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Kingdom of God (Part 2)



Kingdom of God - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg delves into the central concept of the Kingdom of God and what it means for Christians. He explains that the Gospel of the Kingdom of God was a central concern of Jesus' ministry and that it is tied to the concept of Jesus as Lord and King. Gregg emphasizes the importance of recognizing Jesus as Lord and King in order to be saved and have a meaningful relationship with God.

Transcript

I want to talk about how central the concept of the Kingdom of God is to what we call the Gospel. Now, unfortunately for us, we live at the end of 2,000 years of church history where some of the words that were in the Bible have taken on a religious meaning that they did not possess in the first century. The word Gospel, for example, I mentioned this I think last time.

The word Gospel, euangelion in the Greek, in the first century was not a religious word. It wasn't a word about, you know, a religion. The word was simply the common word in the Greek language for centuries before the time of Christ.

It means good tidings and in particular it referred to the tidings of victory that were carried by a messenger from the battlefield back to the folks at home. Say, we won. That would be called good tidings.

That was the euangelion, which is the Greek word for translated Gospel. Actually, even the word Gospel comes from an older form of the English language where it was Godspel, which means good spell, good tidings. But the point here is that we think of the Gospel as a religious message.

When the Bible says that Jesus came preaching the Gospel, that word Gospel meant a proclamation of good tidings of victory, usually of a military or kind of political kind of victory, rather than religious. Now also the word preach, because we find in the Bible the expression preaching the Gospel. The word preaching, charigma in the Greek, originally was not a word about something people did in churches, in a pulpit.

The word preach was simply the word for proclaiming, like to herald news. So preaching the Gospel, as we read of it in the scripture, in the first century didn't strike people as a religious phrase at all, like it does now. It was more like a proclamation of a message of victory, a proclamation of good news, of a sort that might be religious or not religious, but more often than not, the term was used in the Greek language not of religious messages, but of people bringing a good report.

When the scriptures talk about the kingdom of God, they're not talking about something that's peripheral. The first preaching in the Bible was that of John the Baptist and secondly of Jesus, and they were both preaching what's called the Gospel of the kingdom of God. In Matthew 3, 2, we read that John the Baptist, before Jesus, was talking about the kingdom.

Matthew 3, 2, in those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And you remember if you're here last week that the kingdom of heaven is simply a synonym for the kingdom of God that Matthew uses frequently. Only Matthew ever uses the term kingdom of heaven, no other biblical writer does.

But he uses it in passages where the other writers use the term kingdom of God parallel. So it's the same thing, just Matthew's own way of saying the kingdom of God. In Luke 16, 16, Jesus said the law and the prophets were until John.

Since that time, that is since John has come, the kingdom of God has been proclaimed. Mark 1, 14, and 15 has the first recorded words of Jesus as an adult. In Luke chapter 2, we have recorded words of Jesus as a 12 year old.

But the first recorded words of Jesus as an adult are found in Mark 1 verses 14 and 15. Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, or proclaiming or heralding the good tidings about the kingdom of God and saying the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel.

So the time is fulfilled suggests that the time that the Jews have been waiting for, the time the prophets had spoken of, there was a period of time that the nation had waited many generations and now that time was at its end. The wait would be no more. And he says therefore people need to get ready for it and they need to repent and believe the gospel.

In Matthew 9, 35, it says then Jesus went about all the cities and villages teaching in their synagogues preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Jesus said in Matthew 24, 14, this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations and then the end will come. So we see that the gospel of the kingdom that Jesus preached, now that he's been gone all this time, it is still relevant and still to be preached before

the end.

In fact, it appears that this is the thing that is being waited for. Why hasn't God brought the end of the world yet? It's been so long since Jesus left. Because the gospel of the kingdom has not yet been preached in all the world.

It must be before the end comes, said Jesus. In Luke 4, 43, after Jesus had spent a whole night healing everyone in town and the disciples had gone to bed, Jesus got up real early the next morning and prayed and the people came looking for him to do more miracles for them and they couldn't find him. The disciples looked for him, finally found him out praying and they says, come on, everyone's waiting for you to do some more miracles.

