

# OpenTheo

## Disciples and the Kingdom



### **Genuinely Following Jesus** - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the relationship between discipleship and the kingdom of God. He clarifies that the term "kingdom" refers to a relational concept in Jewish history, rather than a physical place. Gregg emphasizes that Jesus' disciples should not fear persecution, as they are part of a kingdom established by God, with Jesus as the true anointed king. He encourages his listeners to become part of this kingdom by following Jesus and becoming born again, even if it means enduring unpopularity or persecution.

### **Transcript**

Tonight, we're going to be talking about the disciple and the kingdom of God. Now, a couple of years ago, I taught a whole series here on the kingdom of God. It was the first series that I ever taught at this church, I believe.

I taught on the kingdom, and I've taught on several different things since then. The kingdom of God is so central to what the Bible teaches, that it's hard to give a full series on anything very significant without touching again on the subject of the kingdom of God and its relationship to whatever topic we're dealing with. I'm only going to spend one lecture, but it's not going to be just on the kingdom of God, and actually, it won't duplicate any of the lectures in that series that I gave a couple years ago.

It's hard to get very far from the subject of the kingdom of God if you're going to stay close to the heart of the New Testament. Although that is true, many Christians don't know very much about the kingdom of God, and if asked, could not really define it to somebody. And the reason I know this is because I was a Christian for many years myself, and if somebody had asked me to define the kingdom of God or give any kind of exposition on it, I really would have been at a loss.

Although I saw the term in the Bible frequently, I never really knew very much what it was about. I kind of assumed it was just another term for heaven. You know, the Bible talks about entering the kingdom of God or inheriting the kingdom of God, and I figured, well, that's just referring to when we die, we go to heaven if we're saved.

In fact, as I got older and studied the subject, I realized that the kingdom of God is not really a synonym for heaven at all. It does have its place in our thinking about what happens in eternity after this life, certainly. But it has a place equally in what we're here to do right now, what we're here for, what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

You can't really understand discipleship in a biblical sense without having some connection with the kingdom of God and understanding that the disciple is called into the kingdom of God now. And if we don't understand what that means, we will be very much poorer in our understanding and in our zeal, I think, than otherwise, because I have never, frankly, come across a topic more exciting to me than the kingdom of God, in Scripture or elsewhere. I mean, certainly outside of Scripture, there couldn't be anything anywhere near as interesting.

And even in Scripture, where there's many interesting things, there's nothing more compelling than the vision of the kingdom of God once you see it. And there's every reason that every Christian should, because Jesus taught on it all the time. In Luke 6.20, which is where Luke begins what we normally would call the Sermon on the Mount, it says, Then he lifted up his eyes toward his disciples and said, Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Whose? You disciples who are poor. Now, they happen to be poor. Not all disciples are poor, but these ones were relatively poor.

And he said, Even though you're poor, you're blessed, because yours is the kingdom of God. Now, they possessed the kingdom. This is not stated in the future tense.

He doesn't say, you shall have the kingdom of God, or you shall be in the kingdom of God, or you will inherit the kingdom of God. He says, yours is. And that's interesting by contrast, because afterwards, immediately afterwards, he says, And blessed are you who hunger, for you shall be filled.

And blessed are you who weep, for you shall laugh. He said, you shall be filled. You shall laugh.

He talks about something in the future. You're weeping now, and you may weep for a while yet, but someday you won't be weeping anymore. You may be hungry now, and your hunger may continue for a while.

Who knows? But at least someday, your hunger will be over, and you'll be filled. But of the kingdom of God, he says, You have that now. This is present tense.

The disciples are called into, and when we become disciples, we partake in what Jesus referred to as the kingdom of God. Jesus said to his disciples in Luke 12, verses 31 and 32, But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to you. And then he said immediately afterwards, Do not fear, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure

to give you the kingdom.

This is to his disciples. He says, Seek the kingdom of God, and realize that it's the father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom of God, because you are disciples. In fact, you cannot divorce the idea of discipleship from the idea of possessing the kingdom.

We're told in Luke 14, verse 22, that Paul and Barnabas, returning from their first missionary journey, revisited the churches that they had planted on that trip, and it says they did so visiting these infant churches and strengthening the souls of the disciples. Now, remember, the disciples simply means everybody who was in the church. Everyone who was a Christian was called a disciple.

The word disciple in the early days was synonymous with Christian. And so they were strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, we must, through many tribulations, enter the kingdom of God. So, these people were disciples.

They were entering the kingdom of God. But Paul and Barnabas were saying, this is going to be difficult. There will be hardships involved.

In Colossians 1, in verse 13, Paul says that God has delivered us from the power of darkness, and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Now, that He has delivered us is just another way of saying we're saved. And that is something all Christians pretty much rejoice in and take somewhat for granted.

If I'm a Christian, isn't that the same thing as being saved? Well, yeah, it kind of is. But Paul says it's not only that you've been delivered or saved from the power of darkness, but you've been conveyed into the kingdom. You were saved out of something when you became a Christian, and you were saved into something else.

And notice this is a past tense. If you've been born again, you have been conveyed into the kingdom. You have come into the kingdom of God.

So, in order to understand what Jesus meant, as His disciples were expected to understand it, we need to have their perspective. And their perspective, of course, was that of Jewish history. What we would call Old Testament history.

They didn't call it the Old Testament because they weren't talking yet about New Testament. But they just considered it the Scriptures. They considered it their own sacred history, the history of Israel.

And it was there that the kingdom of God concept had its foundation laid and from which it was built by divine revelation through the centuries, so that the Jews of Jesus' day had a concept of the kingdom that gave flesh to the bare statement, kingdom of God, when

Jesus used it. It says, yours is the kingdom. Or when John the Baptist said, the kingdom of God is at hand.

