

## **The Invisible Kingdom of God, Part 2**

Luke 17:20-21

42-222

We want to talk today about the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God. And in particular we want to talk about the visible King and His invisible kingdom. I would imagine that the most elaborate event that the world ever sees, the most magnificent event, the most grandiose ceremony that is ever held is a coronation. I've never been to a coronation, but I've seen a few on television. And they really pull out all the stops, even, in fact, when the person being crowned has a rather insignificant actual role to play. But that's a holdover from days when the crowning of a king was intended to be grandiose and it was intended to make a massive, if not awesome and even frightening impression on people, because after all, a king was a king and a king or a queen, in some cases, has absolute power, absolute authority to do absolutely whatever he wills, whenever he wills, with whomever he wills. This is what it means to be a king.

We've all seen on television the vestiges of a coronation. And we have seen what a grand event it is in the most austere and magnificent building available to a people, with the most lavish kinds of clothes, attended by the most erudite and significant and important of all people. These are all signs of the power and signs of the privilege and signs of the authority. These are the magnificent emblems of what it means to be the monarch, to have absolute supremacy and absolute sovereignty in a nation.

Our Lord Jesus made a claim to be a King. But there was no such coronation. There was a very meager coronation, as a matter of fact, at least from the public's viewpoint, a few sort of low-life shepherds showed up in a filthy stinking stable to bow down to a baby in a manger one night in obscurity in a small town called Bethlehem. There was another coronation of sorts some time later when some Persian king-makers, strangers and foreigners, showed up and came to that same child and offered gifts, indicating that this indeed was a King, but this too was a very private event and it was purposely kept private. And in fact it so upset the reigning king that even with a threat that it could be a real king who was born there, he decided to kill every single baby who might not...who might be that king and might be a threat to his throne some day. You might even say that the greatest King that ever came into the world came in without an appropriate coronation, that would certainly be true.

But then again, not only was His coronation not like any other coronation, His kingdom was not like any other kingdom either. In fact, it was He who said, "My kingdom is not of this world." It was actually Jesus who said, "The kingdom is here and I'm the King." And the people didn't believe it. He just didn't look like a king, He didn't act like a king, and there was no pomp and circumstance to indicate the establishment of any kingdom.

With that in view, we come to the text of Luke 17 verses 20 and 21. The Jews had an immense expectation for the coming of the kingdom. They were waiting almost in a posture of holding their

breath hoping that the king would come. Even at the time of the birth of Jesus, Anna and Simeon were waiting for the kingdom of God to arrive, that kingdom promised in the Old Testament anticipated for centuries. Patience was running out. The ongoing pagan conquerors that had occupied the land of Israel were so distasteful and accumulated disappointment was rising and mounting and the people wanted the kingdom.

For example, Joseph of Arimathea, who showed up to take the body of Christ, is identified as one waiting for the kingdom. Luke 23:51 it says, "Joseph was a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God." He wasn't the only one. He was just one of many who were waiting for that kingdom, hoping that kingdom would come.

And when the King did come, He didn't look like a King, and when He said the kingdom had arrived, it didn't look like a kingdom. And the Pharisees were convinced that He was a phony, that He was a charlatan and a fraud, trying to pass Himself off to the people of Israel as a King, when in fact He wasn't a King and didn't have a kingdom. The ultimate mockery was to put on the cross that "this is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." That was put there with disdain and scorn and sarcasm that just dripped with hatred.

But Jesus talked about being a King all the time. And He talked about the kingdom of God all the time. In fact, it was a constant thing in His ministry to talk about the kingdom. So it's somewhat natural that eventually they're going to get around to asking Him about it, and that's what they did in verse 20. "Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said..." Let me stop you there for a minute.