And he says, no, I must preach the kingdom of God in other cities also because for this purpose I have been sent. Why did Jesus come to the earth? What purpose was he sent here for? I'm sure that Christians would give a variety of different answers to that question and probably all of them would have an element of truth because Jesus mission was not totally simple. It was complex.

There are many aspects to it. But by his own admission, his purpose for coming was to preach the kingdom of God. That obviously is the central concern of the New Testament and of Jesus ministry.

In Luke 8, verse 1, it says, now it came to pass afterward that he went through every city and village preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. Luke 9, verses 1 and 2, it says, then he called his 12 disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases and he sent them to preach the kingdom of God. And after his resurrection, according to Acts 1, 3, Jesus spent 40 days with his disciples before he ascended into heaven.

And it says to his apostles, he also presented him as alive after his suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during 40 days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Jesus' whole ministry is bracketed by preaching the kingdom of God. It begins with John preaching the kingdom of God.

Then Jesus preaches the kingdom of God and then he sends the 12 out to preach the kingdom of God. In Luke 10, we didn't look at it, but he sent the 70 out to preach the kingdom of God and he's preaching the kingdom of God in all his parables. And after he's died and risen from the dead, he spends 40 days with his disciples.

What's he talking about then? Lo and behold, it's still the kingdom of God. And yet, how many of us know anything about what the kingdom of God is about? Now, I'm not asking for a show of hands because I imagine some of you say, I know what it's about and you'd be right. But I know that when I was raised in a church, in a not only a Bible-believing church, but a very biblically literate home, my parents were very biblically literate and I

was raised to be biblically literate.

And yet, when I was 16 years old, having been a Christian for 12 years at that time, I could not have given you the slightest definition of the kingdom of God, if you'd ask me. And yet, it's that which permeates the entirety of the Gospels, the entirety of the ministry and life of Jesus. And not only that, the early church.

What's their preaching about? In Acts 8, 12, we find Philip goes to Samaria. And he says, but when they believed, Philip, as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. In Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas are revisiting the churches they had established on the first leg of their first missionary journey.

And as they return and revisit these churches, it says in verse 22, 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. Well, exactly what that means perhaps would repay sometime an explanation. We'll get to that sometime later on.

But suffice it to say, it's clear that Paul was talking about the kingdom of God and the need to enter the kingdom of God to his disciples. And that this could only be done through great tribulations. In Acts 19, 8, it says that Paul went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

This was in Ephesus. In Acts 20 and verse 25, I should have given you verse 24 and 25 because this is an interesting thing. I mentioned last time that there are many who feel that the gospel of the kingdom of God is not a gospel for this dispensation.

And that in this dispensation, we're supposed to be preaching something called the gospel of grace. Anyone familiar with that claim? Anyone ever heard that? Yeah, that there's a dispensation that Jesus was preaching the kingdom of God, it is true. But because the Jews rejected it, he postponed it until the second coming.

And he will establish the kingdom of God after his second coming in the millennial kingdom. But that because it is postponed, there's an interim, there's a parenthesis called the church age, they say. And during that age, the gospel of the kingdom is not relevant.

It's the gospel of grace. So they say there's really two gospels. Paul got so mad at people who preached other gospels that he could spit about it.

He said, if anyone preaches another gospel than I preached to you, let him be a curse, even if it's an angel from heaven. In Galatians 1, 8, 9. But the point is, there are people who say, yeah, there are two gospels, one that was preached by Jesus and the other

that's preached by Paul and appropriate to this present church age. And when the church is raptured and the church age ends, then it'll be time for the preaching of the kingdom again.

And the establishment of the kingdom in the millennial reign. That's what is commonly taught in many churches. By the way, that was never taught in any church before 1830.

No church had ever heard such doctrines as those. Those doctrines originated in England in 1830, and the man's name who's the culprit can be given, but I'm not going to worry about him right now. But I want to show you something interesting, because the term the gospel of grace is found only once in scripture.

And it's in the verse before this one. In Acts 20, verse 24, Paul is talking to the elders of the church of Ephesus who have come to meet him in Miletus as he's on his way to Jerusalem. And he says, he's talking about how he has been told by prophets and so forth that he's going to face tribulations and chains in Jerusalem.

