

Jesus: King Of The World

The final pages of the Old Testament come to a close with the prophetic words of Malachi, written around 460-430 BC. We find the people of Israel have returned from nearly 130 years of exile and are back in the land of their ancestors. Yet the nation is vastly diminished. The temple has been restored under the leadership of Nehemiah but it is a much smaller building than the previous, gloriously constructed temple of King Solomon's days. The royal line, although still in existence, no longer occupies the throne. Israel is a shadow of her former glory; a vassal state under the domination of the Persians, the great world power of the day. Ezekiel's prophecy against Israel – a result of their rebellion of God's sovereignty and their faithlessness as His witnesses – has been utterly effective:

“You profane and wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose time of punishment has reached its climax. This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Take off the turban, remove the crown. It will not be as it was: The lowly will be exalted and the exalted will be brought low. A ruin! A ruin! I will make it a ruin! The crown will not be restored until he to whom it rightfully belongs shall come; to him I will give it.” | Ezekiel 21: 25-27, NIV

Demoralised and disloyal, the people of Israel continued to go about their religious obligations but they had completely lost faith in God and doubted His love for them. They believed that nothing good ever came from following God and forgot, as they had many times before, His blessings and favour of them as a people. They had no confidence He even cared about their future.

This final book of the Old Testament offers a glimpse into the hearts of those who had been specially chosen by God as His

witnesses to the nations around them. Even with the perspective of their glorious history and events like the Great Exodus from Egypt, they had completely given in to apathy. They had neglected God's promises; and spiritual lethargy and a corrupt priesthood spread unfaithfulness, cancer-like, throughout the nation.

Malachi's words are the last message from God to His people and, for 400 years after, there will be silence.

God's Announcement – I Am Arriving!

It is to this vast length of silence that God finally speaks, announcing His impending arrival into the story of not just Israel, but the entire world. The work that God had been at for a long time was about to culminate in a tiny, obscure town in the middle of the demoralised and now Roman-occupied nation of Israel. The glory of God was about to be revealed to all humanity.

John the Baptist, God's messenger, bursts onto the scene, "preaching a baptism of life-change that leads to forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4). But there was more.

"As he preached he said, "The real action comes next: The star in this drama, to whom I'm a mere stagehand, will change your life. I'm baptising you here in the river, turning your old life in for a kingdom life. His baptism—a holy baptism by the Holy Spirit—will change you from the inside out." | Mark 1:7-8, MSG

John was simply the messenger. The 'star in this drama' was none other than God's own son, Jesus Christ. He was coming, not only to save people from their sins but to be God's perfect image-bearer and to restore God's righteous rulership. Jesus had been prophesied to be king of the world ([Luke 1:30-33](#), [Matthew 21:5](#), [John 12:13](#), [Luke 19:38](#)) and his message of good news would totally change people's lives.

God's Kingdom And The Arrival Of The King

We were created intentionally and with purpose, to be the image-bearers of God, the king of the earth. We were destined to be like Him and enact His will throughout the world. The first humans, Adam and Eve, were given the authority and privilege of ruling over God's good creation, filling all the earth with His glory and accomplishing His purpose. This is where we first see the concept of God's reign – His sovereignty – displayed (Genesis 1:26).

However, instead of partnering with God, Adam and Eve sought to undertake this rule on their own terms, setting in motion the destructive cycle the world has been subject to ever since. The story of human history is really the story of human failure in accomplishing God's purpose, and God's continual involvement in the chaos and mess that we have created, to save us from ourselves.

For centuries, God's story of liberation and redemption – part of His 'Kingdom Mission' – has been enacted, over and over again in the history of the world. Firstly, with covenants made to [Abraham](#), through whom God promises to bless all the world (Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 13:14-17, Genesis 15:1-21, Genesis 17:1-11). Then with Abraham's descendants, those who came to be known as the people of Israel, who were intended to be God's witnesses to His Kingdom Mission.

"But you are my witnesses, O Israel!" says the LORD. "You are my servant. You have been chosen to know me, believe in me, and understand that I alone am God. There is no other God – there never has been, and there never will be. Yes I am the LORD, and there is no other Saviour." | [Isaiah 43:10-4, NLT](#)

Finally, God personally steps into the drama in the person of His Son; [born as a human like us](#), yet expressing and embodying the entire fullness of God's nature (Matthew 21:37, Matthew

1:22-23, Isaiah 7:14, John 1:14, John 14:9, John 12:45, Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 2:9). The relationship between humanity and God, broken in the Garden of Eden, was going to be reconciled. God's good creation, damaged by Adam and Eve's disobedience, was going to be restored. Not only that – God's Kingdom Mission – that all the earth be filled with His glory – was finally breaking through into the kingdoms of mankind. It had been advancing for centuries but finally, it had arrived and the message was clear. God was still king – He has always been king – and His reign, fractured early on in human history (Genesis 2), was going to be properly reinstated through His Son, Jesus.