Just to give you a little idea of how much He talked about the kingdom, go back to chapter 4 and let's just kind of flow through Luke. We could do this in Matthew, we could do it in Mark, but we're in Luke, so let's do it there. Verse 43 of Luke 4, He said this, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also for I was sent for this purpose." Chapter 6, verse 20, He began the Beatitudes, "Blessed are you who are poor," or poor in spirit, "for yours is the kingdom of God." Chapter 7 verse 28, "I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John, yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." In chapter 8, verse 1 it says, "He began going about from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God." In chapter 9 it's the same thing, the chapter begins, He called the twelve together, gave them power and authority over all the demons to heal diseases, and He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God. And in verse 11, "The multitudes were following Him and welcoming Him and He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God." In verse 27 the words of Jesus, "I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God." In verse 60 of that same 9th chapter, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead," He said, "but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God." In verse 62, "No one after putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." And then in chapter 10 and verse 9 He said, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." In chapter 11 and verse 20, "If I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

He preached the kingdom, the kingdom, the kingdom, the kingdom and then He said, as demonstrated by His power over Satan and demons, "The kingdom of God is near," and then He said, "The kingdom of God has come." He preached the kingdom and He preached that the kingdom had come.

In chapter 11, same emphasis, the kingdom has come. Chapter 12 verse 31, "Seek for His kingdom and these things will be added to you." He preached on the kingdom as recorded in chapter 13, chapter 14, chapter 16, chapter 17, chapter 18. And He preached the kingdom particularly in that 18th chapter in verse 29. He said this, "There is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who shall not receive many times more in this present life and in the age to come, eternal life." And then He preached the kingdom in chapter 19, 21, 22, and as I noted earlier, also in chapter 23. He preached the kingdom, He was a kingdom preacher. And He was preaching a kingdom that had arrived because He was the King and He was there. His kingdom was there.

Well this just did not fit the Jews' expectations. All this kingdom talk and where are the signs of the kingdom? Where is the great coronation? Where is the great event?

Jesus knew what was on their minds. This was mockery. This was "You keep talking about the kingdom, You keep saying You're a King," which they perfectly well understood to mean that He was the supreme sovereign. They understood what it was to be a king. As I pointed out last week, we have a hard time with that; we've never had a king in America. We don't like absolute, unilateral rule. That's not our approach. But they understood what a king was and they understood the absolute supremacy, absolute sovereignty of a king to do whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted, with whomever he wanted and there was no recourse. They understood exactly what it was to claim to be a king.

But to claim to be a king without the appropriate kind of coronation and to claim to be God's King and to have brought God's kingdom without the attendant and what they thought to be absolutely necessary evidences of that was in their minds ludicrous and foolish. They made a lot of efforts to make Jesus look foolish. The Pharisees engaged Jesus in a number of questions in the gospel of Luke, starting in chapter 7, chapter 11 and many other places, and every time they engage Him with a question, it is in the intention of discrediting Him, exposing Him, making Him a joke, or bringing down upon Him the animosity of the populace or in some cases even ultimately the Romans. So they never had a good motive. It doesn't seem that their motives were ever pure. And by this time, all this kingdom talk and absolutely no evidence of it makes a joke out of His claim and they come wondering in their minds just exactly when this kingdom of God is going to come that You keep announcing. They had developed a very elaborate expectation that the Messiah's rule would be inaugurated with a display of miracles, signs and wonders in the sky and in the earth that would make the arrival of the true King and His true kingdom unmistakable.

In fact, it might be good to show you what they expected in part, I can't take you through the whole Old Testament but a very good way to understand what was in their minds is to go to the book of Joel, the minor prophets. The last twelve books of the Old Testament begin with Hosea, then Joel, and Joel lays out for us the prophecies concerning the arrival of the King to establish His kingdom. It involves, of course, judgment on the ungodly and then protection and deliverance for the godly, the righteous, as they are ushered into the glorious kingdom.

Joel begins at the very outset of his prophecy with identifying this event, chapter 1 verse 15, "Alas for the day, for the day of the Lord is near and it will come as destruction from the Almighty." The coming of the King was the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is always associated with judgment, maximum judgment, a final kind of judgment. There are days of the Lord in the Old Testament, days when God stepped in with great judgment, but there is a culminating, eschatological final day of the

Lord which Joel has in view here. This will be destruction from the Almighty. He will come to destroy His enemies and the ungodly. At the same time, it will be a time of salvation. It will be a time of blessing for the righteous. If you go to the end of his prophecy, chapter 3 verse 18, "It will come about in that day" that Day of the Lord, "the mountains will drip with sweet wine and the hills will flow with milk and all the brooks of Judah will flow with water and a spring will go out from the house of the Lord to water the valley of Shittim." In other words, it's going to be a time of immense blessing. Back in verse 16 at the end, "The Lord is a refuge for His people and a stronghold to the sons of Israel." Verse 17, "You will know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain, Jerusalem, will be holy." So we see the positives. There's going to be the rescue and the protection of the righteous and God is going to send His King to establish His throne in Jerusalem and He's going to reign over Israel and over the whole earth.