But he says in verse 24, but 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 the gospel of the grace of God. Well, it sounds like the doctrine is true. We're supposed to teach the gospel of grace.

That's what Paul was preaching. He was preaching the gospel of the grace of God. This is the only place in the Bible that uses that expression, gospel of grace.

And it clearly was taught by Paul. So I guess we should be preaching the gospel of grace. But what about the next verse, verse 25? Paul then says to them, And indeed, now I know that you all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God will see my face no more.

Now is Paul confused or what? Or are the modern teachers confused? Paul said, I've been preaching the gospel of grace. And in the next verse, I've been preaching the kingdom of God. Apparently, Paul didn't know there were two gospels.

He only knew of one gospel. It was the gospel of the grace of God. It was also the gospel of the kingdom of God.

How would that be an impossibility? How would it be difficult for the good news to involve a message about God's grace and God's kingdom at the same time? Obviously, there's only one gospel. Not two. In Revelation 14, John saw an angel flying through midheaven preaching what John calls the everlasting gospel.

Well, if the gospel is an everlasting gospel, that must be eternal. That must mean there's no periods of time when that gospel is not relevant. It must be the gospel for all time.

So, the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of grace are the same gospel. There's only one gospel. But notice that Paul, who preached the grace of God, was also preaching, as he says, the kingdom of God.

In Acts 28, the last chapter of Acts, as we approach the end of the record of Paul's life, in Acts 28, 23, it says, So, when they had appointed him a day, many of the Jews of Rome came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the grace of God, no, of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the law of Moses and the prophets from morning till evening. And then a few verses later, at the very end of the book of Acts, the last verses, then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house and received all who came to him preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him. Now, I would say we have just seen that the ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist was characterized by the preaching of the kingdom of God.

When Jesus left and ascended to heaven, the apostles picked up the banner and they began to preach something, too. What was it? The kingdom of God. The same thing.

You never find a time, from the opening historical records of Matthew to the closing historical records of Acts, you never find a time when anyone is preaching anything other than the kingdom of God. So we, apparently, that's the task, that's the message for us to preach, too. But how can we preach if we don't know what it means? Well, here's the bottom line.

I said earlier, and we can get this from, as I said, the very earliest mentions of the kingdom of God in Scripture in Exodus 19. Where God said to Israel, if you obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, you'll be my kingdom. That being the kingdom of God is really a reference to a relationship between a people and their God.

A relationship of a king and subjects. A relationship involving obedience. If you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you'll be my kingdom.

Therefore, it should not be surprising that the message of the kingdom of God is simply this. There is a king. And he has called for us to come into a relationship with him as obedient subjects.

Those who did so were called disciples in biblical times. And the people who were called disciples later were called Christians. By the way, in Acts 11, 26, it says the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

So, the subjects of the king were the disciples who were also, that was originally what the word Christian meant. Now, you and I know very well that the word Christian is used much more broadly than that today. I mean, if the disciples were called Christians, well, you can read what the Bible says about disciples.

What's a disciple? You ever read Luke 14? Where Jesus said, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and his mother and his wife and his children and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Or if anyone comes to me and does not take up his cross, he cannot be my disciple. Or in Luke 14, 33, if anyone does not forsake all that he has, he cannot be my disciple.

Not may not, but cannot. Being a disciple is apparently a pretty big commitment. Forsaking all that you have.

Hating wife, children, mother, and father. You know, by the way, these are hyperboles, but they mean something. Bearing a cross.

Now, you can't be a disciple, Jesus said, unless you're able to do those things. And the disciples are the only people in the Bible who are ever called Christians. Because the word Christian is just a synonym for a disciple.

Now, today, we call people Christians for a lot of, you know, a lot of reasons. In fact, in some cases, a person who doesn't make any profession to be a Christian would be offended if you said they weren't a Christian. Because they think Christian means like a decent fellow.

I've heard people say, well, my unsaved friends, my unchurched friends, they're better Christians than any of you Christians are. Well, they're not better Christians. They might be better people, but they're not Christians.

