

King Jesus and the Kingdom

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Date: 22 March 2026

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[0:00] Alright, turn to Matthew chapter 4 and we'll read from verse 12 to verse 17. Now when he'd heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee and leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali.

So that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled, the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee the Gentiles, the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light.

And for those dwelling in the region and the shadow of death, on them a light has dawned. From that time, Jesus began to preach, saying, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Alright, let's pray. Our Father, in your mercy, we thank you that you've given us the days you've given to us and you've established Jesus as the King over all.

Help us to grab and grasp these truths and to love and to live by them. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, you may have heard of the Doomsday Clock.

[1:26] It's one of the most recognisable and lasting icons in popular culture these days. It conveys the urgency of nuclear danger.

Now, over the years, the hands have moved backwards and forwards towards midnight. And when it comes midnight, that's the time when we face nuclear apocalypse.

The end of the world. In 1947, it was set at seven minutes to midnight. And in 1946, it went back to 12 minutes to midnight.

And then in 1991, it was back at 17 minutes to midnight. And ever since then, the board, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists have been adjusting it.

And it's been moving closer to midnight. And right now, as of last couple of days ago, it was now at 85 seconds to midnight.

[2:39] So, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists have said it at an alarming point. It has never been closer than it is today. Now, I'm not telling you this to particularly frighten you.

All right? But, we are experiencing the pain of the war in the Middle East and the threat to our oil-dependent economies. Are causing a lot of soul-searching.

And yet, as alarming as the doomsday clock is, there is a message that is more urgent and important for our world to hear.

And we've just read it. And that is, it's time to repent. For the kingdom of heaven is near.

The truth is, let me tell you, the truth is, the world will not end by a nuclear holocaust. But by a heavenly one.

[3:40] The world will end when the king of heaven and earth returns. And brings in the kingdom of God fully and finally.

And depending on which kingdom you are in at the time, it will determine whether you think it's a good thing or a bad thing when that kingdom comes. For God's people, it is the light at the end of the tunnel.

It's a great comfort. Now, when Jesus began his earthly ministry over 2,000 years ago now, he began a prophetic ministry. A ministry that began and continues to call people to repent.

Because the kingdom of heaven is near. And the question is, do we believe it, to start with?

And secondly, what are people to repent of? I put it to you that because the kingdom of heaven is near, it means that every opposing kingdom is going to be done away with.

[4:50] It's going to be swept away. And so Jesus is commanding people everywhere to stop rejecting our creator God as king.

And instead, submit to his righteous, good and gracious rule. Because his kingdom is at hand. In other words, we have a kingdom of God clock. And it's more like 15 seconds to midnight. Now, as you look at the passage here, some time has passed from verse 11. John the Baptist has been put in prison. He's going to lose his head because of his faithfulness to God. And you can read about that in Matthew chapter 14. John the Baptist called out Herod Antipas for his sin, his adulterous relationship with his brother's wife.

[5:55] And because he spoke out against his sin, he was put in prison. And when Jesus hears about this, he leaves Judea and goes back to Galilee and settles in Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee.

And Herod Antipas rules there as well. So let's just put a bit of a map on the screen here. Galilee is up towards the north, right? Now, Nazareth is a town in the region of Galilee.

And Capernaum is at the northern end of the Lake of Galilee. Now, the prophecies of the Old Testament now are rapidly being fulfilled.

We're told that this fulfills what Isaiah said about 700 years earlier. He fulfills Isaiah chapter 9, chapter 4, verse 15.

Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee, the Gentiles. The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light.

[7:04] And for those who dwell in the region and the shadow of death, on them a light has dawned. Let's have a look at this map again, another map. Here we have the lands that they were divided up, how they were divided up.

You've got Zebulun and Naphtali were two tribes of Israel. They were given allotments of land up the north, barren tracts of land at one level. Basically the same region as Galilee.

Zebulun and Naphtali were the first tribes to feel the destruction of the Assyrians about 722 BC.

They were the first to be conquered by the Assyrians as they swept down into the northern tribes. They felt the feet of foreign armies many times, like Afghanistan or many other nations.

Other nations have been invading Afghanistan for years. Zebulun and Naphtali were raided by the Assyrians under Tiglath-Pileser III around about 722 BC.

[8:13] And anyone who wanted to move up and down the coast, right, because other side's desert, you can't move through desert very well.

They would have to go through the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. The Egyptians went through, the Greeks went through there, the Romans went through. The people living in that land were under the shadow of death as the world powers walked through there over and over again.

After the Assyrians wiped out the Jews living there, it was the home of the nations, the Goyim, the Gentiles. So that was the way the Assyrians worked. The people from many nations were transplanted there.

That was the strategy of the Assyrians in their conquering. Relocation of conquered people. But not only that, right, the temple was down in Jerusalem.

The place where you'd meet with God, hear God's word, have hope and light preached to you.

Everything that made a Jew of a Jew was down in Jerusalem. That's where the temple was. And yet, in this place, this land, a great light has dawned.