But what are the signs of this? What should they be looking for as an indication? Chapter 2 of Joel, verse 1, "Blow a trumpet in Zion. Sound an alarm on My holy mountain. Let the inhabitants of the land tremble for the Day of the Lord is coming, surely it is near." Now we get a description. "A day of darkness, and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, as the dawn is spread over the mountains, so there is a great and mighty people." There's never been anything like it. Now he goes in to talking about an army and a great war that will take place. Then down in verse 10 he describes further phenomena. "The earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark, the stars lose their brightness and the Lord utters His voice before the army." Plenty of very visible signs, a great amassing of people in an army on the side of the conquering Lord as well as enemies opposing Him; signs in the sky, signs in the earth, voices from heaven. Verse 11 says, "The day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome, and who can endure it?"

Now Jesus was doing miracles. He was healing people, casting out demons, raising dead people. And there was a certain power in that that was inexplicable. Miracles were happening all over the place throughout His ministry, stunning, shocking, but not the kind of awesome signs, a shaking earth, a collapsing heaven, that are associated by this prophet with the work of God. "In that day rend your heart," verse 13 of chapter 2, "and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God who is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in loving-kindness and relenting of evil." In other words, you better make your peace with God before it's too late in that day. And so Joel gives very specific indicators.

Over in verse 30 of chapter 2, "Blood, fire, columns of smoke, the sun turned to darkness, the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes." That's what they were looking for. They weren't looking for someone who was meek and lowly, compassionate, sympathetic and tender-hearted, who spent His time with the sick and the needy and the poor and the grieving and the pained. Certainly weren't looking for someone who was so comfortable with tax collectors and prostitutes and the other assembled sinners who belonged to the base level of their society. Where was the spectacular? Where was the big time divine coronation? Where was the fireworks show? And so they come in a mocking tone, I think. Can't be dogmatic, but I think consistent with all the other times they came. They'd come and say, "Well when is the kingdom of God coming?"

And as He always did, He dismantles their misconceptions. He says in verse 20, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed." It's not coming with signs to be observed. That's not a future tense, by the way, that's a present tense. He's not talking about the future coming of the kingdom. That will come with signs to be observed. The kingdom is now currently in the process of coming and there are no such signs. You can see signs of My deity displayed every time I do a

healing, every time I cast out demons, raise the dead. Signs of My deity are on display when I feed the multitudes, or when I walk on the water. But there are no signs of the coming of this aspect of My kingdom.

The words of our Lord reveal their misunderstanding. They didn't understand the kingdom. The King was there and the kingdom was there, but they had a problem. And Jesus expressed what that problem was in a conversation He had with Nicodemus in John 3. Do you remember that conversation? Let me just pull one statement Jesus made out of it. "Jesus answered and said to him," John 3:3, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." If you haven't been recreated, if you haven't been raised from the dead, if you haven't had the blinders taken off, if you don't have new life, you can't see the King or the kingdom. And He went on to say, "You must be born of the water and the Spirit." That's spiritual birth, cleansing by the power of God, and be given His Holy Spirit, or you'll never see the kingdom, never.

It's still that way now. God has revealed it to us, the not many noble, the lowly. God has revealed it to us, the babes, and hidden it from the wise and the prudent. And as I told you last time, the kingdom of God is here. It's here now. It was there then. It's here now and it's growing and it's expanding and the world still can't see it. It's the invisible kingdom. It's moving toward a great day of immense visibility. When He comes the second time, every eye will see Him. And not only will they see Him, but there will be, Romans 8:19 to 21, the glorious manifestation of the children of God. There will be the unveiling of who we really are.

I was thinking about that the other day at the car-wash. At the car-wash you just stand around. I don't have a lot of times in my life when I just stand around, but I stand around at the car-wash. And I was thinking, "These people have no idea at they're looking at." No, not that I'm a pastor, but that...that the kingdom of God is within me. They have no idea that the Trinity lives in me. I'm unveiled...I'm not yet unveiled, I am veiled. The glorious manifestation of the children of God hasn't taken place. It was just a stunning moment. The world doesn't see it. They know we gather like this. They pull along the street here and watch you all coming in and they probably think we're kind of typical religious people. It's nice for us, it works for us. They have no idea who they're looking at. The kingdom of God is in this place, it's in you. It's the invisible kingdom, the world can't see it. Jesus said you can't see it if you're not born into it. If you're still blind and dead, you can't see the kingdom.

