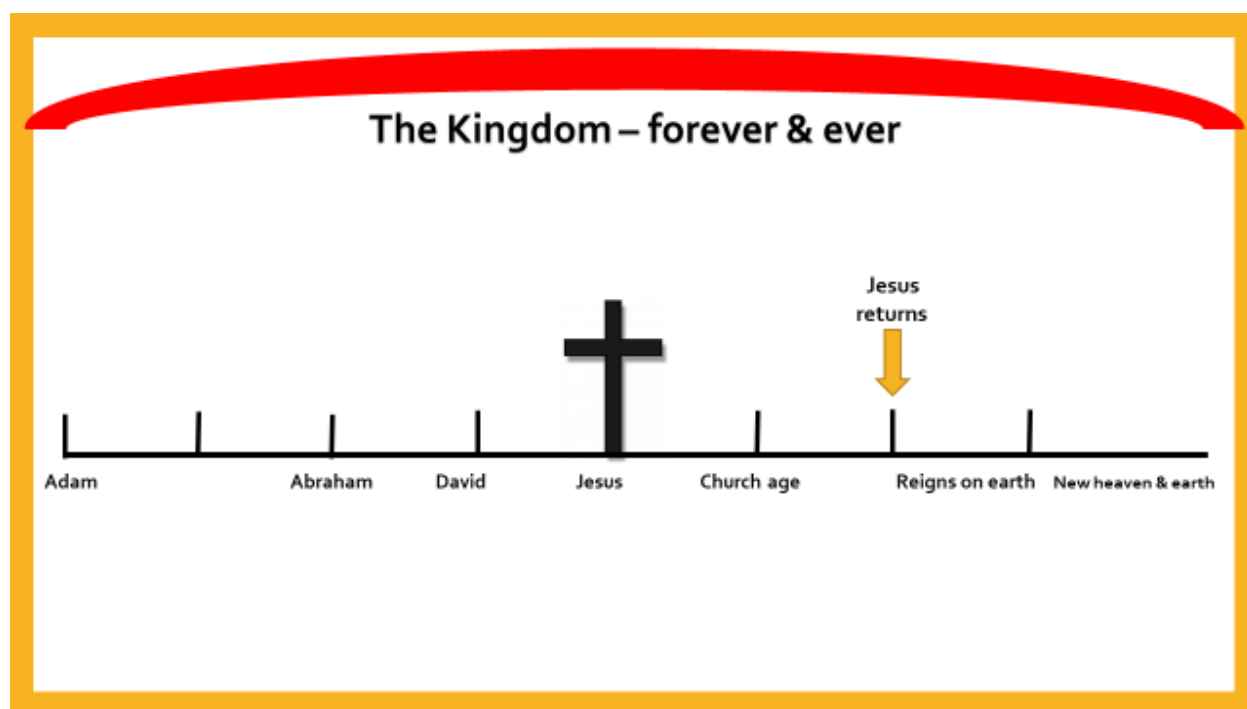


## THE KINGDOM OF GOD

*Do you ever wake up with a song or verse going through your mind? I do sometimes. This week the phrase ‘Yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever amen’, has been in my heart. It is the refrain in the song ‘Our Father’, but it is also a verse we find at the end of the Lord’s Prayer, although you will probably find it in small print at the bottom of the page. It’s a wonderful truth we see throughout Scripture – and whenever I hear those words I have a sense of God’s greatness.*

‘Yours is the Kingdom’. We often hear people referring to the kingdom, and no doubt we have all heard messages on this topic. But what is the kingdom of God? Is it the church? No, it is something far greater that has always existed and always will – forever and ever. It is God’s rule as King over all of creation - over all things.

I have created a simple diagram to help us understand what I am saying – we can see the kingdom of God – sweeping across eternity – within that God created the world as we know it – he created time and physical matter and made man.



## THE PAST – GOD’S PURPOSE

God’s desire was to have a people who would love him – a family. He saw Abraham trusted and believed him and made a covenant with him. A nation grew from Abraham. God said to them:

**“Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”**  
Exodus 19:6

But there came a time when the people said, “We want a king just like the other nations around

us.” This is a danger God’s people have always faced. We want to be like others around them, but God has called us to be different. When the people told Samuel they wanted a king, he was upset. However God said to Samuel:

**“It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.” 1 Samuel 8:7**

We need to be careful what we want. Is it really what God wants for us? God knew what would happen, as he sees the end from the beginning, but he has given us free choice. So God gave the people a king and it was the kind of king they wanted – one who looked like a king, who stood out, head and shoulders above others. His name was Saul.

