

End Times pt.1: The Kingdom

When I was thinking about starting this podcast and blog I asked my friends on Facebook what topics they would like to hear about. The only topic that got multiple requests was the end times.

The end times is kind of a broad subject, since most of the Bible speaks of the end times in one way or another. But there are a few things I would like to say as a general overview – a way of thinking about the study of the end times.

Eschatology, or the study the end times, is a very controversial area. And the controversy is mostly about the order of events of things that are still future. Is it the rapture and then the tribulation and then the 2nd coming and then the millennium and then the eternal state? Or the millennium, then the 2nd coming, then the eternal state? Where does the Antichrist fit in? Who are the two witnesses? What about Israel? What are the signs of Christ's coming?

People get so caught up in those kinds of questions, they lose sight of the big picture of end times prophecy. The big picture is the coming kingdom of God. Only when the kingdom is our central focus will we have a proper understanding of the details.

So for today's podcast, I want to play a 4 minute clip from a recent message that summarizes what I believe is the primary theme of the whole Bible. That will give us the big picture. Then in tomorrow's podcast, I'll talk about how to figure out the order of events, the millennium, the church age, the Second Coming, and how to interpret all the various promises that relate to the end times.

The Bible is basically the story about the kingdom of God. It begins on page 1 of the Bible which is the first place where we see this idea of ruling over the whole world. It's going to happen through these creatures that God has made in his own image.

But then, these creatures that are supposed to be the ones through whom God reigns, his vice regents, rebel. They are supposed to carry out his reign, but they don't even submit to his reign themselves. Under the influence of the serpent, they establish their own kingdom. So now you have two kingdoms - a human/satanic one, and God's Kingdom.

So how is God going to fix this problem? It starts with a guy named Abraham. God promises to bless the whole world - all the nations, through this man. And the farther you read in the Bible, the more God reveals about how that is going to shake out. It will happen through a human king, like David. You keep reading in the prophets and you find out this king is going to be God himself - the wonderful counselor, everlasting father, prince of peace, Mighty God. And of the increase of his kingdom and of peace there will be no end. All the nations all of humanity will willingly, gladly, joyfully, eagerly bow before his authority.

So along comes Jesus. And here's how he summarized his entire message:

Luke 4:43 I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God ... because that is why I was sent. And that's what he trained the 12 to do as well.

Luke 9:2 he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God

Jesus taught us all to pray, "Let your kingdom come." Then, after Jesus died and rose from the dead, before he ascended into heaven he hung around 40 more days on earth – doing what?

Acts 1:3 ...He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

So, the Messiah finally arrived to establish this world-wide kingdom, but he didn't establish it in its final form. He got it started, but between his first coming and his Second Coming the opposition kingdom is still in place.

Ephesians 2:2 ...you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

So you have these two kingdoms – man's kingdom on earth and God's kingdom in heaven. The objective of history now is to get from that to Rev.11.15.

Revelation 11:15 ...The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.

One kingdom, where every single person in the world joyfully, eagerly, enthusiastically, and gladly submits to the rule of the great King. Every last soul, everywhere in the world, wholeheartedly excited about serving the King.

Revelation 5:13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

That's the story of the Bible. And that's the answer to the question I asked at the beginning. What is the best possible universe? The most beautiful, happiest, most awesome, most spectacular, most exciting, most satisfying possible state of affairs? It's Rev.11:15, where every person in the world wholeheartedly and happily submits to the reign of King Jesus. That's where all history has been going since page 1 of the Bible.