So He came unto His own, His own received Him not. He was in the world, the world was made by Him, couldn't see it. They were dead wrong, by the way. The King was there, they were looking into His face. The King of kings and the kingdom had come and it was there and it's still here.

How, you say, are we to understand this kingdom? Let me review what I told you last week. And by the way, many people said this week to me, "That was really deep." And I just...I was trying to make it really clear. I was working hard to do that. I don't know if I succeeded on that. Deep is usually...when somebody says "that was really deep," that means "I didn't get it." And...and I...you know, it's easy to be hard to understand, it's real easy to be hard to understand, because if I don't know what I'm talking about, you won't either. It's hard to be clear because for somebody to be clear, they have to understand what they're saying. And so hopefully, maybe...maybe I've cleared up a few things and I can express them a little more clearly to you.

God is King and He really rules over two kingdoms; one Kingdom in two parts, two phases. First, there is His external, universal kingdom over which He rules by creation. That is He's the King of the

universe. He's the King of everything and everyone. Everything and everyone in the universe at all times from their creation to their end or their eternity is under His absolute, sovereign will and authority. He exercises supreme power over everything and everyone He has ever made, and He exercises it at all times. Since the Fall, this kingdom has been in rebellion against its King. And by the way, there is a leader of that rebellion named Satan and the rebellion is unsuccessful and headed for a total destruction. But in the meantime, the system run by Satan is in violent rebellion against the King. And the King Himself has cursed His own creation. But one day that will all be over. The curse will end. Satan and all his minions will be cast into the Lake of Fire prepared for the devil and his angels. All the ungodly will go there with them. And the Lord will destroy this cursed universe in an uncreation, a dissolution, an implosion described by Peter as the melting of all its elements with fervent heat' and in its place create a new heaven and a new earth. And the thing that is distinctive about heaven and the eternal state is that God is King forever. No more rebellion, no more curse.

But there's another kingdom, or another aspect of His rule and that is not the external, universal kingdom over which He rules by creation, but the internal, personal kingdom over which He rules by recreation. That is to say, it is the spiritual realm. He rules over the souls of those that belong to Him eternally through the salvation He has provided in His Son. This is the kingdom that they couldn't see and the world couldn't see. There's no pomp and circumstance with the establishment of this kingdom, nor with its increase. This kingdom is growing. Remember what I told you about Luke 13:18 to 20. Jesus said the kingdom is like a mustard seed. It starts out very small and it just keeps growing and expanding. That's why the present verb: The kingdom of God is coming. And then He says immediately after that, it's like leaven, it keeps permeating and expanding and expanding and expanding until finally it reaches its maximum expansion when all the elect are redeemed and the Lord returns and the spiritual kingdom dominates the world in the great millennial reign of Jesus Christ. After that, the establishment of the eternal kingdom; and the spiritual kingdom and the material kingdom, the newly created material kingdom, are one forever. That's kingdom theology. Spiritual kingdom will grow into its fullest consummation in the glorious reign of Jesus Christ on earth that we call the millennium.

But it had already started. Let's go back to verse 20. So He says the kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed. The one that is now in motion in process is not observable. Verse 21, He then adds, obviously, "Nor will they say, 'Look here it is,' or 'There it is.'" It's not something that you can identify as an event. The Greek phrase here, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed," literally is, "You can't see it." You cannot see it. It's not with observation. It's not involving a public spectacle of any kind whatsoever. In fact, it is completely invisible.

Back in the 11th chapter of Luke, so amazing, He was casting out a demon in verse 14 and a demon that had made a man unable to speak, dumb. The demon went out, the dumb man spoke, multitudes marveled. Sure. But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons." Boy, a 180 degrees the wrong conclusion. But this is amazing. They had just seen a shocking inexplicable miracle and the next verse says, "To test Him, they were demanding of Him a sign from heaven." What in the world do they need? They needed what they thought was consistent with the prophecies of Joel and all the other prophets and healing a man, or delivering a man from a demon didn't fit their expectation. And we can, to a degree, understand that because that expectation had been generated by the reading of the Old Testament.

