

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## *The Universal Reign of God* **Selected Passages**

**Keywords:** Kingdom of God, Sovereignty of God, Reign, Hope, Universal Kingdom

**SermonAudio Blurb:** The Kingdom of God has many facets to it, making it a fascinating study for any Christian. But more importantly it reveals how God works out His sovereign rule throughout history. Therefore it becomes both the key to understanding the flow of history and the linchpin that holds history together. In this sermon we spend time exposing the fact that a key aspect of the Kingdom is God's universal reign over all throughout time. And in doing so we find it to be both a terrifying and comforting reality.

### **I. Introduction.**

- A. After a very long hiatus due to Ethiopia and the virus we pick back up on our side series on the Kingdom of God.
  - 1. We last dealt with this subject, excluding the nature of hermeneutics, back on the first of March.
  - 2. You may remember that we saw in Acts 1 that Jesus Christ invested a lot of time instructing the Apostles on this key theme prior to His ascension.
  - 3. By simply reading the first 11 verses of Acts 1 you will easily see that this is something that is at the forefront of both Jesus and these men He is appointing to be His key servants for the birth and expansion of the church.
  - 4. But we also saw that there was still a point of confusion by the Apostles. Not about the nature or identify of the Kingdom. But the timing of it for they knew it had not yet come. So they wanted to know if it was time.
  - 5. But Jesus said that the timing was not their's to worry about; rather, simply to go and obey His instructions and wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- B. Today I want us to be encouraged as we look together at several passages that describe what I will call the "universal reign of God."
  - 1. When you think about the Kingdom of God it is usually rather vague in your mind. In some way or another God reigns.

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2. We have songs about God reigns. We have people saying that God is still on His throne. We sings songs about Jesus as king. But how much do you really know about the Kingdom of God?
  3. The goal of this small series is to help you see that the Kingdom of God is a thoroughly biblical idea that pervades the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.
  4. But to understand it requires that you understand first that like most things in the bible, it is not a simple, one dimensional idea. Rather, there depending on how you are looking at it you will see various aspects of it that need to be understood.
    - a. You can get caught up with on aspect or another and fail to grasp that they are only one side or perspective regarding the kingdom.
    - b. What I want us to do is to gain rest for our souls and hope in the midst of much unrest and uncertainty. For that is what the Kingdom of God gives to us if we understand it.
- C. So today, let us find the hope that is found in the glory of God’s kingdom as we learn of His universal reign.

## **II. The Fact of His Universal Reign.**

- A. We begin by noting that God works primarily through a mediator with regards to the Kingdom.
1. Many people think that to understand the Kingdom all that is needed is to look up the various times that the phrase “Kingdom of God” is used. But it doesn’t work.
  2. The Old Testament does not use those terms and yet it is obvious from the New Testament that there was an expectation and understanding of the Kingdom of God. It is a key message of the Old Testament even though the phrase does not show itself there.
  3. This mediatorial kingdom is the idea that God primarily rules through a person or entity such as a nation. We will see this in detail in the coming messages.
  4. However, look at Genesis 1:26ff (**turn**).
    - a. It is God’s creation but He almost immediately gives the responsibility of ruling over the earth to Adam and his offspring.

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

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This is the idea of God's rule being mediated. Adam is to represent God and His will upon the earth. He is God's representative.

