

THE UNSHAKABLE KINGDOM #3

“The Incarnation of the Kingdom”

Introduction

Tonight we continue our series on the “Unshakable Kingdom”-a study of what I and many others believe to be the most important subject in the Bible.

R.C. Sproul

“The central motif of sacred scripture, I believe, is the concept of the Kingdom of God.”

Darrell L. Bock, Dallas Theological Seminary

“The Kingdom of God has been one of the dominant topics of New Testament study in this century. The reason is obvious. Many scholars, both conservative and critical, regard the kingdom of God as the ‘central theme’ of Jesus’ public proclamation.”

The Kingdom of God is a First Priority

- The first thing Jesus preached (Matthew 4:17)
- The first thing He taught us to pray for (Matthew 6:10)
- The first thing He said we are to seek (Matthew 6:33)
- Jesus spoke of the Kingdom as a present reality (Luke 17:21; Rom.14:17)

And yet, as important as it is, many Christians do not “see” the Kingdom.

Unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

John 3:3

Notice, He did not say IF you are born again you WILL see the Kingdom; He said UNLESS you are born again, you CANNOT see it.

It is possible to be born again and not “see” the Kingdom.

Notice that the goal is not to *hear* about the Kingdom; it is to *see* the Kingdom.

A primary example is the nation of Israel. The Jews had heard about the Kingdom for 1000 years; they were waiting for the Kingdom; they were looking for their Messiah. But when their King came, they did not recognize Him.

It's easy to criticize the Jews for missing their Messiah even though He was standing right in front of them in the flesh. But tonight I want to show you how the Church has made the same mistake in not seeing the Kingdom; even though the Jesus came in the flesh to reveal it to us. Here is my them right up front...

Theme

Jesus Christ came in the flesh to show us what the Kingdom of God looks like.

I have 3 points tonight:

1. I want to revisit the incarnation of Jesus and see it through "Kingdom Glasses".
2. I want to show you how His ministry was an incarnation of the Kingdom
3. I want to show how seeing this will transform your personal journey with Jesus forever. The title of my message is...

I. The Incarnation of the Kingdom

A. First: Revisiting the Incarnation of Christ

1. Pretty much everyone in the world, Christian or not, is familiar with the biblical teaching on the incarnation; it's what we celebrate at Christmas. The dictionary definition:

Incarnation

A person who embodies in the flesh a Deity, Spirit, or abstract quality

2. The Christian message of the incarnation is clearly set forth in the Gospel of John:

John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,

3. The 'Word' refers to the Son of God, the 2nd person of the Trinity; the incarnation is "the Word become flesh" and dwelling among us. God taking on a body.

4. **The question is WHY? Why did God need a physical body?** The first (and correct) answer is obvious: because Christ came to die for our sins. As God He could not die; but as the God-Man, He could.

a. This is confirmed in the Book of Hebrews, quoting the Psalmist:

Hebrews 10:5-7

Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come — In the volume of the book it is written of Me — To do Your will, O God.'"

b. The Son is saying that God no longer desired the blood of bulls and goats as burnt offerings and sacrifices for sins. So “a body you have prepared for Me.”

c. In a very real sense, Jesus was born so He could die!

d. But if we *limit* the purpose of the incarnation to the Cross of Christ we will miss an opportunity to “see” the Kingdom! How so?

B. Second: The Ministry of Jesus Was an Incarnation of the Kingdom

Most Christians know that Jesus Christ came in the flesh so He could die for our sins. But few realize that He also came in the flesh so He could show us what the Kingdom of God looks like in action.

1. It is one thing to hear about the Kingdom-it’s quite another thing to *see* it in action. A Super Bowl winning NFL coach said it this way...

Bill Parcells

“Don’t tell me about the pain. Show me the baby.”

2. Jesus did not come in the flesh just to tell us about God, He came to show us what God is like! In John 14, Philip asked Jesus, “Show us the Father”. Jesus’ response?

John 14:9

He who has seen me has seen the Father.

a. In the same way, Jesus did not come just to tell us about the Kingdom of God; He came to demonstrate it!

3. In his classic book on the Kingdom of God, “The Unchanging Person and the Unshakable Kingdom”, the great E. Stanley Jones put it this way:

E. Stanley Jones

“The revelation of the Kingdom of God must not be just a verbal revelation—it must be the Word become flesh—we must see it as well as hear it.”

4. God could have spoken to us about the Kingdom through a Prophet; instead, he prepared a body for Jesus so that we could actually see the Kingdom in action!

E. Stanley Jones

“Jesus was the embodiment of the Kingdom of God so we could see the Kingdom in a Person. The Kingdom and the Person belong together, for without the person illustrating the Kingdom the kingdom pattern would have taken many directions with all sorts of meanings, as it has done through history when the Kingdom and the Person have been separated.”

(Notice 3 things in this powerful statement)

a. First: “Jesus was the embodiment of the Kingdom of God so we could see the Kingdom in a Person.” The Kingdom “came” in Jesus. He brought the Kingdom of God from Heaven to earth. (See Matthew 6:10)

b. Second: “The Kingdom and the Person belong together.” We must not separate the King and the Kingdom.

c. Third: What happens when we separate the Kingdom from the Person? “Without the person illustrating the Kingdom, the Kingdom pattern takes many directions with all kinds of meanings, as has been done down through history.”

5. The sure sign that a Church has separated the King from the Kingdom is a Church that has no power. There’s a ‘power outage’.