Or many, many other things that Jesus said about the kingdom. So, we need to have that Old Testament perspective if we're going to understand what is meant by the kingdom at all. So, let's go to the Old Testament.

And this is the first reference in the Bible to the kingdom of God. It's in Exodus, chapter 19, verses 5 and 6. The occasion, God had brought Israel through the Red Sea successfully and delivered them from Egypt and had brought them to Mount Sinai where He was now initiating a new covenant with them. We call it the Old Covenant, but it was new to them.

And basically stating what the terms of relationship with Him were going to be from this point on. He had saved them, just like Paul said in Colossians 1.13, God has delivered us and He's conveyed us into the kingdom. Well, that's exactly what happened to Israel.

They were delivered from Egypt and conveyed into a kingdom. And this is where it makes it very clear. God says to Moses, Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people, for all the earth is Mine.

And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. He said, these are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel. So, this is God's message to Israel upon bringing them out of Egypt.

And we have to remember that they had been slaves there for many, well, for centuries they had been away from their homeland. When they'd gone into Egypt, they'd just been a family. They weren't a kingdom.

They weren't a nation. They weren't political. They were just a guy and his twelve sons and their kids and their grandkids.

Seventy adult males of the family of Israel went into Egypt. After years of slavery, God delivers them out. Now there's a great number of them.

As many as 600,000 adult males in the group. Tremendously grown group. But they're still just an amorphous company of related people.

A big family, a big clan, or a collection of clans. But He brings them out of Egypt to Mount Sinai and says, Now I've got a plan for you. I want to make you into a kingdom.

This is going to involve you obeying my voice and keeping my covenant. And if you do that, then I'm going to have you be special to me. I will treasure you.

This is very much like a marriage proposal. In fact, in later Hebrew Scriptures, this event

is remembered as if it was a marriage proposal. In Jeremiah chapter 3 and in Jeremiah chapter 31, and other places in the Old Testament.

This covenant that God made with Israel is likened to a covenant that a man and a woman make when they get married. And He's saying, Okay, if you'll be my people, I will treasure you more than anyone else. It's sort of like in a wedding vow.

People say, I will forsake all others and cleave only to you. That's what God's saying to Israel. It's conditional.

If you'll obey my voice and keep my covenant. But if you do, you shall be to me a kingdom. And this is the first time the Bible ever mentions God having an interest in having a kingdom of His own.

There were other kingdoms on the earth already, of course. They knew about Egypt. All over the world, there were petty city-states and kings and so forth.

And in a kingdom, the king was the head honcho and everybody was submitted to him. He was the sovereign. He was not really answerable to anybody else.

He was over everybody. And God says, I'd like to have a kingdom, too. I want you to be it.

And so you see, the kingdom is a people. The kingdom isn't a synonym for heaven. It's not a synonym for a political unit or even a geographical place.

It is a people. Israel, at this point in time, 40 years before they ever had a place to call their own because they wandered for 40 years, they were already a kingdom as long as they were following God in the terms of this covenant. This made them a special people, a holy nation.

Holy means set apart for God. Among the nations of the world, they were set apart for God, the only nation that was. All the others were just in darkness, but this nation belonged to God.

Now, it was very important to God that they took that seriously, and they did take it seriously, some of them, for a long time. During the period of the judges, we know that Gideon was one of the judges, and Israel didn't have any kings during that time because God was their king. But after Gideon delivered the people from the Midianite bondage, the people came to Gideon and they said, Rule over us, you and your sons and your sons' sons.

Rule over us. What they were saying is, we've never had this before, but we'd like to start a dynastic monarchy here. Gideon, you can be our first king.

Your sons and your sons' sons will also be kings. There will be a hereditary dynasty here

of kings. And Gideon said, No, that's not going to happen.

He said, I will not rule over you and my sons will not rule over you. The Lord rules over you. He understood, and that was what was given.

God is your king. You don't need a human king because you have a king already. However, that didn't last forever.

In 1 Samuel 8, at the end of the period of the judges, we read in verses 4 and 5, Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel, to Ramah. Now, Samuel was the judge at that time, and he was essentially the last of the judges and usually regarded to be the first of the prophets. But they came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, Look, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways.

Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. Now, judging, the word to judge us means to rule us. They say, We have never had a king.

We've had judges like you. But you're old. You're not going to be here forever.

Your sons are not worthy successors. What did they have before they had this arrangement? What was it in the period of the judges? God would raise up individual charismatic leaders in crises. That's what happened.

Most of the time, Israel had no central government. It was just really families were fairly sovereign over their own households, their own homesteads and so forth. But when they were overrun with enemies and became under bondage, and they cried out to God, God would raise up a judge.

And a judge was not somebody who had any kind of royal lineage. There was no royal lineage in Israel. He could be anybody.

In the case of Jephthah, he was like the illegitimate son of his father and had been living out in the wilderness. And the people came to him and said, Come and deliver us. The different people God raised up for judges were a very motley crew.

Once the judge had lived his lifetime, and he went the way of his fathers and died, there was a vacuum there and no one filled it. It was not something that God arranged to be filled. Now, a lot of people say the period of the judges was not a good time because it says twice in the book of Judges, in those days there was no king in Israel.

And what? Everybody did what was right in his own eyes. This verse is quoted many times to say that's a bad thing. Well, no.

That's what God arranged. For there not to be a king, Israel was exactly what God had ordained. That people did what was right in their own eyes was actually good as long as what was right in their own eyes was somehow informed by the laws of God.

