

**The Advent of the King**

**Lesson 12: The Kingdom is at Hand**  
**The Gospels**

**TEACHING NOTES**

**EPIC – intro (video clip from EPIC by John Eldredge)**

**A Light Grows in the Darkness...**

**PREP**

- Sit back, relax, don't take notes – it's all in your handout – try to picture it, take it in, join in when asked – this is a meditation on the Kings, on Advent, and most important on Christ!

**\*\*\* Start Single Candle Video \*\*\* (3 min. for next sections)**

**ACT 1: God of Eternity**

In the depths of time, when the world was yet formless and void, there was in the midst of all a light, and that light was a relationship both beautiful and holy. It was the relationship of the one, true, self-existent God within the three parts of his godhead. There was the Father, from whom all blessings flowed, and the Son, through whom redemption is accomplished, and the Spirit, whose indwelling makes God's presence felt. In the mind of God there arose a grand vision, of a universe filled with majesty and wonder, with creatures great and small, and with a special race of creatures that would love, worship and obey him. On these later creatures he would pour his love and blessings for all eternity. Yet, even as he planned for the unfolding of this world there was a problem. If he forced his special creatures to love him; then their love would not be genuine and real. Yet, if he allowed them choose to reject him; he would then be forced to cast them out from his holy presence forever. Thus a plan was made to create a world that would be free to grow and groan and change through time. Then, at the fullness of time, the light would dawn as God himself would step into his world to redeem it, reshaping it into something even grander than the original design.

They began with the angels, beings who would stand in the presence of the godhead forever, worshipping and praising the great name of the Lord and serving at times as his ambassadors to the world. Somewhere, in the midst of time, one of those angels grew jealous, deciding he would rather be God himself. His name would be known as Satan, the deceiver and devourer. He corrupted a host of other angels who all rebelled against God, and were cast out of his presence. They were left to roam the world until the day of judgment when they will be condemned to torment forever.

## **ACT 2: God of Creation**

At a time appointed by God, a time we recon as the beginning, God manifest his plan in physical form, creating in the midst of the void a world and a planet within that world called earth. For six days he poured forth his creativity bringing forth light and forming earth and sky and sea, filling them with every variety of plant and animal and fish and bird. He then made his prized possession, man himself, made in the image of the trinity, created male and female for his glory. He gave his entire world to man, making him caretaker and vice-regent to rule under his headship. Yet God was far more than a wonderful watchmaker, instead he came and walked with man, talking with and caring for him, creating woman when he saw man was alone, and providing for his every need. He gave just one restriction; one tree out of the whole earth man was not to eat from lest he die. Yet that was enough. Satan came in the form of a serpent and deceived man. First Eve decided she knew better than God. Thinking God was holding out on her she ate of the forbidden tree. Then she offered it to her husband Adam, who also ate, plunging all mankind into sin and condemning all mankind to death. The light was overtaken by the darkness.

**\*\*\* Go to Darkness \*\*\***

## **ACT 3: God of Redemption – The forming of a People**

In nakedness and shame they now hid from God. Yet God had foreseen it all and he had a plan. He was about to start another story, a story that he would weave into the story of the creation and the fall and work out through time in a way that would surprise even the angels. In place of the deserved story of eternal death he was to write a new, gracious story, a story of light and of love, a story of hope and redemption and eternal joy.

**\*\*\* Start Advent Candle Video \*\*\* (4:50 minutes for next section – Abel to Judges)  
– O Come, O Come Emmanuel 1 with lighting of 1<sup>st</sup> 2 advent candles**

When God finds man hiding in sin and shame he does three things. First, even as Adam and Eve blame each other and God for their shame, the Father questions them, showing them clearly their own guilt. Then he pronounces curses on the human race. Not the curse of instant death as was expected, but rather a life of hardship and toil and conflict ending in both physical and eternal death. But that is not the end - God then gives hope, giving a wonderful promise that one day the seed of the woman will crush the serpents head. With this renewed vision God reaches down and kills an animal to make clothes for Adam and Eve, leading them to a new home to begin again their journey with God.

To Eve comes a son, Abel, maybe this is the one, the one who will crush the serpents head! But as Abel makes his sacrifice to God his brother Cain grows jealous and kills him, after which God casts out Cain. So what of the promise? For answer God gives another son, Seth, to continue the line of Adam, but Seth is not the promised one. Nor are his children, or the generations after. Instead man runs from God, becoming so distant that the thoughts and intents of his heart are evil all the time. Man grows so evil God wipes out all creatures from the earth in a massive 40 day flood. Yet he saves Noah and his family and a few of each creature to make a new start, promising never to destroy all by flood again. The light is growing, the expectation is growing, the promise may be just around the corner!