## **PAST – GOD’S PROMISE**

### **To David**

Then God chose someone else, someone whose heart was towards God. God sees things very differently to the way we do. David wanted to build a house of worship, but God said that wasn’t what he wanted David to do, but he made a promise:

**“Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me, your throne will be established forever.” 2 Samuel 7:16**

Wow, what a promise! How would that even be possible? Hundreds of years went by and David’s sons and ancestors ruled on the throne, but eventually because of sin it ended and the people were taken into captivity. BUT GOD NEVER FORGOT HIS PROMISE and he doesn’t forget his promises to us either. Hold on to them.

The people of Israel held onto God’s promises and kept longing for a king like David, for the Messiah who had been promised. They kept hoping he would come and free them from the oppressive Roman government.

God’s ways are so different to ours. We see our immediate future – God sees eternity.

### **To Mary**

One day the angel Gabriel visited Mary and repeated the promise that God had given to David.

**“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and his kingdom will never end.”  
Luke 1:31-33**

## **PAST – FULFILMENT: Part 1**

Jesus was the fulfilment of the promise given to David – the gospel writers show again and again that he is the one God promised, the Messiah, the Savior of the world, the Son of David.

- See that in his miraculous birth
- In his perfect life
- His teaching – he constantly taught about the Kingdom
- The miracles and healings – demonstrating the Kingdom

In fact the people wanted to make him king. However they were still hoping for a king who would deliver them from the Romans and change the government, but God's plan was infinitely greater. It wasn't just about Israel, it was about salvation for all mankind.

### **The Trial**

At the trial, when Jesus stood before Pilate, he asked Jesus if he was the King of the Jews. This is how Jesus replied:

**“My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.” John 18:36-37**

- Jesus is saying, “At this time, right now my kingdom isn't on earth, it is from another place.” And we are still living in that time – now!
- So Pilate asks again, “So you are a king then?”

**“You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”**

- Jesus is the king. He constantly taught about the kingdom and demonstrated it.
- But he said that at this time his kingdom was from another place.
- So how can we enter his kingdom if it is not of this world?

### **How to enter the Kingdom of God?**

God's plan wasn't just for Israel to belong to his kingdom, but to give all men and women the privilege, the choice to belong. Jesus came to make that possible.

Remember the story of a Jewish leader, a Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus. He came to Jesus secretly to ask about the kingdom of God. He realized Jesus came from God.

**“I tell you the truth, no-one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born of God.” John 3:3**

- Jesus said the only way to belong to the Kingdom was to be born again.
- The only way was to believe in Jesus, to turn to him and make him your King/Lord.
- Then a person would be born into God's Kingdom, his Spirit would come to live within that person.

**“The Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Romans 14:17**

- The Kingdom of God isn't of this world. It is not physical or material, rather it is in another dimension.

- When we enter through Jesus, the Holy Spirit resides in our spirit and we can know and experience the reality of the kingdom right now. The evidence of that is righteousness, peace and joy.

There is a teaching that says the church will see the nations and governments of this world transformed and we will usher in God's kingdom on earth. If we truly walk in the power of the Spirit we will see this happen. We are to take dominion over all of the earth as that is what God has called us to do.

- Yes God has given us the power of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, so we can effectively share the Gospel and lead people to Christ.
- We have been given authority over powers of darkness to speak and declare God's will. The Bible is very clear though, that God's Kingdom here on earth will only be ushered in at the time when Jesus returns.

## **FUTURE – Fulfilment: Part 2**

When Jesus was born into this world he came to reveal to us who God is, what the Kingdom of God is like, and to make a way for us to enter that Kingdom. But he was clear: his Kingdom was not of this world. He told his disciples that he would return. You see there is a second part to the fulfilment of God's plans. We see this in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

God gave a vision to the king of Babylon, who was ruling over much of the earth at that time. It was a vision of a great statue. God revealed the dream and the meaning to Daniel. The head, arms, body and legs of the statue represented different kingdoms that would rise on the earth. Then Daniel went on to say:

**“In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.” Daniel 2:44**

- The first part was fulfilled when Jesus came but we haven't seen the complete fulfilment.
- Later Daniel had another vision in the night, similar to the first one. This time he saw four beasts, representing four different kingdoms that would rise on the earth.
- This time he received more details of this kingdom.