So all those miracles while they demonstrated the deity of Jesus Christ unmistakably, and while they were intended to demonstrate the compassion and sympathy of God for people — that's why God

chose to prove the deity of His Son through the relieving of people's pain and suffering, thus displaying Himself as a God of great mercy — never did convince the people that He was the King. Later in that same 11th chapter, as the crowds were increasing He began to say, "This generation is a wicked generation. It seeks for a sign and I'm not giving you any sign except the sign of Jonah," and then He went on to talk about His Resurrection. Even that didn't convince them.

So the kingdom is coming, is coming, present tense, is coming, is coming, still coming, still coming, still coming. Every moment when someone is added to the kingdom by salvation, the kingdom expands. But it is not visible. You can't say it's there, you can't say it's here. It's not an event to point to. It is externally invisible. That's indicated by the fact that these religious leaders were looking at the King and the kingdom was growing right in front of them and they couldn't either see the King or the kingdom.

And then in verse 21 He says this: You want to know the nature of this kingdom? "Behold," He said, "the kingdom of God is within you." Now some of you have a Bible that says, "in your midst." Translators bounce back and forth between those two. The original Greek text uses a Greek word, *entos*, which has a little preposition *en* which means "in." *Entos* means "inside." That's what it means. It's only used one other time in the New Testament and that's in Matthew 23:36 where Jesus said regarding the Pharisees, "They clean the inside of the cup." It means "inside." If our Lord wanted to say, "in your midst," or "among you," He would have used most likely *en meso*, which is a different Greek phrase, but that is the phrase that is used regularly to mean "in your midst." And there are a number of illustrations of that, but one simple one is in the 2nd chapter of Luke and verse 46 where it talks about Jesus being found at the age of twelve in the Temple sitting in the midst of the teachers, and it uses *en meso*.

You say, "Well why don't they just translate it 'within you' if there's no disputed original text?" And the reason most commentators give for not translating it "within you" is the fact that that might make it apply to the Pharisees. Why would He say to the Pharisees, "The kingdom of God is within you?" But that's easily resolved if you understand, first of all, that the "you" is very generic and you also understand that even though directing Himself at the Pharisees the crowd is always mixed. Remember that? We have been telling you at the end of His life, particularly chapters 15 and following, there is this constant interplay between Pharisees and the disciples and Jesus. And what He says to the Pharisees, the disciples here, what He says to the disciples, the Pharisees over here, they're always there and the Pharisees are going to make sure they're in every crowd because they're seriously looking for some things that Jesus says that they can use to have Him killed. The very next verse it says, "And He said to the disciples." The "you" here is generic. All He means to say is the kingdom is inside. It's not outside, it's not external, it's not visible, it's not manifest in the way that you expect it to be manifest. Sad to think about those self-appointed religious experts missing the whole thing. They had waited along with Joseph of Arimathaea for the King and the kingdom and the King and the kingdom came. Because they were not born again, they couldn't see it. They were still looking for their perspective of the kingdom. But that couldn't come. If that kingdom came, nobody would be there to enter it because until the kingdom is within you, until you're part of the internal, personal, visible kingdom, you'll never experience the external kingdom.

So He said, "It's in you, it's set up in your hearts. It's for all of you in whom the King lives." As in Romans 14:17, that beautiful statement by the apostle Paul, "The Kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." It's an internal thing. It's righteousness in the heart imputed by faith in Christ. It is peace with God, it is joy' all of that as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit. The

kingdom is within you because the King is within you and He reigns and rules within you. There is no other way to view Jesus Christ other than King. When we say we believe in the Lordship of Christ, we're just saying we know He's King and that means He's in charge, absolutely in charge. I love what Jesus said. He said, "I'll give you the Holy Spirit who will be within you." But He also said this as we talked about last week, "I will come to you and My Father will come to you and we will make our abode in you." And that's why the wonder of wonders is this: that the Trinity has taken up residence in the hearts of those who embrace Christ. That's the kingdom for now. That's now in place of the future millennial kingdom described clearly both in the Old Testament and in the 20th chapter of Revelation. That's simply the final consummation when that spiritual kingdom is unveiled and only those who are the righteous enter into that kingdom. All the ungodly are destroyed at the return of Jesus Christ.

