

KINGDOM BREAKTHROUGH

SERMON FOUR

CHRIST BRINGS THE FUTURE INTO THE PRESENT

We have seen how the Old Testament prophets spoke of a coming Kingdom and the promises of that Kingdom. Many who read those promises understood them to be fulfilled only at the end of the age when God would bring the history of mankind to a close. With the coming however of Christ to earth proclaiming that the Kingdom of God had come, much of what was only expected at the end of the age became a reality in the present. This morning as we continue our series in understanding the Kingdom of God, I want to invite you to join with me as we consider the fact that Christ brings the future into the present. Many Christians are living their lives in the hope of what they think the future Kingdom holds for them when Christ has brought the hope of the Kingdom into the

present. There are a number of ways in which he does this that I would like us to consider together this morning.

1. HIS MINISTRY BRINGS HOPE INTO THE PRESENT.

In Luke 4 we have described for us the beginning of the ministry of Christ, his temptation in the desert, his rejection at Nazareth and then his very first act of ministry, teaching in the synagogue. It very significant that he turns to Isaiah 61:1-2, the Messianic prophecy and reads as follows in Luke 4:18-19, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour”, and then concludes in verse 21 by making an amazing statement, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”. The Jews had for centuries been looking forward to this day as a future hope and Christ stands up and brings this future hope

into the present. The future kingdom hope had become a present reality. Christ announces the fulfilment of this prophecy and then demonstrates this by his ministry. Christ not only taught about the fact that the hope of the Kingdom had come, but he demonstrated it by his ministry. In Matt 11:2-6 we are given a record of an interesting exchange between John the Baptist and Jesus. John is in prison and for some reason begins to doubt that Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah he proclaimed him to be and sends word to Jesus questioning him as to whether he was indeed the Messiah. How does Jesus respond? Does he try and explain who he was from the Scriptures? No! He points John to look at what he was doing in His ministry in fulfilment of Isaiah 61:1-2 in verse 4. “Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor”. Christ’s ministry on earth brings the

future hope of the Old Testament prophets into the present and he demonstrates this by the miracles that he was performing. Jesus came as a confronting king to set people free from every kind of bondage, spiritual, physical and material. The Kingdom had come, and hope became a present reality. This is the present hope that you and I have. With the coming of the Kingdom Christ is able to set us free from any kind of bondage that we might find ourselves in.

2. HIS DEATH BRINGS JUDGEMENT INTO THE PRESENT

When Isaiah predicted the coming of the Kingdom he predicted universal judgement for mankind. The people of God lived with the dread of the future day of judgement which awaited them at the end of the age. When Christ came and died on the cross, he brought this future dreaded judgement into the present and dealt with it so that no longer do God’s people have to fear

the coming judgement at the end of the age. In Jn 12 Jesus is speaking about his coming death and in verse 31 makes a profound statement when he says, “Now is the time for judgement on this world..”. He understood the cross to be the day of judgement. This is the basis for the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross. In his death Christ was judged by God for our sin found guilty and borne our future judgement on himself. For those who have accepted the sacrifice of Christ and Him as Lord, there is no longer the fear of a future judgement for our judgement has been settled in the present by Christ. It is for that reason that Paul is able to proclaim those wonderful words in Roms 8:1, “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..” At the end of the age we will not stand before the judgement seat of God and be judged as those who do believe will be judged. What a joy and what a hope and encouragement. The judgement has already been settled by Christ because the Kingdom of God has

come. We can face the future with confidence because the judgement of God has been removed from us as we have been brought into the Kingdom of God.

3. HIS RESURRECTION BRINGS FUTURE ETERNAL LIFE INTO THE PRESENT

For the Jewish believer, the hope of the resurrection and eternal life was something to be looked forward to as a future hope at the end of the age, something we would enjoy after we have died. Jesus however, with his rising from the dead brought this future hope into a present reality. The interaction between Jesus and Martha around the death of Lazarus gives us a wonderful insight into this truth. Jesus is comforting the sisters of Lazarus after his death and says to Martha in John 11:23, “Your brother will rise again”, to which Martha responded, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day”. Martha clearly had an understanding that eternal life and

resurrection was a future hope to be looked forward to and not a present reality. Notice how Jesus then responds to her future hope in verse 25, “Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die”. In essence Jesus is saying that eternal life begins in the present when we accept his and as we receive this eternal life we will never die. Resurrection happens when we are saved, not one day when Christ returns and the graves are opened. Eternal life begins when we are saved by Christ. It is a present reality not just a future hope. That is why the symbolism of believer’s baptism is so powerful that we die with Christ and are raised now to new life. Kingdom life is resurrection life. Eternal life and all the blessings associated with it begin now and are to be enjoyed now.

4. HIS SENDING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BRINGS THE END TIMES INTO THE PRESENT

Both the prophet Isaiah as well as Joel saw the pouring out of God’s Spirit as the sign of the end times. Christ having ascended to the Father sends the promised Holy Spirit at Pentecost and Peter witnessing the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2:16 makes the connection with the prophecy of Joel in Joel 2:28-29, “In the last days God says I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days”. Christ by sending the Holy Spirit brings the end times from a future event to a present reality. For the believer this reality is exciting as we see God working out his will and purpose. Paul reinforces the idea that the Spirit brings the end times into the present when he speaks of the sealing of the Spirit in Ephesians 1:13-14, “Having

believed you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance...”. Notice what Paul is saying here. He is suggesting that the future hope and promise of a future inheritance, with the sending and the consequent sealing of the Spirit, that future promise is a present reality as our inheritance is now guaranteed in the present. It is not just a hope but a certainty. The future is brought into the present by the Spirit at Pentecost.

CONCLUSION

And so as we reflect on the truth that with the coming of the Kingdom Christ has brought the future in the present, what are the implications of this for us?

1. Christ can set us free from any bondage.
2. The fear of judgement is no longer a fear and threat for those who believe.

3. Eternal resurrection life begins now. Death holds no fear for us.
4. We are living in the end times and God’s plans and purposes are about to be fulfilled with all the blessings of the end times for us.

Are you enjoying the blessings of Kingdom resurrection life now or are you still waiting for it into the future and missing out on what God desires to do for you now?