FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

ESCHATOLOGY

The Doctrine of Last Things

He Who Was, and Who Is, and Who Is to Come

UNIT 3: THE KINGDOM OF GOD — ALREADY AND NOT YET

Lessons 7–9: The Reign of Christ Between the Two Comings

Lesson 7

THE KINGDOM INAUGURATED

Christ's First Coming and the Dawn of the Eschatological Age

The Kingdom of God as the Governing Eschatological Reality of the Present Inter-Advent Age

"The King has come. The kingdom has arrived. All that remains is the public declaration of what Easter morning already decided."

Key Texts: Mark 1:14–15; Matthew 12:28; Luke 4:16–21; Colossians 1:13–14; Acts 2:29–36; Ephesians 1:19–23; Daniel 7:13–14

> *"Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus."*
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> **Titus 2:13, NASB 1995**

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Introduction

Unit 2 traced the eschatological journey of the individual believer from the threshold of death through the intermediate state to the glorious present heaven where the redeemed dead dwell with Christ. Unit 3 now widens the eschatological lens from the individual to the cosmic, from the personal to the historical, from what happens to a person at death to what God is doing in history through the reign of His Son. The subject of Unit 3 is the kingdom of God, the governing eschatological reality that Jesus announced at the outset of His ministry and that the New Testament presents as the framework within which all subsequent eschatological development must be understood. No doctrine in the entire landscape of biblical eschatology is more central, more contested, or more practically significant than the doctrine of the kingdom. What is it? When did it arrive? How does it operate in the present age? And where is it going?

This lesson, the first of three in Unit 3, addresses the inauguration of the kingdom: the claim, which is central to the Reformed amillennial framework this series defends, that the kingdom of God arrived in history in the person and work of Jesus Christ at His first coming, and that the present age is therefore already the eschatological age of the kingdom's presence. This is the "already" of the already/not yet framework introduced in Lesson 1 and expanded in Lesson 2. The kingdom is genuinely, really, presently here. It arrived with Jesus. Its arrival was announced by His preaching, demonstrated by His miracles, secured by His cross, vindicated by His resurrection, and enthroned by His ascension. The church does not live in a pre-kingdom age, waiting for the kingdom to begin. It lives in the age of the kingdom's inauguration, empowered by the Spirit of the kingdom, commissioned by the King of the kingdom, and advancing the kingdom's purposes through the proclamation of the gospel until the King returns to consummate what He has already begun.

The lesson develops this claim under seven headings: the Old Testament background of the kingdom of God and its eschatological expectation; Jesus' announcement of the kingdom's arrival in His preaching (Mark 1:14–15); the presence of the kingdom in Jesus' miraculous ministry, particularly His exorcisms (Matthew 12:28); the Nazareth sermon as a programmatic declaration of kingdom inauguration (Luke 4:16–21); Daniel 7:13–14 and the exaltation of the Son of Man as the kingdom's enthronement; the ascension and session of Christ as the event that establishes the kingdom's present heavenly rule (Acts 2:29–36; Ephesians 1:19–23); and the implications of inaugurated kingdom theology for the church's identity, mission, and posture in the present age. Throughout, the aim is not merely to establish a theoretical framework but to show what it means to live now as citizens of a kingdom that has already arrived under a King who is already reigning.

A word of orientation is important for those who have been formed by dispensational eschatology, in which the kingdom of God is a future entity, the millennial kingdom to be established at Christ's return, and the present age is not the age of the kingdom but the age of the church, a parenthetical period inserted between two phases of God's program with Israel. The Reformed amillennial understanding presented in this series is fundamentally different: it holds that the kingdom arrived with Christ and is present now, and that the church is not a parenthetical substitute for the kingdom but the primary community through which the kingdom advances in the present age. This is not a novelty, it is the historic Reformed and confessional understanding of the kingdom, and it is the understanding that follows most naturally and consistently from the exegesis of the New Testament's kingdom texts. The case will be made in this lesson and the two that follow. It will be made from the text.

I. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Eschatological Expectation That Jesus Fulfilled

A. The Kingship of God in the Old Testament Narrative

The concept of God's kingship is not a New Testament innovation; it is woven into the fabric of the Old Testament from its opening pages. The God of Israel is fundamentally the sovereign King of creation, the One who rules over all things by right of His creative power and covenant authority. Psalm 103:19 states the principle with lapidary clarity: "The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all." This is not a metaphor or an aspiration; it is the foundational ontological claim of the Old Testament's theology: God is King, He rules, and His rule is not contingent upon human recognition or cooperation. The creation narrative of Genesis 1 is, among other things, a royal decree, the sovereign God ordering the chaos into cosmos by the word of His authority and establishing His image-bearers as His vice-regents over the created order.

The kingship of God in the Old Testament takes on a specifically eschatological dimension in the prophetic tradition, where the present exercise of God's sovereign rule over history, which is always affirmed, is set alongside the promise of a future, more direct and more universally recognized exercise of that rule in the coming age of salvation. Isaiah 52:7 captures this eschatological longing with extraordinary vividness: "How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" The announcement that God reigns is here associated with the arrival of the messenger who brings the good news of peace and salvation, a messenger whose feet are beautiful because his message is the message that changes everything. The New Testament explicitly identifies this messenger with Jesus and this announcement with the gospel (Romans 10:15).

The prophetic expectation of the kingdom was shaped by several converging streams. The Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7 promised an eternal throne to David's son, a promise that the later prophets understood would be fulfilled in a messianic figure who would reign in righteousness and justice. The servant songs of Isaiah (Isaiah 42–53) promised a servant who would establish justice in the earth and be a light to the nations. Daniel's vision of the four beasts and the Son of Man (Daniel 7) promised the replacement of all human empires by a kingdom that the Most High would give to one like a Son of Man, a kingdom that would be everlasting and universal. Zechariah promised a coming king who would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, speaking peace to the nations (Zechariah 9:9–10). Malachi promised a messenger who would prepare the way for the Lord's coming to His temple (Malachi 3:1–2). The prophetic horizon was rich and varied, but its center was consistent: the God of Israel was coming, or sending His anointed, to establish His kingdom in a new and decisive way. When Jesus arrived in Galilee preaching "The kingdom of God is at hand," He was not announcing something unprecedented. He was announcing the arrival of the long-awaited.

