

Preaching the Kingdom

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[0 : 00] preaching the kingdom of God. If we had Mark 1.15 before us as a text even, reading at verse 14, Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe the gospel. So they were told by Mark that Jesus was preaching the gospel, the good news of the kingdom of God.

And then a quotation from that preaching, The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel. Now that expression, the kingdom of God, is one that you find throughout the Synopsys Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke especially.

You also find it frequently in the book of Acts and it certainly informs the preaching of the early church. And yet for some strange reason, and maybe it's just my own understanding, it's rarely found in the lips of the people of God.

I can't think really of any time a fellowship I've had with the Lord's people when they've actually used the phrase or the term, the expression, the kingdom of God. And it's not all that often found in preaching either.

[1 : 21] Maybe that's just my own experience, but that seems to be the case. And yet it was so significant in the first century, and yet here we are in the 21st century, and you wonder, has something changed?

Why is it perhaps that we in the church don't speak of the kingdom of God? Why is it we don't preach the kingdom of God? Perhaps we do, maybe we do it under different terminology.

We'll come to that. I think there may be some reasons for this. First of all, there may be archaic language. The kingdom of God.

That kind of language, the concept behind it, people say that's quite alien to what we would see or think even today. Even within the church, and certainly outside the church, if you went around speaking of the kingdom of God, people really may not be able to understand what you're talking about.

So as people say, well, if you can't use language like that, then change the language, use something that people can identify with more readily, and preach it that way.

[2 : 28] Perhaps. But archaic language in that sense. Different worldview. There are preachers, of course, who are very aware of the significance of the kingdom of God within the New Testament, and particularly within the Gospels.

But when they come to preach on a text or a passage that is focused on the kingdom of God, they feel, well, in order to make this understandable, I'm going to have to delve into some biblical history.

I'm going to have to relate it to the Old Testament. And I really feel that I'll bore my people by doing that. And I don't have that much time. I've only got 30 or so minutes in a sermon.

How can I find time to root these things, to explain them properly in their historical context? Because after all, it's a different world we're living in today.

People have a different worldview. They can't be expected to understand the worldview that a phrase like the kingdom of God and the Gospels is in touch with.

- [3 : 35] Another reason, perhaps, is that it's incompatible with reality. After all, you tend to look around, perhaps, in some of your own congregations, your own communities, your own nation, and you begin to ask yourself, well, where are the signs that the kingdom of God has come, is coming?

Because you look at the fortunes of your own ministry, maybe things haven't worked out the way you planned, and you left the college, or whatever, maybe you had great dreams of what you would be able to achieve by His grace, and here you are, some years down the line, and you think, wow, things have not turned out the way that I intended at all.

And kingdom of God, reign of God, perhaps you don't see all that much of it. And then when you gather together as a prep session, or as a deacon's court, or as committees within the church, does kingdom of God really inform the policymaking of our church?

Perhaps not. Because it's difficult for the church to preach and teach, but no longer influences its own policies and practices with respect to its mission to the world and believers.

Incompatible, then, with our own experience of reality. A fourth reason, perhaps, why it maybe is not emphasized so much as confused interpretation.

- [5 : 07] Perhaps, really, people are genuinely not sure just what does the expression mean. After all, it's used in a variety of different contexts.

It's associated with different verbs. You might hear about the kingdom coming, seeking a kingdom, entering a kingdom, the kingdom being described as this or that.

How can you fit all these things together? And it's not always easy to do so. Some people will understand the expression, kingdom of God, to refer to the church of Jesus Christ.

And I reckon, if you asked folks in your own congregation, that's probably the answer they would come up with. I tried it within my own family, and that's the answer they came up with.

Others may think, well, it's the cause of God in the world. So we're saying, your kingdom come. We're really asking for God's cause to prosper. Or, they might say, well, it's just my being a Christian.

- [6 : 10] I've entered the kingdom of God. It's just being saved in that sense. That's what kingdom of God means. The trouble is, if you take these kind of interpretations, you'll find it very hard to fit them into all the various contexts where the expression occurs in the Gospels.

people, and sometimes preachers, then, are not really sure how to interpret the concept, so they focus on what they can understand, and they preach that with passion, with certainty, and with authority.

The point to notice that whatever the reasons for not using or explaining this kind of phrase or concept, the kingdom of God, the outcome may well be that the church is lacking something.

They have become ignorant of a central concept of the New Testament, a concept which the early church would never have dreamt of living without, and a concept which they would never have thought of as just the clothing of some other more central message.

Not at all. The same kind of thing has happened as opposed with covenant terminology. You could have repeated the last four points by that as well.

- [7 : 33] Archaic terms, different worldview, incompatible with reality, confused interpretation. How can we possibly preach covenant theology?

How can we preach kingdom of God terminology? Some ways, of course, as you know, they are very linked together. One in the Old Testament, one in the New, and one flows into the other.

Now, though these comments, I think, are exaggerated and intentionally so, I do think there is some confusion among the Lord's people and possibly among pastors and teachers over the kingdom of God.

