

# OpenTheo

## What In The World Was Jesus Talking About?



### Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In "What In the World Was Jesus Talking About?", Steve Gregg discusses the misunderstood concept of the "kingdom of God" in Jesus' teachings. He highlights how it refers to a present reality on earth, and its pursuit should take precedence over material needs. The idea of the Kingdom of God is tied to a community governed by God on earth, which was long-awaited by the Jewish people and continues to be relevant for Christians. Gregg emphasizes that the Gospel of the Kingdom is a growing movement that involves an alternative society governed by Jesus as King, which Christians are called to actively participate in through good works and submission to His will.

### Transcript

I actually don't usually have names to my messages. Usually it's just on a topic. I'm a Bible teacher.

I might just say for those who don't know me, I may not look like it, but I've been a Christian for about 60 years following Christ, and I've been a Bible teacher for about 50 of those years. 49, exactly, this year. So I've been preaching for quite a while.

I was raised in a Christian home, and yet what I'm going to speak about today is something I did not understand for many of the early years of my Christian life and even my early years as a Bible teacher. And that was partly because I suppose the church I was raised in maybe didn't teach it well. Maybe they didn't even know it.

I don't know. Certainly I had the disadvantage in some of the early years of being in churches that had an entirely different view from what I now believe the Bible teaches, and that's not uncommon in America today. However, the message of Jesus is what I'm talking about.

The name of this message is, What in the World Was Jesus Talking About? And the phrase, in the world, is an important part of the title because Jesus was talking about something in this world, and that's something that I didn't know about when I was growing up. If you had asked me what the message of Jesus was or what the message of the New Testament was when I was a teenager and a believer, even doing evangelism

myself among my schoolmates, I would have said, well, the message of Jesus was that if you believe in him, you go to heaven when you die. And I didn't really know much else then because every time I heard the gospel preached, that's what I heard.

And I never heard what Jesus actually said. The truth is, Jesus almost never mentioned going to heaven, although I'm not saying it was absent from his teaching. I'm not saying he didn't teach it, but he almost never taught it.

He almost never made reference to the afterlife at all. Instead, he talked about something else. In fact, there are two things that Jesus talked about in almost every time he spoke.

Now, if I said, what would you say is the main teaching of Jesus? And I assume you've been a Christian for a while, most of you. I don't know what you would answer. If I said, could you give me a word or a phrase that is the main topic of Jesus' preaching? A lot of people would think of love, forgiveness, things like that.

But I mean, virtually every time Jesus spoke, there were two things that were almost never absent. One of them is what I want to talk about today. The one I'm not going to talk about today that would be equally valuable is the fatherhood of God.

The Jews did not usually refer to God as their father. That was a little too familiar for their tastes. They felt he should be spoken of somewhat more reverently as if he was somewhat more aloof than a father.

And Jesus, of course, it was one of the revolutionary teachings of Jesus that God is our father. But that's not what he was talking about on earth. That is, the father is in heaven.

He specifically said, your father who is in heaven. We're supposed to pray, our father who art in heaven. But what is on earth that he talked about all the time? Well, I'm going to look at four.

Let's start with three passages, all from Matthew. I know Johnny and this church went through the gospel of Matthew not very long ago. So I'm sure that what I'm going to say was mentioned by Johnny because he and I are pretty much on the same page about most of this kind of thing.

I'd like to look at three passages in Matthew and at least two of the three would be in the highest rung of familiarity to evangelicals. And the other one's not unfamiliar either. But let's look at three passages and see if you catch what the common denominator is in these passages.

In Matthew chapter 6, verses 8 through 10, Jesus said, therefore do not be like the hypocrites and don't be like the Gentiles when you pray. But he says, when you pray, pray like this, our father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your

will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That's the first one.

Everyone knows that because everybody knows that prayer. If you'll turn over a few pages or just even maybe the next page, it might even be on the same page for you. The same chapter in verse 33, Matthew 6, 33.

Everyone knows this verse as well. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you. Very familiar verse.

And then let's look at one other verse. This is in Matthew 24 and verse 14. And by the way, I do hope you have Bibles with you, even if it's only on your phone.

It's always nicer when you can turn pages. It's more like a, I don't know, I'm old-fashioned, I guess. But whatever, whether it's on a book or on the phone, I hope you'll follow because I'm going to be showing you other scriptures in the course of this morning.

But this third passage with which we begin is in Matthew 24, 14. And Jesus said, and this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations and then the end will come. Now I'm sure that since I set you on the alert before I read these, you had no trouble discovering the common denominator of these particular verses that we took.

And what is the common denominator? The kingdom of God. The kingdom of God. Not only these verses, by the way.

The Bible says that Jesus never spoke to the crowds without a parable. He says that in Mark 4:34. And we find that the parables that are recorded usually begin with the words, the kingdom of God is like this, or the kingdom of heaven is like this.

Now don't be confused by the term kingdom of heaven. It's only found in Matthew and that's because Matthew's writing to Jews and Jews didn't like to use the word God very frequently. Again, they like to keep God somewhat aloof and separate and didn't want to use his name too frequently.

So they substitute things like the almighty, you know, the most high, and even heaven. They substitute for the name of God. That's when the prodigal son desiring to come home to his father said, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight.

Of course he means I've sinned against God. The Jews would commonly use the word heaven when they really mean God. And Matthew alone uses the term kingdom of heaven.