B. The Transition from Old Covenant to New: John the Baptist as the Hinge

The figure who stands at the hinge between the Old Testament's eschatological expectation and Jesus' announcement of the kingdom's arrival is John the Baptist. Jesus identifies John with the greatest of all the prophets, and yet, paradoxically, as less than the least in the kingdom of God (Matthew 11:11). John's greatness consists in his unique eschatological position: he is the Elijah figure of Malachi 4:5–6, the forerunner of the coming

King, the last and greatest herald of the old covenant's expectation. And his lesser status consists in the fact that even the least in the kingdom of God, the kingdom that John announced but did not enter, is greater than John in the sense of possessing a fuller eschatological privilege.

This remarkable assessment by Jesus establishes the eschatological watershed that the kingdom's inauguration represents. John stood at the end of the old age, pointing forward to the kingdom that was coming. The disciples of Jesus stood at the beginning of the new age, having witnessed the kingdom's arrival in the person and work of the One John had heralded. The kingdom's arrival is not a minor development in redemptive history; it is the decisive turning point that separates the age of expectation from the age of fulfillment. Everything before John was preparation and anticipation; everything after the arrival of Jesus in Galilee with the announcement of the kingdom is fulfillment, however partial and however provisional in its present form. The eschatological new has broken in, and John, the greatest of the old, stands just on the far side of the hinge, having prepared the way for the King whose sandal he was not worthy to untie.

The eschatological significance of the Baptist's ministry also illuminates the character of the present age as the age of fulfillment in a way that has direct implications for how the church understands itself. The church of Jesus Christ is not a provisional, stop-gap institution waiting for the kingdom to begin. It is the eschatological community of the new covenant, the community that has received the Spirit promised by the prophets, that worships the risen King who sits at the right hand of the Father, and that advances the kingdom's purposes through the proclamation of the gospel until the day of final consummation. To understand the church rightly requires understanding the kingdom rightly, and to understand the kingdom rightly requires understanding the eschatological watershed that Jesus' first coming represents. The church is not pre-kingdom; it is the community of the kingdom's inauguration.

II. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE KINGDOM, MARK 1:14–15

The Time Is Fulfilled and the Kingdom of God Has Come Near

A. The Content and Grammar of Jesus' Proclamation

The opening of Jesus' public ministry in Mark 1:14–15 is one of the most theologically concentrated passages in the Synoptic Gospels: "Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'" Every word of this proclamation bears the weight of eschatological declaration. Jesus is not beginning a religious reform movement, not launching a philosophical school, and not proposing a new ethical framework. He is announcing the arrival of the long-awaited eschatological event: the kingdom of God has come near.

The Greek phrase translated "is at hand" or "has come near" (engiken) has been the subject of sustained exegetical discussion. Does it mean "has arrived" or merely "is drawing near"? The verbal form is a perfect active indicative, which in Greek grammar typically conveys a completed action with present results: something that has happened and whose effects continue into the present. The weight of the exegetical evidence, reinforced by the parallel texts we will examine below (particularly Matthew 12:28), supports the understanding that the kingdom has not merely drawn close as a proximate future event but has arrived as a present reality in the person and ministry of

Jesus. "The time is fulfilled" (peplerotai ho kairos) confirms this: the appointed time, the divinely set moment that the entire prophetic tradition had been anticipating, has arrived. Not almost. Not soon. Has arrived.

The call to "repent and believe in the gospel" is the appropriate human response to an event that has occurred, not merely to a possibility that may occur. Repentance and faith are not the means by which the kingdom is brought into existence; they are the means by which individuals enter and participate in a kingdom that has already arrived. The gospel, the good news, is the announcement of what God has done in Jesus Christ, and the response it calls for is the response appropriate to the hearing of good news: trust the One who has accomplished it, and turn from the old way of life that denied its necessity. The entire structure of the gospel, as the New Testament presents it, presupposes a kingdom that has already arrived and a King who has already acted. Repentance and faith are not contributions to the kingdom's arrival; they are the entry points into its blessing.

B. *The Kingdom as the Reign of God in His Anointed*

It is crucial to clarify what Jesus means by the kingdom of God in His proclamation, because the term has been understood in widely divergent ways in the history of interpretation. The kingdom of God (basileia tou theou) is not primarily a territory, a political state, or an institutional structure. It is, fundamentally, the dynamic reign of God, the active exercise of God's sovereign rule over creation and over history through His appointed King. When Jesus announces that the kingdom of God has come near, He is announcing that God's rule, His direct, personal, redemptive governance of the world through His Messiah, has broken into the present age in a new and decisive way through the arrival of the One in whom that rule is embodied and exercised.

This understanding of the kingdom as dynamic reign rather than static territory has important implications for how we read the kingdom's presence in the ministry of Jesus. The kingdom is present wherever the King is present and active. When Jesus heals the sick, casts out demons, raises the dead, and forgives sins, He is not merely performing impressive miracles, He is exercising the royal prerogatives of the One in whom the reign of God has arrived. These acts of power are not random demonstrations of divine ability; they are signs of the kingdom, evidence that the age of salvation the prophets announced has begun, that the powers of sin, disease, death, and the demonic are being pushed back by the arriving reign of God, and that the eschatological new creation is beginning to break in at the points where the old creation's corruption is most visible. Every healing in Jesus' ministry is a parable of the kingdom's character. Every exorcism is an act of eschatological warfare.

The connection between Jesus' identity as the Messiah, the Anointed One, and the arrival of the kingdom is indissoluble. The kingdom does not arrive apart from the King; the reign of God does not descend upon history apart from the One through whom God has chosen to exercise that reign. This is why Christology and eschatology are so deeply intertwined in the New Testament that it is impossible to understand one without the other. To know who Jesus is is to know that the kingdom has arrived. To know that the kingdom has arrived is to know that Jesus is the King. The announcement of Mark 1:14–15 is not separable from the identity of the One who makes it. The kingdom has come because He has come.