And I would like just to spend some time, first of all, introducing the concept of the kingdom of God, attempting to assess its significance within the church in general, and then finally its significance for preachers in particular.

The kingdom of God, what is it? Sixty-six times that expression, kingdom of God, occurs in the New Testament.

[8 : 44] in addition, Matthew's gospel has the kingdom of heaven thirty-one times. So you're talking close to a hundred occurrences of just this phrase, the kingdom of God.

And of course, kingdom of heaven, kingdom of God, mean exactly the same thing, as you're well aware. Now, the expression can of course be used in a variety of different ways, associated with different verbs.

It's often found with the verb to come, the kingdom of God has come, is at hand, is near, is coming, will come in the future. It may be described using various similes in the parables.

It's like a seed that is sown, it's like various things. The kingdom of God is something which is spoken of that can be sought.

Seek first the kingdom of God. Don't worry about the material possessions. Don't let these be the primary focus. Seek first the kingdom of God. With Nicodemus, what was he told?

[9 : 56] You can't see the kingdom of God. You can't enter the kingdom of God without the new birth. You're associating this term, this expression with so many different verbs.

The kingdom of God may be inherited. It may be attacked from the outside. In Paul and 1 Corinthians it may be presented by the father to the son.

And you think how can you possibly keep all this together? Well there are three things I think which are crucial to understand with respect to the kingdom of God.

First of all it's associated very much with God's sovereign saving intervention. When we say the kingdom of God I think we are to understand that dynamically.

We are to understand it in terms of power being exerted. We are to understand that God exerting his reign. Of course God has always been God.

[11 : 02] He has never ceased to be God. He has always been powerful always full of majesty. And yet there are times when he does not exert his reign as he does at other times.

And when we speak of the kingdom of God coming we are very much speaking of God exerting his reign his sovereign reign his saving reign through which he will set all things right.

Now we can understandably move into a territory a geography where we think of the kingdom of God as a sphere over which God himself reigns.

And ultimately that's where it will take us. A new heavens and a new earth where only righteousness will dwell and every knee will bow to God the kingdom of God.

That will be the result that at the moment is very much this dynamic approach that we must understand. It's coming his reign has been exerted he has risen to intervene he has come and that I think is what we must understand.

[12 : 18] Of course that reign this coming of God's kingdom this rising up of God to intervene is precisely what was promised in the Old Testament.

Man's sin and man's rebellion was that to have the last word not at all. Not even when they sinned as a people as the people of Israel his own treasured possession who were given more than any other people in the world even when they chose deliberately to sin against God to rebel against their maker was that to have the last word?

Amazingly no. God himself would come and rescue his people from their enemies. Now there were many folks of course in the first century who were expecting the intervention of God.

They looked around they saw the Romans present in their land. Yes they had come back from the exile but there were the oppressing Romans. They looked at the temple but no Shekinah glory.

They were really looking at the people and the people were they giving evidence that they were renewed in their hearts? No. And they were longing for the reign of God to come to change things.

[13 : 40] Of course some of them became very nationalistic and they were just thinking of God's intervention God rising up God exerting his reign God coming as king to rescue them from their national enemies to confirm Israel's special place in God's purposes in a way that would actually provoke the Gentile nations to envy.

So they were expecting God to come expecting God to reign to set his people Israel free to make them great again in a nationalistic sense as they were perhaps in the days of David and Solomon.

But there were others and they were thinking far more biblically. They were expecting an intervention of God a reign of God that would bring what they spoken of as the consolation of God.

you remember the way it was. They were expecting nothing less than the fulfilment of the kind of things that we find mentioned in Isaiah 40.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith the Lord. You know the passage and you know it well. There you find God's coming, God's consolation associated with forgiveness of sins and coming in a way that will show the Lord himself arriving to reign and in a way in which he will tend his flock, gather his lambs, bringing that consolation that they so much needed and never ever deserved.

[15 : 27] the sovereign intervention of the Lord himself is what Isaiah spoke of and you'll find it hard to read, especially the second part of Isaiah without understanding that.

This message of his arrival and activity is what Isaiah says should be proclaimed to Jerusalem and to Zion. What is it? Here is your God.

He's come, look at him. And what happens in verse 12 in chapter 40, right down to the end, there's this marvelous portrayal of the might of God.

What kind of God has come to tend to gather the lambs and the sheep? What kind of God? A God of might, a God of power. That's the kind of God who comes, one who can really change things, one who can really rescue them from their enemies, no matter how powerful or mighty they may be.

So you can well understand when you get that kind of promise in the Old Testament, and people aware of their need in the days before the coming of Christ, they would be longing for the consolation, longing for that comfort, longing for the change in things, spiritually, as well as nationally, longing for the arrival of God to glorify his temple, longing for the people to be changed so that the new covenant would come into action, so that people would obey God from the heart, longing for that time when everyone would bow the knee to God and acknowledge him in his glory.

