

Jul 14, 2018

Luke 17:20-37

The Certain Gospel: What is the Kingdom of God? Part 1/2

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I want to start today with an **ice-breaker question**. “If you could choose, who would you prefer to be in charge of your life?”

- a. Myself
- b. Scientist
- c. Celebrity
- d. Politician
- e. King

Now I want you to be **honest**. Don’t just give the answer you think I **want to hear**. Who could you trust to handle your life **well**? Maybe some of us would say, “I want to be in **control**, so I choose **myself!**” Are you sure you want that much responsibility? If you’re a **logical** thinker and want your life to be based on the **hard facts** of **reality**, you might choose a **scientist**. If you want to be **rich, famous, and successful**, you might choose a **celebrity**. If you want to have **influence** and run for **office**, you might choose a **politician**. If you really like the **dark ages**, you might choose **king**. Really, **why** would anyone choose king?

Did you know that Jesus is a **king**? In fact, he talks about kingdom all the time. We find “the kingdom” and “the kingdom of God” **39 times** in the Gospel of Luke.¹ In our passages today the Pharisees **ask** Jesus **when** the kingdom of God is coming and he says, “The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst.” (**Luke 17:20b-21**)

The Pharisees **seem to think** they know what the kingdom of God is (they’re actually wrong) and Jesus **definitely** knows what it is, but do you? I’ve **struggled** to understand the kingdom of God in the Bible.² Maybe you have too. This theme ties the **whole** Bible together from **beginning to end**. Today I’m going to give you a **Biblical overview** of the kingdom of God so we can come to fully **know** the **good king** who is **offering** to be in charge of our lives. Let’s start in the **first** book of the Bible.

Chapter 1. God is king.

I’ve broken today’s sermon into chapters because the Kingdom of God is more of a **story** than a **three-point sermon**. The kingdom of God is a story building towards a **consummation**, and ending which is really a new beginning. I’ve divided this story up into **12 chapters** but we don’t have all evening so in **Part 1** today we’re going to go through **7 chapters** and in **Part 2** next week we’ll **finish** up the story. Just like any good story it has to have a good beginning, and we find that in Genesis 1.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (NIV®)

I don't believe Moses wrote Genesis 1 to give us a **scientific explanation** of the **origin** of the earth. I don't think **Christians** and **scientists** should argue about the age of the earth in Genesis 1 because I believe God is revealing himself to be the king who **rules** over all creation.

Psalm 93:1-2

The Lord reigns, he is robed in majesty;
the Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength;
indeed, the world is established, firm and secure.
2 Your throne was established long ago;
you are from all eternity. (NIV®)

In Genesis 1 God creates a **kingdom** and appoints **vice-regents**, small “k” kings, to rule over it **with** him.

Chapter 2. People are called to rule.

God makes men and women in his image. One of the things that means is that humankind will rule over creation just like God.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” (NIV®)

The ESV says “let them have dominion...” Those who **rule** or have **dominion** are those who have been given **royal authority** by God. So God creates a **beautiful** world for all of nature and creation to share. Everything about it was perfect, good, and **harmonious**, and the Lord places **men** and **women** in this creation to keep it (Gen 2:15, 18). What could possibly go **wrong**?

Chapter 3. The first rulers fall short.

Despite Adam and Eve being created **without sin** and God inviting them to help him rule creation in perfect paradise, they give into temptation. The **serpent**, who we know as **Satan**, tempts Eve to eat a fruit that God had forbidden. He said she would become like God and **know** the things he knows. Eve takes the fruit, eats it, gives it to Adam who eats (Gen 3), and just like that the first rulers lead the whole world out from under God's good rule and into the realm of **darkness** and **sin**. The **kingdom of God** is **gone**.

Satan **tempted** Eve with a temptation he's still tempting each one of us with today. You don't need God. You can **rule** your life **without him**. I think that's a lie a woman named Valerie bought into. She writes:

Between the ages of **17 and 22** my life spiraled out of control. Due to **drugs, alcohol, and rebellion**, I lost everything. Even though I tried everything the world had to offer, I still couldn't seem to fill the **void** in my life. My life was no longer **fun** and **exciting**. The feeling of **depression** took hold of my life and I began to **cut myself** and **play with death**. When all hope was lost, my **family** stepped in and brought me to **Adult & Teen Challenge**. With a dramatic change, I **let go** and **let God** control my life. This process has taken a lot of discipline, strength, courage, and self-control. God has changed me from the **inside out**, and He will forever be the **leader** of my life.³