“From the days of John the Baptist until the present, the kingdom from heaven has been forcefully advancing, and violent people have been attacking it.” | Matthew 11:12, ISV

“The time promised by God has come at last!” he announced. “The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!” | Mark 1:15, NLT

God's Upside-Down Kingdom

The idea of 'the kingdom of God' was consistent with the Jewish hope of a saviour and the arrival of the one who would be the 'consolation of Israel'. (Isaiah 52:7-9, Luke 2:25, Acts 26:6). The prophet Isaiah speaks poetically about the one who would bring peace, justice, and righteousness again to Israel. This national hero would be from David's royal line and Isaiah predicted that his kingdom would have no end.

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone...for to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government

and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.” | Isaiah 9:6-7, ESV

“And he shall set up a banner for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” | Isaiah 11:12, NASB

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” | Micah 5:2, NIV

“Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?” | John 4:42, NIV

“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” | [Luke 1:30-33, ESV](#)

Yet God's kingdom was not going to arrive in the way that the nation of Israel expected. In reality, this kingdom had very little to do with Israel's nationalistic hopes of liberation from the Romans. This messianic saviour was also intended to be the saviour of the world and the righteous king of God's choosing. Israel was correct to expect him to be from David's royal family line but pitifully ignorant to think that he

would only be coming to overthrow the Romans and restore Israel's monarchy.

So while the nation of Israel expected a royalist and a revolutionary, one who would come to conquer and overthrow by violence and force, their saviour arrives instead in the humblest of forms, a small baby, born to an insignificant family. As this child grows into a man, he teaches of a kingdom of service and love, not of domination or force. This kingdom is about repentance and return to the one true king of the world. This kingdom will deliver humans from the worst kind of domination; slavery to sin and death, and bring them back to a whole and restored relationship with God.

This is not what the nation of Israel expected and even Jesus' disciples, his closest companions who knew him best, were dismayed and confused by his arrest, trial, and subsequent death, not fully understanding his purpose and mission:

“And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened.” | Luke 24:17-21

The Kingdom Of The King

Jesus came as the perfect example of what God is like. [The Word became a man](#), like us, that we might truly know and appreciate the depth of God's reconciling work on our behalf. In the person and ministry of Jesus Christ and his death and

resurrection, all families of the earth, of any nationality, are able to be blessed and experience the righteous rulership of God.

Jesus was born to be king and He is God's perfect king. He upholds the requirements of God's righteous laws and enacts justice on behalf of his people. His power is not demonstrated in ruthless coercion, but in love, poured out on the cross. His might is not revealed in political coups and military advances, but by redeeming humanity and transforming our hearts.

"We need to shed our unearthly and nonsocial and idealistic and romantic and uber-spiritual visions of kingdom and get back to what Jesus meant. By kingdom, Jesus means: God's Dream Society on earth, spreading out from the land of Israel to encompass the whole world." | Scot McKnight

As more people come to believe in Jesus and the power of his message, surrendering to his rulership in their lives, God's kingdom grows and develops, until one day it will fill the whole earth. One day, the relationship between humanity and God will be totally restored, [the earth will be completely filled with God's family](#) and the last great enemy, even death itself, will be destroyed ([1 Corinthians 15:25-26](#)).

"In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever." | Daniel 2:44, NASB

This is a kingdom that has been advancing for thousands of years. It is the core message of the gospel, which confirms to us God's purpose with humanity and how God's Kingdom Mission can become our story too. And the king of this kingdom is none other than Jesus Christ, born to be king of the world!

“Hail, the prince of heaven comes, angel choirs sound the call, for this babe wrapped in a cloth is the incarnate word of God. All the kingdom and its power, resting now in this child, prince of heaven, Jesus: hope of the world.” | [Prince of Heaven](#)

“Something happens when people tell the story of Jesus and start living like he really is the king of the world. That’s when this gospel becomes the best news that you’ve ever heard.” | [The Bible Project](#)

The kingdom is also described in the Bible in other ways, such as ‘the kingdom of heaven’ (the gospel of Matthew), ‘the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ’ (2 Peter 1:11), ‘the kingdom of Christ and God’ (Ephesians 5:5) and ‘the kingdom of God’ (the gospels of Mark and Luke). You can read more about the kingdom in the article ‘[The Kingdom | Now, But Not Yet](#)’. You may also enjoy [this podcast](#), produced by The Bible Project: Jesus and the Kingdom of God.