They didn't have some oppressive government telling them what they had to do. Everyone was to follow God according to his own conscience. And it's true, some people didn't follow the law, but those who wanted to could.

And actually, I kind of think that God always seemed to prefer for people to have their own conscience involved in the decision of whether they're going to follow God or not rather than some kind of imposed government that makes them be religious. And God didn't have an imposed structure like that from all that time. But the people got a place where they felt weird because they didn't know who was going to take over after Samuel.

Well, probably no one would have taken over after Samuel. That's how it was with the judges. When Samuel would have died, then presumably they wouldn't have a judge again until next time they needed one.

Now, it does say in the previous verses that Samuel had made his sons judges, but I don't think that they would have lasted long in that office. I don't think people recognized them as such. And really, a judge was recognized.

His power was based on his charisma and the recognition of the people in his leadership. And there wouldn't be another one like Samuel probably for a long time until another crisis. Actually, there was a crisis to Samuel's day.

It was the Philistines were causing problems, and they continued to until David's time. But anyway, these people wanted their country to become more like a regular country. They'd been, what, 380 years in a period of judges, something like that? A long time.

Yeah, several centuries. They were without a king. But now they said to Samuel, Give us a king to judge us, to rule over us like all the nations have.

Now you might say, well, that's fair enough. I mean, why shouldn't they be like all the nations? The reason is because God never wanted to be like all the nations. He wanted them to be a peculiar people.

He wanted them to be a separate people ruled by him, unlike the other nations. So what they were asking for was that God should not be their king anymore in the sense that he had wished to be. And in the next two verses, 1 Samuel 8, verses 6 through 7, it says, But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us.

So Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you. They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

And this was a very bad turning point in Israel's history. They had been, at Mount Sinai, made into a kingdom of priests, a kingdom of God. They'd had that position.

They'd had that role for some 400 years. And then they surrendered it. Now God didn't surrender them entirely.

God saw them as rejecting him, but he didn't fully reject them. So he still kept his hand in the choosing of kings. And so he had Samuel pick Saul to be king, but Saul turned out to be a bad king.

And so he sent Samuel to choose David to be a king. This picking of a king was not something God liked. In Hosea chapter 13, verses 10 through 11, God is, well, through the prophet, reflecting back on this selection of Saul as a king.

And God says, I will be your king. Where is any other that he may save you in all your cities, and your judges for whom you said, give me king and princes? He says, I gave you a king in my anger, and I took him away in my wrath. That's God's summary of Saul's reign.

God gave them Saul because they asked for him. The name Saul in Hebrew actually means asked for. And he gave them a king whose name meant asked for because they'd asked for him.

But then he says, I did it angrily, and I was still angry when I took him away. When Saul died in battle against the Philistines on Mount Gilboa, it was God's anger against Israel that he gave them a king and took the king away. But notice he says, I will be your king.

Now, there's a promise here that God will reestablish himself as king over his people. In other words, the kingdom of God, which Israel as a nation had rejected, God says it's going to happen again. I'm going to be king someday again.

In Hosea 3, verses 4 through 5, there's this prediction. For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince. Afterward, the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king.

Now, the many days that Israel was without king or prince, I believe, refers to the time from the Babylonian exile until the time of Christ, essentially. There were some petty self-appointed kings during the Hasmonean dynasty in about the second century before Christ came. But from about 586 BC, when the Jewish king was taken into captivity in Babylon, they never had a king of the royal dynasty on the throne again until Jesus came.

And of course, even he didn't sit on the throne in that sense. Jesus did not occupy a political position, but he truly was the king in the line of David that was to come. Now, it says, after a long period of time where Israel will be without a king, God will restore the kingdom under the Lord and David their king.

Now, we need to understand what it means when it says David their king, because of



course David's been long dead now. And some people say, well, I guess God's going to have to raise David from the dead in order to make him king. But that's not really what is meant there.

After David's lifetime, after his reign had passed, he became the icon for monarchy in the Jewish mind. David reigned over Israel during the most glorious golden age of Israel's history. He conquered the Philistines, which none of the judges had completely done previously.

Even Saul couldn't do it. David completely conquered the Philistines. He also conquered the people all around him, the Moabites, the Edomites, and so forth, and brought them under tribute.

Israel was the big boy on the block in the Middle East during David's reign. And David made the nation wealthy and a proud people. But when David died, things went downhill after that.

And the Jews after that always remembered David's dynasty. And the promise God had made to David, because God had promised David that there would be an eternal throne in David's monarchy. But it had been interrupted, obviously.

And the people looked forward to David coming back. Not David, really, but his kingdom coming back, his monarchy being restored. After the reign of David, his name was used to refer not only to himself, but also to his dynasty, and to any ruler of his dynasty.

For example, Ahaz was one of the kings descended from David in Jerusalem many generations after David. And yet Isaiah said to him in Isaiah 7, 13, I mean, here now, you house of David, is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of God also? But notice, this king who is of the divinic line, many generations after David, is referred to as house of David. House of David means dynasty of David.

Rehoboam, David's grandson, was spoken to this way by the people of Israel when they rebelled against him. They said, what share have we in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel.

Now see to your own house, O David. They're speaking to David's grandson, and they call him David. Because he is the current resident of the throne of David's household.

And so, when the prophets say that David will rule over his people when God restores the kingdom, it doesn't mean the historic David. It means a king of David's line. The dynasty of David will be restored in a king who will rule.

And we see that again in Ezekiel 34, verses 23 and 24. It says, and I will set up one shepherd over them, even my servant David. He shall feed them.

He shall be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, shall be their God. And my servant David, a prince among them.