Teen Challenge is a **Christian Recovery Center** for **addicts**. It's a **12-18 month** program that's saved lot's and lots of lives. Do **you** really want to rule your life? When we take the reigns like Adam and Eve, we may feel free at first but it won't last long. When Adam and Eve removed themselves from the Kingdom of God, they came under another's kingdom, and his rule is **oppressive** and **evil**. His name is:

“the prince of this world” (John 12:31)

“the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (Ephesians 2:2)

“The god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4)⁴

See if you’re not under the rule of the **good king**, you’re under the rule of an **evil tyrant**. There’s no middle ground. But God promises to overthrow the tyrant. In Genesis 3 God curses the serpent:

Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel.” (NIV®)

This is called the “**proto-euangelion**” or “first gospel” which means “first good news.” It’s good news because God is going to send a **descendent** of Eve, another ruler, another king, to crush the head of the serpent, to defeat Satan’s rule. And so we humanity begin to wait. Under Satan’s rule we continue to **rebel** so much God sends a **flood** to wipe all of humanity out. But God hasn’t lost hope because after the flood when people have filled the earth again God chooses a **family** to bring his **kingdom** and **king** through.

Chapter 4. God gathers a kingdom people.

God begins a relationship with a man named **Abram** and promises him that he will bless him. He will make him into a great nation and will use his descendants to bless the world.

Genesis 12:2-3

“I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
3 I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.” (NIV®)

It’s through Abram (or **Abraham**) that God is going to destroy the prince of this world and restore the kingdom of God on earth. Here we see the kingdom of God is a:

1. **Reign:** God reestablishing his presence on earth.
2. **Realm:** God restoring all of creation from the fall.
3. **Redemption:** God redeeming his fallen subjects.

So if someone asks you, “**What** is the kingdom?” you can say “The kingdom of God a reign, a realm, and the redeemed.” The only time **enemy forces** ever occupied our **nation’s capital** was in the **war of 1812** when the **British** forced President **Madison** out of town and burned down the **capitol**, the **white house**, and several other buildings. Although Madison was still the President, for one day he not longer **reigned** in Washington DC, the **realm** burned, and his people needed to be **redeemed** from British rule. But Madison didn’t push the British out. They left because they wanted to. God promises to push Satan out. He has a plan to reestablish his reign, restore his realm, and bring redemption to his fallen subjects.

God is going to use Abraham and his **descendants** to bring God's **reign** on earth, the restoration of his **realm**, and the **redemption** of his people. Through Abraham's line God forms the **Hebrew** people. Although they spend **400 years** in captivity in **Egypt**, God delivers them and brings them to the promised land of **Israel** where they ask for a king (1 Samuel 8).

Chapter 5. God provides a human king.

When Israel asks for a king, they **reject** God as their king (1 Sam 8:5-9). But God knew this would happen. All the way back in **Deuteronomy 17** God gave **guidelines** for how their king should rule.

Deuteronomy 17:16-17 The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the Lord has told you, "You are not to go back that way again." 17 He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. (NIV®)

So the king couldn't acquire lots of horses, which meant he couldn't build a big **army**. He wasn't supposed to lead the people back to Egypt, which was a place of **oppression** but also **safety**. He was not supposed to **marry** a lot of women, which was a way of forming **political alliances**. And, he wasn't supposed to have a **big savings account** for a **rainy day**. But it doesn't stop there.

Deuteronomy 17:18-19 When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. 19 It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees (NIV®)

The king was supposed to take a copy of the **law**, the **Hebrew Bible**, and make a copy for himself, meditating and reading it every day of his life so that he could lead the people in obedience to God (v18-19). This king was supposed to do what Adam and Eve failed to do, rule **justly** while being **dependent** on God.

The kingdom of God is so much different than the worldly kingdoms we build. Our **nation** has **1 tanks**, **warships**, **fighter jets** and **missiles**, political **alliances**, and a little place called **Fort Knox**. I doubt any of our **political leaders** are **hand-copying** the Bible for themselves. It's true these guidelines are for the **nation of Israel** way back then, but they still **reflect** the kind of king that God is interested in.⁵ God gives Israel their **first king**, a man named **Saul**, but pretty soon he begins to acquire a big army and lots of wealth.

Chapter 6. The human kings fall short.

Saul is just the first king in a long line of kings who give into the temptation to rule **their way** instead of God's way. Even Solomon, the wisest king of Israel, gathers **12,000 horses**, has **700 wives**, and lots and lots of **gold** (1 Kings 4:26; 10:14-17; 11:3).