In the parallel passages in Mark and Luke where the same statements are found, where Matthew has kingdom of heaven, Mark and Luke both have the same statements, only

kingdom of God. That's because Matthew was writing to Jews and used the actual words Jesus used because he was Jewish speaking to Jews. And sometimes he said kingdom of God, sometimes kingdom of heaven.

Both are found in Matthew and are used interchangeably. As when Jesus said, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. The previous verse says how difficult it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Yeah, kingdom of God, kingdom of heaven, two successive verses. That's Matthew 19. Both talk about the same thing, same term, a different term, same thing.

Now, so if you find the term kingdom of heaven, it's the same as the kingdom of God, but that's confusing. And this is where I was confused in the early part of my Christian life. I was under the impression that because I found in Matthew the expression kingdom of heaven, that it meant heaven.

Like we might say the kingdom of Saudi Arabia or the kingdom of Tonga or the kingdom of whatever. We think it's the name, we're thinking of kingdom of heaven means the kingdom that's called heaven. But then we might as well say it's the kingdom that's called God because that's the more frequent term in scripture, the kingdom of God.

It's not the kingdom that is called heaven. It's the kingdom that is from heaven. Of means from, just like Jesus of Nazareth means Jesus from Nazareth.

That's where he came from. When Jesus said to Pilate in John 18, 36, my kingdom is not of this world. He was not saying my kingdom is not in this world.

It certainly was. It's not of this world. It doesn't originate from this world.

He said, if my kingdom was of this world, my servants would have fought. So I would not have been captured by the Jews, but my kingdom is not from here. Now that's a chapter earlier.

Jesus had prayed for his disciples and said, they are not of this world, but do not take them out of the world. That's he prayed that in John 17 verses 15 and 16. He says, I do not pray that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them for the wicked one.

They are not of the world. Interesting. They are in it.

And he didn't want them to be elsewhere. Do not take them out of the world. They are to be in the world, but they are not to be of the world.

In the previous chapter to two chapters previous to that in John 15, Jesus said to the disciples, if you are of the world, the world love its own, but because I've chosen you out of the world, the world hates you. Now, the point here is that Christians and the kingdom

are not of this world, but that doesn't mean they're not in this world. In fact, in Luke chapter 17 and verse 20, the Pharisees demanded of Jesus when the kingdom of God would appear.

Now the very question itself suggests that they're not thinking of the way I was thinking growing up. I never thought of the kingdom of God, that something going to appear. I thought, so I'm going to die and go there someday.

Or maybe when Jesus comes back, he'll set it up, you know, somewhere. But, but the point is they were looking for it to appear and rightly so. And his answer to them was, the kingdom of God does not come with observation.

Men will not say, lo, here or lo, there it is, he said, but the kingdom of God is already in your midst. Now, by the way, some translations, the older ones like King James say, the kingdom of God is within you. The word within is not referring to inside the Pharisees.

The Pharisees were not parts of the kingdom of God. Within means within the group here, within the crowd, within your midst, in your midst, the kingdom is here. Well, then what is it? He says, you can't see it.

It doesn't come with observation. You won't be able to say, oh, there it is, or there it is. It's already here and you can't see it.

And another occasion in Matthew 12 in verse 28, Jesus was explaining his ministry of exorcism. He says, if I'm casting out demons by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. You didn't notice it, did you? But it's here.

Now, what is it then? Jesus said it was here. And certainly the apostle Paul believed it was here because in Colossians 1.13, writing to the Christians in Colossia, he said that God has, this is past tense, God has translated us out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear son. So that's where we are.

If we're Christians, we have been translated into the kingdom, out of the kingdom of darkness. There's two kingdoms. But what is Jesus talking about then when he talks about the kingdom? It's clear that he makes it a priority.

First of all, it's the first priority in praying. When you pray, say, our father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, your kingdom come. But notice, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

This kingdom has to do with something on earth. And it is the first priority in prayer. And there's few things more important than prayer.

And in prayer, there's nothing more important than the kingdom. But do we even know what it means? That's what we need to know. And I hope we will before we leave today,

if you don't already.

I didn't for many years. The other verse we read, a second verse we read, was Matthew 6.33. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things we have to do. What does that mean? Seek the kingdom of God.

Again, growing up, I just thought that meant you should make sure that it's your priority that you get to heaven. I didn't know what it meant. Other than that, to me, as far as I knew, the kingdom of God just meant something up in the sky where I go when I die.

It's my mansion in the sky or whatever. But what if it isn't that? What if that's not what it means? It isn't. You never find the kingdom of God equated with heaven in the Bible.

I mean, if the kingdom of God was heaven, what do we do with parables that say the kingdom of God is like a man who sowed good seed in a field and his neighbor came while he slept. Thank you, brother. And sowed tares and then the tares grew up with the wheat.

What, in heaven? He said this is what the kingdom is like. In heaven, there's tares growing up? Or why did Jesus say the kingdom of God is like mustard seed that grows into a great tree? Really? The kingdom is heaven like a mustard seed? What's the comparison here? I don't get it. Or the kingdom of God is like leaven that a woman put into a lump of dough.

