

## Foundations #5 – The Kingdom of God

I am going to talk to you about the Kingdom of God today, but **first** I want to talk about another kingdom. In the month we call July, 356 years before Christ, a boy was born, a son of a king, a privileged boy, his teacher was Aristotle.

This boy grew up to become a great warrior king, as a matter of fact; the word “great” became part of the name we know him by. I’m talking, of course, about **Alexander the Great.**

Alexander the Great’s armies swept through all the known world, conquering the different areas as he went. And Greek became the **lingua franca**, the world wide language of trade, much like English is now. So when a Arab who didn’t speak Latin went to Italy and spoke to an Italian who didn’t speak Arabic, they both spoke Greek.

One night Alexander had a dream and in this dream a man with a long flowing beard told him to build his capital in northern Egypt.

And so he built a great city and named it Alexandria. This was the greatest city in the world in its day. A **huge library** was built to house the sum of human knowledge. At its height it contained between 500,000 and 750,000 scrolls.

It became the learning center of the world. The city attracted the finest minds from across the globe. **Caesar, Cleopatra, Mark Antony, Euclid, Galen, Archimedes** all walked its streets. You have heard about the 7 wonders of the world, the Alexandria Lighthouse was one of the seven wonders.

For some reason Alexander the Great was almost friendly to the Hebrew nation. Actually we know the reason and it goes all the way back to the Book of Daniel in the O.T.

The **Book of Daniel** was written about 300 years before Alexander was born and in the book of Daniel there is a prophecy about a large statue that represented the worldwide kingdoms that were to come. And the Jewish scholars said that Alexander’s worldwide kingdom was foretold in the O.T.

Before we leave the Book of Daniel take note of this prophecy found in Daniel 2:44, *“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.”*

So the Bible tells us that during the time span of the kingdoms represented on the statue the Kingdom of God was going to be created.

Because of the prophecies about the kings there was a lot of interest in the O.T. But the world didn't read Hebrew which the O.T. was written in. So they found 72 Hebrew scholars who knew Greek, sent them to Alexandria, put them into 72 separate cells and they worked for 72 days translating the O.T. into Greek.

This was called the **Septuagint**; the word means "70". Because of the interest in O.T. prophecies, this Greek translation was circulated though out the known world and many people from many nations had access to them.

What was happening? God was preparing the earth for the coming of His Kingdom.

And **BTW**, the **Septuagint is the Scriptures that Jesus quoted** when He walked the earth. I find this interesting because the Jewish rabbis considered it a very poor translation but it was the one Jesus used.

Why am I talking about this when the message is supposed to be about the Kingdom of God? Because this is all part and parcel of God setting up the world for the coming of His Son and with Him, the Kingdom of God.

Something else He did was bring a **time of peace** and open borders between the countries which is called in Latin "**Pax Romana.**" **Roman peace**. It started 27 years before Jesus was born and lasted for a couple hundred years.

We read in the N.T. about **Paul's** missionary journeys, and **Peter's** travels, they were made possible because of the Pax Romana.

**So we see that God set the stage for His Kingdom to be setup. The Bible**, of course, plays a big part in providing information about the Kingdom of God. How well has it survived over the centuries? Is what we have now what the prophets wrote? Let me tell you a bit about that.

As the centuries went by the original scrolls that the prophets wrote had to be recopied a number of times as they wore out. Wouldn't errors creep in over time?

Well, when the scrolls were copied they were very careful. **That's nice, you say**, but mistakes could still creep in over the centuries. Okay, let me tell you just how careful they were, they knew the **exact number of letters** in each book. And they would count the letters and if it came out wrong, they threw the scroll away.

After copying a scroll, they found the middle letter and then counted forward and backwards from it, and if it came out wrong they destroyed the scroll and started over.

The critics really thought they had found a huge error when the Bible said that Belshazzar was king of Babylon because historical writings said Nebanitas was king, but after an archeological dig they found that Nebanitas had decided to wage a war in a distant land and made his son king while he was gone. Guess what the son's name was? Your right, it was Belshazzar.

No archaeological dig has ever shown the bible to be wrong!! Let me give you an example. We have all heard the song "*Joshua fought the battle of **Jericho.***"

Well, archaeologists found that ancient city and when they were digging it up they were amazed by what they found and made an announcement to the press. This was the only ancient city they had ever found that had been attacked and the walls were pushed outward.

On all the others the walls had been pushed in by the invaders, not so with Jericho, it happened just like the Bible says it happened. **Okay**, so we can trust what is written in the Bible, what does the Bible say about the Kingdom of God?

Well, for one thing it says that one of the reasons Jesus came to earth was to tell people about the Kingdom of God. "*Jesus said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."* Luke 4:42

Jesus was sent to tell about the Kingdom of God; Jesus preached the message of the Kingdom wherever He went. So, it must have been pretty important! **So just what is the Kingdom of God?** That is not an easy question to answer because the term is used broadly, so any definition will fall short in some respects.

But in general we could say, "***The Kingdom of God is located wherever and in whomever the will of God holds sway unhindered.***" More about this later...

The Jews all knew about Daniel 2:44 and they were all waiting for the Kingdom of God to come. The Jews were looking forward to this time because they were **expecting a political overthrow of Rome** and of Israel becoming a world power again like in the days of David.