This is talking about actually when the Messiah would come. And the David in these passages is a reference to the Messiah, and the Jews knew it. The Messiah was to be a son of David, was to be a king of David's line.

And these are prophecies about the reign of the Messiah that would come. He's called David because they didn't know what his real name would be anyway. Sort of like when Malachi is predicting John the Baptist, but he didn't know what John's name would be, so he called him Elijah.

Because Elijah was a type of John the Baptist. David was a type of Christ. And therefore, the prophets, not knowing the man's real name, used the name of the one who is the type in the foreshadowing of him.

So, the Messiah is here referred to as David. In Ezekiel 37, 24, he says, and David, my servant, shall be king over them. And they shall have one shepherd.

Now, that statement, they shall have one shepherd, might remind you of something in the New Testament, does it? You see, Jesus said, I am the good shepherd. In John chapter 10, verse 14. And in verse 16, he said, and other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring.

They will hear my voice, and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Now, obviously, he's saying he is that shepherd. In Ezekiel 34 and Ezekiel 37, God said, I will shepherd my people.

They will serve me and my shepherd, David. And Jesus says, I'm that shepherd. I'm that good shepherd that the prophets spoke of.

And I'm the one who will be the one shepherd. Because it says in Ezekiel 37, 24, they shall have one shepherd. Jesus said there will be one flock and one shepherd.

He's echoing very clearly these predictions. He was fulfilling this. Of course, the other sheep that he was talking about were the Gentiles.

His disciples were all Jewish. They didn't know there would be Gentiles in this kingdom yet. And he said, well, there's other sheep you don't know about.

I'm going to go get them too. They're going to come follow me too. And the Gentiles and the Jews.

And there will be one flock, one body of Christ, one shepherd over them. And so we have Jesus identifying himself as the fulfillment of this. In Acts chapter 2, Peter, in his first gospel presentation to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2, 29 and 30, he said, Men

and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

Therefore, being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, he would raise up the Christ to sit on the throne, on his throne, that is David's throne. Think about that for a moment. Peter is giving the accepted understanding that the Jews had from the prophets about what David had been promised.

Now, there were promises that David would rule over the people, but actually, Peter, representing the common Jewish view, and the correct view actually, said it's not actually David. David's dead. David's buried.

His tomb is with us. David was a prophet, and he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, God would raise up the Messiah. The David in Ezekiel 34, the David in Hosea chapter 3, the David in Hosea chapter 37 in the Messianic prophecies, that's not David.

That's someone of the seed of David, the Messiah. And Peter's saying, well, David knew that. David knew that God was going to raise up one of his seed to sit on his throne after him.

And he says in verse 36, Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now, he says, okay, David knew the Christ would be raised up of his seed to sit on his throne. Now, I want you to know, Israel, God has done this.

God has fulfilled this promise. God has established this kingdom. He has brought the king of the line of David.

He has raised up Jesus and made him the Lord. He's made him the ruler. He's made him the Christ, the predicted one.

These prophecies have been fulfilled, Peter is saying. The kingdom has been established. And Jesus is the shepherd, the David, the king that the prophet spoke about.

Now, it's helpful, I think, for us to look at David's life somewhat because he is clearly a type of Christ. Now, do you know what we mean when we say a type? Maybe some of you do, I'm sure, and some of you might not. To say that something is a type of something else in Scripture, it means that the thing that is the type is an earlier event or thing or person, which foreshadows a later thing or event or person.

Typically, when we talk about Old Testament types, we're talking about Old Testament things that are foreshadowing Christ. So that even every time a lamb was offered under the Jewish law, that lamb being slain was a type of Christ being sacrificed for us. When

Abram offered Isaac on Mount Moriah, we usually think of that as a picture, a type of God offering Jesus.

It's a type, a picture, a foreshadowing, a foreglimpse. An event that happened that was intentionally looking forward to something else. Now, David is clearly always in Scripture represented as a type of the Messiah.

And in many ways, we can understand the kingdom of God and our role as disciples in God's kingdom under Christ by looking at how the kingdom was formed under David. Because David's kingdom, remember, was the prototype that the prophets always looked back on as when God restores the kingdom, it's going to be under David or one like David from David's loins. And so what was it like under David? Well, to start out with, David's career as someone special in Israel began in 1 Samuel chapter 16.

Because there, Saul, the first king of Israel, had been rejected by God because of his disobedience to instructions that the prophet Samuel had given him. And the Lord told Samuel to go to Bethlehem to the house of a man named Jesse. And there would be another man, God had sought a man after his own heart to be the next king after Saul.

And we read in 1 Samuel 16, 13, Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him, that's David, in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. Now, David's a type of Christ.

Jesus was anointed and the Spirit of God came upon him also. You remember when he was baptized by John. The Spirit of God came down upon him in the form of a dove.

He was anointed. And at that point, what did God say? This is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. Now, most commentators agree that in God saying, This is my beloved son, there's an allusion there to Psalm 2, in verse 7, where God said, You are my son, this day have I begotten you.

And it's actually a psalm about God installing the king, the Messiah, as the son of God. And God made this announcement about Jesus at his baptism. He was anointed, just as David was anointed by Samuel, in a private ceremony.

At that point, God declared David to be the rightful king over the people of God and put his spirit upon him as the qualifying credential. And by the way, if you read the chapter 16, it says, And the Spirit of the Lord left Saul, because Saul had had the spirit come upon him when he was originally anointed too. But it says, The Spirit of the Lord left Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord came upon Saul.

And tormented him. But the point here is that David, though he was an unknown shepherd boy at this time, Saul didn't even know the boy existed at this time. He was not in the public light.