III. THE KINGDOM PRESENT IN POWER, MATTHEW 12:28

The Exorcisms as Signs of the Kingdom's Arrival

A. *The Exegetical Significance of Matthew 12:28*

If Mark 1:14–15 is the programmatic announcement of the kingdom's arrival, Matthew 12:28 is its most exegetically decisive confirmation. In the context of a controversy over the source of Jesus' power to cast out demons, Jesus declares: "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." The Greek verb translated "has come" (ephthasen) is in the aorist tense, completed action in the past. This is not the "has come near" (engiken) of Mark 1:15, which could theoretically be read as proximity rather than arrival; this is an unambiguous declaration of arrival, completion, presence. The kingdom has come upon you. Not "will come" or "is coming" but has come, as a completed event whose results are now present in the immediate experience of the audience.

The connection Jesus draws between the exorcisms and the kingdom is revelatory. The casting out of demons is not merely a display of power; it is evidence of the kingdom's arrival because the demonic realm represents precisely what the kingdom has come to overthrow. Satan's dominion over human beings, his ability to oppress, possess, and enslave those made in the image of God, is the most vivid and terrifying expression of the bondage that sin has introduced into God's good creation. When Jesus casts out demons by the Spirit of God, He is not merely relieving individual sufferers; He is demonstrating that the stronger Man has arrived to bind the strong man and plunder his goods (Matthew 12:29). The exorcisms are acts of eschatological warfare, the first strikes of the kingdom's assault on the dominion of darkness.

The binding of the strong man parable (Matthew 12:29) is directly relevant to the amillennial understanding of the millennium of Revelation 20. When Jesus says that the strong man must be bound before his house can be plundered, and then demonstrates the truth of this parable by His exorcistic ministry, He is indicating that the binding of Satan is not a future event associated with the parousia but a present reality already accomplished in principle in His own ministry. This is consistent with what He says in John 12:31, "Now the ruler of this world will be cast out", where "now" refers to the cross, not to a future millennium. The binding of Satan in Revelation 20:1–3 is the apocalyptic counterpart to what the Synoptic Gospels describe in historical narrative: the decisive restriction of Satan's power that was accomplished in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

B. *The Spirit of God and the Kingdom's Power*

The instrumentality Jesus names in Matthew 12:28 is as significant as the conclusion He draws: "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God." The kingdom arrives and operates by the power of the Holy Spirit. This connection between the Spirit and the kingdom is not incidental; it is structural to the New Testament's entire eschatological understanding. The Spirit is the eschatological gift, the firstfruits of the age to come (Romans 8:23), the one through whom the powers of the coming age break into the present age (Hebrews 6:5). Jesus' exorcistic ministry by the Spirit is therefore the entry of the new creation into the old, the Spirit who hovered over the waters at the first creation (Genesis 1:2) now hovering over the chaos of demonic possession and bringing the new creation's order by the authority of the Son.

The gift of the Spirit at Pentecost is therefore not the initiation of the kingdom but its extension and empowerment beyond the ministry of Jesus to the community of His disciples. What Jesus accomplished in the power of the Spirit through His personal ministry, the church is now commissioned to continue and extend in the power of the same Spirit, through the proclamation of the gospel and the ministry of the Word. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20) is issued in the explicit context of the King's universal authority ("All authority has been given to Me in

heaven and on earth"), and the promise of His presence ("I am with you always, even to the end of the age") is the promise of the kingdom's continuing operative presence through the Spirit, who is Christ's own Spirit given to indwell and empower the community of His disciples. The kingdom that arrived in Jesus' ministry advances through the church's ministry, by the same Spirit, toward the same goal of the total displacement of the ruler of this world by the reign of the Son of God.

There is an implication here for the church's understanding of spiritual conflict. If the exorcisms of Jesus were acts of eschatological warfare, the kingdom's assault on the dominion of darkness, then the church's ministry in the power of the Spirit is also, at its deepest level, eschatological warfare. Paul's description of the Christian's conflict in Ephesians 6:10–18, "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places", is not a description of a struggle that exists outside the kingdom's sphere. It is a description of the ongoing conflict within the already-arrived kingdom, between the community of the King and the powers that His arrival has already decisively defeated but not yet finally abolished. The church fights, not to bring the kingdom, but as those who live within it and advance its purposes against a defeated but still active enemy.

IV. THE NAZARETH SERMON, LUKE 4:16–21

The Programmatic Declaration of the Kingdom's Arrival

A. The Isaiah Scroll and the Year of the Lord's Favor

The most programmatic and the most theologically loaded account of Jesus' kingdom announcement is the Nazareth sermon of Luke 4:16–21. Jesus enters the synagogue in Nazareth, is handed the scroll of Isaiah, and reads from Isaiah 61:1–2: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord." He then rolls up the scroll, sits down, the posture of authoritative rabbinic teaching, and delivers what is perhaps the most stunning single sentence in the Gospels: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

The Isaiah 61 passage that Jesus reads is itself one of the most eschatologically charged texts in the entire Old Testament. It announces the arrival of the Servant of the Lord, the One anointed by the Spirit, who will inaugurate the great Jubilee year of liberation: good news for the poor, release for captives, sight for the blind, freedom for the oppressed, and the proclamation of the year of the Lord's favor. This is not merely a social program; it is the eschatological vision of God's reign breaking into the darkness of human bondage in all its forms, physical, social, spiritual, and cosmic. When Jesus applies these words to Himself and declares them fulfilled today, He is making the most comprehensive of all possible claims: the entire eschatological program of Isaiah 61 has found its fulfillment in the One standing before the Nazareth congregation, and it has begun today, now, in the hearing of this particular gathering.

The moment is also a masterclass in apostolic hermeneutics, anticipating the pattern Lesson 2 established as normative. Jesus identifies Himself as the fulfillment of Isaiah's eschatological promise. He does not promise a future national restoration of Israel in which the literal blind will be healed en masse and literal captives released from prison. He declares Himself to be the fulfillment of the promise in a way that encompasses both the literal

and the expansive dimensions of the prophetic vision, He does heal the literally blind (John 9), He does release the literally captive (Luke 13:16), and He accomplishes a spiritual liberation from the bondage of sin and the devil that Isaiah's language, taken in its fullest theological scope, was always reaching toward. The fulfillment exceeds the image without abandoning it; the antitype encompasses the type without merely reproducing it. Today this Scripture has been fulfilled.

