

Notes on Kingdom of God (1)

Duncan McLea - Christ Church Kenilworth – 25/02/2007

(These are a summary notes from the first sermon in this series)

Right at the beginning of Mark's Gospel Jesus first public words (Mark 1:15) were ...

"The time has come (is fulfilled)," he said. "The kingdom of God is near."

What time has been fulfilled? No explanation given because the Jewish world into which he spoke was filled with expectation and an understanding of what the kingdom was. When he said "the kingdom is here" they knew exactly what he was referring to. If we are going to be followers of Jesus. If we are going to do ministry in the way he did it. If we are going plant churches, pray for the sick, work amongst poor communities, as followers of Jesus, we need to understand how he saw the world and understood his ministry, because he said to his followers, "You will do the things I do, and even more".

Exodus Event

Exodus 15:18

The LORD (Yahweh) will reign for ever and ever."

The Exodus is the first place in Scripture where there is a clear reference to the coming of the Kingdom of God. There is a drama of spiritual warfare or the collision of two powers. The powers of the gods of Egypt and the power of the Yahweh the God of Israel on the other.

That confession that Yahweh will rule for ever and ever comes at the end of a narrative that explains what this rule means. In **Exodus 3** we have the story of the burning bush and Moses' encounter God where he is commissioned to go and liberate the people from Egypt. In that context Moses asks God what is his name – i.e. his character – what kind of God are you? God tells him – *I am who I am* (Yahweh) – it also means "I was who I was and I will be who I will be". It also conveys the understanding of *becoming present*.
"I am the one who is becoming present."

The people in slavery are crying out to God saying, "Please God deliver us". God's response (Exodus 6:1) is "I have heard their prayer and I have come down to act. I am becoming present. I am here to deliver you."

In the account of the plagues (Exodus 7 – 12) every plague is linked in some way to one of the gods of Egypt.

The conclusion is Ex 12:12...

"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn--both men and animals--and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. (I am the "becoming present one".)

This spiritual warfare was then translated into military warfare with their liberation from Egypt and the drowning of Pharaoh's forces in the Red Sea.

The Song of Moses and Miriam (Exodus 15:1-18) celebrates this victory.

Key verse is verse 11

"Who among the gods is like you, O LORD?"

Verse 13 gives the reason God intervened.

"In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed."

And it ends with the final confession. ...(verse 18)

The LORD will reign for ever and ever."

This is where the whole understanding of the Kingdom of God begins. In essence the Kingdom of God is about a collision of powers and a war of liberation. It is about God breaking into the present in signs and wonders that bring liberation to his people.

The Davidic Monarchy

Here the essence of the Kingdom of God is the same, but some of the details are now expanded.

Psalm 2 (A Messianic Psalm). This time it is not just Egypt but all the nations of the region that are coming against Israel and her God. The context is again a collision of powers – a conflict between God and those who oppose him.

Now the intervention of the Kingdom of God will not simply be by God himself through signs and wonders but that intervention of God in history will **now be focussed in and through an earthly king**. This king will be God's representative on earth. In that this king will be God's anointed one and God's power is upon him, what he does, is what God does.

In **2 Samuel 7** Nathan, as the spokesperson for Yahweh, comes to David saying that his rule will be God's rule. What God did in past, he will now do through David. Not only that, but he will be the first in a dynasty of kings that begins with David and goes on from generation to generation and it will never cease. It will be the basis of an eternal kingship.

In the second half of the chapter 7 David responds to this call that he is the adopted anointed one through whom God will do all this.

The announcement of this dynasty by God through Nathan is then translated into a series of military campaigns. David leads the people in battle and he defeats the Moabites and the Jebusites and the Hitites. There is a recurring refrain.

“The LORD gave David victory where ever he went.” (8:6,14)

Then verse 15 we read a key statement.

David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people.

The rule of God was expressed through the reign of David. In that David was God’s anointed ruler, the people were experiencing the rule of God. They were experiencing the Kingdom of God.

But David never really lead Israel into the fullness of this - he had his failings as we know - and so it was left to his son, Solomon, to bring Israel into the golden age.

The Golden Age of the Monarchy

1 Kings 4:20 gives us a description of this golden age of the Kingdom of God being experienced.

The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy.

They were multiplying and they were having a party! That is what the Kingdom of God is like. This was the expectation in the minds of Jesus’ hearers when he said, “The Kingdom of God has come near”.

And just so we don’t miss the point we are given a few more details. See verses 21ff.

(To be continued ...)