Unless we're using the word Christian to mean simply good people. Of course, evangelicals would say, no, a Christian is somebody who has accepted Jesus into their heart. Another expression that's not found anywhere in the Bible.

There's no place in the Bible that talks about accepting Jesus into your heart. Now, you might say, you can't be right, Steve. I've heard my preacher say that so many times.

Well, okay, check me out on it. So, we shouldn't redefine a Christian as a person who's accepted Jesus into their heart. Well, what is a Christian then? A Christian is a disciple.

What is a disciple? A disciple is a subject of the king. A person who is in God's kingdom in a relationship with Christ as king, as Lord. Now, the word Lord, again, is one of those words that in the past 2,000 years of religious history has taken on a religious connotation.

The word Lord to us sometimes is almost like a synonym of God. You hear non-Christians talk about the good Lord, you know, the good Lord was merciful to me or the good Lord did this and, you know, you think, do you know what the word Lord means or do you think Lord is just a label for God? Just one of his names, Lord. Well, a Lord in, again, in the first century when the New Testament was written had a very distinct meaning.

The Caesar claimed that he was the Lord. A Lord was an owner of people. In lands that had slavery, which was every land in all the world until about 150 years ago, every country had slaves, the owner of slaves was a Lord.

We might call him a master in our society more, but Lord and master are the same term. A Lord was an owner. We still have it in the word landlord.

If you're a renter, you have a landlord. Or if you own property, you might be a landlord. And what that means is you're the owner of the land.

You have full sovereignty over the land. It belongs to you. Now the kings or the Caesars of Rome claimed that they were the lords of their subjects.

They owned them. Everyone was the servant of the Caesar and should be willing to happily do anything the Caesar wished, including die. Dying, what's the big deal? If it pleases Caesar for us to die, we die.

We belong to him. He's our master. He's our Lord.

He owns us. Now when the disciples start saying Jesus is Lord in a pagan environment, that had ramifications that were more than religious. To me, it's a very great shame that we think of Jesus as a religious leader.

Now, I guess we have to say, well, what does religion mean? What is religious? Well, religious, of course, has to do with belief systems about God. And of course, we do get our belief system about God from Jesus. So in that sense, he is a religious leader.

Religions have forms of worship. And Jesus certainly taught us something about worship. So he's a religious leader in that sense.

But when the Bible says Jesus is Lord, it's not talking about his religious teachings or his religious standing. It's talking about the fact that God has made him the emperor of the universe. That's what Jesus himself said just before he ascended.

In Matthew 28, 18, he said, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. All authority. That means the right to rule.

That's what authority means, the right to rule. It's all, all of it in heaven and earth. It's all been given to me.

I am in, I am the supreme autocrat of the universe, apart from my father, of course, who gave it to me. And he says, therefore, go out and make disciples. Well, how do you make disciples? He says, well, you baptize them once they come to Christ, of course.

But then do you know the other part of making disciples? He says, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. How do you make a person into a disciple?

You teach them to obey everything Jesus said. Why? Because he's the Lord.

Because he's the owner. Because he is the emperor of the universe. And Christians are people who have happily submitted to that reality.

And says, you know, if he's the emperor of the universe, I can't be my own lord and my own emperor anymore. Or else I'm going to be in a heap of trouble. Because there's a day of reckoning.

And so a Christian is one who says, I repent of having been my own lord. I acknowledge Jesus is lord. And he will be my lord to the day I die.

And I'm going to live in such a way that demonstrates that he's my lord. That's what every early Christian knew they were getting into. That's how you make disciples.

Jesus said, make disciples of every nation, teaching them to observe everything I commanded, because every bit of authority in heaven and earth is now mine. So to say Jesus is lord is to make a statement that's almost political. Now I say almost political because Christians get actually political sometimes in ways that I don't think is what Jesus necessarily calls for.

His kingdom is not of this world. And therefore it is not run like a political kingdom. And a lot of people, once they get the idea that Jesus is lord, they say, well, we need to make all the laws of this country enforce Christianity.

If you were listening to my show a couple days ago on the radio, a guy named Victor from Vancouver, Washington calls me from time to time. He's called about it half a dozen times. He always has the same question.