[17 : 15] They were longing for that consolation, and they spoke about it, Anna, Simeon, Zacharias, Elizabeth, people like that, they gathered together, and what did they speak of?

The consolation of God. That's what Luke tells us that they were expecting, the consolation that God himself would bring, and it would result from the direct, personal, sovereign intervention of God.

God himself would come, he is the one who would set things right, he is the one who would bring about the great restoration that was begun with the fall of man into sin in the garden of Eden, but was seen again and again and again throughout the history of humanity and even the history of the nation of Israel.

They were waiting then for this great restoration which would be universal in its significance. I knew heavens and I knew earth, something that would touch the whole world and at the same time something that would be amazingly professional, tending the lambs, gathering the sheep.

Now the intervention of God, as I'm sure they would have thought of it, would involve several things, but primarily the rescue of God's people from every single one of their enemies, their restoration to God himself as a people, each one of which, in the words of Adolf Schlatter, who would will the will of God with the whole of their will.

[19 : 07] A beautiful way to speak of what God is doing when he's drawing a people to himself. He's drawing a people who will the will of God with the whole of their will.

That kind of single mindedness, that's what he desires and will achieve in all the people that he will gather to himself.

Yes, it will climb us in the great restoration of the whole universe to God's purpose in a way that will reflect nothing that is contrary to the glory of God.

God. So there's the kingdom of God then as the reign of God. This dynamic understanding, the idea of God's coming, exerting his reign, intervening in such a way that is bringing about the great final restoration.

It's begun. The second thing to understand the kingdom of God in the New Testament is that the sovereign, saving intervention of God takes place through the coming of Jesus.

[20 : 24] The kingdom of God is associated very much with the passion and work of Jesus in the first century. His coming is the keystone of the reign of God.

You simply cannot speak of the exertion of God's reign in New Testament terms without associating it with the passion and work of Jesus Christ.

Remember John the Baptist. What did he say? There's someone coming after me who is mightier than I am. That was his conception. He could have spoken of his holiness and later on he would be very aware of that.

But he's determined by God's spirit to speak of his might. There's someone coming who is mightier than I am. And what will he do? He'll baptize with the Holy Spirit.

And they're immediately linking that to Ezekiel 36. This cleansing, this renewal in the heart that will result in people obeying God from the heart.

[21 : 29] God sanctified. Well, there's one mightier coming. Of course, he's referring to Jesus. He comes to rule on God's behalf as a Davidic Messianic king to rescue God's people from their enemies and to restore them to faithfulness to God.

There were many kings in the Old Testament and they were quite happy to lead the people but not always to God. But Jesus is a king who will draw people to himself and in such a way that they are being restored to the Father himself in faithfulness.

And God has given to Jesus this authority on earth and Jesus himself was in no doubt as to his own significance.

You may read many books on the kingdom of God and many of them may give you the impression that Jesus didn't really understand his own significance. That he was really beating about in the dark, not sure of what the outcome would be.

Now that just does not accord with New Testament facts. He was aware of his own significance and certainly that is true from the time of his baptism.

[22 : 54] He was the one through whom God's sovereign intervention, the kingdom of God, would take place in him and through him.

And that's seen of course in several ways. First of all there's the miracles. The miracles testify to the power of God at work through Jesus.

It must have been quite something to be alive at that time when disease in certain localities was done away with, where people's illnesses were removed, when even death itself was reversed.

The miracles, they are huge symbols telling us of what happens when God exerts his reign, when he exerts his power for the benefit of his people, rescuing them from their enemies.

We normally classify the miracles into four groups. There's the nature miracles, where you find God through Jesus stilling the sea.

[24 : 04] There's the waves, but he just stills them with a word and there's a great calm at incredible speed. Then you also find something like the creation of bread.

There you have a few loaves and fishes and he just moves his hand and just deals them out to the disciples and he just keeps on doing it, it's always there. He just creates bread so effortless.

When God exerts his reign, there are these kind of nature miracles. Then there are also of course healings from things that may be very minor like skin infections, progressing on to maybe more deep leprosies, all the way to blindness where people could never see from birth and yet here they are now being able to see.

People who are deaf coming to hear for the first time, people who are paralysed finding strength in their muscles that they had never known ever before and the ability to use them even.

This is God's intervention, God's reign and when he comes he genuinely changes things. He can change nature, he can even remove illness.

[25 : 26] exorcisms. This is when we find Jesus himself on God's behalf speaking to demons, commanding them to depart from any individual, just come out of him.

That's all it takes, just a word, come out of him and they have to come. they can't stop themselves. They must do it because the king has come, God's reign has begun.

It's not what Jesus said, he's among them and if I, he says, by the spirit of God, by the finger of God, cast out demons, know, he says, the kingdom of God has come.

Know it, the kingdom of God, the reign of God. The final group of miracles of course are and I, every year there's a word that I find difficult to say in class and for a whole year this was one of the words, re-livification and I struggled with that every time it came up, re-livification but now, as you can see, I have mastered it and that's tremendously encouraging.