- b. As one man put it, "the kingdom is present with creation as God the King of creation tasks his image-bearer, man, to rule and subdue His creation." (Vlach, 23).
- B. But to appreciate all of this you must always remember that no matter how the rule of God may look, in the end God is ultimately the one who IS ruling. In fact the Kingdom of God is seen in Genesis 1.
1. We read in vs 1 "In the beginning God created. . . ." and in that statement is the essence of the Kingdom of God.
  2. Nothing exists apart from God. Before creation nothing but God existed and all that exists is from and by God. Thus, He is king. All that exists is His.
  3. What makes vs 1 so important is that it is not seeking to prove this in any manner. You are given the statement and now you must decide if you believe it or not. But how you decide will affect everything you are and do in life.
  4. This is why we can read in Psalm 2 (turn and read) the presence of kings and kingdoms but over and above it all is God. He is unmoved and unimpressed even as the power of the nations roil about like a tortured sea.
  5. It is no surprise to me that Genesis 1-2 are where most people who profess to believe God and love Christ, begin wiggle and create a bit of distance between themselves and the Word of God.
    - a. You may be surprised to know that many, if not most, of the seminary graduates today take their degree while either rejecting the literal creation of all things by God as it is written in the bible....
    - b. Or, they will only hold to it in the vaguest of ways all the while creating a separation between what is written and what they believe the bible actually means.
    - c. It is an issue of authority and rule. Did God really create all things? Really? Is God truly the only self-existent One? Is God the only way to have true life through Jesus Christ? Must all things

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

ultimately find their meaning and purpose in Him? And is it God to Whom we are ultimately accountable?

6. So Genesis 1:1 is the foundational passage to consider the fact of God's universal reign. But it is not the only one by far.
- C. To understand what is meant by the universal kingdom of God is to simply understand God's sovereignty.
1. It is really that simple. Yet, so many will affirm the utter sovereignty of God and not realize that the term itself is filled with kingship.
  2. The sovereign in human terms is one whose word and decision is final. We do not understand this well in our nation and time.
    - a. To be sovereign is to answer to no one. Your word is truly final.
    - b. To come into the presence of such a ruler is to come in complete subjection. Your face would be downward and your life is fully in his hand. A simple nod or gesture and your life is forfeit with no questions and no guilt.
    - c. For him to bid you to rise and to look upon him is to find favor in his sight. It means that he will deal kindly with you and allow you to look at him face-to-face. You see it in the blessing, "The LORD bless you, and keep you; the LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace." (Num. 6:24-26)
  3. Psalm 103:19.
    - a. Note the exultation of the writer here. This is a thanksgiving Psalm where the writer calls upon God's people, Israel, to give thanks.
    - b. They are called to realize the grace that is poured out upon them. Of all the nations of the earth, this nation is the one God has shown His grace to.
      - (1) So in vss 1-3 they are called to bless or praise His name because He forgives their sin.
      - (2) In vss 6-8 He is the one who reveals His ways to them.

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
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- (3) In vss 14-18 He is a covenant-keeping God. And therefore He will not forever abandon them even in their own rebellion. Those they are faithless, He is ever faithful.
  - c. But the crowning jewel is that this God whom they serve and by whom they are loved is the sovereign one in vs 19.
    - (1) No one establishes His kingdom but Himself.
    - (2) He waits for no one and no one escapes His sovereign hand.
  - d. And so the writer calls even the angels and spiritual beings and even the works of God to bless His name.
4. 1 Chronicles 29:11-12.
- a. In this passage David has gathered the funds to build a temple for God. The people of Israel respond to that opportunity to give with a whole heart rather than a reluctant and divided one. The money pours in and David, knowing that this is not a work of man but of God, then gives this prayer of praise.
  - b. And so he piles the words on top of one another describing the rule of God. No aspect of a kingdom and its authority is missed.
  - c. God alone has that infinite power. God alone has the vastness of an unending realm. God alone has true and final victory over His enemies.
  - d. And because of this nothing we possess is actually from our hands but rather it is from the hand of the sovereign God.
  - e. But is this not a besetting sin for each of us? We see things more like Nebuchadnezzar, who thinks like too many of us, that it is by our hands, our wisdom and our power that things are the way they are. We fail to give praise and thanks to God. And we tend toward grasping tightly what was never ours in the first place.
  - f. Far better would it be that we learn to walk in a humble thanksgiving, simply marveling at how all things are from the hand of our Creator and Father. To pause each day to remember this. To consider the frailty of our being in the presence of the Almighty.
  - g. Or is it necessary for some of us to possibly suffer a similar fate as that great king Nebuchadnezzar?