Really? What is the kingdom then if it's put into a lump of dough? It's not some eschatological place. What is the kingdom of God? And by the way, the last verse we read said this gospel of the kingdom, the good news of the kingdom, must be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations and then the end will come. Do you want the end to come? I would like to see the end come, frankly.

And yet, Jesus said it's not going to happen without first the kingdom gospel, the gospel of the kingdom being preached in all the world. Okay, well, the gospel is being preached in all the world. Really? You're here, no doubt, responded to some preaching of the gospel at some point in your life.

What is the kingdom of God? Did you hear about it? What does it mean? What is the good news of the kingdom? That's what Jesus has to be preached. Is it? Has it been? How far are we? Now, what I want you to see here is that the three verses we start out with said that the kingdom of God is the priority in your praying. It is the priority in your pursuing.

Seek first the kingdom of God. And it is the priority in our preaching. And I dare say that unless we know what in the world Jesus is talking about, our prayers, if we pray it, are going to be vain repetitions.

How could it be an important prayer if we don't even know what it is we're asking? I was told to say this, your kingdom come. Okay, that's a nice sounding word. And I say it a million times in my lifetime.

But do I even have a clue what I'm asking for? Or is this just vain repetitions? The very thing Jesus in the same passage said not to do. Am I seeking the kingdom of God? First and foremost, as opposed to food and clothing, as Jesus in the context says, don't worry about food and clothing, just seek the kingdom of God. These things will be added to you.

Well, how do I do that? Where is it? What is it? How do I pursue that? I obviously every day am pursuing some goals, but how do I know if the goals I'm pursuing are what Jesus said I should be pursuing? And preaching? Oh man, we might say, well, you know, I was raised in a Christian evangelical. I certainly was in America. So I have every confidence that the gospel that I preached and was preached to me must be the real gospel.

Do you know that there was about a thousand year period from about 500 AD to about 1500 AD that every Christian in the Western world had a gospel preaching that we would not recognize as the true gospel before the Reformation? That's a whole millennium of Christians responding to a gospel, the only one they'd ever heard. But we would say they didn't get it right. There are cultists going door to door every day preaching a gospel.

We would say that's not the right one. They're sure it is, but we're pretty sure it isn't. Right? It's cultic.

Now, if the whole church could be around for a thousand years, if totally dedicated cultists could be totally devoted to a gospel they believe is in the Bible, but we'd say it's not, we need to be humble enough to say, you know, we are products of 20th century, now it's 21st century now, but we are products of a particular kind of gospel preaching that arose in the 20th century, which had not been preached before, and which emphasized something that was not emphasized in the preaching of Jesus or the apostles. I hate to shock you about that. It's really surprising.

I remember when I was about 19 years old, somebody said, let me ask you a question. Just what if the Bible never said anything about heaven or hell? Now, by the way, it does. Okay, I'm not suggesting it doesn't.

Just hypothetically, if the Bible never mentioned heaven or hell as destination, would you still serve Jesus? In other words, if all you knew about was this life, would you still serve Jesus? That was shocking for me to hear because I think, well, it's kind of hard serving Jesus. I have to cut out a lot of things I'm tempted to do and not do them. I have to be kind of unpopular in certain circles, like most.

You know, would I serve Jesus if there wasn't a reward after this life that I knew about?

My answer is yes. Jesus, let me tell you something. If you look at all the evangelistic sermons in the book of Acts, that's where the apostles preached, in the book of Acts.

All the letters they wrote were to Christians, but in the book of Acts, we have them addressing unbelieving crowds. At least three or four such sermons of Paul are recorded, about three sermons of Peter, like that are recorded. Study them sometime.

See what they preached and what they didn't. See how different it was from modern preaching. I was listening to a preacher yesterday on YouTube, a man I know, a friend of mine, but he was talking about the need to urge upon people the urgency of getting saved because they're going to hell.

Well, I believe that people who don't follow Christ are going to hell. I believe that. And that was the way he said, that's the way Jesus preached the gospel.

I thought, where? Where do you find Jesus saying to unbelievers, if you don't believe me, you're going to hell? Now, he said things about hell, but he said to his disciples privately. He talked about hell, but did he preach it to unbelievers? I can't find a place where he did. When you read the sermons in the book of Acts that Peter and Paul preached to unbelievers, not one mention of the afterlife comes up.

Not one mention of heaven or hell is in their sermons. And yet thousands of people responded. What in the world were they talking about? Well, obviously they were talking about something in the world.

They didn't mention another world in their preaching. What is it? Now, we know that the kingdom is related to this world because Jesus said, every time you pray, you should pray, Father, may your kingdom come. Where? Here.

From there to here. And your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. What's that even mean? I thought it was just supposed to be rapture and go away.

No, there's something God wants to see happen on earth, and that's what Jesus was announcing. When John the Baptist began preaching, his first words were, the kingdom of God is at hand. When Jesus began preaching, his first sermon recorded in Mark 1.14, 1.15, it says his message was, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

At hand means close. He didn't mean you're going to die soon and go to heaven. He's talking about something very different.

He says the time is fulfilled. What time? It obviously is suggesting that there was something being anticipated, something had been predicted, something was looked for, and this was the time that it was going to be realized. So where's this anticipation come from? It comes from the Old Testament.



The Jews to whom John and Jesus preached were schooled, of course, in the Old Testament. It's the only Bible they had. You know, I mentioned, would you serve Jesus if you knew nothing about heaven or hell? You might think, well, I'm not sure I would.