1 Kings 11:6 So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done. (NIV®)

One thing that Solomon does get right is he builds the **temple** and the **king's palace** right next to each other, showing the **unity** God intended for the king and God to experience. Solomon did **love** the Lord and was a **template** for a good king, but he wasn't enough. After him came **king after king** who the Bible says "did what was **evil** in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kings 13:2). That phrase appears **15 times** in the books of **1st and 2nd Kings**.⁶ Each of the kings either loves **power** too much, or **money**, or **conquest**, or **women**, or relies on **politics** instead of God. Some **genuinely** love God, but even they are **flawed**. None of them are that king we

were promised back in **Genesis 3**. None of them are spreading God's kingdom reign, realm, or redemption from **Genesis 12**. There's a **pattern** of continually **falling short**.

There's a **lesson for us** in this. If you are looking to the **kings of this world** to rescue us you are sadly mistaken. Let's go back to our **opening ice-breaker**. Do you really want a scientist to rule your life? That sounds good till you remember **scientists** invented the **atom bomb** and **eugenics**. A celebrity could make you famous and wealthy but just as **unhappy** and **miserable** as many of them seem to be. **Politicians** would never lead us into **unjust wars** or sell their vote to **private interests** or for **personal gain**, would they? Who are you looking to? **President Trump**? **Hilary**? **Elon Musk**? **Mark Zuckerberg**? **JK Rowling**? **Oprah**? If you're looking to a human king, they will fall short. But God doesn't forget his promises.

Chapter 7. God promises a final king.

The best king of Israel was not Solomon, but his father, **King David**. God calls him "a man after his own **heart**" (1 Sam 13:14). He was a good king who loved and **meditated on God's word**, even writing most of the **Psalms**. Although he was closer to the type of king God wanted, he didn't bring God's perfect reign, realm, or redemption. He too had **flaws**. But he did want to build a **temple** for God to help bring about those things. God says he won't build it, but his son Solomon will. Instead, the Lord gives David a **gift**.

2 Samuel 7:16 Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever." (NIV®)

God promises David that it's through his **line** that the future king will come.⁷ He will **reign** justly. He will restore the **realm** of heaven on earth. He will **redeem** God's broken people. He will be called God's **anointed one**. God anointed **prophets, priests, and kings** in Israel as a symbol of his **divine authority** on them.⁸ The **Hebrew** word for "anointed one" is **Messiah**. The **Greek** translation of the **Messiah** is **Christos**, or **Christ**. This Messiah or Christ is **not** going to be a **normal human king**, but will be **God himself** stepping down into our world. In the Old Testament we find this prophecy about the coming king.

Daniel 7:13-14 "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Do you want to meet this **final king**, the **good king**? Do you want to meet this **son of man**? Do you want to meet the **anointed one**, the **Messiah**, the **Christ**? Do you want him to take **dominion** of your life? Do you want the **one person** who **isn't broken** by sin to **love** you and **care** for you and **lead** you into a life of **holiness** and **joy**? Then come back next week for **part 2**.

Pastor Jonathan Romig preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church.

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Jul 14, 2018

¹ Murray, Stephen. "What is the Kingdom of God in Luke's Gospel?" <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.484.84&rep=rep1&type=pdf> Accessed 7/10/2018.

² The following booklet provides a concise but detailed overview of the Kingdom of God. Please download a copy. Um, Stephen. The Kingdom of God. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/publication/the-kingdom-of-god/> Accessed 7/12/2018.

³ Teen Challenge: Success Stories. <https://www.teenchallengeusa.com/about/success-stories> Accessed 7/13/2018.

⁴ Was turned towards these verses by Bible Q&A: Who Really Has the Authority on Earth, God or Satan? by Pastor Tim. <https://unlockingthebible.org/2016/08/god-vs-satan-authority/> Accessed 7/11/2018.

⁵ Sprinkle, Preston. Fight: A Christian Case for Non-Violence (Kindle Location 711). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition. This is where I learned many of these points. Read chapter 3 "Israel's Bizarre Warfare Policy."

⁶ 1 Kings 11:6; 14:22; 15:26; 15:34; 16:7; 16:25; 16:30; 22:52; 2 Kings 3:2; 8:18; 8:27; 13:2; 13:11; 14:24; 15:9.

⁷ Jeremiah 23:5

⁸ Psalms 105:15; Leviticus 6:22; 2 Samuel 22:51.