B. *The Significance of "Today"*

The word "today" (semeron) in Luke 4:21 is one of the most theologically significant temporal markers in the New Testament, and it recurs throughout Luke's Gospel as a marker of eschatological immediacy. "Today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). "Today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9). "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). The pattern is consistent: Jesus brings the eschatological fulfillment of divine promise not to a general future but into the specific, concrete, datable present moment of encounter with Himself. Salvation, liberation, and the fulfillment of prophecy are not events the audience must wait for; they are events that occur in the hearing, in the encounter, in the day of Jesus' arrival.

This emphasis on the present tense of the kingdom's fulfillment has profound implications for how the church reads its own identity and its mission. The church is not waiting for the age of fulfillment to begin; it is living in it. The Spirit of whom Isaiah 61:1 speaks, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me", is the same Spirit who descended upon Jesus at His baptism (Luke 3:21–22) and who was poured out upon the disciples at Pentecost as the direct result of Jesus' exaltation (Acts 2:33). The year of the Lord's favor is not a calendrical event that occurs once and passes; it is the entire inter-advent age, the era of gospel proclamation and Spirit-empowered ministry in which the church now lives. Every proclamation of the gospel is a continuation of the today that Jesus inaugurated in Nazareth. Every act of mercy and justice is an extension of the liberation that the Anointed One announced as the charter of His kingdom.

The reaction of the Nazareth congregation, initial admiration followed by violent rejection (Luke 4:22–30), anticipates the pattern that the kingdom announcement has always evoked: a division between those who receive the King and those who refuse Him, between those in whom the kingdom takes root and those in whom it is rejected. The kingdom does not impose itself uniformly upon all who hear its announcement; it creates the division that Jesus later describes in the parable of the soils (Luke 8:4–15), the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24–30), and the great net (Matthew 13:47–50). The kingdom's presence in the world is not a coercive uniformity but a redemptive invasion that calls for response and that generates both acceptance and rejection, both the community of the redeemed and the hardening of those who refuse the King.

V. DANIEL 7:13–14 AND THE ENTHRONEMENT OF THE SON OF MAN

The Kingdom's Heavenly Establishment at the Ascension

A. *The Vision of Daniel 7 and Its Eschatological Claim*

The Old Testament passage that most directly illuminates the ascension of Christ as the kingdom's heavenly enthronement is Daniel 7:13–14, one of the most eschatologically significant visions in the entire canon: "I kept

looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed." The vision is of a heavenward movement, the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days and receiving universal, everlasting dominion. It is the vision of enthronement, of the investiture of royal authority.

The conventional dispensational and many premillennial readings of Daniel 7:13–14 interpret the Son of Man's coming to the Ancient of Days as a second coming, the return of Christ to earth at the end of the age. But the direction of movement in the text is precisely the opposite: the Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days, he moves toward the divine throne, not from it. The vision is of a heavenward ascent to receive kingdom authority from the Father, not an earthward descent to establish a kingdom on earth. This is the vision that the ascension of Christ fulfills. When Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, He was "coming to the Ancient of Days" in the sense that Daniel's vision describes: He was brought before the divine throne and presented there as the One to whom all authority in heaven and on earth had been given (Matthew 28:18).

The New Testament's use of Daniel 7:13 confirms this interpretation. When Peter declares at Pentecost that "God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36), he is applying the language of Daniel 7:14 to the ascension and session of Christ, not to a future return. When Paul declares in Ephesians 1:20–23 that God has seated Christ at His right hand "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come," he is describing the present result of the ascension as the fulfillment of the Danielic vision of universal dominion. And when Jesus Himself, before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, declares, "Hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64), He is applying Daniel 7:13–14 to His own exaltation at the right hand of God, an exaltation that the high priest and his colleagues will witness in the judgment of Jerusalem in 70 AD, which is the first visible manifestation of the ascended Son of Man's authority over the nations.

B. *The Ascension as the Kingdom's Enthronement*

The ascension of Jesus Christ is, in the framework of inaugurated eschatology, the decisive eschatological event that establishes the kingdom's present heavenly rule. At the ascension, the risen Christ who has conquered death is enthroned at the right hand of the Father, invested with the universal authority that Daniel 7:14 promised to the Son of Man, and constituted as the Lord and Christ whose reign now encompasses all things in heaven and on earth. This is not a peripheral or ceremonial event in the redemptive-historical sequence; it is the establishment of the kingdom that the resurrection had secured and that the parousia will consummate. The present age, from the ascension to the return, is the age of the ascended King's reign.

Peter's Pentecost sermon makes this connection between the Davidic covenant, the ascension, and the present reign of Christ with remarkable exegetical precision. He argues from Psalm 16 that David spoke prophetically of the resurrection of Christ, and then turns to Psalm 110:1, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet'", to establish that the risen Christ has been exalted to the Davidic throne: "Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear" (Acts 2:33). The kingdom promised to David has been established, not in a future millennium but at the ascension, in the exaltation of David's greater

Son to the throne of God. The Davidic throne is not an earthly throne in Jerusalem; it is the throne of God in heaven, where the Son of David now reigns over all things as the promised King.

Ephesians 1:19–23 adds the cosmic dimensions of the ascended Christ's authority with breathtaking comprehensiveness: "[God] raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." The ascended Christ's authority is not limited in scope (all rule and authority), not limited in time (not only in this age but also in the one to come), and not limited in sphere (all things in subjection under His feet). The kingdom that Daniel's vision promised is the kingdom that Christ's ascension has established. And the church is the community over which this universal King reigns as head, the community through which His kingdom purposes are being advanced in the present age.

VI. COLOSSIANS 1:13–14 AND THE TRANSFER OF KINGDOMS

The Believer's Present Citizenship in the Kingdom of Christ

A. Already Transferred, The Aorist of Colossians 1:13

The most explicit statement in the New Testament of the believer's present participation in the kingdom of Christ is Colossians 1:13–14: "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." The verbs are decisive: "rescued" (erueto) and "transferred" (metestesen) are both aorists in the Greek, conveying completed past action. The transfer has already occurred. Believers are not waiting to be brought into the kingdom of Christ at the return; they have already been transferred into it by the saving action of God in their regeneration and conversion. The kingdom is the present reality in which they live, the realm in which they have been placed by the definitive act of divine grace.

