I want wisdom
- Because I want spiritual guidance or insight
- Because I want to find the rules for living right
- Because its an interesting religious book
- Because I'm a bible scholar

There can be all sorts of reasons which we might have for reading the bible, unfortunately if we are not intentional about how we travel through the bible there is no guarantee that we will end up at the Kingdom.

This is why you find PhD bible scholars, very smart people who know the bible backwards and forwards in the original languages from the original manuscripts who read the bible but have no faith in Christ, can't accept miracles, and end

up saying that the bible is simply a collection of documents compiled by men over the years with no authority. They do not end up at the kingdom of heaven.

These folks are mistaken in their thinking that you arrive at truth by taking an “unbiased” stance in order to examine things. Remember I’ve said truth is all about perspective and the goal is to allow God to give us his perspective. So its up to us choose our bias when reading the bible, and my advice to you is to choose the one that leads to the Kingdom of God.

However, a warning – choosing this bias may mean that the Bible is going to lead you in places you may find difficult to accept; it will challenge your understanding of reality and push you out of your comfort zone. This is why many people choose to read the bible with a bias that only confirms what they already believe to be true about life and this world. But what our journey has been about is to learn how to approach, read, and understand the bible with bias that leads us to the Kingdom of God.

### *How to get to the Kingdom*

So lets see how what we have learned about the Bible on our road trip through it fits together to bring us to the Kingdom of Heaven.

First we start by recognizing that the Bible came to us as a record of how God had revealed himself to humans, God initiated it, and humans responded and recorded it and through the Holy Spirit God ensured that it was passed on. So the bible is not just a book that the church made up but a co-operative effort between God and those whom he revealed himself to. So Christians believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, the infallible word of God and its all about salvation through Jesus Christ.

The next step comes from realizing that both God and humans were involved in writing the bible.

Because of this the bible is made up of different types of literature which have different goals and purposes and you

need to understand this in order to read them correctly and hear what God wants to say to you through it.

So we have Wisdom, Narrative, Gospel, Law, Poetry, etc...in the Old and New Testaments.

But because God is at work in this and the bible is his Word to us and He speaks to us in this, these different kinds of literature all work together in such a way to give a unified theme to the Old and New Testaments, it's more than a collection of random experiences and pieces of literature. The whole is more than the sum of its parts.

The Old Testament – says the world is in a mess, but God promises to send a messiah to do something about it. It ends there with a cliff hanger waiting to see if this will come true.

The New Testament – answers the question by saying yes God kept his promise and the person and the work of Jesus Christ of Nazareth is how God did this.

But as we said our goal was to make bible reading simple but not simplistic and so we looked specifically for ways in which the NT showed that Jesus fulfilled the OT pictures and we saw

how Jesus was the serpent Stomper, the Lamb of God, and the Prince of peace.

Then, if you are serious about not wanting to be simplistic we saw that there was some unfinished business in these pictures and we were lead to understand why that was when we learned about the overall story of scripture and how it is made up of the four most significant events in reality – creation, fall, redemption and the promise of a new creation.

And in this overall story we learned about the kind of relationship we have with God, a covenant relationship. A relationship that is a gracious imposition, about loyalty and character, and we learned what the symbols of this relationship are – baptism and the Lord's Supper.

So this brings us to the Kingdom, in a way which shows us what the Kingdom of God, the kingdom of Heaven is really about. Because the journey prepares us for the destination, but without the destination the journey goes nowhere.

So what is the Kingdom?

First the nature of our covenant relationship with God tells us that the Kingdom of Heaven is the context where our relationship takes place. A covenant is established between a King and his subjects, it's about loyalty and service, and belonging and so we learn about the Kingdom of God that it impacts us personally because you and I belong to it, and we live in it.

Secondly the Kingdom of God is a place – the story of scripture teaches us that the borders of the Kingdom of God encompass all of reality. Why? Because of Creation – the first significant event – when God spoke everything into existence. It all belongs to God, he is the creator and the ruler and so that makes it his kingdom.

So what this means is that God has a claim on the world outside of the church and our congregation, it belongs to Him even if they don't want to, or don't recognize it. It means that you can't live a life where you are "Christian" at church and "normal" at work or school. The Kingdom of God extends

everywhere and as His subject you are called to be loyal and obedient to Him everywhere and in all situations.

The Kingdom of God is when through the covenant relationship God exercises his rule and reign over the creation through the obedience of his subjects – you and me.