Re-livification a fancy way of course, people being brought back from the dead. That itself, we read of it, we know it's in our Bibles, we tell it as stories in our worship time with our kids, but it actually happened.

[27 : 05] People were reversed in death. They were brought back to life. Still remember John Blanchard speaking of that, must have been the Northern Convention many years ago, there's Lazarus, he is alive and he dies.

And then Jesus comes and he's alive. Of course he says the next thing he did was to carry on dying. And that's true. The kingdom of God has come, it will yet come in such a way that there will be no more death.

But you see, the miracles testify to the power of God at work in Jesus. That's how Jesus himself wants the reign of God to be understood.

You remember when doubting John the Baptist was in prison, he sends messengers to Jesus asking, are you the one that was to come or should we expect someone else?

These were, I think, moments of genuine doubt. there are reasons for that. But what did Jesus do? He sent back a message after he had performed more miracles.

[28 : 20] And the message was very much in terms of Isaiah 35, the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the lepers had cleansed, the deaf healed, the dead are raised, and the poor had good news preached to them.

And it's all one for Jesus. this enormous transformation, if you know the context of Isaiah 35, from something that was a wilderness and desolate to a place flowing with water.

That's the kind of transformation that takes place when God comes in his glorious power to reign, to effect saving change, and he does it through Jesus.

So the kingdom of God, the reign of God, was knocking on the doors of individuals in their knees. And these miracles were indications of the reign of God, which was destroying the effects of the devil's activity that had begun through the fall of humankind into sin.

So these miracles take place, as Jesus himself indicates, because he was the mighty one. He has bound the strong one, Satan, and he is plundering his goods.

[29 : 45] You remember the context? People are saying to him, oh yes, we know why these demons are coming out, because you are really on the side of the else. You're on the side of the devil.

No, he says. He says, he is mighty, he is strong, but a stronger one has bound him and is now plundering his goods, i.e.

the reign of God has come, the kingdom of God has arrived, God is exerting his reign through me, and the devil's work is being destroyed, bit by bit by bit.

Then there's the teaching. This also is evidence of the coming of the reign of God that transforms everything. The teaching of Jesus, and especially his parables, reflect the immense significance of what is taking place with the arrival of God's reign in Jesus.

In parable after parable, Jesus explains what the kingdom of God, what the reign of God is like. He doesn't leave people just with a phrase, the kingdom of God, the reign of God.

[31 : 03] He says, let me tell you what it's like when God exerts his reign, as he's doing now through me. He says, it will be like a, like sowing which will lead to a harvest.

It will be over a period of time that God's reign will come. It will not happen. instantly. It will lead to a harvest.

Make no mistake about it. However, much of the seed may seem to be lost by going on the path or on the thorns or whatever, be sure there will be a good crop.

There will be a harvest. The kingdom of God, the reign of God, he says, is something that begins small but will have universal significance. just like the mustard seed, so and so tiny, you think it won't grow into much, it grows into something much bigger than it seems at the beginning.

So it is with the reign of God. It seems tremendously small, this one man in Galilee, 30 or so years of age. And yet, what happens there will eventually lead to a whole universe being transformed and a people being saved, each of which will will the will of God with the whole of their will.

[32 : 25] He explains it. It will also be something that will grow by extension rather than by a series of interventions. It will be like leaven.

When the leaven is put into the dough, it will spread. And that's how the kingdom of God will come. It won't be punctuated by huge, dramatic, appearances from heaven.

No. It will spread like yeast through the dough. Its method of growth will not always be fully understood. There will be times when you scratch your head at how God's reign is coming.

Like a farmer who sows a seed goes out the next day and he sees it's grown a little and he doesn't know how it grew. He doesn't understand the process.

He doesn't understand how life is really showing such evidence. And yet it is. And each day he goes out he sees more and more.

[33 : 29] Well the kingdom of God, the reign of God is like that says Jesus. There will be times when you'll scratch your head and you'll think what's happening? How is it progressing? And yet the Lord knows.

And through the parables then he presents people with a description of what God himself is like in his reign. You see the parables. If you even just think of each parable and take all the parables together and think what have I learned about God through the parables?

It would be an amazing series of sermons in itself. He's like the father of the prodigal son. He's the man seeking a lost sheep. God's people.

How are they presented in the parables? God's people are presented as those who respond to the reign of God. Who ensure that nothing they have can come between themselves and the blessings brought by the reign of God.

It's like the kind of man who finds treasure in a field, says Jesus. And he finds it and he knows it's worth so much he'll sell everything else just to make sure that he gets it.

[34 : 43] He doesn't want to lose this priceless treasure. Well that says Jesus what the kingdom of God is like. He says people will come to see the blessings of the kingdom, the blessings brought when God exerts his reign through Jesus.

And they will want it so much they won't want anything to come between them and receiving these blessings. blessings. The peril of great price.

On the other hand, those who reject the blessings offered when God comes to reign through Jesus are presented as those who are on the outside, those who are in the darkness, those who are ready for unquenchable fire.