Well, the Old Testament people had to. There was no description of heaven or hell in the Old Testament covering 4,000 years of history during which people, some of them served God, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Moses, the prophets, as far as we know, they didn't have a clue what happens after you die, nor were they motivated by such things. Well, what in the world were they motivated by? Well, I think they're motivated by God.

You know, there was a time when Christianity even was taught, was about God. It's preached now as if it's about you. It's about you.

You're really in a lot of trouble unless you repent. Get saved and you won't be in so much trouble. You'll be glad you did.

Do yourself a favor, a big favor. Yeah, that sounds like an advertisement for soap because advertising is all about you. This product will help you.

You'd be stupid not to buy this product. The product you have now is inferior to this other product, which is good for you. You'll be happier with it.

And that's how we preach the gospel. Not quite so coarsely, but we'd make it like, you know, you don't have peace in your life. You don't have joy in your life.

You're a slave of your sins. Your, you know, your marriage is a wreck perhaps. You need, you need God in your life.

And of course you need him most of all because someday you're going to stand before the great white throne and then eternal destinies will be assigned. So, I mean, you really need to do yourself a favor. They never said that when they preached the gospel in the New Testament.

I'm not saying there was no benefit to the sinner that was known. Certainly they, I mean, at one point Peter said, save yourselves from this corrupt generation. But it's already, he'd already given the altar call before that.

There really wasn't actually an altar call, but his sermon had ended. What had his sermon ended with? In Acts chapter two, his first sermon and all the other sermons follow the same pattern. Peter's first evangelistic sermon was simply a recitation of what the prophets had predicted would happen with reference to the Messiah and a reference to the fact that these prophecies had come true.

And his final statement was, let all the house of Israel assuredly know therefore that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ. Sermon ends. No altar call,

no sinner's prayer, no every eye closed and every head bowed.

Just, here's the announcement. Because good news, the word gospel, euangelion in the Greek was a word in the Greek language before, before Christianity. They just picked it up.

Euangelion means a good, good tidings, a good announcement. Like if the king's wife had a baby and they're now a new heir to the throne, a public proclamation such as a herald would give was a euangelion. If the war is doing well in the, among the barbarians and the Roman, you know, messengers come back with, you know, we defeated the barbarians in such and such a place, then that's a good announcement.

It's what a herald would announce. And when the disciples came along, they preached and heralded something too. It wasn't an invitation.

It was information, namely the kingdom of God. Jesus preached the kingdom of God is at hand. Therefore repent and believe the gospel.

Why? Well, apparently so you can be part of this. Well, what is it? Well, in the old Testament, people loved God and wanted to be part of his kingdom. They didn't know anything about heaven or hell because it hadn't been revealed in the Old Testament.

The Bible says in first Timothy that life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel of Jesus. So even before Jesus came, God hadn't really illuminated people about immortality. That wasn't the message and it wasn't apparently the message Jesus or the apostles preached primarily either, but something was.

And it all began in the Old Testament in Exodus chapter 19 verses 5 and 6. When God brought Israel out of Egypt and brought them to Mount Sinai, he told Moses, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you will be a peculiar treasure unto me, says the Lord, for all the earth is mine and you'll be a holy nation and a kingdom unto me of priests. Thus shall you tell the children of Israel. Now think about that.

If you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you'll be a holy nation. You'll be a kingdom to me of priests. This is the first time that the Bible ever suggests God had any interest in having a kingdom of his own.

There were kingdoms of the world. They began with Babel and other rebellious kingdoms against God. But now God pulls aside one family, brought them out of Egypt, says you can be my kingdom if you will.

If you'll obey my voice, if you'll keep my covenant, then you can be my kingdom. Where? Right where they were. Not when they died.

God was establishing a kingdom among Israel to be his kingdom among the nations. The

king Satan had ruled the nations unchallenged since the time of Adam and Eve. Now a challenger came, a new kingdom with God as its king.

Those who obey him, those who keep his covenant, he's got a kingdom now too. He's invaded the kingdoms of this world and established a kingdom of his own made up of a community, a society that followed his ways, a society that followed his covenant called Israel. Now the problem is they didn't.

God was very forgiving. When they made their golden calf, they broke the covenant. And hundreds of times after that as you read the Old Testament history, the book of Judges, the books of kings, full of the disobedience of Israel against the covenant.

But you know what happened in the book of Samuel at the end of the period of Judges in 1 Samuel 8, it says that the children of Israel came to Samuel the prophet and said, you know, we're tired of this situation here where we have judges instead of a king. Make us a king to rule over us like all the nations have. Now that sounds reasonable.

Why not? They're a big nation. Why shouldn't they have a king like all the nations are? Because they're not like all the other nations. That's just the point.

They have a king already. During the period of the judges before Samuel's time, Gideon was offered the position of king. He was a judge, not a king.

Israel didn't have kings in those days. There was no king in Israel back then. There were judges.

And when Gideon delivered the people from the Midianites, the people said, rule over us, you and your son and your son's son. In other words, let's set up a dynasty here with you as the starting point and your sons after you can be kings too with you. And he said, I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you, but the Lord will rule over you.

Gideon knew Israel's status was different than the nations. All the nations had kings you could see, except Israel. They had a king you could not see, and he was the best king of all.