The language of "rescue" and "transfer" is drawn from the political and military imagery of the ancient world: the deportation and resettlement of conquered populations from one domain to another. Paul uses this imagery deliberately, because the transfer into the kingdom of Christ is as decisive and as definitive as such a resettlement. The believer who has been transferred into Christ's kingdom has not merely changed religious affiliation; they have changed the fundamental orientation of their existence, the governing power under which they live, and the ultimate allegiance that determines their loyalties, their values, and their destiny. They are no longer under the domain of darkness, the realm of sin, the devil, and death that held them in bondage before their conversion. They are under the kingdom of Christ, the realm in which the forgiveness of sins is the foundational reality and the life of the age to come is the governing power.

The present experience of kingdom citizenship has immediate and comprehensive implications for the Christian's daily life. If the believer has already been transferred into the kingdom of Christ, then every dimension of their life is kingdom life: their work, their relationships, their use of money and time, their political engagement, their cultural participation, and their personal ethics. There is no secular sphere that exists outside the jurisdiction of the kingdom into which they have been transferred. The Reformation's recovery of the doctrine of vocation, the

conviction that every calling, whether in the church, the family, the marketplace, or the civil sphere, is a sphere of kingdom service, is grounded in precisely this Pauline understanding. The believer does not serve the kingdom only when engaged in explicitly religious activities; they serve it in everything they do, because they are citizens of a kingdom that encompasses everything.

B. *The Kingdom and the Church*

The relationship between the kingdom of God and the church is one of the most practically important and most frequently confused questions in eschatology. The kingdom is not identical to the church: the kingdom is the dynamic reign of God in Christ, which encompasses the entire created order and which the church exists to proclaim and serve, not to replace. The church is not the kingdom; but the church is the primary community through which the kingdom operates, the assembly of those who have been transferred into the kingdom, and the body through which the King's purposes are advanced in the present age.

This distinction matters for several reasons. First, it prevents the equation of the church's institutional health with the kingdom's advance: the kingdom of God is not served whenever a church grows numerically or gains cultural influence, and it is not threatened whenever a church declines or suffers persecution. The kingdom advances wherever the gospel is proclaimed and received, wherever sin is repented of and faith exercised, wherever the name of Christ is honored and His lordship submitted to, and these things can occur both through and despite the visible fortunes of any given institutional church. Second, it prevents the privatization of the kingdom: if the kingdom is not identical to the church but encompasses the whole created order, then the church's kingdom responsibility extends beyond its own institutional life into every sphere of human existence in which its members are engaged.

Third, and perhaps most importantly for the eschatological framework of this series, the kingdom-church distinction clarifies the eschatological character of the church's present mission. The church is not building the kingdom, the kingdom has been built by God in Christ, and the church is its witness and its instrument, not its architect. The church is not transforming the world into the kingdom, the kingdom will come in its fullness only at the return of Christ, when He consummates what He has already inaugurated. The church is the community of the kingdom's inauguration, advancing its purposes through the proclamation of the gospel, the making of disciples, the practice of justice and mercy, and the demonstration of the new life that the kingdom's arrival has made possible. It is a community of anticipation and of witness, living in the "already" of the kingdom's arrival and looking toward the "not yet" of its consummation.

VII. LIVING AS CITIZENS OF THE INAUGURATED KINGDOM

The Practical Shape of Kingdom Life in the Inter-Advent Age

A. *The Parables of the Kingdom and the Character of Its Present Form*

Jesus' parables of the kingdom in Matthew 13 are among the most important texts for understanding the character of the kingdom in its present, inaugurated form. The parable of the sower (vv. 3–23) establishes that the kingdom advances through the proclamation of the Word and that its reception is varied: some hear and

reject, some receive superficially and fall away, some are choked by the cares and riches of the world, and some receive and bear fruit. The kingdom's advance is not uniform, not guaranteed in every individual case, and not coercive. It proceeds through the Word, by the Spirit, with varied results that only the final harvest will fully reveal.

The parable of the wheat and the tares (vv. 24–30, 36–43) establishes that the kingdom in its present form coexists with the opposition of the evil one, that the field in which the wheat of the kingdom is growing is also the field in which tares have been sown by the enemy. The church is not the pure, triumphant community of the fully realized kingdom; it is the community of the kingdom's inauguration, mixed, imperfect, and engaged in a conflict with the powers of darkness that will not be fully resolved until the final harvest. The parable's instruction not to pull up the tares lest the wheat be damaged is a counsel of eschatological patience: the kingdom's completion is the work of the final judgment, not of any human purification program in the present age.

The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven (vv. 31–33) establish the organic, hidden, and gradually expanding character of the kingdom in its present form. The mustard seed begins as the smallest of seeds and becomes a large tree; the leaven hidden in the flour gradually permeates the whole lump. These parables speak against two opposite errors: the error of despising small beginnings (the kingdom's present form may appear insignificant compared to its eschatological glory, but it is genuine and growing), and the error of expecting the kingdom's fullness in the present age (the leavening process takes time; the final permeation of the whole awaits the full arrival of the age to come). The kingdom is genuinely present, genuinely advancing, genuinely transformative, and genuinely incomplete, genuinely hidden, and genuinely awaiting its consummation. This is the character of the inter-advent age.

B. *Kingdom Citizenship as the Shape of Christian Discipleship*

The most immediate and the most comprehensive implication of inaugurated kingdom theology for the believer's daily life is this: Christian discipleship is kingdom citizenship, and kingdom citizenship is total. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) is the constitution of the kingdom, the description of the life appropriate to those who have entered the reign of God in Christ. Its ethics are not impossible ideals for an age that has not yet arrived; they are the description of the life that the Spirit of the kingdom enables in those who have been transferred into the kingdom and who submit to its King. The beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–12) describe the character of kingdom citizens, the poor in spirit, the mourning, the meek, the hungry for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted. These are the people who have recognized that the kingdom has arrived and who are living in conformity with the values of the age that has broken in.

The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13) is the prayer of kingdom citizens: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." This prayer is the eschatological longing of those who know the kingdom has arrived and who long for its completion, who know that the will of God is done fully in heaven, that it is being done partially and incompletely on earth through the community of the kingdom, and who pray and work for the increasing conformity of earthly reality to heavenly reality until the return of the King brings the full realization of what the prayer anticipates. The Lord's Prayer is not a prayer for the kingdom to begin; it is a prayer for the kingdom that has begun to advance, and ultimately for the day when its advance will be complete.

