The Kingdom

1. Introduction

a. The Bible has many themes but at the heart of almost every theme is the theme of The Kingdom of God. A Kingdom exists because there is a King and at the heart of the bible is the story of a King and His relationship with His creation.

b. In this series we will look at what the Kingdom is and is not, what the Bible teaches about the Kingdom (in particular the parables Jesus taught about the Kingdom) and what it means to be citizens of this Kingdom.

Phil.3:20 *But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*

c. Kingdom is defined as:

   i a politically organized community or major territorial unit having a monarchical form of government headed by a king or queen, or

   ii a country, state, or territory ruled by a king or queen

d. In other words what creates a kingdom is a king. In the western world we have come to believe that democracy is the best form of government. Even though we have a monarchy in our country our queen doesn't have personal rule – we have a democratic government.

e. This is because we live in a world where most people are controlled by their "sinful nature" creating an environment of greed, self-dealing and corruption. The democracy form of government creates checks and balances helping to mitigate greed, self-dealing and corruption. However, a kingdom form of government is much superior if it is led by a righteous king/queen. Let's look at some reasons why:

   i The kingdom form of government is the natural order of things and is how the universe is governed.

   ii The primary focus of a righteous king is the well-being of the people under his authority.

   iii As a citizen of the kingdom, you are under the protection of the king and his kingdom.

   iv Decisions are based on truth and what is right, not on what is politically or personally in the best interest of a person or party.

   v It is more efficient.

   vi It creates order, focus and consistency.

   vii You have freedom and rewards if you obey the king and adhere to his culture.

2. Kingdom rule

a. **Following are some key characteristics of a kingdom form of government**. As we consider them, let us consider the many verses in Scripture that deal with these topic areas and I believe the Bible will start to make more practical sense as we understand our citizenship in God's Kingdom:

i A **king** is never voted into power or takes it by force, he is **born into power**. Kingship is a birthright. The Bible says Jesus is the Son of God, a king, *"And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased"* (Matthew 3:17).

ii Accordingly, **a king cannot be voted out of power** and serves for life. Since Christ will never die, the Bible says Christ *"will reign for ever and ever"* (Revelation 11:15).

iii In a kingdom, **the king determines who will be its citizens** and the standards for becoming a citizen. Jesus said *"For many are invited, but few are chosen"* (Matthew 22:14).

iv In a righteous kingdom**, the welfare of the citizens is the personal responsibility of the king.** *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"* (John 10:10b).

v **When one submits to a king and his kingdom, he/she comes under his welfare.** *"If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 28:1-2).*

vi **The word of a king is law and he is bound by it.** His word cannot be challenged, changed, or countermanded. *"Long ago I learned from your statutes that you established them to last forever" (Psalm 119:152). "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23-24).*

vii **The authority of a king is unconditional.** It can't be changed by anyone or any governing body, such as congress or parliament. *"When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, saying, 'I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.'… Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:13-19).*

viii **In a kingdom government, the king is the government.** He doesn't represent the government, he is the government. He does not represent the authority, he is the authority. Where he goes the government and all its power and authority is present. *"'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news'"* (Mark 1:15)! Jesus was announcing as King, that since He was present on earth, the Kingdom of God was present.

ix **The king's authority is delegated through his name** and he can delegate authority to act in his name or on his behalf. This includes the authority to set up kings/kingdoms under his kingdom. Note that God the father gave such authority to Jesus, *"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me"* (Matthew 28:18-19). Christ, the King has also delegated certain authority to His disciples (those who obey him,) ***"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me*** *will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.* ***You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it"*** (John 14:12-14).

x **In a kingdom, the king owns everything;** there is no personal ownership, only stewardship over the king's property, *"The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters" (Psalms 24:1-2).*

xi **A king's status is measured by his prosperity and that of his citizens and their quality of life.** *"King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart" (1 Kings 10:23-24)*

xii **In a kingdom, the king has a realm and a reign.**

(1) **His realm** is the territory or geographical boundaries over which a king reigns.

(2) **His reign** is his rule, power or authority.

b. **In the Bible, the term "kingdom" is thought to generally mean wherever the reign of God is manifested**. Perhaps because He is the creator of *"the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1), therefore, He owns it all and it is all part of His realm. He also has a realm in Heaven (the realm we can't see) where His throne is, *"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10). Here, Jesus refers to both God's reign and the part of His realm where the throne of God is.

c. Most authors seem to agree that, in the Bible, the term "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" are generally referring to the same thing (compare Mt 4:17 with Mk 1:14-15, Mt:5:3 with Lk 6:20 and Mt13:31 with Mk 4:30-31).