But God knew him, God knew he was a man after God's heart, and he sent Samuel there, and David became the king of Israel on this occasion, as far as God is concerned. But Saul was still king as far as the public was concerned. And so we read in 1 Samuel 18, 8, After David killed Goliath, and the people were praising David more than they were praising Saul, it says, Then Saul was very angry, and he said, They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands.

That is referring to the fact that the people, after David slew the giant, the women were singing, Saul has slain his thousands, and David has slain his ten thousands. That is, Saul is a great deliverer, but David is a greater deliverer. Saul killed a lot of our enemies, but David killed ten times as many as Saul.

Well, these women were just trying to exalt David, but they didn't realize the trouble it was getting him in with the powers that be, you know. So Saul says, They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom? Very perceptive, Saul.

That is exactly what David is going to have, is the kingdom. At this point, though, he was just a teenage boy. He had never even worn armor before.

He had never had any government functions. He was not ambitious. He was not out, you know, campaigning for popularity like Absalom later did against his father David.

David was just being a good subject, a good, you know, loyal servant of Saul, but in spite of himself. He was getting a lot of recognition, and Saul said, I think this guy is not far from taking the kingdom from me. So, 1 Samuel 19 says, Now Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants that they should kill David.

And Saul said to his son Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20, verse 31, As long as the son of Jesse, that's David, lives on the earth, you shall not be established, nor your kingdom. See, Jonathan was the heir to the throne of Saul, but Jonathan was sympathetic to David. He liked David.

David and Jonathan were friends. Saul was rebuking his son, saying, Don't you know, as long as the son of Jesse lives on earth, you'll not be established, nor your kingdom. Now, therefore, send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die.

Of course, Jonathan did not cooperate there, but you can see Saul intended to kill David. Why? Because Saul was the one that was popularly recognized as king, and he enjoyed his power. Now, David was the king as far as God was concerned.

God had already anointed David privately, but most people didn't know that. Saul began to suspect it, and he was not welcoming the news, and he, in fact, decided he'd better kill David. Now, what's the type of Christ in this? Well, Jesus was anointed to be the king at his baptism, but the world already had a king.

The whole world lies in the lap of the wicked one, it says in 1 John 5, and the wicked one was not happy to see another king appear to threaten his domain, because after all, what is Jesus going to reign over? Well, ultimately, the whole world. Well, that's the same domain that Satan rules over now, or was trying to rule over at the time. And Satan wasn't going to say, well, you know, may the better man win.

I guess, Jesus, you're a better man than me. Why don't I just hand over the keys to the kingdom to you? The devil was not so inclined. He was more like Saul.

He still is. And what we have now is a king who's been anointed by God, who is the true king, and we've got a usurping king, or an old king, who will not surrender without a fight, and who persecutes. And so, for the past 2,000 years, Satan has been resisting the message and the reality of Jesus' kingship.

But the devil's been losing ground that whole time. Now, in 1 Samuel 20, in verse 31, we read this, David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adulam. He was running from Saul, because Saul wanted to kill him.

And Saul actually had dispatched his armies out to kill David. So David escaped. He had to live in a cave.

And it says, And everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him. So he became captain over them. And there were about 400 men with him.

Now, this is a small ragtag remnant of Israel that recognized David was their man, not Saul. They were going to follow David. Now, realize to do that at this point was to put themselves in jeopardy, because David was a hunted man.

And to say, Well, I'm going to go with you, means I'm going to be hunted with you. And I'm going to put my life in jeopardy for you, but that's how much I believe in you. You're going to be my captain.

I'm going to be your troops. And this is at a time when it's dangerous to do that. Now, later on, when David became the universal king over all of Israel, everyone wanted to be on his good side then.

But there was no danger. There was only glory in that. Everyone wants to get close to the king who's reigning, but the king who's being persecuted by the more powerful king, the king who has the armies chasing you, it takes some real conviction to become a follower of David at a time like that.

And it says he became the captain over them. That means he gave them orders. He gave them commands.

They marched at his bidding and took the risks of life and limb that came with being part of his group. Now, that group was 400 men initially. Later in the book of Samuel, we read that there were 600.

So, David apparently had a growing movement, but still very small compared to the population of Israel that followed Saul. Now, these people who followed David during the time when he was not yet universally recognized as king and where it was dangerous and unpopular to be a follower of David are parallel to people who follow Christ today, disciples. See, these were David's disciples.

They followed him around and they paid the price. They had to leave family. They had to leave their homes.

They had to leave their jobs. Now, some of them didn't have much to leave. They were in debt.

They were discontented. They were in distress. But isn't that kind of the type of people that are willing to lay their life in this world down and follow God now? It's not many rich, not many noble, not many great men are called.

And the reason is because people who are noble and great and rich and respectable, they've got too much to lose by following Jesus. Maybe not in this country so much. I mean, some people might even get themselves elected to office by saying they're followers of Jesus in a country like this, but less so as time goes by.

In many parts of the world, it's the opposite. You say you're a follower of Jesus, and you could get yourself put in jail or beheaded or something like that. The point is these people were people who were not happy with the present administration.

They were discontented with Saul's rule. They were in distress probably because of his policies. They were in debt.

They didn't like the way Saul reigned. So they fell in with David. And that's what we have done.

We have a king who has been anointed by God. He is the real king. Remember Jesus said when he rose from the dead, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me, not will be, has been.

All authority means he rules over everything. He has the right to rule. Authority doesn't mean that you are actually making things happen.

Authority means that you have the right to make things happen. You have the right to decide. That's what a person like a parent in a household has authority over the children.