And I always give the same answer. But he has one interest, one issue, and he says, Steve, what do you think? Do you think the nation should tolerate false religions? He says in the old testament, false religions were condemned with the death penalty. And yet in our country, Christians say it's a good thing for America to tolerate false religions.

What do you think? And he called me as recently as day before yesterday on it, and I still thought the same thing about it that I did the other times he called. I'm not sure why he thinks I would have changed my mind in the meantime. But see what he what he's not getting clear is he's got it clear in his head that everyone should obey God.

And false religion is idolatry and that's disobedience to God. So that's not okay. But he's translating that into the nation of America should not be tolerant of people not being Christians.

I said, well, what is it exactly you're proposing here? That we make a law that everyone must be a Christian. Everyone who doesn't we throw them in jail or line them up and

shoot them. I mean, what was it you're suggesting here? Paul said, what do I have to do with judging those who are outside the church? God judges them.

We must judge those who are inside the church. The church is God's kingdom. The people, the true people of God who are submitted to Jesus as their king, they are the true followers, subjects of King Jesus.

And they are the ones who acknowledge his authority. The world outside, they don't acknowledge his authority. That doesn't mean he doesn't have authority over them.

It just means his authority has been spurned. You know, when I drive over the speed limit, that doesn't mean the speed limit laws don't have any authority. They have authority.

I'm just violating their authority. And if there's a policeman around who wears a badge, that badge means he has the authority to bring me back into line or penalize me for breaking the authority of the law. Jesus is the authority over all of heaven and earth.

Much of it is still in rebellion against him. But not forever. Not forever.

And ultimately, those who are in rebellion against him will be brought under his feet. Now, we need to understand, sometimes people think, well, there's God rules over the Christians and the devil rules over the non-Christians. And therefore, the non-Christians are simply following their king.

We may not agree with that being the right thing to do, but who am I to intrude into their lives? They're following their king, I'm following mine. But the truth of the matter is, the devil isn't anybody's real king. When she said, all authority in heaven and earth is given to me, that didn't leave any for the devil to have.

The devil has no authority. He rules those who don't know that. And the message of the kingdom is the proclamation that Jesus is the king.

And that all who are submitted to a false authority, Satan, need to repent and come under his lordship. Now, I don't believe in enacting laws through Congress requiring people to do those things. Because Congress isn't the kingdom of God.

Congress isn't the enforcers of God's kingdom. The Congress is the enforcer of the Constitution, which actually deliberately allows people to be non-Christians. There's freedom of religion here, and thank God there is, because if our friend Victor would have his way, and only Christians were in Congress, and only they made Christian laws, of course it would be their version of Christianity that would be enforced.

And my version of Christianity might not jive with theirs, and I might go to jail or worse, because that happened for about a thousand years in the Middle Ages, when all the

nations of Europe were Christian. The Waldensys, the Hussites, the Wyclifites, Luther, they didn't agree with the state religion. And they got persecuted and hounded, and most of them got killed.

And, you know, I don't like state religion. And I'm really glad that our country allows freedom of religion. Yes, it allows unbelievers to express their unbelief, but it allows me to express my faith, too.

I'm for that. But, the kingdom of God is something else. The kingdom of God operates within all nations.

The kingdom of God is not especially associated with the Constitutional Republic of the United States. It was in existence in Israel, then in the Roman Empire. It's been in existence in Communist countries, in Muslim countries where there are Christians.

There aren't many in Muslim countries, but where they are, there's the kingdom. And the kingdom of God can operate under any kind of oppressive government, and sometimes even flourishes under those governments that are most oppressive. The most notable case in modern history being that of China.

When Mao Zedong came to power in China, he drove out all the Christians who were Westerners, and he shut off all communication for, what, 30, 40 years with the outside world. The church in the West was thinking, oh boy, the Christians in China must have just dried up and disappeared under that kind of persecution. It was the most severe persecution known in modern history, is the Communist persecution of Christians in China for those years under Mao Zedong.

Then he died. And eventually China opened up. People were able to go in and see, are there any Christians left? Yeah, there's a few Christians left.