6. But the Kingdom of God is always connected to the power of God.

a. Look at the last line of the Lord’s Prayer:

Matthew 6:13

“For Thine is the Kingdom, *and the power*, and the glory forever, Amen.”

b. It is no accident that this is the last line of the Lord’s Prayer; Jesus was paraphrasing from a prophecy by the great King David:

Psalms 145:10-13

All Your works shall praise You, O Lord, and Your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, and talk of Your power, to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, And the glorious majesty of His kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations.

c. Notice that the saint's proclamation of the Kingdom is not only "speaking" of God's glory and "talking" about His power; it is "making known God's mighty acts to the sons of men"!

7. A right revelation of the Kingdom always includes the incarnation of His power:

Luke 11:20

If I drive out demons by the finger (Spirit) of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you. (NLT: 'has arrived among you')

8. Jesus was the incarnation of the Kingdom, the power, and the glory of God; but so were His disciples! When Jesus sent out the 12, He connected the Kingdom of God to the power of God:

Luke 9:1-2 NIV

Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

a. To preach AND to heal! If our church preaches the Kingdom without practicing the Kingdom, it means we have disconnected the Kingdom of God from the power of God.

b. In the next chapter He sent out 70 more:

Luke 10:1

After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.

(And with what instructions?)

Luke 10:8-9 NIV

**"When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'
(And what was the result?)**

Luke 10:17

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

9. Notice in every case that the Kingdom of God is never disconnected from the power of God. The same pattern continued in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. This in his letter to the Church at Corinth:

1 Corinthians 4:20

For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.

1 Corinthians 4:20 NLT

For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God's power.

a. Paul never disconnected the Kingdom of God from the power of God. He used the power of God, not 'power of persuasion' to prove his point...

1 Corinthians 2:4

My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

b. It's one thing to listen to a salesman tell you about that beautiful new car on the showroom floor; but you need a "demo drive" to know for sure.
The Kingdom is more than instruction-it is demonstration.

c. Then Paul wrote this to the church at Thessalonica:

1 Thessalonians 1:5

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance...

10. The obvious question: Is this true of us? Is our version of the gospel 'in word only'? Or 'in power' and 'in the Holy Spirit'?

III. Bringing It Home

A. Review

1. We put some “Kingdom Glasses” on the incarnation; that Jesus needed a body for more than just to die for our sins.
2. He needed a body to show us what God is like; to show us what the Kingdom of Heaven looks like in action on earth.
3. But, you say, Jesus’ body is no longer on earth; He is seated in heaven at the right hand of the Father. But here is where we come in! How? Because...

B. The Church is the “Body” of Christ

1. Paul wrote this to the Church at Corinth:

1 Corinthians 12:27

Now you are the Body of Christ, and each of you is a part of it.

2. The Church is “now” the “Body” of Christ and each one of us is in that Body.

In a very real sense, the Church is the ongoing incarnation of the Kingdom on earth.

3. Jesus needed a Body to bring heaven to earth; to show us what God is like; to show us what the Kingdom looks like in action. He still does!
4. This is why this is the FIRST thing He taught us to pray for.

Matthew 6:10

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

- a. The Kingdom is God’s will done on earth as it is in heaven.
- b. Can you now see that this is really a prayer for the “ongoing incarnation” of the Kingdom?
- b. In his book, “When Heaven Invades Earth”, says...

Bill Johnson

“This is the primary focus of all prayer—if it exists in heaven, it is to be loosed on earth.”

5. The Church exists to demonstrate the Kingdom, the power, and the glory of God, on earth as it is in heaven!

a. In his book, “Kingdom Conspiracy”, Scot McKnight says...

Scot McKnight

“The power of kingdom redemption is centered in Jesus, his life, his death-absorbing death, and his resurrection. But this resurrected Jesus unleashes kingdom redemption in the here and now through the Spirit.”

6. The word must not just hear about Jesus; we must show them Jesus. They do not need to hear instruction about the Kingdom, they need to see a demonstration of the Kingdom.

a. One of the first champions of women’s rights was India born Pandita Ramabai, who converted to Christianity out of Hinduism...

Pandita Ramabai (1858-1952)

“People must not only hear about the Kingdom of God, they must see it in actual operation; even on a small scale and in imperfect form, but a real demonstration nonetheless.”

7. God did not save you to sit in a pew and listen to sermons! You were made for more than that! Your heart is confirming my words!

8. The world is waiting for a church that not only preaches the Kingdom but practices the Kingdom.

Mother Teresa

“As soon as we take the enfleshment of God seriously, the incarnation which, for Christians, is represented by the Person of Jesus Christ, then we start taking all things seriously.”

C. Taking All Things Seriously

1. Testimony: I was saved for 10 years before I “saw” the Kingdom of God; I began to “take all things seriously”.

2. You are not here by accident. Most come to this local church because they love the Word of God and Bible teaching. But we must not be hearers only. Hearing the Word won’t show Christ or the Kingdom to a hurting world.

3. How to begin?

R.C. Sproul

“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 the Kingdom of heaven and subjects of the King.”

4. The Kingdom still comes when God’s will is done on earth as it is heaven; the Word is still “made flesh” when we do the will of God.

a. The great Christian missionary Dr. Albert Schweitzer said this:

Dr. Albert Schweitzer

“There can be no Kingdom of God in the world unless the Kingdom of God is in our hearts.”

CLOSING PRAYER AND ALTAR MINISTRY