3. Defining Kingdom biblically

a. So the basic meaning of the word *kingdom* in the Bible is God's *reign* not *realm* or *people*. The kingdom creates a realm, the kingdom creates a people, but the kingdom of God is not synonymous with its realm or its people.

Psalm 103:19 *The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.*

b. He sits as king on his throne of the universe, and his kingly rule — his kingdom and his reign — governs all things. The basic meaning of the word *kingdom* in the Bible is God's kingly rule — his reign, his action, his lordship, his sovereign governance.

c. Since God's purpose for the world is to save a people for himself and renew the world for that people, his kingly rule implies a saving and a redeeming activity on their behalf. This is why the coming of the kingdom in the New Testament is called good news.

d. When John the Baptist came out of the wilderness he made an urgent announcement, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." We see it again when Jesus appears on the scene with the same pronouncement.

e. At the heart of this theme is the idea of God's messianic kingdom. It is a kingdom that will be ruled by God's appointed Messiah, who will not just be the Redeemer of His people, but their King. So when John speaks of the radical nearness of this breakthrough, the intrusion of the kingdom of God, he's speaking of this kingdom of the Messiah.

f. In and through Jesus, God, the king, came into the world to establish his saving rule. First, in the hearts of his people and in their relationships by triumphing over sin, Satan, and death. Then by the

exercise of his reign, gathering a people for himself that live as citizens of a new allegiance of the kingdom, not of this world. Then Christ comes a second time and completes the reign by establishing his kingdom rule over every nation upon earth.

g. In other words, the Kingdom of God is all about a Messianic Kingdom that was promised throughout the Old Testament. It was manifested in Jesus at His first coming and brought all who would place themselves under His Lordship into the Kingdom. It will be fully established when He comes again and rules over all nations. This is the Kingdom of the "now and not yet".

h. We live in a world where there is a conflict of kingdoms. We experience this conflict of kingdoms when Jesus tells us to pray, "Your kingdom come." What does this mean? What are we praying for when we speak this petition? There is a progression through the Lord's Prayer. Each of the petitions is connected to the others. The first petition Jesus taught us was, "Hallowed be Your name," which is a plea that the name of God would be regarded as holy. Manifestly, unless and until the name of God is regarded as holy, His kingdom will not and cannot come to this world. But we who do regard His name as holy then have the responsibility to make the kingdom of God manifest.

i. John Calvin said it is the task of the church to make the invisible kingdom visible. We do that by living in such a way that we bear witness to the reality of the kingship of Christ in our jobs, our families, our schools, and even our finances, because God in Christ is King over every one of these spheres of life. The only way the kingdom of God is going to be manifest in this world before Christ comes is if we manifest it by the way we live as citizens of heaven and subjects of the King.

4. The gospel of Matthew

a. Each of the gospels has a slightly different focus. Matthew wrote for a Jewish community from a Jewish perspective and his gospel's main focus is the Kingdom and the King. He emphasises Jesus as the Son of David and hence heir of Israel's throne—He is the rightful king of the Jews.

b. Matthew presents Christ as the One who fulfilled the Old Testament promises and prophecies related to Israel's Messiah. The word "fulfilled" occurs in Matthew fifteen times, and there are more quotations from the Old Testament in Matthew than in the other three Gospels combined.

c. Matthew's first sentence gives us a key to the book (Mt. 1:1). David is the only king in the genealogy who is called "king" (Mt. 1:6). Notice that David is called king twice in one verse!

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham…[6] and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by…the wife of Uriah. (Mt. 1:1, 6)

d. Matthew opens with the visit of the wise men from the East to worship the Christ Child, and the wise men inquire, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" They were not asking about a saviour, but rather the King of the Jews. Mark, Luke and John do not mention this event.

e. Only Matthew mentions "Jesus' throne of glory" in His millennial kingdom (Mt. 19:28; 25:31) and that all nations will be gathered to Him as the King (Mt. 25:31-40).

Mt. 19:28 *"Assuredly…in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

Mt. 25:31 *"When the Son of Man comes in His glory…He will sit on the throne of His glory.*

f. Matthew alone mentions the parable of the wedding feast of the King's Son (Mt. 22:2).

g. Finally, Matthew records the full teaching of Jesus known as the Sermon on the Mount which outlines the culture of the Kingdom.

Matt.5:2-3 *And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: [3] "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

h. For all these reasons we are going to be mostly looking in Matthew's gospel to gain greater revelation of the Kingdom both **promised, fulfilled and yet to come**.