They never seemed to understand it wasn't going to be that kind of a kingdom. Even near the end when they came to arrest Him as if He were leading an insurrection. He told the armed men, "*Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest...'*" John 18:36

They had some serious misunderstanding of the Kingdom of God, so Jesus corrects them when they questioned Him about the Kingdom.

*“Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.” Luke 17:20-12.*

Some translations say *“because the kingdom of God is in your midst.”* Actually, either way it is translated is true.

The Jewish leaders were looking for an earthy kingdom and Jesus is letting them know God’s Kingdom isn’t an earthly kingdom or political party. He tells them the kingdom is already here.

The Kingdom of God is present because Jesus the King of the Kingdom is present. Luke 11:20, *“But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the Kingdom of God has come to you.”*

Not only was the Kingdom of God present then, **it is still present now** because Jesus is still present in the church through the Holy Spirit.

Does this mean that the Kingdom of God is here in all its glory? That we should have no future expectations regarding the Kingdom? No, not at all. When Jesus says *“The Kingdom of God is present or in your midst,”* He doesn’t mean the full manifestation of God’s Kingdom.

**Obviously**, sin, Satan, evil, suffering, all still exist. Those things will cease to exist when the Kingdom of God comes in its fullness.

Rev 11:15 referring to the end days says, *“There were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The Kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.”*

Rev 12:10 *“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.”*

In fact, Jesus tells us how we will know when the fullness of His Kingdom comes. This fullness takes place when Jesus comes again. Jesus discusses this full manifestation of the Kingdom of God in the next few verses,

*“For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other... “Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.” Luke 17:24-27*

In some ways, the Kingdom of God is like a hurricane. When the outer bands began to come onshore, the wind and rains pick up. Then the weather person can accurately say, *“The hurricane is now here.”* At the same time, everyone knows that this little bit of wind is only a foretaste of the intensity that is to come.

In the same way, the display of the Kingdom of God we experience today is only a foretaste of what is to come in greater intensity and power.

Back to our definition of the Kingdom of God: *“The Kingdom of God is located wherever and in whomever the will of God holds sway unhindered.”*

### **Where does the will of God hold sway unhindered?**

**In heaven** for sure and as a matter of fact the words Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven appear to be interchangeable in the Bible.

**In church** is another place where the will of God is supposed to be unhindered. Think about this, and something I worry about is this: If a particular church is not a place where God’s will is followed then is that church part of Kingdom?

And I often pray “Lord, help us to never do anything that would cause You to lift Your grace from this place.”

Just a few words on how our particular church is governed. We try to follow the pattern we see in the New Testament. In the N.T. the churches were governed by elders and that is the pattern we follow.

Photos of our staff and elders are posted on the bulletin board next to the elevator.

Our guide is the Bible only. We are not part of any denomination. No one tells me what to preach or to believe, only the Bible.

**In Christians** is another place where the will of God is supposed to be unhindered.

In all cases and regardless of where it is found there are some things that are true about the Kingdom of God.

**1. In God's Kingdom we have different objectives.** In most kingdoms the authorities see to it that the citizens obey the rules they have set for them. By their laws and enforcement agencies they control your behavior.

But members of God's Kingdom behave as they do **not** because they are forced but because they are transformed on the inside. 2 Corinthians 3:18, *“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory.”*

And because we are part of the Kingdom of God and have been transformed we live by different **guidelines** than members of worldly kingdoms.

**For instance, we put others before ourselves.** Philippians 2:3-4, *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”*

Romans 15:2, *“Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.”*

Vs 5, *“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had.”*

Vs 7, *“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”*

**2. In God's Kingdom we have different reactions.**

When someone treats us unfairly or cuts us off in traffic what is the natural reaction? To get back at them, to get revenge!

**But if you live in the Kingdom of God what is your reaction?**

Matthew 5:38-43, *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...”*

What about **accountability**? Do we just let people walk all over us? There is a place for that teaching - especially in the church, but what area do you think we need to focus on?

Do we need to focus on protecting our rights, looking out for number one? Or do we really need to work on reacting as Jesus would react?

### 3. In God's Kingdom we have different tools.

In earthly kingdoms they keep control over their citizens by force. You don't do what they say, they have weapons and can inflict painful consequences on you.

**2 Corinthians 10:3-4**, *“Though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.”*

We use different tools because we have a different enemy. In the kingdoms of this world the enemy is always other people, in the kingdom of God the enemy is not people.

**Ephesians 6:12**, *“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*

#### In the Kingdom of God:

Instead of control, freedom,  
Instead of laws, grace,  
instead of self-promotion, service and love.  
The kingdom of God is all about love.

**1 John 3:14**, *“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.”* If you do not love, you are not in the kingdom.

Would you say that you typically love and serve, or would you say that you typically just look out for yourself?

#### **In which kingdom have you put your trust?**

Which kingdom do you live in? *The kingdom of God is made up of people who put His will above their own. Who serve others rather than themselves; who give of themselves in order to bless others.*

The Kingdom of God began when Jesus came to destroy the power of Satan, sin, and death.

And it will be complete when Jesus comes again to rid the world of Satan and his counterfeit kingdom.