

Jesus ushered in the Kingdom of God, also called the Kingdom of Heaven. The bible draws a clear distinction between our upside-down kingdom of darkness and God's Kingdom of light.

How did Jesus demonstrate that the kingdom of light was overcoming the kingdom of darkness? (Mat 23-25)

Matthew 4:23-25 NLT - 23 Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. 24 News about him spread as far as Syria, and people soon began bringing to him all who were sick. And whatever their sickness or disease, or if they were demon possessed or epileptic or paralyzed-- he healed them all. 25 Large crowds followed him wherever he went--people from Galilee, the Ten Towns, Jerusalem, from all over Judea, and from east of the Jordan River.

Jesus' kingdom was on the move and continues to move against darkness to this day. But working to extend His kingdom means following God's lead, not standing in the way by insisting on our own agenda.

Wrap Up

We are born into an upside-down kingdom of disorder and darkness whose prince is Satan. Jesus offered to welcome everyone into his Kingdom of Heaven if we repent and turn toward God. That means more than feeling bad, we must change directions and start walking in the ways of God. And when we follow in that new calling, we must be willing to completely commit, leave our own agenda behind, and follow His.

Memory Verse

From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near." -Matthew 4:17 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs. _____

Challenge- What areas of your life are expanding God's Kingdom. Are there any areas where you might be standing in its way?

"A New Kind of Kingdom" Upside Down Kingdom- #1

INTRODUCTION

In Matthew chapter 4 we witness the announcement of the arrival of a new Kingdom. John the Baptist announced to the people; "Prepare the way for the LORD's coming!" After John was arrested, Jesus appeared and confirmed that a new Kingdom had arrived. But this kingdom was not like anything they had seen before. In our new sermon series, The Upside-Down Kingdom, we will explore just how different the Kingdom of God is from the Upside-Down Kingdom of this world.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Have you ever visited a foreign country? If so, what was the biggest difference you noticed?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. An Announcement

Matthew 4:12-17 NLT - 12 When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he left Judea and returned to Galilee. 13 He went first to Nazareth, then left there and moved to Capernaum, beside the Sea of Galilee, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. 14 This fulfilled what God said through the prophet Isaiah: 15 "In the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali, beside the sea, beyond the Jordan River, in Galilee where so many Gentiles live, 16 the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined." 17 From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."

The announcement was first made by John the Baptist; repent and be prepared for change. Jesus was bringing a new kingdom. When Jesus heard of John's arrest he returned to the region of Zebulun and Naphthli.

How was this area described by Isiah (v.15-16)? What would be the emotional or mental state of people living in the shadow of death? Where do we find people like that today who desperately need light?

Jesus extended his invitation to Gentiles, not exactly the “in” crowd by Hebrew standards. His announcement told them what actions were required to participate in this new kingdom; repent of your sins and turn toward God.

Do you think those who heard this were encouraged or discouraged by what Jesus said?

Repentance (metanoia, 'change of mind') involves turning with remorse for your sin and reorienting toward God. It is not just a feeling; it is an action. Pointing out how you are doing something wrong can lead you in a better (more life giving) direction. So, Jesus' announcement was good news, if you were willing to act on it.

Why might people not take the action required to participate in God's kingdom? What are some effective responses to those objectives?

2. A New Calling

Matthew 4:18-22 NLT - 18 One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers--Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew--throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. 19 Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" 20 And they left their nets at once and followed him. 21 A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he called them to come, too. 22 They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.

Fishermen were held in low regard in this culture. They had no formal education and would have been relatively poor. In Acts 10:34 Peter tells us that God does not show favoritism. Jesus' call to them was the same as it is to everyone, rich or poor; follow me.

These men responded decisively. They understood that following Jesus required a complete commitment.

*Why would people leave everything and follow Jesus?
What would be the equivalent of us leaving our nets to follow Jesus?*

Jesus also told these men that He would show them how to fish for people.

If the gospel is our net, what do we do to throw it in the water, and what do we do to keep it mended and useful?

3. A New Kind of Kingdom

Matthew 4:23-25 NLT - 23 Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. 24 News about him spread as far as Syria, and people soon began bringing to him all who were sick. And whatever their sickness or disease, or if they were demon possessed or epileptic or paralyzed--he healed them all. 25 Large crowds followed him wherever he went--people from Galilee, the Ten Towns, Jerusalem, from all over Judea, and from east of the Jordan River.

Jesus grew up in shadow of a massive earthly kingdom...Rome. When the people heard there was a new kingdom, they equated it with freedom from their Roman oppressors. They were seeking a revolution by which Jesus would take power from Rome and become the ruler over the world's kingdoms.

Matthew 4:8-9 NLT - 8 Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 "I will give it all to you," he said, "if you will kneel down and worship me."

How did Satan present this kind of revolution as a temptation to Jesus in Matthew 4:8-9? Why did Satan have the authority to offer the kingdoms of this world to Jesus (see below)?

2 Corinthians 4:4 NLT - 4 Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe...

Colossians 1:13 NLT - 13 For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son,

John 18:36 NLT - 36 Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world."