**“In my vision at night I looked and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” Daniel 7:13-14**

When will Christ set up this Kingdom? When he returns. We read in great detail what will take place just prior to his return. He wants everyone to come to him, so tells us well ahead what will happen. He sees the end from the beginning, so he knows what will happen. However not all will turn to him: ‘the wicked will continue in their wickedness, the righteous will continue to follow righteousness’. In other words there will still be many who refuse to believe and accept Jesus.

We read in the Book of Revelation how the economic systems of this present world will collapse and governments will fall. Then Christ will return to set up his Kingdom on earth. This what it says in Revelation 11:15

**“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ and he will reign forever and ever.” Revelation 11:15**

## **THE PRESENT**

So what does all this mean to us right now? I would like to share three things with you.

### **1. OUR PRIORITY**

First of all, the Kingdom is to be our priority, our overall focus in our lives. We don't belong to this world, we belong to God's Kingdom and that is to be what motivates us in all we do here.

**“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you as well.” Matthew 6:33**

God knows our needs. He is speaking about the need for food, clothing and shelter, and he tells us to ask him. He certainly will provide, often over and above what we need, but don't let those things become the main thing. The main thing is the kingdom.

*Recently we watched a documentary on the life of Steve McQueen, the action movie star of the 1960's and 70's. He was known as 'King of cool'. Steve had a sad and unhappy childhood, however he loved machines and driving fast motorbikes. He became a successful actor, the highest paid actor at that time, but he had no inner peace. While learning to fly, his Christian instructor invited him to church and he came to know Christ. Not long after that he was diagnosed with cancer. His faith changed him though and before he died he left a message on tape. He wanted people to know about his relationship with God.*

Steve's story is just another reminder that all the fame and money of the world cannot give you peace. There will always be those who have fame and fortune, but our priority in this life is to seek God's kingdom. We belong to his kingdom – let's not be distracted!

### **2. OUR PRAYER**

If our priority is the kingdom, then that will also be the focus of our prayer. We know the prayer Jesus gave us:

**“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Matthew 6:10**

What does this mean?

- We are praying that what pleases God, his will, his purposes, will come to pass.

- We are to pray this for our lives, our families, our neighborhood and our nation.
- Pray it, declare it! Pray for people to come to know Christ and to enter his kingdom.
- However it also means that we pray for the final fulfilment of God's plan to come to pass. This is that Christ will return and establish his kingdom forever.
- In fact the very last prayer recorded in the Bible, at the end of Revelation says, "Amen. Come Lord Jesus."
- I sense that this will only take place when God's people cry out in unity, with deep longing for his to return, that the Father will say, "Now is the time."
- We can't fix the problems and governments of this world. Yes we are to pray and do our part, but ultimately it will be Jesus who comes to set up his rule over this earth.

### **3. OUR POSITION**

We are living in this period between the first coming of Jesus and his return, a time when we enter his kingdom by faith. The Holy Spirit gives us the assurance we belong to him and is the guarantee that we will receive all God has promised. The wonderful thing though, is that we can live in that dimension right now, the dimension of the kingdom, and we can do that by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

*This week we took our grandson Tyron to the 5G Spark Race Zone in the Viaduct. This is a place where you experience being part of the America Cup through technology. They use a simulator so they can experience being part of the yacht race and then you can have photos taken of you with the huge cup, creating the sense that you are really there.*

Now if man can do that, don't you think it is easy for us to be seated with Christ, in the spiritual realm while our bodies are here on earth!

**"And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:6-7**

This is our true position, but the truth is we don't always live out from that place, but when we do, we find victory, peace, joy and freedom. Let's seek to live in this place, not just in theory, but to really live out of this place.

### **Conclusion**

We belong to a kingdom that is not of this world. It is eternal, it is the kingdom of God. One day, in not too distant future, we will see the completion of all God has promised.

- Let's make his kingdom our priority in this life. There is nothing that is more worthwhile.
- Let's daily pray for his kingdom to come in our life, and in the lives of those around us.

Let's live out this life! It is possible! Jesus died and rose again to make it possible. He sent us his Holy Spirit to empower us to do so.