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

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- (1) A man warned by the prophet Daniel to give thanks and be humble. But who did not believe.
- (2) A man broken by God to the point he became a raving madman put out to pasture like a wild creature.
- (3) But also a man who in the end of it all came to see God as He really is. Hear his words and ask yourself if these are yours as well?

*"But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation. "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'*

*"At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me. "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride." (Daniel 4:34-37)*

5. There are many other passages we could consider but they all end up saying the same thing in one way or another. God is sovereign over all.

D. A final survey of passages:

1. **Psalm 103:19** The LORD has established His throne in the heavens; And His sovereignty rules over all.
2. **Psalm 135:6** Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.
3. **Psalm 148:8** Fire and hail, snow and clouds; Stormy wind, fulfilling His word; (we need not fear the storm, better to fear Him who is Lord of the storms.)

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

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4.     **Romans 11:34-36** For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.
5.     **Ephesians 1:11** also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,
6.     Beloved, the bible is clear with this declaration. The Lord God Almighty reigns. None are above Him nor before Him. He is the maker of all things and sustains it all in accordance to His pleasure.
7.     For the one sitting here today hearing this but who does not love God there is nothing for you but His eternal wrath. He has made Himself known to you both in the glories of creation and within your own heart. He bids you to come to Him through Jesus Christ but you have not. He tells you that life is found in Jesus Christ but you will not believe. He gave His Son to be the perfect substitute for sin. That Jesus would take on death and drink fully of the wrath that is ours is beyond what the word “kind” could ever convey. But you reject? Will you not now turn to Him?
8.     But what about you who do have your trust in the person of Jesus Christ and His work on the cross? What of you? Allow me to give a few thoughts on the hope that knowing and remembering the universal reign of God brings.

### **III. The Hope Due to His Universal Reign.**

- A.     A broad perspective on world events.
  1.     Where humans exist, trouble exists. Whether it is wars or rumors of wars or any other such thing, it is the way of life. And we can become consumed and overwhelmed by these.
  2.     Revelation 4:1-6 and the vision of God enthroned. The sea is a classic symbol of chaos and turmoil. And here we see God seated above it all.
  3.     It serves to remind us that God is still God. All is well in His Kingdom and all things are still under His throne. Questions may be on your mind but if you can grasp that God is still king over all then you have a steady anchor for your soul.

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
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- B. It gives rest to those who believe it.
1. “When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You. In God, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me?” (Ps. 56:3-4)
  2. Sovereignty means that if God says something we can believe Him and trust Him. For who can thwart His will? No one can stand before Him. Not one molecule exists apart from His sovereign will. So trust is to be the lifestyle of the one whose hope is settled upon his Father in Heaven, seated on His throne. It is the way our Lord lived.
  3. “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed” (1 Pet. 2:21-24).
- C. It puts terror into the hearts of those who do not believe it but come to understand it.
1. “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.” (James 2:19)
  2. It is a good thing to watch those who reject God begin to come to grips with how nothing is in their control. The mocker mocks but does so out of his disbelief, thinking there is no God to judge him. And thief steals, the killer stabs and shoots all the while telling himself that there is no God.
  3. But when the reality hits that there is one God over all who has made all things for His glory and purpose and who will judge the living and the dead, then fear is the only real and true response.
  4. The demons shudder because they know there is no other place to go. No other being to whom they might appeal for safety. They are laid bare and it terrifies them for they know that when He says that it is finished, that they shall be swept away.
  5. May we be a people who not only speak of the life that comes through Jesus Christ but also a people who tell others that there is no other way.



# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

That we might be a people who live in such a way that we model what it looks like to be under the constant eye of our Creator.