And they were the privileged nation to be his kingdom. But they wanted a king like all the nations in Samuel's day. So Saul was given to them.

The name Saul, by the way, in Hebrew means asked for. And so they got what they asked for. They got Saul.

And he turned out to be a bad one. Then God raised up David to replace him, a man after his own heart, and set up a dynasty in David. But the idea was, okay, Israel, you want a king, you can have a king, but he has to be subject to me.

That's why you find in the Old Testament, the kings are rebuked by the prophets. It was

understood in Israel, the prophets speak for God. And the kings are subject to God because he's still the king, supposedly, but they didn't recognize him as king.

And the kingdom was totally destroyed when Babylon carried them into captivity. They never had another king after that for the next 500 years, almost 600. And so the kingdom had come to an end.

The kingdom of God in Israel no longer existed because of their rebellion. They didn't meet the conditions. The condition were, if you obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, you'll be my kingdom.

They didn't. God persisted and forgave and was patient with them. Finally he said, listen, you're done with me, I'm done with you.

And so they went off into Babylon. Now he brought them back from Babylon, but he didn't set them up as a kingdom. They were always vassals under pagan kingdoms.

When they came back from Babylon, they were under Persia until the Greeks conquered Persia, and then they were under the Greeks. Then the Romans conquered the Greeks, and so Israel was under the Romans. And that's when Jesus came.

Israel did not have a kingdom of its own after the Babylonian exile, but the prophets had predicted that there would be one, that God would raise up a king. The Jews called him the Messiah, which means the anointed one. The phrase anointed, or the word anointed one, it suggests one who's been anointed to be king, like Saul was anointed to be the king, and then David was anointed to be the king.

The pouring of oil over the head was the installment ritual of kings. So when they spoke of the one who's coming, who's the anointed one, they mean the king. And actually the Old Testament doesn't use the word Messiah as much as we might think it would, but it uses the word king and Messiah interchangeably.

And the word Christ is the Greek word for Messiah. So not only when Jesus talks about the kingdom of God, is he talking about the kingdom of God, but whenever the word Christ is used with reference, it's talking about the kingdom of God. You know, when Paul preached in Thessalonica, a pagan city, his gospel was understood by the listeners to be saying, there's another king, one Jesus.

And that's precisely what the Bible teaches. Jesus died, and then he rose, and then he ascended to the right hand of God, and he's seated on a throne. He's enthroned.

He's a king. And you can't be a king without having a kingdom. You can't be a king without having subjects.

Israel was to be God's kingdom in the Old Testament. A nation, an alternative society

governed by God on the earth amidst the pagan nations. They ditched the project.

But the prophet said, I'm going to restore that. I'm going to bring the Messiah, and I'll reign over Israel again. And so when John the Baptist appeared hundreds of years later and the kingdom of God is at hand, the Jews didn't have a concept of, you know, what happens when you go to die and go to heaven.

That's not what they're thinking, and nor should they. How could that be at hand unless they're going to die real quick? What was at hand was the fulfillment. Jesus said, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Therefore, repent and believe the gospel. So what was it he's bringing? It was not something elsewhere than here. Israel was an earthly nation, and Jesus came to Israel and offered them the status of being the kingdom again, coming under God, but this time under his agent Messiah, who is God and is the anointed king, like David.

David was a type of Jesus, and so many of the things in David's life resemble the kingdom of Jesus. And you know, I mentioned that Jesus said the kingdom was there. It had come.

The kingdom of God has come upon you, he said. It's in your midst. And then Paul said, we have already been translated into the kingdom.

What does it mean then to be in the kingdom? Well, it doesn't really mean very much different than what it meant the first time God ever mentioned it in Exodus. If you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you'll be my kingdom. That's what a kingdom is.

It's people who obey the voice and keep the, you know, national arrangement that, you know, with the king. And so it is that Jesus made a new covenant. So to be in his kingdom now requires that we're faithful to the new covenant, but still obey.

Now, we've got, but I thought we're saved by faith. Yeah, we're saved, we're justified by faith. No question.

Anybody who dies with faith is going to go to heaven. They're justified. There's nothing standing between them and God on the judgment day.

That's a good thing. I'm not trying to eliminate from your minds the concepts of what happens after you die. What I'm trying to reintroduce is what Jesus talked about all the time.

What happens before then? What about before you die? What then? Now, see, the way I was preached to the gospel when I was young, it's like, don't worry about too much about what happens between now and then. Get saved, hang in there, you'll die or Jesus will come back and you'll go to heaven. And that was the only thing I really knew.

Now, I knew that there were some teachings about doing, you know, loving and forgiving and things like that. You know, you can't read the New Testament without discovering those things, but somehow I wasn't sure how that really fit in. I mean, okay, yeah, it's good to do those things.

Jesus did teach a better way to go. So, I mean, we maybe should try to do that a little bit, but really it's all about saved by grace through faith. You know, that famous verse, Ephesians 2, 8 and 9, by grace you're saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it's the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

The next verse says, for we are created in Christ for good works. We are his workmanship created in Christ for good works. We're not saved by works, but Jesus said he's calling us to himself for works.

In fact, in the Sermon on the Mount, he said, you're the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, so men will see your good works and glorify your Father, which is in heaven. We're supposed to be doing something here.