When Mao Zedong came to power, there were under 1 million Christians in China, about 800,000. When he left power, 40 years later, there were something like 50 million Christians under extreme persecution. Now, I'm not for persecution.

I like freedom. I just soon live here. But the truth of the matter is, it doesn't matter what the government does.

The kingdom of God has its own destiny, its own dynamic, its own king, and it will flourish. And nothing can stop it, as we shall see in the scriptures here. Here's the bottom line in the message of the kingdom.

Where are we here? The bottom line is that Jesus is the king, or lord, and that he calls us to be his disciples. The first sermon Peter preached on the day of Pentecost ends with these words in Acts 2, 36. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Now, realize the word Christ is just the Greek word for Messiah. Messiah is the Hebrew. Christ is the Greek.

They're the same word. They both mean the anointed one. But when he said, you in Israel need to know that God has made this Jesus that you crucified, he's made him Lord, that's emperor, and Messiah.

Now, the Messiah was a word that was charged with meaning to the Jews. It was the king that God was going to send when he established his kingdom among the people of God. Peter says, he's done it.

You've killed him, but God raised him. He established him. He's the Lord.

He's the Christ. Everyone needs to know this. That's the proclamation of the kingdom.

That's the proclamation of Jesus being the king. Lord and king are not separate concepts. They're identical.

In Romans 10, 9, Paul said that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, in some translations say that Jesus is Lord. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Now, is Jesus Savior and Lord? Jesus is Savior and Lord, though the Scripture never says that.

It always says Lord and Savior. Do you know that? Whenever you have those two words together in Scripture, it's Lord and Savior, not the other way around. When those two are mentioned that close together, sometimes they're mentioned further apart in a sentence, and it's different.

The point is that Jesus is the Lord, and when you confess that Jesus is your Lord, and you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you'll be saved. So, upon what basis is a person saved? By confessing that Jesus is their Lord, and meaning it, of course. Not just saying it.

Because Jesus said, many shall say to me that day, Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name, we cast out demons in your name, we did many mighty works in your name, and I'll profess them. I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of iniquity.

It's in Matthew chapter 7, near the end of the Sermon on the Mount. There are many people who say, Lord, Lord, to Jesus, but they don't mean it. Obviously, Paul's talking about if you really believe it.

If it's really your conviction, if it's your persuasion, your conviction, your dedication, that Jesus is indeed Lord, and that means something to you, that it should mean, then you will be saved. And this is why it's such a mistake, I feel, for people to teach the idea that you can accept Jesus as your Savior today, and then later on, maybe He can be your

Lord, too. And I was raised in a church where that kind of talk was very common.

Commonly, we heard testimonies of people who said, I accepted Jesus as my Savior when I was 12 years old, but I never really accepted Him as my Lord until I was in my 20s, or something similar like that. Now, what are these people saying? They're saying there's two Jesuses, and they accepted one of them when they were 12 and another one when they were in their 20s. But the Bible only knows of one Jesus, and He is Lord, and He is Savior.

And He becomes your Savior when you confess that He's Lord. The angels said to the shepherds the night Jesus was born, unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. Jesus is all those things.

If you have the Son, you have life. If you don't have the Son, you don't have life. John said that in 1 John 5. He that has the Son has life.

He that has not the Son has not life. Well, okay, you have the Son, what do you have? You have one who is Savior, Christ, and Lord. If you don't have one who is Savior, Christ, and Lord, you don't have the right guy.

Because the real Jesus is all those things. And you don't get Him as your Savior first and Lord some other time. Now, I want to clarify this, because I myself grew up under this delusion, and yet I would dare say that I believe I was saved before I understood much about Lordship, about the kingdom of God.

I believe that when I received Christ the best I knew how, I was receiving Him as completely as I could, but I hadn't been informed about everything. But I do know that even though I couldn't have told you what the word Lord means when I was 10 years old, or I couldn't have told you what the relationship of a Lord to subjects is, I still knew because of my relationship with God, I knew that if God said something, I should do it. I knew that if Jesus said something, that carried weight, and that that was I had no right to disregard it.