Now the parables, they're strange stories in many ways. Of course they were told at a certain time in the ministry of Jesus.

They were told before the whole secret was out. They were told in the early days when the kingdom was being announced first of all.

[35 : 55] And as such they revealed that something momentous was taking place. This is God's reign. And think of it. Everybody who followed Jesus, that's what they heard, parable after parable, repeated in different locations again and again.

Taught in Galilee, taught in Jerusalem, taught in the Decapolis, wherever he went, preaching the parables, declaring the kingdom of God, explaining what it was like.

And people would gain the impression, something momentous is taking place. God is exerting his reign. So, this revelation going on with the parables, they reveal, but at the same time they conceal.

Because they're not really making plain how the reign of God will take place. They're not really explaining the great hinge events which are necessary for the kingdom of God to achieve its goal, i.e.

Christ's death and resurrection. Nevertheless, in telling these parables, Jesus is challenging people and challenging the status quo.

[37 : 14] And in a very gentle, disarming manner, he confronts prevailing conceptions of what the reign of God was thought to be like.

Who would benefit from it and who would not. And in telling these parables, he's saying, you think it's going to be this way? Let me tell you what it's really like.

And you know, just by telling a story, he's interacting with their thinking, he's challenging them to think differently and to respond by saying, yes, I want part in this reign of God.

I want to be among the good ones. I want to have the peril of great price. So you see, in telling the parables, Jesus is not just describing the reign of God.

He's actually bringing the reign of God. Even in telling a story, the reign of God is in action. People's thinking is changed and they come and they follow.

[38 : 30] And through these parables, Jesus presents the people with a God who is able to bless with unimaginably precious blessings and warning them at the same time that their response to the arrival of the reign of God and Jesus can have the most marvellous results for those who respond favourably and the most fearful consequences for those who choose either to ignore it or oppose it.

and it's open to both. That's why Jesus can say at the end of the Sermon on the Mount the man building his house on the sand the man building his house on the rock.

You're hearing my words, you're hearing my teaching, you're hearing my parables, this is the reign of God. How you respond to that will have consequences for the future.

So you've got the miracles, the parables testify to the coming of the reign, the kingdom of God and Jesus. Thirdly, you've got the crucifixion and the subsequent resurrection of Jesus.

He says he has come to give his life as a ransom for many. You know, Jesus' death and resurrection, maybe these don't occur so much in the parables, that kind of teaching.

[40 : 00] But Jesus gives explicit teaching to his disciples prior to his death. He warns them, I will suffer, I will be put to death, I will be buried, but I will rise again.

He prepares his disciples for what will happen. Now this is the same person who said the kingdom of God. I am among you, if I cast out demons, the kingdom of God is among you.

I am here, the king has arrived. And at the same time, the king is saying, hey, I am going to suffer, I am going to die, I am going to be buried, but I am going to rise again.

Now, we can't divorce these two things. These two things are intertwined. Even when you come to the Lord's Supper, and I am sure I will be looking at this.

When Jesus is having the people, the twelve, gathered around him, and when he is explaining to them the symbols of the bread and the wine, he speaks about the giving of his own body, the shedding of his own blood, at the same time as he speaks of the kingdom of God and the reign of God.

[41 : 17] And you understand by that, you see, that both must be held together. Jesus' death, Jesus' resurrection, they're both part of the coming of the reign of God.

His death takes place because he has been elected by God and rejected by man. His resurrection will take place because he has been vindicated by God, despite the rejection of man.

And he's exalted to the right hand of power. And that's where it was always going. That's where the reign of God had always intended to bring Jesus.

Through the cross and the resurrection to the right hand of God. So the death of Jesus does not take place because God's reign has hit the barriers of the devil's might, but because this was the only way in which God could actually restore a people to himself who would have their sins pardoned and who would will the will of God with the whole of their will.

So the kingdom of God is God's saving sovereign intervention. salvation. It's that sovereign saving intervention through Jesus. Thirdly, it's a saving intervention which will be consummated with the final coming of Jesus.

[42 : 58] It's a waiting consummation. The kingdom has come. The kingdom will come.

Both are true. As theologians have said for a long time now, it has already begun. It has not yet been consummated. It's been inaugurated.

It will come to its climax. And Jesus does not pretend. He doesn't leave the church with the impression it's all happening now.

No, he says, there are things that belong to the future and belong with my second, my final coming. The kingdom of God will be consummated then.

He doesn't deceive them then into thinking that things will happen quickly in the reign of God. But he makes clear there will be a consummation. It will be associated with his own parousia.

[44 : 02] When he will come with the power and with the glory of the Father. Then God's people, the true Israel, represented by the twelve at the Lord's Supper, they will be blessed at that consummation.

And that consummation is as certain as the resurrection of Jesus. No doubt about it. So having looked at these three things briefly, it's clear that Jesus was greatly aware of the immense significance of what was taking place with the arrival of God's reign and kingdom through his own personal presence and activity.