Jesus and Paul refers to them as good works, but they're not going to save us. Once you're a follower of Jesus, once you've committed to him, once you've believed in him, you don't need to worry about how you're going to get saved, that's you've been saved. But the next verse is, what am I saved for? I'm saved to be in the kingdom.

What's that? It's a movement with a king. It's an alternative society governed by the king. In this world, there are two kingdoms.

There's the kingdom of Satan and there's the kingdom of God. Now, by the way, the kingdom of Satan shrinks as the kingdom of God grows. You know why? Because everyone who comes into the kingdom of God came out of the kingdom of darkness.

So Satan is not real happy to see the kingdom of God grow because it's always at his expense. And therefore, there's a war, the spiritual war. Now, you've heard of spiritual warfare.

I know that I used to hear sermons about spiritual warfare, and it sounded like, again, it's all about me. Everything's all about me. In popular American preaching, it's all about me.

God created the universe for me, no doubt. If I was the only person who ever lived, Jesus would come and die for me. Well, I don't know if he would have or not.

The Bible doesn't say that, but sure, popular preaching book, because it's all about me. I'm the most important thing to me until I become a Christian. I mean a real Christian.

What did Jesus say? If anyone wants to come after me, let him do what first? Deny himself. Why would I have to do that? Because until then, I've done nothing but affirm

myself and serve myself. I've got to deny myself and take up a cross and follow Jesus.

That's what being a Christian is. That's because I have now another king, one Jesus. It's not about pursuing my agendas and my dreams and my goals, my comfort, my security.

It's not even about me pursuing my eternal destiny, as important as that is. It's about pursuing God's purpose. It's a great tragedy if I die and don't go to heaven.

I admit that's a tragic thing, but it's not anywhere near as tragic as if I die and God didn't give from my life what he deserved, what he paid for, what he made me for. If I die and go to hell, that's just justice. I mean, it's tragic for me, but in the grand scheme of things, that's just justice being done.

I deserve it. But if God doesn't get from my life what he paid for, that's injustice. It's cosmic disaster.

And the gospel doesn't call me to just make something better for myself, make my life better because it'll be less complicated and I get to go to heaven when I die. Those statements may be true statements, but they're not what it's about. What it's about is finding out why God made me and why he bought me and what he has assigned to me now that he is my king.

And I am part of a global movement that Jesus had began in his own day like a little mustard seed, but has grown to be a global phenomenon. The image of that little mustard seed growing into a global phenomenon, a great kingdom, actually is, it has a precedent in the Old Testament that Jesus might have had in mind because he did quote from this passage in Daniel 2 on another occasion. Daniel chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar, who was a king of Babylon, had a dream of an image with a head of gold, chest of silver, belly of bronze, and legs of iron, feet of iron and clay.

And then a stone struck the image in its feet. It crumbled. The stone grew into a great mountain and filled the earth and consumed all the other metals.

Nebuchadnezzar had no idea what it meant. Daniel was called in. Daniel had it revealed to him.

Daniel said, okay, you're the head of gold. You're Babylon. There'll be some other kingdoms follow you.

Media Persia will be this chest of silver, Greece the belly bronze. The Roman Empire, he didn't name them all, but we know them from history. The Roman Empire was the legs of iron and clay.

But he said in the days of these kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom. The God of heaven will set up a kingdom. In what time? The time of the Roman Empire.

That's the last kingdom mentioned in the vision. In the days of these kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom, which will never be destroyed. It will not be left to any others.

And it shall reign forever. And it says, and as you saw that the stone began small and grew up to be great enough to fill the whole earth. So God has shown you what he's going to do in the latter days.

Now this happened. Jesus came during the Roman Empire. That's the time that Daniel said it would happen.

Daniel said, the God of heaven is going to set up a kingdom. Did he? Jesus said he did. And Jesus is enthroned.

And therefore he calls us to not just to believe and get a ticket to heaven. He calls us to repentance from our rebellion against our king. You see, Jesus is the king.

Sometimes we say, I made Jesus the Lord of my life. You know, when I was 12 years old or something like that, I didn't make Jesus the Lord of my life. God did that 2000 years ago.

God established Jesus as above every name, every kingdom. He made him Lord of all. He was my Lord before I ever had ever heard his name.

What I had to do is submit to that reality. Faith, the faith that changes me, that transforms me from being in the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's son is a faith that is basically a submission to what has always been true and what is declared to be true in the right preaching of the gospel. The right preaching of the gospel is there's another king, one Jesus.

Or as I said, Peter closed his first sermon, let all the house of Israel know that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord, which means owner and master, and Messiah, which means the king. That's the kingdom message. Now it's interesting Paul didn't use the word kingdom of God as frequently in his writings as Jesus used in his preaching, but Paul used the word Christ consistently, which is a kingdom.

It means king. Jesus is the Christ. He's the king.

The message of Paul was about the kingdom of God too. Sometimes people mistakenly think Paul preached a different gospel than Jesus because Jesus said in the verse we read in Matthew 24 14, Jesus said this gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations and then shall the end come. Well I've heard people say, and this is the view that I was taught when I was in my growing up in my other church, they say well yeah Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom, but Paul, you know, he's the apostle of another denomination, dispensation.



Could be a different denomination from Jesus too, but different dispensation than Jesus. I think they represent him as being part of a different denomination too than Jesus, but they say he preached something else and that's the gospel of grace. And Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom, but Paul taught the gospel of grace.