Now if that parent happens to be a quadriplegic, and the kids obviously could take

advantage of a parent, but that doesn't change the fact the parent has authority. If a parent tells a child to do a thing, the child must do it. All authority has been given to Jesus, and Christians, disciples, are the ones who recognize that in a world that doesn't, generally speaking, in a world that still kind of likes to follow the devil's way.

Being on the devil's team is kind of enjoyable sometimes. I remember Juan Carlos Ortiz saying that the reason it's easier to serve Satan is because his kingdom is a sinking ship. If the ship is going down, the captain might say, Okay, everyone, just do whatever you want.

Go into the bar, drink all you want, you know, throw lamps across the room, skate on the carpet, and do whatever you want. You can destroy anything you want. There's no boundaries here.

And people say, What a nice captain we have on this ship here. I like this ship. But he doesn't tell them, Well, you can do all this because the ship's sinking.

He may not mention that to you, but for a while you think, Well, this is a very generous captain. He lets us do whatever we want to do here. And that's how the devil is.

His kingdom is going down. It's sinking, and it's going to be judged. But it will be a lot of fun before it goes down.

After that, however, it's no fun at all. It's not as easy to be following Jesus right now as it is to follow the devil. Following Jesus goes against some of our urges and even some of the things our friends would like us to do.

And so we're in the position like those who had followed David back when it was not the popular thing to do. Now, Jesus said to his disciples, From the days of John the Baptist. This is in Matthew 11, 12 through 13.

He said, From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven. Now, by the way, the term kingdom of heaven is just a synonym for the kingdom of God. It's not a reference to heaven.

It's a reference to the kingdom that is from God, from heaven. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and law prophesied until John, he said.

Now, that's an ambiguous sounding statement. The violent take it by force. And it's been interpreted various ways.

But I think the way to understand it is to compare it with the parallel statement in Luke, which is in Luke 16, in verse 16. You can see all the elements are the same, but although the wording is somewhat different. In fact, it's different in a way that clarifies what's a



little more difficult to understand in Matthew.

In Luke 16, it says, Jesus said, The law and the prophets were until John. Well, that's sort of like the last line of the passage in Matthew. And then Jesus says, Since that time, the kingdom of God has been preached.

See, it's a synonym for the kingdom of heaven. Kingdom of heaven, kingdom of God. Then he says, And everyone is pressing into it.

Now, that everyone who's pressing into it is parallel to the violent take it by force. Jesus said in Matthew's version, The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and violent people take it by force. Now, the suffering violence, you have to understand, means persecution.

Christ's movement was being persecuted from the days of John the Baptist on. John was put in prison by Herod. Jesus was chased around by his enemies and eventually was crucified.

His disciples, likewise, took risks by being with him. And eventually, many of them were martyred later on in their lives. The kingdom of God is suffering violence.

Why? Because King Saul is not happy about King David. And King Satan is not happy about King Jesus. And Satan has the troops.

Satan has the popular masses following him. And if you don't think so, just watch TV. And see how Christians are depicted.

See how, especially in the news stories, any flaw is magnified. And Christians are made to look ridiculous. But the media is just really reflecting kind of what a lot of the general public think.

That's just the way it is in this world. People whose minds are darkened, they don't like light. They don't recognize light when they see it.

And so the kingdom suffers violence. But Jesus said, the violent take it by force. The word violent there is a Greek word that means forceful people.

And you can see it parallels with this one. Everyone is pressing into it. The word violence in the Greek here means to force your way in.

To something like crowding into an elevator where it's already pretty full. And there's people resisting you, but you're going to get in there anyway. You're not going to wait for the next car.

You're determined. You're pressing in. That's what it means.

Jesus is saying, because the kingdom that he is reigning over, and which we the disciples of Jesus are a part of, is unpopular. Because it is persecuted. Because it suffers violence from the powers that be.

If you're going to be in it, you're going to have to press into it. You're going to have to be determined to get in. You're not going to just say, well, I'll just wait for the next car.

You're going to say, no, I'm getting in this car. I'm getting in right now. Nothing is going to keep me from being a part of God's movement.

Now, why would that require forcibleness? He's not talking about physical force, of course. We're talking about an attitude of determination. Because coming into the kingdom of God and living in the kingdom under Christ is going to be challenged at every point.

Not just by the people around you, but by certain elements inside of you. Your flesh. Your appetites.

Your pride. Your greed. Those things are going to resist your following Christ in the way that he requires.

They're going to go against his commandments. And you have to be determined to not compromise. You need to be determined, I'm going to follow Jesus.

And no one's going to say that I can't. Remember when Jesus gave his unpopular sermon about eating his flesh and drinking his blood in John chapter 6. It says many of his disciples forsook him and walked no more with him. That was so unpopular that even those who had been his disciples at that point, many of them left.

But he turned to Peter in the 12 and he said, Will you go also? And Peter said, Well, to whom shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life. You know, we don't like this unpopularity either. But there's no place else for us to go.

We're going to be in your kingdom and nothing's going to move us out. We've recognized who you are. And it doesn't matter how difficult or unpopular it is to stand by it.

That's just where we're going to stand. And that's what it takes to be a disciple. You need to be seizing the kingdom by your own determination not to be squeezed out of it by the world's disapproval of it.

You see, we are sensitive creatures. We are affected by approval and disapproval of other people. But remember, we're commanded to not be concerned about the approval and disapproval of other people but of God himself.

Paul said in Galatians 1.10, If I were still seeking to please men, I wouldn't be the servant

of Christ. Galatians 1.10, he said that. If I wanted to please people, I wouldn't be following Jesus.

I couldn't. I couldn't serve Christ if I wanted to please people. And so, a disciple is someone who takes an unpopular stand in favor of an unpopular king.