And throughout his ministry, Jesus himself urges people to seek the kingdom of God, to enter the kingdom of God, to allow it to become the most significant factor in their relationship with God and in their relationship with their fellow man and in their mission with the world.

Their thinking must now take account of the fact that God has done something of personal and universal significance in Jesus.

Something which has colossal proportions. In some, he says, you must repent. You must believe in the gospel.

[45 : 35] You must turn from every other conception of the reign of God. Every other way of trying to achieve the blessings that God would desire for his people.

Repent and believe in the good news. Now, of course, the good news, the gospel, these words were spoken before Jesus died and rose again.

This is Jesus saying, the very fact that I have come, that God is exerting his reign in me, is good news. Respond to that now.

Now. Believe. And in the end, believers are those who acknowledge that God's reign has begun through Jesus in a way that impacts upon themselves and will one day come to a certain climax.

Well, if that's a brief description of what the kingdom of God was, was a reality for the early church and it must continue to be a reality for all generations of believers, including our own.

[46 : 49] Several ways. First of all, our world view. the gospels, you just think of it, why has the Lord given us the gospels?

Why has it given us a New Testament canon? Why has it given us these four gospels in particular? It's so that we might gain some understanding of what it was really like when God exerted his reign in Jesus Christ.

God imagine if you and I did not have Matthew, Mark or Luke. Imagine if we didn't have the narrative contained there. All we knew was that God exerted his reign in the past 2000 years ago through Jesus.

We wouldn't know much. But because we have the narratives there, we can gain some understanding of what things are like when God exerts his reign.

the implications for the individual, for the church, for the world, for the devil, for the arrival of the kingdom of God.

[48 : 00] And Jesus wants us to remember that. Do this in remembrance of me. Not just that I die for you, but my whole ministry.

Remember my whole ministry. Remember the kingdom of God. Don't forget it. it's been inaugurated.

It's been confirmed through the death and the resurrection of Jesus. It will come to its consummation. And the worldview presented in the Gospels is the one that must impact our worldview in the church today.

we should be able to appreciate the final stage of the great restoration has now begun. And all spheres of existence and experience must bear its impact.

So whether we are discussing something like sin and temptation, we must discuss it in the light of the fact that God's reign has come. Sin is no longer what it was. Temptation is no longer what it was. God's reign has come. New hearts and holiness. Things can really happen in the lives of believers. God's reign has come. God is changing things.

[49 : 25] Sickness and deceives. Yes, we face them every day. But know that God's reign has begun. And one day there will be a world where the reign of God will be so evident there will be no sorrow or death whatsoever. Released from demonic oppression. Yes, that's a reality. It's possible.

The reign of God has actually begun. Death itself. That will be finally reversed. The reign of God has begun. This is the reality. All of these kind of things then are affected by the arrival of God's reign in Jesus as the Gospels testify. That was the reality of which the church was so aware in the first century. Well, if the church is to be informed in its thinking by the synoptic Gospels and the four Gospels indeed, it should also seek to have its conception of the kingdom of God. The conception of the kingdom of God moulded by the book of Acts. By seeing the kingdom of God in action there. Like us, the early church in the book of Acts did not enjoy the physical presence of Jesus. Very few of them did. Perhaps 500 or so. They didn't enjoy that physical presence of Jesus either in his pre-resurrection or his post-resurrection state. They faced society. A pluralistic society.

Different world views. Current and not society. Cherished earnestly by various groups. And yet, did they wince? Not at all.

They're absolutely convinced of the sovereignty of God at work through the ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. Especially in light of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

And what do they do? They say, call on the name of the Lord. It doesn't matter what world view you represent. You don't call on the name of the Lord. You will not be saved. They're so convinced that he is Lord.

[51 : 53] And it's the kingship of God that comes across. Particularly in the early chapters of the book of Acts. The kingship of God exerted through Jesus permeates their minds. And you see that even from some of the psalms that fill their worship. What psalms are quoted in the book of Acts? You'll find that they are each linked in some way with the kingship of God. You've got Psalm 2. You are my son. I have installed you on Zion.

And that's what the church was so aware of. Psalm 16. Rising out of the grave. Going to a path of life. That is the journey through which the king came. So that he could ascend triumphantly to the right hand of God.

Psalm 45. The king marrying his bride. Psalm 110. The Lord said to my Lord, sit my right hand till I make your foes a foodstool.

Psalm 46. The early church never felt themselves to be part of a movement that was taking place alongside other movements.

Psalm 46. The early church. Psalm 47. The early church may have lacked clarity and definition, you might say, in some aspects of theology.

[53 : 35] There's no doubt whatsoever they grasped the certainty of the centrality of Jesus and his reign to the great restoration. The relentless reign of God had begun.

Look at the letters which make up the New Testament. You find this awareness of what? The will of God. Paul's an apostle by the will of God.

People are converted in the purpose of God. They're drawn together in God's good pleasure. As though the will of God the king was what really was the basis for all these churches coming into existence.

Individuals and churches are addressed as those who have been unchangeably and eternally saved under the reign of God.