Now it's important that you begin to see how the journey we took through the bible shapes what we understand God's kingdom to be. Others who don't follow this particular bias in reading the bible might still speak of a Kingdom too – but it's not the same one. They will fall into one of two extremes because they don't see the overall story of the scripture and the significance of its major events. So...

- 1) The Kingdom they speak of has little or nothing to do with our world – the emphasis instead is on a spiritual world, or heaven. What happens here to this planet and the creation is of little importance, what matters most is that people's souls are saved. So people are encouraged to say "the sinner's prayer" so that they will not perish when this world does, but can escape to heaven forever.

- 2) The Kingdom they speak of is just humans making progress in our world. There is no belief in existence of a spiritual reality; it can simply be explained away as emotional or psychological parts of our human brain. What matters most is helping people to feel good, act good, reach their potential. The Jesus in the bible was a good example of a human who was able to do that and therefore we should follow him.

Neither of these two views of the Kingdom of God are what you will understand the bible to be speaking about if you've taken the road trip through the Bible as we've outlined it, and it makes all the difference in how you think and therefore how you live your life.

*So, What do we do in the Kingdom?*

Because when we arrive at the Kingdom, we are to live in it. If you think the Kingdom has little or nothing to do with this world then you will live in that way. You will neglect what we've learned from the story of Scripture about God placing Adam and Eve in the garden and commissioning them to steward the earth. If you think the Kingdom is simply about human progress and potential and morals, then you will live as though it is possible for us on will power alone to overcome sin and evil. You will neglect what we've learned from the story of scripture that it was a spiritual issue which introduced sin and evil into our world and that it takes a spiritual solution to overcome this – a covenant relationship with God in Jesus Christ.

But if you understand because of how you've read the scriptures that the Kingdom is about God, in a covenant relationship with us, ruling over his creation and promising that one day this creation will be made new again. Because you know from the story of scripture that God's kingdom is already here, but the New Creation has not arrived yet. Then you live

your life posting signs to help others see the Kingdom, not so that they can save their soul – but so that they can recognize who their rightful King is, and they can also begin to live in the Kingdom waiting for the New Creation. After all when you’ve been on a great trip you want others to know how to get there as well. You send them postcards, bring home souvenirs and post your pictures online so friends and family can see them.

### How to Post Signs?

We start by learning what life is like in the Kingdom of God so we can live that way. So the scriptures tell us that life in God’s kingdom consists of

1. People love and trust in Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord. (Phil 2:9-11) What this means is that you and I are open, honest, and genuine that we have actual affection for Jesus, and we show it by participating in worshiping Him with others who feel the same. And we make it no secret that our loyalties lie with Him and others know this about us.

2. People show the fruit of the Spirit. ( Gal 5:22) Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness self-control. These character traits are self-explanatory, when the Holy Spirit fills us they become part of who we are and how we conduct ourselves and people take notice of them.
3. People seek out God’s intentions for creation and live accordingly – (Rom 8:20-21) Creation and New Creation in the Story of scripture give us insight into God’s intentions for creation, but we can also study the creation under the light of scripture to learn how God designed it.

For eg.

- I) God promises there will be no more sorrow or suffering or pain or tears, sickness or disease, so when people discover cures for diseases or ways to heal and cure, that is a sign of God’s Kingdom.
- II) Satan will be completely defeated in the New Creation – So when Christians resist the devil, expose the evil and the danger in the occult, and pray for God to stop Satan’s lies and destructive

actions in peoples lives that is a sign of God's Kingdom. Stomp on the serpent.

- III) When God created humans he created them Man and woman, distinct but complimentary and it was good – So when Christians help to end gender confusion in its many expressions, or provide a place where people can be honest about how they struggle with homosexuality and find forgiveness it is a sign of God's kingdom.

So these are some practical ways in which we can post Kingdom signs in our everyday lives. But remember, signs need to be clear if you are going to communicate properly. So as we post signs to God's Kingdom in our lives they need to have both words and actions, our actions also come from our understanding of scripture but people need to understand why we do what we do and so words to explain our beliefs and convictions are necessary, otherwise they'll miss the sign and miss out on taking a road trip through the bible which can lead them to Kingdom of God. Because

friends that is our destination, that is why we read scripture the way we do. I'll see you there. Amen.

Let us now read from scripture and look for what we've learned about God's Kingdom.