But the kingdom has a glorious future. And those who participate in it now will have reason to be very happy that they did. Just like those who followed David for years when their lives were at risk for doing so.

When he came to power and he became the universal king over all the nation of Israel after Saul's death, those people who had been loyal to him at that time, they were the ones he knew he could trust. They were the ones that he brought on board to be his cabinet and his mighty men and his generals and so forth. These were the ones that were given positions of responsibility and privilege in his kingdom because they had been with him during the hard times.

You remember Peter and the other apostles once in Matthew 19, when they saw the rich young ruler go away unwilling to become a disciple. Remember Jesus said to him, you have to sell what you have, give to the poor and come follow me. The man was not willing to do that, so he went away sorrowful.

And Peter said, well, Lord, we, meaning he and the disciples, we have forsaken everything and followed you. What shall we have? And Jesus said, those of you who have followed me in these hard times, in the regeneration, you will sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel. In other words, there's a time coming when you will have authority in my kingdom because you were loyal to my kingdom when it was hard to be loyal to the kingdom.

Everyone's going to want to jump on the bandwagon when Jesus shows up, but it'll be late for them. We're the ones who have the opportunity to get in now, you know, join now and avoid the rush. It says in Mark 4, verses 30 through 32, then Jesus said to what shall we like in the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? It is like a mustard seed, which when it is sown on the ground is smaller than the seeds on earth.

But when it is sown, it grows up to become greater than all herbs and shoots out large branches so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade. Now, this is what the kingdom of God is like. He says it's like small at the beginning.

When he was here, it was very small, him and a few guys. And they weren't powerful people. They weren't rich people.

They weren't influential people. They were fishermen and peasants, really. Small, like a mustard seed.

What a small kingdom that was. But he said, but it's like a mustard seed. It starts out incredibly small, but it grows.

And it grows to be considerable. It puts out large branches. Now, the kingdom of God has been growing for 2,000 years from those small beginnings.

And we can see that it has penetrated every country on the planet. And Christ has genuine followers from every nation, kindred, people, and tongue. What a change from that little tiny mustard seed of a kingdom that he planted 2,000 years ago.

And it might seem to you like 2,000 years is a long time. But when you consider the size of growth, when there were only, on the day of Pentecost, 120 initially who were followers of Jesus. Later the same day, there were 3,000, which was a pretty big growth in one day.

Probably the largest incremental growth of the church in history on any one day. I don't know if the church ever increased by, what, 2,500% in one day worldwide. Although in those days, there wasn't one person in a million on the planet that was a Christian.

Now, one person in four claims to be a Christian today. Now, one person in four isn't really a Christian, of course. But the fact that they used to worship pagans, and now they at least say Jesus is Lord, is quite a victory.

Many of them will find when they meet Jesus that they were really expected to have more loyalty than they really do have. But nonetheless, that he was an unknown carpenter 2,000 years ago, and now a quarter of the world's population want to say they're on his side. And even if only one in a thousand of them are true disciples, and I don't know what the percentages would be, but if only one professing Christian in a thousand was really a true disciple, that means that one in 4,000 people on the earth is a true disciple today compared to less than one in a million 2,000 years ago.

I mean, that's tremendous growth. This mustard seed has grown and sent out its branches, and many of us have come to nest in its shade. In Daniel 2, 44, Daniel, interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream, said, In the days of these kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed.

So, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom. What is that? It's the kingdom of the God of heaven, or the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven. It's the kingdom of the God of heaven.

The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people. That is, it's not going to go down and be replaced like other kingdoms have done. The Babylonians by the Persians, and the Persians by the Greeks, and so forth.

God's kingdom will not be left to other people. It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall last forever. This kingdom was established as a little mustard seed in the days of Jesus, and it has grown to become a great kingdom to fill the whole earth.

In Daniel 7, in verse 14, Daniel saw this vision. One of the things he saw, it says, Then to him, that is to the Son of Man, who is the Messiah, was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed.

That's the kingdom that you're part of now, and that's what it is going to be. Daniel said in Daniel 7, verses 21 through 22, I was watching in the same horn, this is an evil power that he saw in a vision, a little horn who was fighting the kingdom of God, a powerful opponent of God. The same horn was making war against the saints and prevailing against them until the Ancient of Days came.

Now, God is the Ancient of Days, and I believe when the Ancient of Days came, that's the second coming of Christ, when God comes here in the person of Jesus. And a judgment was made in favor of the saints, that's the judgment that takes place when Jesus returns. And the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

Now, we're in the kingdom, but possessing it, it has to be taken by force, it has to be taken by pressing into it. The time will come where the kingdom will be delivered over to the saints, and it makes it very clear, it says, Then the kingdom and dominion and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole of heaven shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. So, this is what the disciples are investing in now.

We're investing in it now. If you could have invested in Microsoft stock 30 years ago, for whatever it was, a buck a share, if you had a time machine and could have gone up to our time and then gone back in time to buy that stock, you'd be seeing something no one else saw. You'd be investing in something that you know what the value of it's going to be, and no one else can guess.

But we can, we don't have to guess, because we've been told the kingdom that we're investing in now is going to be forever. And all nations and all dominions will be subject to Christ and to us. Because Paul said in 2 Timothy 2, 11 and 12, If we died with him, we shall also live with him.

If we endure, we shall also reign with him. Enduring. Those who followed David during the time of his unpopularity had to endure living in caves and running.

And lots of times the armies of Saul were not very far behind them. But these people

were within a step of death a lot of the time. They had to endure great hardship for David.

But they reigned with him. And if we endure as disciples of Christ, we will reign with him. Revelation 11, 15 says, Then the seventh angel sounded, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.