So even though I didn't use the word Lord, I think when I received Him, I did receive Him as Lord, I just didn't use that term. The important thing is not so much the word Lord as the relationship of having a Lord. That you are submitted to Him as your King.

You come into His kingdom and you get the benefits of being in His kingdom as a result of that, as we shall see. In Luke 6, 46, Jesus said, Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and you don't do the things which I say? Obviously that's, you know, it's crazy to say someone is your Lord, which means your owner and your master, and you don't do what they say? It's just kind of non-sequitur. Jesus said in John 8, 31, If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed.

Now, indeed is an emphasis word. It suggests there may be people who are disciples but

not indeed. Disciples in pretense, disciples in name only, but indeed means genuinely, for sure, for real.

If you really are a disciple, and remember I said, many will say, Lord, Lord, and He'll say, I never knew you. Well, then how do I know if when I say, Lord, Lord, I'm really His disciple or not? Well, He said, if you're continuing in my words, do you read the Sermon on the Mount? Do you read what Jesus said? Does that word to you translate into your code of life? When you make any business decision, any family decision, when you decide who you marry, where you're going to get educated, what career you're going to choose, how you're going to spend your money, how you're going to discipline your children, when you're making any decision in life, do you consult the words of Jesus? If so, then you are truly a disciple, because that's a disciple indeed who continues in His words. If Jesus has said something about something, and you don't consult Him to do it, then I don't know any way to call a person like that a disciple.

For example, there may be many in this room, I don't know, I hope not, but there may be many in this room who did not consult Jesus before seeking a divorce, and may have divorced contrary to His teaching. Now, this is not a small matter, because that's like one of the major decisions a person makes in their life. I mean, second to being deciding to follow Jesus, the next is regarding your marriage.

Real disciples take Jesus seriously. They don't say, I know Jesus doesn't want me to do this, but I really want my happiness. Okay, you can have your happiness for now, you won't have it later, because you're not going to have Him.

You take Him as your Lord, or you don't take Him at all. If He's your Lord, you do what He says. If you fail to do what He says, you repent of it, and you start doing what He says.

And you're not saved by doing it, and this is what Christians get concerned about. They think, well, you're talking about salvation by works. No, I'm talking about salvation by relationship.

That's what the Bible talks about. You have salvation by a relationship with Jesus Christ. But that relationship has definition.

A lot of people say, I have a relationship with Jesus, but it has no definition to them. Okay, you have a relationship, what does that mean? Well, you know, I kind of like Him. I feel good about Him.

I sing songs about Him. That's not a relationship. If my wife and I had only that kind of relationship, that she sang songs about me and kind of liked me, but that's all there was to it, I'm sure we'd call that a marriage.

The relationship that saves a person is a relationship that has definition. We read it a moment ago. If you confess that Jesus is your Lord, and you believe in your heart that

God raised Him from the dead, you'll be saved then.

That's the kind of relationship, a Lordship relationship. And therefore, all the Scriptures are true. Now, I'm not saved because I obey Jesus, and frankly, I don't obey Him perfectly, but I certainly have decided that I want to, and that's because I have this relationship with Him.

When I fail to obey Him perfectly, I don't get thrown out because I have the option of repenting and saying, I didn't really want to be disobedient, or maybe I did at the moment, but I really don't want to be. In my life, I want to be obedient to God. That's my heart's desire.

I sometimes am disobedient out of weakness, out of foolishness, out of forgetfulness, or whatever. I sometimes am disobedient. That doesn't mean I'm not a Christian, because as soon as I know that I was disobedient, I think, oh my gosh, I have violated the Lord.

I have violated His will for my life, and I repent. And the reason I repent is because I am a Christian, because I really have this relationship. You can know that somebody is not a Christian, not by how much they obey, but by what they do when they disobey.

You're not saved by works. You're saved by having this relationship. But if you have that relationship, you will grieve whenever you know that you've been disobedient to Him.

Because that relationship is based on a commitment that He is your Lord. You are His subject. He is your King.

You are His willing and happy servant. I'm so thrilled to be a servant of Jesus. I don't know anyone who's out there who's not a Christian that I envy.

No one. I don't envy Bill Gates. I don't even know if he's a Christian.