The kingdom of God is being prepared by Jesus, ready to be presented to the Father. The book of the Revelation likewise. The kingdom of God is being prepared by Jesus. There you find this magnificent emphasis on the kingdom of God.

[54 : 47] The reign of God. Even when things seem to be going awry. It's not. It's the Lamb who is on the throne. And the realities of Revelation 21 and 22 will unquestionably come to be part of the Lord's people's experience.

So it's the privilege and the responsibility of the church to ensure that the minds of their people are filled with this great fact.

The reign of God has come. And they are on the winning side. Every time I use that phrase on the winning side I think of a man up in Sutherland.

Is it Sutherland? Is it Sutherland? It's a roger anyway. Yes. The winning side. You might all have met this wee man. Polio in his little hunchback. But what an encouragement to be with.

Ah, he says it's good to be on the winning side. And that's what he would say every time you met him. You know, he's an alcoholic and he's been rescued. He's been restored. He's on the way to glory. He has no doubts whatsoever.

[55 : 59] He's on the winning side. Now, he's a man who knows what it's like to experience the reign of God. We want all God's people to know that the reign of God has come.

It's ongoing. It's relentless. And they're on the winning side. So, our worldview must be impacted by the kingdom of God and its significance.

Secondly, the evangelism of the lost. If the thinking of the church is right, it will always affect the activity of the church. Jesus believed.

Jesus preached. He preached. He preached good news. He evangelized. He preached the kingdom of God more than any other individual before that time.

He was so conscious of the saving power of God now at work that every day he must have woken up and said, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns as well.

[57 : 05] For this purpose I was sent. I've got to do it. He was so aware of the reign of God. He's just got to go and tell people. But not only does he do it himself.

He calls the twelve apostles. He equips them. He sends them out. And he says what? Preach the kingdom of God. Preach God's reign. Then he gathers seventy-two disciples.

He sends them out. What does he say? Preach. Preach what? Preach the kingdom of God. Even when he finds an individual who says, but I've got to first go and bury my father.

I've got to get my priorities right. What does Jesus say to him? Leave the dead to bury their dead. As for you, you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.

In other words, it's got to be a priority for all God's people. Now after the ascension of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the early church continued to preach the kingdom of God.

[58 : 12] But with much more clarity than they ever did when they were part of the twelve or part of the seventy-two prior to the cross and resurrection. In the book of Acts, they have understanding.

They know. They've seen the cross. They have seen the resurrection. They've seen its effect upon the apostles. And they are willing to go out.

Yes, the reign of God has come. And nothing seems to stop them preaching the reign of God in a way that impacts upon individuals.

Whether they're sitting crippled at the temple or whether they're going out to the Gentile nations who are worshipping other gods. They are happy to go out.

And they persevere in their evangelism. Despite persecutions from outside the church, imperfections and inconsistencies from within the church.

[59 : 12] They keep on going. And Paul himself, you'll find that Luke uses this phrase often again and again. He preached the kingdom of God.

It's very interesting. You'll find Paul's preaching described as preaching the whole council of God. Preaching Christ and him crucified.

Preaching the kingdom of God. You know, these are virtually one and the same thing. The whole council of God is God's reign impacting upon every area of life.

All of mankind. The whole council. And it's all centred of course on Christ. And particularly his crucifixion.

Now there are various forms of evangelism in the New Testament. But they all have this in common. That they are consciously taking place under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

[60 : 18] Because he reigns and commissions. They preach. And things happen. The Father's will is that they preach.

Remember Jesus himself was so conscious of harvest time. The Father's will. The Lord's harvest.

These were the kind of things that motivated Jesus in his preaching. And he wants it to motivate the disciples and ourselves in our preaching.

Remember John 4. The woman of Samaria. What happened there? He spoke to her. He revealed himself to her.

I am he. He. She drops her bucket. She runs to her own folks. And she says to them. Come. Come and see a man.

[61 : 21] Who told me all things that ever I did. Come and see him. Come and meet him. Jesus had sown. And now this lady was sowing.

And then the fields are white with harvest. People are coming across the fields. Jesus sees the people coming. He doesn't say right. It's time to scarper now.

Time to put the blinds on the man's windows. It's time to pretend we're not in. No. He says. This is harvest time. This is harvest time. And he rejoices over this.

Just as I'm sure the woman would have rejoiced to have seen the people go out. The harvest has begun. And Jesus is not surprised. This is precisely what he expects to happen.

People being gathered to eternal life. That's what the kingdom of God is about. That's what the will of God is all about. It's harvest time.

[62 : 23] Matthew 9.37-39. Jesus has been declared in the gospel of the kingdom. Healing every disease and affliction we're told. And what's the result? Crowds of people gather.

And I like the way the New Living Translation puts it. Why were they gathering? They were coming to him. Their problems were so great. And they didn't know where to go for help.

They were harassed and helpless. Problems so great. They didn't know where to go for help. But Jesus knew. They're coming to the right version.

He could help them. Why? Because God is changing lives through him. God's kingdom has begun. God's reign is here.