Kingdom citizenship also shapes the believer's relationship to the present world order, its institutions, its cultures, its powers, and its values. The citizen of the kingdom does not flee the world as though the kingdom were a purely inward or otherworldly reality; the kingdom has come into the world and lays claim to the whole of human life.

But neither does the kingdom citizen identify the present world order with the kingdom, as though the institutions of the present age could, by human effort, be transformed into the kingdom of God. The kingdom citizen lives in the world as one whose ultimate allegiance is to a different King, engaged, creative, sacrificial, and hopeful, but without the idolatry that would mistake any human institution or cultural achievement for the kingdom itself. The eschatological reserve that inaugurated kingdom theology generates is not pessimism; it is the appropriate humility of those who know that the fullness of the kingdom is not available in the present age and who therefore hold all earthly achievements, however genuine and however good, with the open hands of those who are looking for a city whose architect and builder is God.

> *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*
> **Mark 1:15, NASB 1995**

Theological Terms and Definitions

Kingdom of God (Basileia tou Theou)	The dynamic reign or rule of God exercised through His Messiah, Jesus Christ. Not primarily a territory or institution but the active, personal, redemptive sovereignty of God breaking into human history through the person and work of Jesus. The kingdom of God arrived with Jesus' first coming, is presently operative through the Spirit in the church's proclamation, and will be fully consummated at the return of Christ.
Inaugurated Eschatology	The theological conviction that the eschatological age, the age of salvation, Spirit, and kingdom, has already been inaugurated in the first coming of Jesus Christ, though it awaits its full consummation at His return. The governing framework for understanding the New Testament's eschatological teaching, expressed in the "already / not yet" tension that characterizes the entire inter-advent period.
Engiken	Greek perfect active indicative (from eggizo, to come near or arrive), used in Mark 1:15: "the kingdom of God is at hand." The perfect tense conveys a completed action with present results. Most exegetes understand engiken in Mark 1:15 to indicate not merely proximity but actual arrival, the kingdom has come near in the sense of having arrived in the person and ministry of Jesus.
Ephthasen	Greek aorist indicative active (from phthano, to arrive, to come upon), used in Matthew 12:28: "the kingdom of God has come upon you." The aorist tense indicates completed action, the kingdom has arrived, not merely approached. The strongest New Testament statement of the kingdom's present arrival, made by Jesus in the context of His exorcistic ministry.
Son of Man	The messianic title Jesus uses most frequently for Himself in the Gospels, drawn from Daniel 7:13–14, where one like a Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days and receives universal, everlasting dominion. Jesus' use of the title is simultaneously a claim to the Danielic vision of eschatological kingship and a statement of solidarity with humanity ("son of man" also meaning a human being). On the Reformed amillennial reading, the Son of Man's coming to the Ancient of Days is fulfilled in Christ's ascension, not in a second coming.
Session of Christ	The present heavenly reign of the risen, glorified, and ascended Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father, grounded in Psalm 110:1 ("Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool") and applied to Christ throughout the New Testament. On the amillennial reading, the session is the present reality of Christ's kingdom reign, exercised through His intercession and through the Spirit's work in the church, and will be concluded at the parousia.
Anointed One / Messiah / Christ	Hebrew mashiach and Greek christos: the "Anointment," the One consecrated by the Spirit to fulfill God's redemptive purposes. The anointing of Jesus by the Spirit at His baptism (Luke 3:21–22) and His declaration in the Nazareth synagogue ("The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me", Luke 4:18) establish His identity as the one in whom Isaiah 61's eschatological program has arrived. The kingdom arrives in the person of the Anointed One.
Domain of Darkness	Paul's designation in Colossians 1:13 for the realm under whose authority unbelievers exist before conversion: the realm of sin, the devil, and spiritual death, characterized by the absence of the light of the gospel and the lordship of Christ. Contrasted with the kingdom of Christ into which believers have already been transferred. The transfer is definitive, past, and complete, accomplished by God's saving act, not by human effort.
Basileia Parables	The parables of the kingdom in Matthew 13 (sower, wheat and tares, mustard seed, leaven, hidden treasure, pearl of great price, dragnet) that together describe the character of the kingdom in its present, inaugurated form: mixed in reception (sower), coexisting with opposition (wheat and tares), organically growing from small beginnings (mustard seed),

	permeating its environment gradually (leaven), and worthy of any sacrifice to obtain (treasure, pearl).
Eschatological Warfare	The framework for understanding the church's spiritual conflict in the present age, derived from Jesus' description of His exorcistic ministry as the plundering of the strong man's house (Matthew 12:29) and Paul's description of the Christian's conflict in Ephesians 6:10–18. The conflict is real, ongoing, and demanding, but it is fought by those who inhabit an already-arrived kingdom whose King has already won the decisive battle, and whose ultimate outcome is therefore not in doubt.

Practical Application

A. *For the Mind: What Must We Believe?*

We must believe that the kingdom of God arrived in history with the first coming of Jesus Christ and is genuinely, really, presently here. This is not a theological technicality with no practical significance; it is the most consequential claim of the New Testament's eschatological testimony, and its practical implications are comprehensive. The person who believes that the kingdom is a future entity, not yet arrived, waiting for a future millennium to begin, will live in a fundamentally different posture than the person who believes that the kingdom has arrived and that the church is the community of its inauguration. The former waits; the latter advances. The former anticipates; the latter participates. The former hopes for the kingdom to begin; the latter lives in the kingdom that has already begun, imperfectly but genuinely.

We must believe that the ascension of Christ is an eschatological event of the highest significance, the moment at which the risen, glorified Son of Man came to the Ancient of Days and received the universal dominion that Daniel 7:14 promised. The ascended Christ is not in a holding pattern, waiting for His kingdom to begin. He is reigning now, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, with all things in subjection under His feet. The church serves a present King whose authority is already comprehensive and whose purposes are already operative through the Spirit in the proclamation of the gospel. That conviction transforms the church's self-understanding from a community waiting for power to a community already acting from it.