Where do you get that? Well there is one place in the Bible where Paul mentions that he preached the gospel of grace. In fact, it'd be good if you looked at it because you'll then see exactly the nature of this claim. This is Acts chapter 20 verse 24 and 25.

Paul has just told the elders of the church of Ephesus whom he's gathered at Miletus to talk with him. He says, I'm going to be, I know I'm going to suffer, I'm going to Jerusalem, I'm going to suffer, everyone tells me that, but he says, but none of these things move me. This is verse 24, Acts 20 24.

None of these things move me, nor do I count my life dear to myself so that I may finish my race with joy and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. There it is. He says, I have been testifying to the gospel of the grace of God.

The only place in the Bible that has the expression gospel of grace, but look at the next verse. And indeed now I know that you all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God will see my face no more. So which is it, Paul? You preaching the gospel of grace or the gospel of the kingdom? Let's get your story straight here.

There's only one gospel. It is the gospel. It's good news about grace.

It's the good news about the kingdom. It's good news about Jesus. It's the gospel of Jesus Christ too.

It's also called the gospel of God. It's all good news. It's all the same gospel.

Paul knew of only one. Remember Galatians 1 8, if anyone, even an angel of heaven would preach to any other gospel than that which I preached, let him be anathema. Paul didn't recognize two gospels and the gospel of grace that he preached, he said was synonymous with preaching the kingdom of God.

In fact, when you close the book of Acts, the very last verses in the book of Acts have Paul preaching to teaching anybody who would come to him. He was in under house arrest in Rome, speaking to anyone who came to him about the things of the kingdom of God. So the very first preacher in the New Testament, John the Baptist, is announcing the kingdom.

Jesus is announcing the kingdom. The very last verse of history in the New Testament is the last verses of Acts and Paul is preaching the kingdom of God. When Jesus sent out the twelve two by two in Matthew 10, he said preach the kingdom of God as at hand.

When he sent out the 70 in Luke chapter 10, he said tell them the kingdom of God has come near them. His parables, what is the kingdom like? To what should we liken the kingdom? It is like such and such. Now I have to say, until we understand that the kingdom of God is a growing movement comprised of an alternative society, a community of the king, a colony of heaven on earth, where people are subject to a king named Jesus and take that seriously.

Remember Jesus said, why do you call me Lord? Lord, you don't do the things I say. If people don't take Jesus seriously, they're not taking his kingdom seriously. They have not responded adequately to the gospel of the kingdom.

That doesn't mean they're going to hell. I'm not going to answer that. God will have to judge, but I'm not here to talk about hell or heaven.

I'm here to talk about the kingdom of God. That's what Jesus was talking about. That's what on earth Jesus was talking about.

Now I want to say this, the gospel and the kingdom according to Daniel 2 is like a little stone that began in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago and has grown to be a great mountain, which is a symbol for a kingdom to fill the whole earth. Jesus spoke similarly. It's like a little mustard seed that grows into a huge thing.

It has. He said it's like leaven that a woman puts into a lump of dough. It permeates the whole thing.

It impacts the whole thing. But if Jesus is the king, why is it that we're under persecution? Well this I'll close with. I said that David was a type of Christ.

He was a man after God's own heart. He wrote many of the Psalms, which are actually, though he was speaking about himself, the New Testament applies them to Christ and makes the words of David the words of Jesus in many of the quotations in the New Testament. David is like, well let's put it this way, to Israel the Messiah was like a second David.

David was a type and a shadow of the Messiah. Well how did he get to be king? Well there was a wicked king already, a demon-possessed king by the way, an evil spirit came upon him regularly. He was a demonic king, sort of like the devil in a way.

And David was secretly anointed to be the king by Samuel in a private ceremony in his father's home. No one knew about it. I mean the public didn't.

Saul would have killed him. Well that didn't help in a secret because Saul figured it out. And so he started persecuting David.

Now the Bible says that when David was anointed by Samuel, the spirit left Saul and

came on David. David was anointed by the Holy Spirit, a spirit filled, and an evil spirit from the Lord came on Saul. So we now have two kings, a demonic king and the king filled with the Holy Spirit, David.

Now David was king just like Jesus was king. When the spirit came down on Jesus at his baptism, the spirit came upon him and God said, this is my son. And he went, well please.

Jesus was anointed by the spirit and when he spoke in the synagogue of Nazareth in Luke 4, he said, the spirit of God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor and opening of prison to the bound and so forth. Now the point here is David and Jesus both were anointed king but were not recognized universally by their people as kings. But they were recognized by Saul.

When David was pursued by Saul, 400 Israelites followed him. They risked their lives. They left their homes, their jobs.

They knew that Jesus, that David was the one that God had anointed to be king. And so they said, we're with you. It says they made him their captain and they fought his battles with him and they fled from Saul and they were persecuted by the armies of Saul because the nation followed Saul just like today.

The world follows the kingdom of darkness. We don't. We've been translated out of that into the kingdom of God's son.

We now have another captain, another king. We are his kingdom. And that group that followed David grew from 400 to 600, the Bible says, and then it doesn't keep track of the rest.

Probably kept growing. In any case, it was a persecuted kingdom, an unrecognized kingdom, except by those who were part of it. But David was the true king, even while Saul was the usurper still on the throne.

