

Wonder

Week 4

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Day 1

The Wonder of the Kingdom Matt 11-13

Jesus sent out invitations to the Kingdom, delivered by his students (ch10) but the response wasn't all positive. The Kingdom of Heaven is here but it's not from this world and it certainly isn't what people expected. Jesus is the long awaited King sent from Heaven but he doesn't fit their idea.

Some people just didn't get it.

It seems that some people came to Jesus with high expectations of what the Kingdom should be. They already have it all figured out and Jesus is not what they were expecting. They went away disappointed.

In chapters 11 and 12 Jesus encounters opposition. This isn't just pushback from the initial campaign in chapter 10; this is a story about who is ready to enter the Kingdom of Heaven and who isn't. In one of many ironic twists of the Kingdom the people you most expect to be ready for Jesus; (ie. smart religious leaders) are not ready to accept Jesus.

They can't get beyond their expectations of what a Savior from God and a Kingdom from God should be. They aren't ready to follow God's plan because they are too hung up on themselves.

You may be surprised by some of the things you learn about Jesus and His kingdom as well. Take a cue from Jesus' good friend John the Baptist. John humbly sent his questions to Jesus and simply trusted what Jesus said.

Those who simply accept that the Kingdom of Heaven is what Jesus says it is, marvel at its wonder. They are the most satisfied. Will you allow yourself to be delighted in the wonder of the Kingdom?

In the space below make a list: "How would you describe the Kingdom of Heaven to a friend?"

Consider this a starting point. Let's revise the list as we learn more from Jesus.

Reading Today: Matthew 11

10-15 minutes

Day 2

Jesus is Subversive

The world has a certain way of doing things. Jesus has a way of doing things that is different than this world.

Change can be scary. Some just prefer their familiar evils. Taking a stand against evil makes enemies of people who embrace those destructive patterns. Doing so will create conflict, opposition, and at the very least make you unpopular. Opposing debt, for example, brings the wrath of the financial industry but also that of those who enjoy the fruits of their debt.

Jesus stood opposed to oppressive systems and people (debt, addiction, ignorance, corrupt justice, and religious control, just to name a few). These systems made people who could otherwise be citizens of Heaven into slaves of someone else.

Jesus was a friend of the sinners and other social outcast but he was hated by those in power.

Jesus spent his days in the company of people society throws away like garbage.

He personally educated women in a culture that stood opposed to it.

At one time, Jesus was asked if citizens of his Kingdom should pay taxes to another Kingdom like Rome - which stood opposed to the Kingdom of Heaven.

His instructions were brilliant: “Caesar’s face is on the money so give it all back to him.” By devaluing Rome’s currency, Jesus’s followers would have led to a financial collapse of the Roman Empire, making Rome financially dependent on Jesus’s Kingdom - all while paying their taxes to Rome.

Jesus didn’t set out to make friends but to undermine the destructive patterns of this world as he established a Kingdom of heaven here on earth. Welcome to a new Kingdom.

Reading Today: Matthew 12

10-15 minutes

Day 3

I am a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven

“My Kingdom is not from this world” -Jesus

Jesus didn't establish a new religion. He started the revolution of a new nation, a kingdom. His kingdom is not like the nations of the world. It has been called upside-down and backwards because our patterns are so different. Let me give you a couple examples.

His kingdom and its resources are used for the benefit of those outside the kingdom.

This kingdom has no borders or geography. Wherever you find people who trust God, the Kingdom of Heaven is there. Every citizen is also an ambassador to the nations of the earth. We could all have diplomatic immunity except that God wants us to live accountable to the laws of the nations of earth as well.

All nations of this earth have a type of police to administer laws and justice. This is a type of external control originating outside of the individual citizen. There is a force outside the citizens that keeps them in line. Jesus' Kingdom is different. It relies on an internal system of self-control. God's Spirit lives in us telling us right from wrong. There is no external system in place, only the spirit keeps us inline. We either trust his wisdom or we don't.

God is King. This nation is a theocracy, ruled by God. Other nations have been ruled by religious orders and called themselves theocracies but this is different. We are governed by God directly and internally; there is no religious order standing between us and God.

Our Government is fueled by trust. It's a new kind of government where citizens are accountable directly to God. And He teaches us self-control a type of self-governing based on the spirit of God. The new standard of right and wrong is based on my heart, attitude and intentions not my external actions. We trust our king and learn to trust him with more parts of our lives. The more we trust Him the more good we can do as a nation.

This kingdom has a new kind of social services where every citizen gives generously and gladly to those in need even though it puts them in a difficult position.

Jesus established a new nation and personally invites you to be a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Reading Today: Matthew 13

10-15 minutes

Day 4

Jesus' Family - Influence

Everyone has family issues, even Jesus. At one point his mother and half-brothers showed up to have him taken away believing he was insane. It's not so hard to imagine from the perspective of Jesus' family. They grew up together. How many times did Mary change his diapers? What kind of childish mischief did Jesus' brothers see? Now he's going around claiming to be sent from God to inaugurate God's Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Did he really think he would build a kingdom that would outlast the mighty Roman Empire? Jesus said no prophet has honor in his home town. He literally couldn't do any miracles in Nazareth. They were so stuck on the boy growing up that they couldn't believe Jesus the Messiah.

It's difficult to break through to family. We are set in our patterns and everyone involved is enforcing that awkward balance that is our family dynamic. Growth requires change and that is good. Jesus can make family better. Family might your parents and siblings, your spouse and children or all of the above - God has a good plan for your family. There will be resistance to change but be hopeful.

It probably didn't happen during Jesus' life time on earth but his half-brother James became an apostle of Jesus and leader of the church in Jerusalem. James became a foundational figure in the Kingdom of God.

Prayers for family:

God, how can I see my family the way you see them? How can better serve my family's needs?

How can I help them to see you?

Feel free to pray for your family in your own words. As always pray honestly about what's in your heart.

Reading Today: Matthew 11-12

10-15 minutes

Day 5

My Strengths - Service

Look over the list of **Strengths** at the end of the book. This list represents strengths that people demonstrate in life. As you look over this list you should indicate by each 'Strength', how you see this personally applying to you by number: 1- Always true, 2 – usually true, 3 sometimes true, 4 – rarely true, 5 – never true.

Look over the thing you have indicated with a '1' or '2' and list the top 5, your most consistent strengths.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

Reading Today: Matthew 13

10-15 minutes

After reading Matthew 11-13 this week how would you change your description of the Kingdom of Heaven?