We must believe that Colossians 1:13 describes our present condition: we have already been transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of Christ. This transfer is as real and as irreversible as the most definitive act of human political relocation. We are citizens of the kingdom, now, today, in this age, and every dimension of our lives is lived under the jurisdiction of the King who transferred us. The privatization of faith, the reduction of Christian identity to personal spirituality with no public, cultural, or structural dimensions, is incompatible with the Pauline doctrine of kingdom citizenship. The transferred citizen belongs to the kingdom in everything, or not at all.

B. *For the Heart: What Must We Feel and Desire?*

We should feel the exhilaration of living in the eschatological age of fulfillment. Jesus said that many prophets and righteous people longed to see what the disciples saw and did not see it (Matthew 13:17). We stand on the far side of the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, the ascension, and Pentecost. We are living in the age that Isaiah and Jeremiah and Daniel were straining toward. The kingdom that the prophets announced has arrived. The Spirit that Joel promised has been poured out. The Messiah that the psalmists celebrated has been enthroned. If the disciples could be amazed by their eschatological privilege, how much more should we be moved by the realization that we live in the age they witnessed? Gratitude, wonder, and a sense of eschatological vocation are the appropriate emotional responses to the awareness that the kingdom has arrived and that we are its citizens.

We should also feel the urgency that inaugurated kingdom theology generates. The kingdom has arrived, but it has not yet been consummated. The King is reigning, but not yet universally acknowledged. The gospel is advancing, but not yet to every person in every nation. The time between the inauguration and the consummation is not a time for the church to be at ease; it is the time for the most concentrated and the most sacrificial kingdom engagement available. Paul's exhortation, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal

through us" (2 Corinthians 5:20), is the language of urgent diplomacy in the moment before the terms of the kingdom are imposed by the returning King. The window for reception is open; it will not remain open indefinitely.

We should desire above all to be genuine kingdom citizens, people whose values, loyalties, priorities, and relationships are genuinely shaped by the kingdom of the One who transferred us, rather than by the domain of darkness from which we were rescued. The church's great temptation is not the rejection of the kingdom but the compromise of it, the gradual accommodation of kingdom values to the values of the domain from which the believer has been transferred. The desire for genuine kingdom citizenship is the desire for the Spirit's continuous work of re-orienting the soul away from the old domain and toward the King whose rule has become its true home.

C. *For the Hands: What Must We Do?*

- Read Matthew 13:1–52, the full collection of Jesus' kingdom parables, in one sitting this week. After reading, identify the one parable that most directly challenges your current understanding of the kingdom's character in the present age. Write a brief reflection on what that parable is saying about the kingdom that you had not fully grasped before, and how it changes or clarifies your understanding of the church's present mission.
- Read Ephesians 1:19–23 carefully, noting every descriptor Paul uses for the ascended Christ's authority. Make a list: far above all rule and authority and power and dominion; every name that is named; this age and the one to come; all things in subjection under His feet; head over all things to the church. Now ask: does my daily experience of the Christian life reflect the authority of this King? Do I pray with the confidence that I am addressing the One to whom all things are in subjection? Do I engage in ministry with the assurance that the church is the body of the One who fills all in all? Let this text reshape your praying and your serving this week.
- Reflect on the Colossians 1:13 description of conversion as a transfer from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of Christ. Name one specific area of your life, a relationship, a habit, a use of time or money, an attitude toward a cultural or political question, where you have been living as though still under the jurisdiction of the old domain rather than under the kingdom you now inhabit. What would it look like to live in that area as a genuine kingdom citizen? What specific change would be required?
- The lesson describes the Lord's Prayer as "the eschatological longing of those who know the kingdom has arrived." Pray the Lord's Prayer slowly and deliberately this week, pausing at "Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Ask yourself: what specific circumstance in your life, your family, your church, or your community needs the kingdom's presence most urgently? Name it in that pause, and then bring it to the King who reigns and who will one day make all things new.
- Identify one person in your life who does not yet know Christ, who is still, in Colossians' language, in the domain of darkness, and commit to a specific, concrete act of gospel witness toward that person this week. Let inaugurated kingdom theology give that act its proper weight: you are not merely sharing a religious opinion; you are extending the invitation of the King whose kingdom has arrived and whose offer of transfer is genuine, costly, and urgent. Pray for that person by name every day this week before your act of witness.

Key Texts: *Mark 1:14–15; Matthew 12:28; Luke 4:16–21; Colossians 1:13–14; Acts 2:29–36; Ephesians 1:19–23; Daniel 7:13–14*

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

- Before this lesson, would you have described the kingdom of God as primarily a present reality or a future one? What shaped that prior understanding, the church tradition you came from, the eschatological literature you have read, or a particular way of reading certain biblical texts? In light of this lesson, how would you revise or nuance that prior understanding?

Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

- Read Mark 1:14–15. What does Jesus say has been fulfilled (v. 15a)? What does He say about the kingdom of God (v. 15b)? What response does He call for (v. 15c)? What does the sequence of these three statements, fulfillment, kingdom's arrival, call to response, tell us about the logical structure of the gospel announcement? How does the grammar of the Greek verb engiken (perfect active indicative, "has come near" or "has arrived") bear on the question of whether the kingdom is present or merely proximate?
- Read Matthew 12:22–29. What is the controversy that prompts Jesus' declaration in verse 28? What specific argument does He make about the source of His power (v. 28a)? What conclusion does He draw from that argument (v. 28b)? What is the significance of the word ephthasen ("has come upon") in this declaration? How does the parable of the strong man (v. 29) illuminate the meaning of Jesus' exorcistic ministry?
- Read Luke 4:16–21. What passage does Jesus read from Isaiah (vv. 18–19)? What does He say about the fulfillment of that passage (v. 21)? What is the significance of the word "today" (semeron) in His declaration? How does Luke's pattern of using this word elsewhere in his Gospel (Luke 19:9; 23:43) illuminate its meaning here? What did the original Isaiah 61 passage promise, and how does Jesus' application of it to Himself define the scope of His kingdom ministry?
- Read Daniel 7:13–14 and Acts 2:29–36. What is happening in the Daniel vision, what is the direction of the Son of Man's movement, and what does He receive? How does Peter in Acts 2 apply Psalm 110:1 to Jesus, and what event in Jesus' life does he identify as the fulfillment of the Davidic enthronement? How does the connection Peter makes between the ascension, the session, and the outpouring of the Spirit bear on the question of when the Davidic kingdom was established?
- Read Colossians 1:13–14. What two things has God done for believers, according to verse 13? What is the tense of the Greek verbs "rescued" and "transferred," and what does the tense communicate about the timing of these actions? What is the "domain of darkness," and what is the "kingdom of His beloved Son"? What is the basis of the believer's participation in the kingdom, according to verse 14?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