God had chosen David and anointed him king. Now Saul eventually died in battle and was gone and then the whole of Israel eventually embraced David as king. His kingdom, which was only recognized by a remnant through much of its early stages, became universally recognized, not only by all Israel, but by Gentiles too.

David conquered the Moabites, the Philistines. He put all these people under tribute to him. He was the king internationally.

Now this is a type of Christ. Christ was anointed king at his baptism. The time will come when Satan will be disposed of finally and the whole world will recognize Jesus as king.

Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of

God the Father. That's a guarantee, but we're not there yet. In the meantime, we're like the 400 or the 600 who are following David around persecuted, not because our king isn't our king.

He is the king and he's the only legitimate king, but he's not universally recognized as such and therefore those who see his kingdom as a threat to Satan's kingdom persecute him. That's why you see many of the things that are beginning to happen in our society even now. The kingdom of darkness is reasserting itself.

It's always been doing that, but the kingdom of God continues to grow. You know, before Mao Tse Tung came to power in China, they say there were under a million Christians in China, but 40 years later, there are like a hundred million. The church grew more than any other time, any other place in history under some of the worst persecution ever.

Persecution does not stop the kingdom of God. It thins it out. It weeds out those who are seed that fell on stony ground, but the kingdom still continues to grow and continues to progress and that's what we're a part of and that's what we must be praying for the continual progress.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven is a progressive thing. Every time one person becomes a Christian actually starts living according to Christ's teachings, God's will is being done more in that instance on earth than as it is in heaven, but we're praying for much more. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

That's our prayer. We're praying for the advance of the reign of Christ. I've compared this.

I thought it was very close to the other, but never trust me when I say that. I'll finish with this. I think I'm watching the clock.

Believe me, I know the clock is there. It's already 9 30. When I was five years old, a movie came out, a horror movie.

I saw it on TV when I was five. I don't know why it was on TV so quickly. It must have gone quickly to TV, but it was the first movie that Steve McQueen starred in.

It's called The Blob. It terrified me. As a little kid, I was terrified by this movie.

Now, I've seen it since then, just not very long ago. It's not that scary really, but the idea, when I see it as an adult, I think, was this written by a Christian? Do you know the production company that made it was a Christian, a maker of Christian films? I didn't know that at all until I had already decided that whoever wrote the movie was aware of the kingdom of God because in the Bible, the kingdom of God is pictured like a stone that comes down and strikes the earth and then begins to grow. And in this movie, this meteorite thing about the size of a soccer ball hits the ground and in the farm, in the

field of the farmer, and he comes out with a stick and touches it, cracks open like an egg.

There's something kind of glowy and goeey inside. It's the blob. So he sticks this stick into it to see what it's like, lifts it up, and it's like silly putty or worse.

And it comes down the stick and gets on his arm. Then it's really worse because it starts eating him. And so he rushes to the doctor and it finally eats him and the doctor and the nurse.

And these people, none of these people are crippled and the thing moves about an inch an hour. It just kind of vibrates along slowly and the nurse just stands there screaming while it's coming across the room at her for the next 15 minutes. Some movies are not entirely realistic but this one has something realistic behind it.

I don't know that it was intended but I have to believe it was because the blob came from another world and it began to consume the inhabitants of this world. By the end of the movie, it had gotten bigger. Every time it got more people in it, it got bigger of course and eventually it was big enough to cover a whole diner and the stars were in the basement wondering what was going to happen and of course they were going to die.

Spoiler alert, they don't but I won't tell you why. But the truth is this is just as I came to understand the kingdom of God, this is no wonder the devil is terrified. I was terrified of the blob when I was five years old.

The devil can be terrified of it because he knows it's real. The kingdom has come. It's landed on earth.

The king has landed. He's called loyalists to himself. He's commanded God to preach his lordship and his kingship to the entire world as a witness to all nations and to pursue it, to pursue its fortunes, to pursue its growth first and foremost and to pray all the time for it to continue and advance.

We are part of something that is not just the going to heaven club. We are part of the alternative society that Jesus established that is now billions strong. Do you know there are only 120 in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost? Now there's over a billion people on the earth who profess to be Christian.

Many of them may not be born again. We can't be the judge of all that but but they profess Jesus as Lord which is a pretty big thing for that many people to do and how much more I don't know but my fear is that we have been praying for and pursuing and even preaching something less than what Jesus said has to be pursued and prayed for and preached and this is not some new revelation or something I've got. This is this is the historic message of the gospel.

You find it in the church fathers. It's modern America that changed it into an advertising slogan and partly because we don't have kings in America. We're like the first society to not have a king so we don't even know what it means.

We only know of you know King Arthur and you know stories like that about kings. They sound very ancient. We don't have kings so we have to think of we're democratic.

We got to get people to vote to vote for Jesus. Please Jesus is knocking on the door of your house of your heart. His cap is in his hand.

Do him a big favor and let him into your house. No the way Paul preached it is God in times of ignorance winked but now he commands all men everywhere to repent. It's an ultimatum.

It's not an invitation. It's an ultimate. The king says I own you.

Now if you're going to act like it you can be part of my kingdom. If you're not you're my enemy because this is a kingdom at war with the opposing kingdom and you can only be in one or the other and that is what Jesus was talking about when he was talking about the kingdom.