I don't think he is, but I don't envy him for his money. I don't envy George Bush for his position as the most powerful man in the world. I don't envy Brad Pitt for his looks.

I could use a little of that, I know, but I don't envy that. I wouldn't trade places with him. I would not.

Not even for a day. And I'm not saying that because I'm pious. I'm saying that because anyone who does not submit to Jesus Christ, I pity him.

Because I am so happy to be a follower of Christ. And we saw last time, Romans 14, 17, the definition of the kingdom of God in Romans 14, 17. The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

And I like that. I like being righteous. I like having peace.

I like having joy in the Holy Spirit. And I wouldn't trade that for money. I wouldn't trade it for fame.

I wouldn't trade it for Angelina Jolie. I wouldn't even be tempted, frankly. Here's what we saw earlier.

In Matthew 28, 18-20. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

This is the commission, to make disciples. What are disciples? People who obey every command. Or at least that's what they're taught to do and what they intend to do.

Remember, your relationship with Jesus is like a marriage. It's a covenant. Marriage is the only covenant relationship, horizontally, that we know in our society.

In Old Testament times, there were other people, like kings made covenants with their people, or even David made a covenant with Jonathan, friendship covenants. But in our society, we don't have those kind of covenants. But we have marriage still.

Marriage is still the only covenant we have in our society that's horizontal. And it's the one covenant of all that God ordained. God ordained marriage to be a picture of the covenant between His people and Himself.

Thus, in the Old Testament, God is the husband, Israel is the wife. In the New Testament, Jesus is the bridegroom, the church is His bride. The marriage covenant is God's intentional depiction of the relationship that He wants with His people.

When you are married, you make certain vows, and presumably you mean them. You say you'll love, you'll cherish, you'll obey, in sickness and in health, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, forsaking all others, you'll cleave only. Those are great, great words.

Great words. Everyone who's ever gotten married has said those words. Fifty percent in our society who've said those words have broken those promises.

But I presume they meant them when they said them. Maybe not. Maybe they didn't even think about it.

But if you thought about that when you said those words to your spouse, you basically were saying, I'm going to be the perfect husband. I'm going to be the perfect wife. You're going to feel loved and cherished.

I'm going to forsake all other pursuits just to cleave only to you, to nourish and to cherish

you. Those are great concepts. But you know what? When you're married, sometimes you've got bad days.

Bad times of the month. Bad weeks, years even. And sometimes when people are married, they don't really cherish and love each other like they said they would.

They don't really obey. They don't really cleave like they said they would. They don't really forsake all others in the sense that they should.

They said they would, but they don't. But are they not married? No, they're still married as long as they intend to keep that covenant. People fall short because of weakness, and they don't do everything they intend to do.

When people get married, they plan to be the best spouse in the whole world. But human weakness sometimes means they aren't always the best. But unless they divorce, they are still in covenant.

And divorce is when they renounce the covenant they've made. Now that's what salvation is. It's a relationship like that with Jesus.

You come into, you pledge yourself to Christ in that way. You say, you are my Lord. I am your subject.

Whatever you say is what I want to do. And that's what I'm pledging myself to. But of course, in the realities of life, we all stumble.

There are failures. We all sometimes sin. But just as in a marriage, your relationship with God isn't shattered as soon as you've sinned.

As soon as you fall short of your ideals in marriage, your marriage doesn't not exist anymore. You still have the covenant. Unless you say, I don't want this covenant anymore.

I want out. Anything short of that, you're still married. What I'm saying is salvation is not about how well you obey.

It's about how determined you are that you should and wish to and desire to obey and are endeavoring to obey. And therefore, you can't tell if a person is a real Christian by how well they're obeying. But you can tell if they're a Christian by how much they regret it and repent when they realize they have not obeyed.

Because they love God. And if you love your wife, and you realize you forgot your anniversary again, you're not chagrined only because she's going to beat you over the head with a rolling pin. You're chagrined because you know that's going to hurt her feelings.

You don't want to hurt her feelings. Why? Because you love her. And a relationship with God is like that.

Salvation is when you have a loving relationship with your King. Jesus is our King, and He's our friend. And we are privileged to be in His kingdom.