

THE UPSIDE DOWN KINGDOM

I- The Lost Kingdom

10/27/24

Introduction: *There's no place like home.* What does the *ideal home* mean to you? How would you describe that?

- *Home is where love resides, memories are created, friends and family belong, and laughter never ends.* -unknown
- *A man travels the world over in search of what he needs and returns home to find it.* -George Moore
- *No matter who you are or where you are, instinct tells you to go home.* -Laura Marney
- ***If you know you're going home, the journey is never too hard.*** -Angela Wood

I wonder if some of our stubbornness about our faith (that we talked about last week) doesn't have a little to do with our zip code. This place we call home... this place that we feel secure and safe, comfortable and at peace. After all, *there's no place like home.*

The Main Message

If I were to ask you what the main message of Jesus was when He was here on earth, what would you say? *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and strength...and to love your neighbor? Repent and be baptized?*

Actually, **the main message of Jesus was what He called the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.** We know this for two reasons:

1. It is the most repeated message.

- The Kingdom of God or The Kingdom of Heaven is mentioned 86 times in the four Gospels.
- All four authors obviously and consistently felt this message was the predominant theme of Jesus' teaching.
- Acts through Revelation also references The Kingdom of God.

2. Jesus states very clearly that this is His ordained message.

- *Early the next morning Jesus went out to an isolated place. The crowds*

searched everywhere for him, and when they finally found him, they begged him not to leave them. But he replied, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other towns, too, because that is why I was sent." (Luke 4:42-43 NLT)

- Something about His message about the Kingdom of God was Good News.
- What are we missing??

First we need to clarify what *kingdom* means. Today, that word conjures up mental images of castles and knights, mighty walls and moats, pennant flags flying in the wind. So we envision a *place*. But that is not exactly what the Kingdom of God actually refers to.

It is eternal

- (Psalm 145:13 NASB) *Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations.*
- It is not bound by a specific time in the past, in this present, or in the future. **The Kingdom of God IS as God IS.**

It is synonymous with the Kingdom of Heaven

- (Matthew 19:23-24 NASB) 23 *And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 "And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."*
- Matthew exclusively used the phrase *The Kingdom of Heaven*.
- In parallel accounts, Mark and Luke use the phrase *The Kingdom of God*.

It is really the *reign of God* that defines the Kingdom of God.

- Where God reigns so is His Kingdom is established

The Lost Kingdom

The Old Testament is essentially the story about The Lost Kingdom. Genesis chapter 1 gives an account of the establishment of God's Kingdom. This includes everything that was created: the stars, the planets, the cosmos, earth, mountains and oceans, valleys and rivers. All the birds of the air and the beasts of the field. And us. And then, *God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.* (Genesis 1:31 NASB)

And the courtyard of this great Kingdom was a place called **Eden**. **It was where Adam and Eve communed with God and received the splendor of every good thing.**

This Kingdom of God was vibrant with life. It was breathtakingly spectacular in its beauty. It was peaceful and inspiring. It was home.

Until the Fall. Caused by pride and jealousy... *So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.* (Genesis 3:23-24 NLT)

Eden was The Lost Kingdom. **Sin would remove us from that hallowed place where we were in perfect communion with God, fully realizing our purpose in creation.** The rest of the Old Testament is about the fallout from that fateful day.

But the Kingdom wasn't lost, only lost to us. We couldn't return to it. We couldn't find it. Over time, many forgot this Kingdom had once existed. And yet, God would expend every resource He had in bringing this Kingdom back into our existence.

We still dream about this Kingdom...even the atheist. Today it's called *World Peace and Prosperity for All* and a place where *all are deemed equal and worthy*. These aren't new concepts. They aren't even simply an ideal. They are remnant memories of a Lost Kingdom... where God reigned in Grace, Love, Mercy, and Wisdom.

Basar! In Hebrew, the word *basar* is used for *good news*. *Basar* is an interesting word because it literally means *flesh*, but in this context it always means to bring tidings and particularly tidings of comfort and joy. Why? Well, *basar* was a word used originally to describe flesh from flesh, or birth, wherein a new soul is birthed which was a great joyous occasion. *Basar* began to be used later as *the joy derived from removing the wrapping of something to reveal a wonderful gift*.

This is how the Shepherds in the field watching over the flocks that night of

Jesus' birth would have understood the message of the angels! *Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!* (Luke 2:9-11 NLT)

That's why they were excited! That's why the Magi from the East came with gifts meant for a King. On that night, the Lost Kingdom had returned to the reality of all humankind.

This is the Good News! God is bringing His Kingdom back to us and He has a plan to fix the issue that cast us out of the Kingdom. **The plan would use a cross as a bridge over the moat and the blood of Jesus which would allow us to pass that flaming sword of judgment.** *How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!* (Isaiah 52:7 NLT)

Now, you say *"that's all interesting, but what does that mean for me today?"*

Repeat after me, *There's no place like home.*

If my *home* is simply this blue and green marble in space, then very little of the message of Jesus makes sense. In fact, Jesus becomes an intrusion into my home.

But if I claim citizenship in the Kingdom of God, suddenly everything Jesus said is Good News and life transforming! I said at the beginning that much of our stubbornness and unwillingness may be a zip code issue. **Where's your heart at?** Have you declared your home to now be the Kingdom of God? Or are you struggling to give up your home here first? Are you the rich young man who wanted to follow Jesus but was told he would have to go home and give it all away first...and who walked away. Or are you going to be a follower who gets out of his boat and follows Jesus...all the way home?