This spiritual kingdom then became the message of the apostles. That's what they preached. If you want to see that, just briefly look at Acts chapter 1. Go with Jesus to the training ground a little bit. He's got forty days between His resurrection and His ascension, forty days before He leaves. And you might want to know how He used that forty days, Acts 1:3, Acts 1:3, "To these He also presented Him alive," that is to His apostles after His suffering, "by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God."

Rounding out any blanks in their kingdom theology, the message of the gospel is Jesus is King, bow to Him. Jesus is King. You want to follow Him? Then you deny yourself, you take up your cross and you follow Him. He is the absolute sovereign of your life. That is what the gospel is offering. It is not offering Jesus as your buddy, Jesus as your pal, Jesus as the guy who wants to come along and make you feel good about yourself. Jesus is your King, He is the absolute dictator of your life.

That's the message and they needed to understand all about the kingdom of God. And so He used those forty days to fill up their understanding of things regarding the kingdom. And when they launched, that's exactly what they preached. And there are just a few illustrations, not all, but in Acts chapter 8 it says of Philip, chapter 8 verse 12 of Acts, "Philip was preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ and they were being baptized, men and women alike." You went out and preached the kingdom because the Kingdom is the message that we preach. God is King, He calls you into His kingdom which means He calls you to submit absolutely and totally and completely to His sovereignty. And for that He forgives your sin and gives you eternal life and imputes to you the very righteousness of God which makes you acceptable to God which produces peace with God and eternal joy. Preaching the good news about the kingdom of God, it's the gospel of the kingdom and it is through the name of Jesus Christ. That's how they preached.

In the 14th chapter of Acts, another illustration, verse 22: The apostle Paul is strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." His message was you must enter the kingdom of God. If you don't enter the kingdom of God, the kingdom doesn't enter you. If you don't come to the King, the King doesn't come to you and it's through tribulation, much tribulation. It's very hard to believe. I wrote a book about that, didn't I? It's very hard to believe. Count the cost. Count the cost, pay the price, self-denial. It's not easy but that's what we preach. That's what we preach. We preach the kingdom and entrance into the kingdom at a high cost: Hate father, hate mother, sister, brother, even your own life.

Acts 19 verse 8, Paul speaking out boldly for three months and what's he talking about for three months? Reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. In that wonderful 20th chapter

where he meets with the elders at Ephesus in verse 25, he says, "I know that all of you among whom I went about preaching the kingdom will see my face no more." I wish...I wish we could get off this kind of evangelism that never establishes the absolute sovereignty of Christ over a life. That's what we're talking about, talking about a King and a kingdom, talking about an absolute monarch whose will is absolute, whose authority is limitless, and whose wisdom is perfect.

In the 28th chapter of Romans, just a closing illustration from...or in Acts 28, right next to the book of Romans, verse 23 of Acts 28. "When they had set a day for him they came to him at his lodging in large numbers." They're coming to Paul now, "And he was explaining to them by" I like this phrase "solemnly," serious stuff, "testifying about the kingdom of God and" they go together "trying to persuade them concerning Jesus." Because you can't get into the kingdom except through Him. And he used both the law of Moses and the prophets and he did it from morning till evening and "some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe."

That's what we do. We solemnly testify about the rule of God, the reign of God. He is King of the universe. He reigns over everything that exists for He made it all and He will eventually dispose of it all and those who do not come into the spiritual kingdom and under the sovereign rule of Jesus Christ will be cast by God forever out of His kingdom into hell. It's about the King and His kingdom.

We know now that in this phase of our Lord's rule He does not exercise His absolute rule over the whole earth. He will in the millennial kingdom over this earth and then create a new heaven and a new earth. He rules as King only among those who believe. It's a spiritual kingdom and it's invisible and not everybody that says they're Christians are a part of it, right? You hear people today say, "You know, we've got to drop the barriers down, we've got to lower the things that divide us and...because if we're ever going to change the world we've got to enlarge the kingdom, we've got to have some kingdom power. So we use politics and social services and we'll make this thing big." That's...that's kind of amillennial....er, post-millennial view. Post-millennialism, which I'm sure you've heard of, says we bring the kingdom and in the end Jesus comes; He shows up after we have created the kingdom on earth, a very popular view these days.