[9:27] The sun has risen there. Here is hope. Because the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Something's about to change. And notice the message is not preached where you might first expect it.

Just like Jesus wasn't born the king of the Jews in Herod's palace down in Jerusalem, nor does the king of the Jews begin his preaching of the kingdom in the temple at Jerusalem.

The symbolic presence of the dwelling place of the kingdom of the kingdom of heaven. He begins preaching in the back blocks of Galilee.

Not Brisbane, but Blackbutt. Not Cairns, but Canberra. But Kingarui. This light is not just light.

It's a great light, notice. And we only hear of a great light here and in Isaiah chapter 9. It's a great light. A great hope.

[10:31] There's light at the end of the tunnel type light. This great light. Come back to Isaiah chapter 9 and we'll spend some time there.

Come back to Isaiah chapter 9. It's in the middle of the Bible. Sharon, no, sorry.

It was read for us a bit earlier. Isaiah chapter 9. Alex read it for us a while ago. That book, Isaiah chapter 9.

The nation's growing. There's joy instead of gloom. The oppressors is done away with. There's great joy. See there in verse 1 to 3. There were no more gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun, the land of Naphtali.

But in the latter time he's made glorious the way of the sea, the land of the Jordan, Galilee, the land of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light and those who dwell in the land of deep darkness on them, the light has shone.

You've multiplied the nation. You have increased its joy. They have rejoiced before you with the joy of the harvest and they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

[11:47] The oppressor's been defeated. There's freedom. There's relief. And we know that the son, right, who's to be born, right, have a look at this.

For every boot and the trampling warrior, the summit battles, and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For to us the child is born, to us the son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and of peace, there'll be no end. And on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and uphold it with justice and with righteousness, from this time forth and forevermore, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do it.

Now we know that the son has been born, don't we? The son of God has been born. And he's grown up. And he is the victorious Israel, conquering, right, not Assyria, but Satan.

And he is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. And on his rule will grow to the ends of the earth. You see there, verse 7. And it will be good rule.

[13:14] There's no boundary for this rule there in verse 7. There'll be no end to it. It's a righteous rule where justice is exacted.

And if you have ears to hear, it's an eternal rule. The light has dawned. There is hope. Jesus is bringing about this long-awaited kingdom of heaven.

And if you have ears to hear, Jesus is the king of the kingdom. And that's great news. That's joyful news. That's something to be proclaimed. It's a momentous good news.

It's the gospel. So come back to Matthew chapter 4. The word that Jesus brings is repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand or has come near.

The same prophetic word that John the Baptist preached. He proclaimed it. He proclaimed it. He announced it. He preached it. And the message is not just for the Jews, the Israelites.

[14:20] No. It's for the nations, the Gentiles, the Australians, anyone who is not a Jew. The outsiders. And what do we mean by the kingdom of heaven?

It means that kingdom means rule. That's what kingdom means. It means there is a king who is in charge of a realm. That's the idea of a king. Now here in Australia, we don't really have much experience of the power of a king, yet our government is particularly shaped by having one in England.

In the world today, there are over 40 monarchies and so kingdoms with kings or queens in them and some have more influence than others. Australia is a constitutional monarchy where we are an independent nation of the British Empire.

The king is notionally our head of state, though we are an independent nation. We don't particularly fear our king, although we should.

But the Bible speaks about kings wielding swords and exercising great power, the power of life and the power of death. And if the kingdom of heaven is near, it means that the rule of heaven is at hand.

[15:40] And the rule of God is about to be experienced firsthand. Jesus is announcing this kind of rule. And he's continuing where John left off.

Jesus is picking up the mantle of the prophet of God. Jesus is both prophet and king of God. And as we've seen so far, Jesus the king is none other than God the son.

And he's calling everyone to repent. All nations to repent. I think it's moved on from 15 seconds to midnight to sort of five seconds to midnight now in the kingdom of God clock.

Repentance means turn, change your thinking, change your way of living. Seeking and seeing the great light of Jesus, the great day of Jesus.

Stop living one way and start living a different way. It's turning. That's what repentance is. It's a 180 degree return. Turning from the kingdom of this world in all its sin and corruption.

[16:56] To being under the reign of God. His good and loving and kind king. Being in this kingdom where things are right and as they're meant to be. Where everything is good, where there's no sin, where there's no death.

Because when this kingdom comes, he will sweep away every kingdom before it. God will rule and every knee will bow, every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Now this is great news, right? This is great news for those living in Zebulun and Naphtali under the gloom of death.

They have come to hear that the kingdom of heaven is coming and they can be part of it. Freedom, hope, joy is coming. And that message is for the whole world.

The Gentiles, you and I, who are not Jews, we're very thankful that there are Jews around about our church.

[17:59] There's no light at the end of the tunnel for the Gentile in the Jews' mind prior to Christ. The way the Jews thought us Gentiles is we are people who live in darkness.

And the Apostle Paul speaks about it in Ephesians chapter 2. Let me read to you Ephesians chapter 2. The Apostle Paul is the great apostle to the Gentiles.