It's harvest time. It's the Lord's harvest he says. And of course Jesus says to the disciples. You could work to do.

[63 : 23] But there's going to be a need for more than yourselves. It's not going to be such a small harvest. That twelve disciples are all that are needed to reap. No, you'll have to pray to the Lord of the harvest for more laborers.

Because harvest is here. Harvest is coming. That is what the kingdom of God brings. But of course the disciples won't pray for more laborers.

Unless they realize and expect a harvest. And I suppose the real question at that level.

Is whether we see Jesus as the Lord of the commission. Or the Lord of the harvest. Or both. Are we those who are just happy to be commissioned to preach.

Or are we also those who expect a harvest. We must allow our awareness of the reign of God to influence our evangelistic activity.

[64 : 30] The kingdom of God must also impact the edification of the believer. People are converted under the reign of God.

The maturest believers under the reign of God. A new lifestyle is not only expected from them. But possible for them.

A new level of righteousness. Jesus says. Jesus says. If you don't have a righteousness greater than that of the scribes and the Pharisees. It's not on. But he says. It will happen.

I'm here. Ask. And you will receive. Seek. You will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. He can actually address the people in the Semen and the Mount.

And apply the greatest ethical standards. And he just says to them. Yes. This is what the new Israel will be like. Will you form part of it?

[65 : 28] Ask. You will receive. You will receive. If you ask. Will you not receive the spirit? What kind of father do you think you have?

Of course you will be able to do all this. For as Paul would say. To die to sin. To live to righteousness. To receive gifts.

To use them in his service. It's all part of the reign of God. And there's that level of expectancy. That seems to mold the writers of the New Testament.

And especially the later writers like Paul and Peter. They make demands on believers. And they expect the believers. To grow in understanding.

To offer their bodies for service in the kingdom of God. And righteousness and holiness. Why? Because grace. Reigns. It's not only present.

[66 : 28] It reigns. It reigns. It triumphs. He expects the sovereign God. To supply them the spiritual gifts. To create situations.

In which these gifts will be used. And you gain this impression. That the sovereign saving activity of God. Has begun. It's effective.

It's irreversible. He has begun a work. He will bring it to completion. Says Paul. To the Philippians. There's a man. Who's convinced. That the kingdom of God has come. But what finally should be its significance for preachers. And their preaching today.

Most of what we said. Obviously. I'm sure. You will see us being of relevance to that. But just a few words in closing. The biblical conception of the kingdom of God.

Must form the foundation. On which we preach. It must be the atmosphere. In which we preach. We preach. Because the king. Is on the throne. He has already poured out his spirit. And equipped the church. Including our church.

[67 : 24] With the church. To preach. For the children. But the church. Because the church. This is the church. This is the earth. Is a church. That is a church. The church. The church.

That is a church. That is a church. God is our church. And the church. So in the church. One of the church. Is a church. Is a church. equip the church including ourselves it's the king that sends us out to preach pray as you preach that the lord will make you aware of his kingdom his reign as having begun relentlessly in progress and certain of consummation secondly it must affect the content of what we preach whenever we preach christ we must preach him as king the terminology may not always have to be there but when god is preached he must be presented as one who has a will a purpose which have been and are at work in the world even at this very moment when the good news the gospel is presented it must be as that which has its spaces in the power and purpose of god the king when judgment is preached it must be proclaimed as something which is wholly righteous in the light of the unimaginable rejection of the blessings of the kingdom in other words when whatever and whenever one preaches one must do so pointing to the reign of god which has so momentarily begun knowing that the final restoration is just around the corner all of god's enemies are being vanquished and all god's people will be rescued so the weak they are to be told well it's not your strength that really matters it's god's believers are to be told it's not their strength that takes them through it's the lord's it's his kingdom so we don't preach what is possible for man to do so much of our policy making is based on what is possible for man we must declare what is possible for god to do it's his kingdom it's his kingdom that must determine what we are as a church and what we do as a preacher the preacher may not always have to use the expression the kingdom of god but you should be able at the end of every year to sum up your preaching and say last year i preached and declared the kingdom of god god so you would want your people to have that impression yes it's not me it's god he changes things he really does some folks you'll feed meet with a tremendous sense of unfairness in the world you can say to them god is in the process of setting everything right he's doing it now come stop being part of the problem and come to be part of the winning side others may feel very impotent in the face of physical mental spiritual enemies to them we can present a god of might who is changing things others may have regret they've gone down the road of backsliding others may be so broken in their lives so ruined and yet god himself is able to change them the content of our preaching must be informed by the kingdom the reign of god and finally of course the expectancy with which we preach remember the two blind men jesus said to them do you believe that i am

able to do this now you might wish that jesus had never asked that question that he had simply healed them but he actually said in a context which speaks of harvest do you believe that i am able to do this when they responded positively he said to them probably what he would say to us today according to your faith be done to you they were transformed the king had come his reign touched their lives blessings flowed likewise when we go out we must expect the king to work according to our faith be done to you we'll leave it there