

The Kingdom in History

One of the things I studied in college was American history, and lots of it. I focused on the time period from the earliest colonies to the end of the 1800s. Then I went to a university in Great Britain for a year and studied more history there, covering the same time period. Believe me, they take a different view of our colonial period than we do.

History is not just a school subject. It is what we all live through each day. Every moment that has ever existed has become history as soon as it passed away. God's people have always lived in that history as God builds his kingdom. And since God works through his people, he has chosen to work through history as well. Let's take a look this week at God's historical work in building his kingdom.

Monday – From First to Last

"God is not in Time. His life does not consist of moments following one another." C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

1. Please read Matthew 6:9-10 we find Jesus beginning to instruct his followers how to pray. What would it mean for God's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven? Is that the present reality?
2. Take a look at Genesis 3:15. What led to God's pronouncement there?
3. Now compare Genesis 3:15 with Revelation 22:3. What will God do to lead his creation from one reality to the other?

Digging Deeper: Matthew 3:2; 4:17; Acts 1:6-7; Acts 4:19-22; 28:30-31; Romans 14:16-17; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 15:20-25; Colossians 1:10-14; and Revelation 11:15 are various passages mentioning God's kingdom. What do they tell you about the present nature of that kingdom? Future?

Tuesday – Joseph

"Bless you, prison, for having been in my life." Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Russian Christian philosopher

1. Please read Genesis 37:1-11. What type of relationship did Joseph have with his parents? His brothers?

Text Insight: In Genesis 12:1-3 God promised Abraham (Joseph's great-grandfather) that God would use his family to build a great nation through which God would reach out to all nations and bring them to him.

2. Now read Genesis 37:12-36. How did Joseph's brothers act towards him? If you were Joseph, what would you be feeling as your brothers attacked you? Sold you off?
3. According to Genesis 45:1-8, what is the real reason all this happened to Joseph? Who sovereignly watched over it all? How easy do you find it to recognize God's hand in your life, especially during the hard times?

Making it Personal: Pray, asking your heavenly Father to keep you close, and that he would reveal himself to you in good times and bad.

Wednesday – Blind Man, God's Glory

"The Scotch catechism says that man's chief end is 'to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.' But we shall then know that these are the same thing. Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him."

C.S. Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms

1. Please read John 9:1-7. What did the disciples originally have in mind regarding the man's blindness? Why do you think they assumed the worst? How did Jesus correct them in verse 3?
2. John 9:13-34 shows what the man had to go through after Jesus healed him. What truth did the man rest upon in responding to the Jewish rulers in verse 25? What did the rulers ultimately do with him?
3. Read John 9:35-38. What eventually happened to the man in his relationship with Jesus? Why do you think he was able to respond to Jesus this way? (Hint: look back at verses 32-33.)

Prayer Focus: Pray that as God's people, the subjects of his kingdom, we would speak the truth about Jesus and what he has done in our lives. Ask God to reveal himself as our Lord through our words and actions.

Thursday – Jesus, Crucified for His Kingdom (part 1)

"Amazing love, how can it be that you my king would die for me?" Chris Tomlin, Amazing Love

1. Please read John 18:28-40. What specific accusations did the Jewish leaders make against Jesus? How did Pilate respond?

Text Insight: the Jewish leaders did not want to enter Pilate's palace because he was not a Jewish official. Rather, he was a Roman sent by the Emperor to be the Governor over the Jews.

2. What comparison can you make between the way the blind man answered the Jewish leaders in John 9 and the way those leaders later answered Pilate? How did one answer glorify God and the other not?
3. Consider the conversation between Jesus and Pilate in John 18:33-37 with the instruction Paul gives us in Romans 8:28. How did what happened to Jesus work for the good of building God's kingdom?

Prayer Focus: God continues to work through his people. Pray that God would use you to build his kingdom.

Friday – Jesus, Crucified for His Kingdom (part 2)

"It's my joy to honor you in all I do." Chris Tomlin, Amazing Love

1. Please read John 19:1-16a. Which authorities (or kingdoms) are identified in verses 7, 10 and 11? Which authority did the Jewish leaders ultimately bow to in verse 15? Why do you think they did so?
2. Now look at Revelation 5:6-10. What has resulted from Jesus' death? How does verse 9 fulfill the promise God made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3?
3. According to Isaiah 9:6-7, what type of king is Jesus? What will his kingdom be like?

Making it Personal: Do you have any desire to be ruled by Jesus? Why or why not? Talk to him about it.

For the Weekend: Read Matthew 6:9-10 and Revelation 21:1-7. Ask God to show you how you can be part of building up his kingdom.