

YOUR **KINGDOM** COME

A STUDY FROM THE **HOLY LAND**

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INTRODUCTION



Thank you for being willing to guide the journey through *Your Kingdom Come!* This project grew out of a passionate curiosity to learn about the notion of kingdom in the Christian faith: Where did the concept of kingdom come from? How did it develop over time? What does it mean for us today?

Obviously the concept of kingdom is used many times in the Bible. If we look carefully, though, we can see that kingdom concepts developed in the hearts and minds of God's people across the ages. One of the central themes of Israel's history is that God is simultaneously attempting to make them into a kingdom while also trying to help them avoid becoming the kind of kingdom that is unfaithful to God's purposes.





This study, then, has a historical component. For those in your group who enjoy tracing historical trends and learning about how the biblical notion of kingdom fits into a larger historical picture, we have included some helps and guides that we think will be interesting. This study is also designed to be a spiritual journey. In the same way that God's people have been on a journey across the ages, we think your group could potentially join that journey and grow in faithfulness along the way. The discussion questions are meant to help you facilitate a conversation of exploration and discovery, not only of the way God has challenged God's people over time but also of how God is challenging us even now.

INTRODUCTION

Each video is designed to introduce your group to the discussion that will follow. While the videos contain content that we hope will be helpful, we haven't designed them to be the centerpiece of the study. Rather, they serve as an orientation to open each session. We recommend allotting about ten minutes for the video, ten minutes to talk through the session with the group, and the remainder of the time dedicated to conversation around the provided questions. The sessions are short enough that participants can read through them prior to class and answer some of the reflection questions in advance if they wish.

These videos were filmed on location at various sites around the Holy Land. We chose sites with kingdom significance so you and your group can gain a better understanding of what it might have been like to live through the kingdom turning points in the history of God's people.

Our thanks to Trevecca Nazarene University's Department of Communication Studies for their commitment to this work, and especially to the dedicated group of students who comprised the film crew.

	PERIOD OF JUDGES	<p>1290 BC – Exodus from Egypt (approx.)</p> <p>1250 – Entrance into the promised land (approx.)</p>
	FIRST TEMPLE PERIOD	<p>1050 – Saul anointed as king (approx.)</p> <p>1000 – David becomes king, begins Davidic kingship</p> <p>960 – King Solomon builds First Temple (approx.)</p> <p>922 – Kingdom divides: Israel in north, Judah in south</p>
	EXILE	<p>722 – Israel falls to Assyria</p>
	SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD	<p>597 – Jerusalem falls to Babylon, kings and nobles deported to Babylon</p> <p>587 – Jerusalem destroyed by Babylonian army, mass exile begins</p>
		<p>537 – Jewish exiles begin to return to Jerusalem</p> <p>520 – Construction begins on Second Temple</p>
		<p>450 – Ezra returns from exile to Jerusalem with Torah</p> <p>333 – Alexander the Great's army enters Jerusalem</p>
		<p>198 – Jerusalem taken by Syria</p> <p>167 – Maccabean revolt leads to century of Jewish independence</p>
		<p>63 – Roman Empire takes Jerusalem, Jewish independence ends</p>
		<p>4 BC – Birth of Jesus</p>
		<p>AD 28 – Sermon on the Mount (approx.)</p>
		<p>30 – Jesus enters Jerusalem, crucifixion</p>
		<p>66 – Jewish revolt against Rome begins</p>
		<p>70 – Destruction of the Second Temple</p>



WHAT KIND OF KINGDOM?

J.J. Wyzinski

▼ HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Jerusalem and the surrounding area (modern Israel) were known as the land God had promised to Israel. Though Israel emerged as a kingdom as early as 1,200 years before Jesus, by the time Jesus was born, Jerusalem had been militarily overthrown by at least three foreign powers. During Jesus's lifetime, the Roman Empire came to power over Israel and established a political and military presence in Jerusalem. Though Rome did not force an end to Jewish worship, they also did not permit the people of Israel to govern themselves independently, and they regularly taxed the Jewish people to support Rome.

▼ LESSON

When Jesus was speaking to his followers about the kingdom of heaven in the Sermon on the Mount, he was using language they understood. A kingdom was a familiar concept in those days. Many of those who heard Jesus speak that day knew the stories of their ancestors, and how Israel had gone from being a group of slaves in Egypt to understanding itself as a kingdom. The hopes of their grandparents and great-grandparents had been that God would establish a way of

life that would allow them to live as God's holy people. That meant that they needed real things like food, water, shelter, and freedom.

Whether it was Egypt, Rome, Babylon, Assyria, or any other kingdom that had taken power over them, the people gathered on that hillside listening to Jesus speak knew what these kingdoms were like. They were set up to funnel power to the ruler, often at the expense of the people. Any kingdom like that was not the kind of arrangement that would allow God's people to live according to their calling.

When Jesus came, he talked about a kind of kingdom that broke the mold from any kingdom these people had known before. Rather than give strength to the king, the kingdom Jesus preached about gave strength to those who were weak. Rather than being set up to conquer enemies, Jesus's kingdom was established on the basis of loving enemies (Matthew 5:43–48). The kingdoms the Israelites knew were about power and competition, but the kingdom Jesus offered was a way of life that allowed them to live as God's holy people. It was the surprising kind of kingdom their ancestors had prayed for. Not only that, but Jesus told them that this kingdom was near and that they were called into it now.

Jesus wasn't giving them a fantasy kingdom but a real one. Jesus called his followers to live in real ways according to the kingdom he was setting before them. The Lord's Prayer, as Jesus taught us to pray it, calls us not just to understand what his kingdom looks like but also to live its pattern in real-life ways, even now (Matthew 6:9–13).

▼ QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR JOURNALING

- 1) Read Matthew 6:9–13. When we read the words, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” what are we saying? What did Jesus intend for us to be praying with these words?
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- 2) Why does Jesus still call us today to pray “your kingdom come”?
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WHAT KIND OF KINGDOM?

- 3) Read Matthew 5:1–11. What did Jesus mean when he said, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth”? What does this mean for the kind of kingdom Jesus is bringing?

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- 4) When Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God,” what does that mean for those who wish to live in Jesus’s kingdom?
-

5) What does the way of life look like that these Beatitudes call us to?



[illegible]

▼ QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1) When you think of the word *kingdom*, what comes to mind? How is life structured for those who live in a kingdom?
- 2) Imagine the lives of those who heard Jesus preaching the Sermon on the Mount. They were ruled by a foreign king, and they were paying taxes to a foreign king. What do you think their hopes were for a new kingdom to be established?
- 3) How do you think the kingdom Jesus preached about was similar to or different from what they dreamed for themselves?
- 4) What kind of kingdom do you think Jesus is bringing today?
- 5) How might we, as a community, live now in this new kingdom?