That's what will be. All the kingdoms of the world are going to be subsumed under the kingdom of Christ. Christ will rule over all.

Right now, he only rules over those who voluntarily sign up. Who voluntarily, at the time when it's not so popular, not as rewarding, they decide they want Jesus anyway. But the time will come when he reigns over everything, whether they want him to or not.

And those who are with him will reign with him. Now, in closing, I want to just make a distinction here between entering the kingdom and inheriting the kingdom. Because you find both of these expressions in Scripture.

And in my opinion, when the Bible talks about how we are entering the kingdom, it's talking about now. We enter the kingdom now. We're born again, and we enter the kingdom.

Jesus said, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. But when you are born of water and the Spirit, then you do enter the kingdom of God. You are born again into the kingdom.

A new citizenship is yours. The citizenship in the kingdom of God. That's John 3.5. In Mark 10.15, Jesus said, Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.

Again, entering the kingdom is what's in view here. Entering as a child or receiving the kingdom as a child doesn't mean that you have to become a Christian while you're a child. And if you happen to grow up before you became a Christian, you're out of luck.

It means you have to become like a little child. That's what Jesus is saying. You have to become childlike to enter the kingdom.

Certainly, to be born again. Born of water and of the Spirit. If you're born again, you become an infant again.

You become childlike again. But that's how you enter the kingdom. You do that when you get saved.

You enter the kingdom. In Matthew 5.20, Jesus said, I say to you that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no

means enter the kingdom of heaven. You have to have a righteous heart.

The scribes and Pharisees had righteous external acts, but your righteousness has to be different, better than theirs. Yours has to be deeper. Yours has to be of the heart.

And unless it is, you're not going to come in. You're not going to become a Christian. You're not going to follow Jesus.

In Mark 10.23, Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God. Again, those who have this world's comforts and riches are less inclined to throw in their lot with Jesus and become his disciples. Therefore, they don't find it easy to enter the kingdom.

That means to enter the movement, to become part of Christ's movement now. But there's also reference in the scripture to inheriting the kingdom. And that's always a reference to later.

We will inherit the kingdom when Jesus comes back. And the reason I think that the term inherit is used in that way is because we are told we will reign with him. And to speak of inheriting a kingdom is analogous to how Solomon inherited a kingdom from David.

David was the king. His son inherited the kingdom. That means he inherited a throne.

He became a ruler in the kingdom. To inherit a kingdom means that that is your birthright as a son of God, a child of God. You become one who inherits a position of authority in his kingdom.

You become a ruler in his kingdom. The king will say to those on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

This is Matthew 25, 34, the parable of the sheep and the goats. That parable begins in verse 31 by Jesus saying, When the Son of Man will come in his glory, then he will sit on the throne of his glory, and he will call all the nations before him and separate them as a shepherd separates between the sheep and the goats. And he says these different things to them.

But to the sheep he says, Come, you blessed of my father. Inherit the kingdom. This is when Jesus comes back.

We enter the kingdom now, but we inherit a place of authority in the kingdom as co-rulers with Christ when he returns, not sooner. Now this I say, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15, 50, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption. He means inheriting the kingdom of God in its glorious state when Jesus comes back.

We're not going to come into that state in our present mortal bodies. We have to put on incorruption or we have to be resurrected from the dead or glorified before we can enter into a role of rulership in a kingdom that never has an end. We have to become immortal.

In 1 Corinthians 6, 9 through 10, Paul said, Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. Now, most of us can find ourselves on this list somewhere here, and I hope people don't think this means that if you've got any of these things in your background that you're lost, because of course, Paul went on to say in the next verse, which I don't have a slide for it, in the next verse it says, And such were some of you, but you've been washed, you've been sanctified. So, what you were before you were a Christian really doesn't count.

This is if you're living your life in these ways, then when the time comes, when some will be inheriting the kingdom, you won't be among them. You're not going to go into this position of privilege with Christ if you have this kind of living that you've been living during your lifetime, assuming that you haven't repented and become a Christian in the meantime. The same teaching is given in Galatians 5, 21, where there's a list of things Paul calls the works of the flesh.

The list begins in verse 19, I won't read the whole list, but in verse 21 he says, Envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like, of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. So, if a person is living in these kinds of practices, unrepentant, they can know that when Jesus comes, they're not going to inherit the kingdom. They might think they are, but they're not going to, because they're not disciples.

People who follow Jesus don't do these things. In Revelation 5, verses 9 and 10, this is a vision of heavenly chorus singing, it says, They sang a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals. For you were slain and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God, and we shall reign on the earth.

So, the people who have been redeemed to God by the blood of Jesus, those who are His people, His followers, His disciples, it is so that we shall reign on the earth with God, with Jesus. So, in summary, disciples, like those people who follow David, are those who have recognized that Jesus is God's anointed king in an age of rebellion against Him, and who have submitted to His leadership as their own King and Lord. In doing so, disciples enter into Christ's kingdom as servants and soldiers, but when He comes, they will inherit positions of rulership with Him over all that He has made.

And that's the summary of this lecture, that if you are called to discipleship, and



remember, if you weren't here in the earlier lecture, disciple is just another word for Christian, at least it was in the biblical times. The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. So, if you are a Christian, you're a disciple.

If you're a disciple, you've been called into the kingdom of Christ. Being a disciple inserts you into a program that God has in the earth of giving the whole world to Jesus. And if you've become a Christian, then you're part of the world that God has given to Jesus.

And He's employed you, recruited you into the spreading of that kingdom, and that's what being a disciple is for. It's not just for getting a ticket to heaven. It's for becoming a participant now, one who has Jesus as his king and captain, and will inherit the kingdom with Him.