- The lesson argues that Daniel 7:13–14 is fulfilled in Christ's ascension rather than in His second coming, because the direction of movement in the text is toward the Ancient of Days (heavenward) rather than toward earth. How do you evaluate this argument? What other New Testament texts bear on the interpretation of Daniel 7:13–14, and do they support this reading?
- What is the difference between the kingdom of God and the church, as the lesson defines them? Why does this distinction matter theologically and practically? What specific errors does it prevent, and what positive convictions does it generate?

- The lesson identifies three parables from Matthew 13 as particularly important for understanding the kingdom in its present form: the wheat and the tares (coexistence with opposition), the mustard seed and leaven (organic growth from small beginnings), and the sower (varied reception). Which of these parables most directly challenges a form of either over-realized eschatology (treating the kingdom as already fully present) or under-realized eschatology (treating the kingdom as entirely future)? How do these three parables together paint a more complete picture of the kingdom's present character?
- The lesson argues that Colossians 1:13's language of transfer, "rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son", has comprehensive implications for the believer's daily life. Do you find this claim persuasive? What are the specific practical implications it generates for a believer's engagement with work, family, culture, and politics?
- The lesson describes the Lord's Prayer as the prayer of kingdom citizens who know the kingdom has arrived and who long for its completion. How does this understanding of the Lord's Prayer differ from treating it merely as a template for personal piety? What specific eschatological convictions does praying "Your kingdom come" require the one who prays it to hold?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

- The lesson says that the person who believes the kingdom is a future entity "waits" while the person who believes the kingdom has arrived "advances." Is this contrast too stark? Are there ways in which the inaugurated-kingdom perspective might itself be misused to generate a triumphalism or overconfidence that is not warranted by the "not yet" dimension of the kingdom? How do you hold the "already" and the "not yet" in productive tension in your daily kingdom engagement?
- The lesson ends with the observation that the church's great temptation is not the rejection of the kingdom but its compromise, the gradual accommodation of kingdom values to the values of the domain from which the believer has been transferred. Where do you see this accommodation most acutely in the contemporary evangelical church? Where do you see it most acutely in your own life? What specific kingdom value most needs to be recovered or strengthened in you and in your congregation?
- As Lesson 8 turns to the "not yet" of the kingdom, the tribulations, limitations, and ongoing conflicts of the inter-advent age, what tension or question from this lesson are you carrying forward? The lesson has made a strong case for the "already" of the kingdom's arrival. Where does that "already" feel most difficult to hold in light of what you observe in the world around you? Name that tension honestly, and bring it into the next lesson as a productive theological companion.

Prayer Focus

Open this prayer time by reading Matthew 6:9–13 together, the Lord's Prayer, slowly and deliberately, pausing after each petition. When you arrive at "Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," pause longer than usual. This is the eschatological heart of the prayer: the cry of kingdom citizens who know the kingdom has arrived, who know it is not yet fully realized, and who long for the day when the will of the enthroned King is done on earth as completely and as joyfully as it is done in the throne room of heaven right now. Pray it as a petition for what is genuinely lacking, not for the kingdom to begin, but for the kingdom that has begun to advance, to penetrate, and ultimately to fill all things with the glory of the One who is already King.

Pray for the congregation's sense of eschatological identity. Pray that the members of this congregation would increasingly understand themselves as citizens of the kingdom that Christ has already inaugurated, transferred people, rescued people, people who live under a different jurisdiction than the domain of darkness from which they came. Pray that this understanding would produce genuine kingdom freedom: freedom from the tyranny of the world's values, freedom from the fear of the world's judgment, freedom from the idolatry of earthly security and comfort, and freedom for the generous, sacrificial, courageous engagement with God's purposes in this age that genuine kingdom citizenship makes possible.

Pray for those in the congregation who are engaged in forms of kingdom work that feel small, hidden, or ineffective, the Sunday school teacher whose class seems indifferent, the parent whose children are far from faith, the missionary whose years of labor have produced little visible fruit, the business person who feels that their daily work has no kingdom significance. Bring the parable of the mustard seed before them in prayer: the kingdom begins small, grows organically, and arrives at its full size by God's sovereign growth, not by human performance. The smallness is not a sign of failure; it is the nature of the kingdom's present form. Pray that the discouraged kingdom worker would be sustained by the knowledge that the King who reigns from the right hand of the Father is the same King who grows the mustard seed.

Pray for the advance of the gospel to those who are still in the domain of darkness, to your neighbors, your family members, your coworkers, your community, and to the unreached peoples of the world who have never heard the name of Jesus. Pray with the vision of Colossians 1:13: God rescues and transfers. The kingdom's advance is the expansion of that transfer to more and more people, as the Spirit works through the proclamation of the gospel to bring individuals from darkness into the kingdom of Christ. Ask God to use this congregation as an instrument of that expansion, to make kingdom citizens of those who are not yet citizens, until the day when the great multitude from every nation stands complete before the throne.

Close with a brief time of congregational declaration. Read together Acts 2:36: "Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." Pause. This is what Peter preached on the day the kingdom's Spirit was poured out. It is what the church has been preaching ever since. Jesus is Lord. He is Christ. He has been made King. The kingdom has arrived. And the church that declares this truth with its lips, embodies it in its life, and advances it through its proclamation is the church that has understood what it means to live in the age of the kingdom's inauguration. Let us be that church.

> *"He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."*
>
> **Colossians 1:13–14, NASB 1995**

Key Texts: *Mark 1:14–15; Matthew 12:28; Luke 4:16–21; Colossians 1:13–14; Acts 2:29–36; Ephesians 1:19–23; Daniel 7:13–14*

Soli Deo Gloria

To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

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