And in Ephesians 2 he addresses the Gentile believers and he says to them this. Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands.

Verse 12. Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

That is the status of everyone who has not come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Without God, without hope in the world.

[19:19] But, by trusting in Jesus, we are born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

And we have a certainty of life in the kingdom. No longer living in gloom. No longer living in the fear of death. Where the greatest hope was that you would ultimately just be worm food and you hope that there is nothing beyond that.

Because if there is, you are in it. The question though is, how near is the kingdom? If you are anything like me, you see the world groaning and I am longing for this righteous kingdom to come.

I really am. When will it come? I was at RI the other afternoon. I mentioned to a Jewish RI teacher, come Lord Jesus. Because I had a conversation before and he said, yeah.

I don't quite know what he agreed to, but it is just a mess. When will this kingdom come? The good news is, right, that the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, has come.

[20:43] But we don't experience it fully and finally yet. So come with me to Matthew chapter 28. We live in the time after the resurrection of Jesus. Come to Matthew chapter 28 with me. We live in the time after the cross.

Matthew 28. And it's the death and resurrection of Jesus and his ascension where he is coronated as king.

And it's by his death and resurrection that he conquered every malevolent ruler in heaven and on earth. And his ascension when he finally comes to sit on the right hand of the father and is given the kingdom to rule for all eternity.

That's happened. That has happened. But in his kindness, he's delayed his return, the day of judgment where he willled the sword. And we're living in a time of amnesty right now.

That's what we're living in, that time right now. And so that we have time to proclaim this message of repentance. It can still be proclaimed. And people can still enter the kingdom of heaven from every tribe and nation.

[21:51] Have a look at it with me now. Chapter 28. Pick it up at verse 16. Now the eleven disciples went to the Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him.

But some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

So Jesus has all authority. He is the king over every kingdom and nation and land and tribe and people. So go therefore and make disciples of all nations.

All the Gentiles. Right? All those who have no hope. Baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The idea of baptising, not just water, but the idea of washing, cleaning, cleansing them.

Right? In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

[23:01] And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. If the kingdom of heaven, whatever the age time we've got left is, was at hand 2,000 years ago.

Oh, it's that much closer today, isn't it? That much closer again today. I think it's more like one second. To midnight.

On the kingdom clock. And that means there's one less day than there was yesterday to repent. And to believe that Jesus is the righteous king of the kingdom.

Brothers and sisters, that has got to change the way that we think about the world, hasn't it? It's got to change the way that we think about those we live with. Those we work with.

Those we study with. Those we, in our families. See, Jesus finished his earthly ministry at the place where he began his earthly ministry.

[24:17] In Galilee. All authority has been given to me. He is the Lord of lords, the king of kings.

And now all nations, Jews and Gentiles. And all nations, Jews and Gentiles, has been given to him. And all nations, all nations have a chance to see this great light.

To have hope. That's why we're running hope beyond cure. To have hope. To come to faith.

In King Jesus. And so enter the kingdom of heaven. Before it's too late. And I've got to say, if you're here this morning and you haven't got that hope.

Please talk to me. Or talk to someone you know. That you might come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And become part of that kingdom. And rejoice. And receive the great light of the gospel yourself.

[25:27] See right now we live in a great time of upheaval. Wars are raging all over the world. Russia. Ukraine. America.

Iran. Israel. And who knows where else soon. Pakistan. Afghanistan. Myanmar. Thai border. Nothing's particularly indicative of the time. When the kingdom. Will come fully and finally. Alright. Jesus promises that there will be wars.

And rumours of wars. Right up until the time he comes. Then he comes in glory. But the good news is.

That those of us who have repented. And believe in this. We can face each day. With certain hope. No matter what might happen in this world. There is light at the end of the tunnel.

[26:27] Because the kingdom of heaven has come. And our experience. Is. Still waiting for it to come fully and finally. But the truth remains.

There is an urgency for people from every nation to repent. For the kingdom of heaven. For the kingdom of heaven is still at hand. We had.

A hundred years or so. In the last. Two world wars. We've had. Many other wars. It's not that.

Wars are unusual. Let me tell you. Rather. Rather. It's peace. That's unusual. It's peace. That's unusual.

We live in a bubble in Australia. Of unreality. That most of the world doesn't experience. But the end will come one day. The amnesty will end.

[27:26] And the end of this world will come. When Jesus brings in the kingdom of heaven. fully and finally. Jesus will return. And establish. Righteousness.

Justice. And peace. And then the kingdoms of this world. As we know. Will come to a cataclysmic end. That is the truth.

That is our hope. So now is the time for us all. To be urgent. About the kingdom of heaven. Loving people enough. Yeah.

Loving people enough. To call them to repent. Loving people enough. To be praying.

That they would repent. And see the grace. Let's pray. Our father we know that with you. A day is like a thousand years.

[28:25] And a thousand years are like a day. Thank you that there is a. Truth that you have preached. And the kingdom of heaven is near. Please help us.

To live appropriately. As we look forward to that great day coming. We pray it in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.