- D. Finally, the end of all things is guaranteed (Revelation 19:6).
1. How often do we waste time fretting over that which we cannot change? How much sorrow do we bring into our lives and those around us because of fear and anxiety?
  2. Our Lord knows we are given to this fear and fretting and He knows why.
    - a. We are afraid because of sin. It really is that simple.
    - b. I do not speak of anxiety as sin in this instance. But rather, I am saying that reality and presence of sin is the engine drives fear.
    - c. We go back to the beginning to see this. When Satan deceived Eve and she ate the fruit forbidden to her. What was the lie he told her? For in it lies the answer to why we fear.
    - d. In Genesis 3:5 he utters these words, “. . . you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Vile words because they promise much and they contain an element of truth that hides the poisoned hook within.
    - e. Yes she would know good and evil, but not like God nor as a god. She would know it because evil would reside in her innermost being and the good that she enjoyed in its fulness would be now lost to her.
    - f. And this is where fear is borne. We find her and Adam hiding in fear, filled with shame, seeking to avoid their Maker.
    - g. Once sin entered the world all of creation became broken and twisted. What was straight now became crooked. What was upright was now bent and broken. What was strong and powerful became ever weaker until it became nothing.
    - h. And this is new reality was frightening because Adam and Eve were not God and therefore they became prisoners of a fallen, sinful creation of their own making.
    - i. All of the sudden they were on a wild roller coaster where events unfolded outside their control. Where no longer were they vice-lords over a creation that obeyed them, but now they experienced

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

in a small way what their rebellion toward God looked like. And it was frightening.

j. And the same is true for us. We start out in life with goals. Sometimes they are fulfilled and sometimes they are not. But one thing every human learns fairly quickly is that they are not in control. And it brings great fear as they see world events, catastrophes, viruses and wars rise up unbidden by them. One day you are healthy and the next you hear frightening words from the doctor. One moment you are merely going to pick up the children and the next you are injured beyond repair. Fear is our companion and it is usually because we do not know how it ends.

3. But the bible, here in Revelation 19 tells us that we do know the end. And it is good and if we can train our minds to remember this then it is all well with our soul.

a. Think about the grand and fearsome message of Revelation 7-20. As the end approaches horrors unfold of a magnitude that defies our imagination.

b. We watch wave after wave of judgment come upon this world and humanity. We see hearts that should break and bow instead become ever harder. We see people clinging to everything but their Creator as they shout slanderous words of hate against Him.

c. But bracketing these frightening chapters are chapters 5-6 and 21-22.

(1) In 5-6 God is seated on His throne over all of creation. Unmoved and unimpressed with the raging of the nations. His Son, the redeemer and savior of us all stands as that eternal and living sacrifice for our redemption.

(2) In 21-22 we see the recreation of all things. Where sin, Satan and death are banished evermore and as it is written by John, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth."

(3) And in the end we see God so work all things together that human history complies with absolute perfection to His will and all things unfold properly for the end to come.

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- (4) And in this time where everything is coming together for the final judgment we hear the angels in heaven cry out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready” (Rev. 19:6-7).
- d. Beloved, the reality of God’s universal reign is something we must consider and impress upon our hearts so that we are constantly reminded that nothing happens outside of His control and that the end is already known by Him and by us. Therefore we need not fear it.
- 4. Is it not this that Paul speaks of in Romans 8:28-39?
  - a. Read it.
  - b. Does not all of this build off of the unstated reality that God reigns?
  - c. Is not the certainty of Paul established in his heart that all things, not most but all, work toward good because God is working in and through all things?
  - d. Is not our salvation sure and immovable because we are kept safe in the love of God and nothing can snatch us from His hand?

## **IV. Conclusion.**

- A. Next time we will begin to see how God mediates this rule and kingdom through man. We will see how, starting with Adam He sets forth His kingdom program that then extends all the way through the bible to the end when He makes all things new.
- B. But until then, beloved, may I encourage you to ask yourself if you do believe that our God is the only God? That He reigns over all? That He is shall judge all through His Son Jesus Christ?
- C. Teach your children this. Remind yourselves of this. And use this as the motive for the gospel that is so desperately needed in the lives of rebels.