That's just the opposite of what the Bible says. The King comes and establishes His kingdom. That's simple. But there are people who want to accept any kind of Christianity, any kind of gospel, any kind of Jesus for the sake of widening the kingdom, for the sake of moral influence, or spiritual influence, or capturing the world in some fashion so that we can collect it all, create a kind of kingdom to which Jesus will then come. No, until He comes the kingdom will be invisible and it will be internal and it will be personal and it will be spiritual and we build the kingdom one soul at a time.

The apostles had no problem with that. They really understood it. They understood what they were to preach. And even after you get out of the book of Acts, for example, get into the book of 1 Corinthians and I could show you a lot of passages, but just look at a couple in the epistles. First Corinthians 4 verse 20, Paul writes, "For the kingdom of God doesn't consist in words but in power." It's not external, it's internal. It's powerful. He's still preaching the kingdom. First Corinthians 6:9, "Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Don't be deceived, neither fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, swindlers shall inherit the kingdom of God." What kingdom are you talking about? Well they're not going to be in the final, consummate spiritual kingdom that takes over the whole earth because they're not in the invisible kingdom. This message rings through all of the epistles. Galatians 5, Paul says, "These are the deeds of the flesh, immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery" so forth

“and I forewarn you,” verse 21, “those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” In the 5th chapter of Ephesians, “This you should know with certainty. No immoral, impure person, covetous man, who is an idolater has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.” And I’m so glad those two are connected because we’re talking about the kingdom of God, we’re talking about the kingdom of Christ as well.

Colossians chapter 4 verse 11, naming some people, “Mark, Jesus who is called Justus, are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God.” We’re in the kingdom. We’re fellow workers for the kingdom. We preach the kingdom. It’s all about the kingdom. So we are a part of this expanding spiritual kingdom. We preach the kingdom, we declare the kingdom and in doing so what we’re basically saying is that Jesus must be acknowledged as what? As King, as King.

This isn’t the only part of the kingdom. It’s moving, it’s expanding toward that consummate, earthly kingdom when Jesus comes back the second time. And when that happens, all the signs prophesied will take place. Look back at Luke 17 for just a preview of next week. Verse 26 speaks of the days of the Son of Man, the days of the Son of Man. Verse 30: “The day that the Son of Man is revealed.” Even Jesus was veiled. He unveiled Himself on the Mount of Transfiguration, didn’t He? And they saw the King in His glory but it was just three disciples. The world didn’t see who He was at all. He remained veiled through His whole ministry. Even after His Resurrection He appeared only to those who believed, never to unbelievers. And now He’s back in heaven but there is a day when He comes and is unveiled. That becomes the subject of the next section as we move from the expanding spiritual kingdom to its consummate form in the glory of the final millennium. And as we shall see, at that point all the signs are made manifest. We live in a kingdom under a King. We are to worship Him and to honor Him and to obey Him and to submit to Him as well as to love Him and to trust Him, and to be blessed both now and forever by His unimaginable benevolence, kindness, mercy, grace, and goodness.

Father, we thank You for helping us to understand our King. We look forward to that day when the kingdom is no longer invisible, when the spiritual kingdom becomes visible in millennial glory and the new Jerusalem descends out of heaven to earth and Jesus sets up His throne in Jerusalem and rules the world with all the righteous who go into that kingdom. We look forward to that glorious manifestation of the children of God who are not now revealed even as He is not revealed. And we look forward to that final kingdom, that everlasting dwelling place in the new heaven and the new earth, that heavenly kingdom as well. And we pray as You taught us to pray, “Our Father who art in heaven, Thy kingdom come.” We say with John, “Even so, come Lord Jesus,” because we want to see that glorious Second Coming and that glorious millennial kingdom, that earthly Kingdom when the subjects of the King are revealed. We want also to say, “Thy kingdom come,” in the eternal sense, we...we want that eternal glory that goes to You in the final state. But even now when we say, “Thy kingdom come,” we are pleading for the invisible kingdom to grow and grow and grow one soul at a time, all for Your glory because You are worthy to be worshiped as our King. Oh God, You are our King. Christ, You are our King. And we honor You as such and we say familiar words that come from the pen of Jude, “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

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