Yet the pattern continues - God walks with man and blesses him, man rebels against God and is judged, yet God is gracious and keeps a remnant safe to redeem in later generations. The light grows in the darkness, yet still so small only a few ever see it. We see it in Abraham as he is promised a son who will be the first of a nation as vast as the sands of the seashore and who will bless all the nations of the earth. We see it in Jacob being chosen and Essau rejected. We see it in the sin and jealousy of Jacob's sons, with some disqualifying themselves from the inheritance, while others repent and are changed. And we see the light growing and the promise approaching as God provides redemption from famine through Joseph.

In each generation the longings and expectations grow. Through the patriarchs who set out on God's journeys never seeing the promised end, to the people groaning for 400 years of captivity in Egypt waiting for a deliver to finally come. Yet, no matter how dark it gets, God is always watching and waiting to act on behalf of the remnant He is preserving..

As God's people groan under Pharaoh's oppressive hand God is growing them, growing them from a family of 12 to a nation of millions. After 400 years of longing and crying out to the Lord He now hears and reveals his glory anew. He raises up Moses in the house of Pharaoh to confront Pharaoh with a series of miraculous signs, demanding God's people be set free. God then hardens Pharaoh's heart so he will not concede until God sends an angel of death to pass over all Egypt killing every first born male child. God uses this to judge and to finally break them so they will gladly send away his people, even giving them gifts as they go! He also uses this as a powerful sign for Israel, as he promises to pass over their homes and not kill anyone within, provided they sacrifice the best of their lambs and place the blood on the doorpost. Thus implementing the Passover meal, which will become a lasting feast in Israel in remembrance of God's deliverance and eternal covenant. A covenant that will one day lead God to sacrifice his own son, using his blood as the atonement for sin. The light is growing amidst the darkness!

God displays his glory for all of Israel in manifold ways. Opening the red sea so they can pass through on dry ground, and closing it on top of Pharaoh and his armies. Leading them with a cloud for shade by day and fire for light by night. Feeding them in the dessert with manna every morning and water from the rocks when they are thirsty. Meeting with Moses to guide and govern the people. And eventually bringing them to Mount Sinai, where he engulfs the Mountain in his glory and graciously gives his commands, so that his people know how to love and serve him as well as how to live in harmony among themselves. And then, most amazing of all, telling Moses that he no longer wants to just be seen in the clouds and mountains, but rather that God himself, the creator and ruler of all, wants to dwell in the very camp of his people. He wants a tabernacle constructed so he can be in the midst of the people, and he will appoint priests to enter his presence on behalf of the people. For their sins he will allow the priests to bring sacrifices, allowing the blood of goats and sheep to mediate on their behalf. What other God has ever done such great, marvelous and loving things for a people so undeserving?

And yet, in the very midst of the greatest miracles and show of love the world has ever seen, we see the heart of the people turn against God. They grumble about the manna, they complain when thirsty, they try to overthrow Moses and the high priest, they cry out to go back to Egypt, and they go as far as to stand at the base of the very Mountain were God is displaying his glory and build a golden calf to worship instead! And yet God, who is rich in mercy, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love listens to Moses' plea on their behalf and does not slay them all in the dessert. He is a God who punishes sin, and so in this case allows them to wonder 40 years until that generation dies. But he takes the few faithful of that generation, and all the next generation, and he does indeed bring them into the promised land of rest, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Under Joshua they conquer the land, with God again showing his miraculous care and protection throughout. But after Joshua they begin to once again do what is right in their own eyes. They decide not to wipe out the last foreigners, but to marry their wives and start adopting their practices and gods. And so God sends judges, to call the people back to himself and to fight for his name in the land. And so the cycle continues for generatios to come – God shows his mighty hand, the people follow-him, then they get proud and rebel and he judges them, then they come back to him and he again blesses until they again rebel.

## ACT 4: God of Redemption – The forming of a Kingdom

**\*\*\* Continue Advent Candle Video \*\*\* (4:10 minutes for next section – Kings, Prophets, Exile, Post-exile**

**– O Come, O Come Emmanuel 2 with lighting of last 2 advent candles**

Eventually this cycle reaches a climax as the people cry out for a king ‘like all the other nations’. They are not content to have God as king. Or even to have occasional judges and prophets appointed by God to act on his behalf. They want a king, and they want one handsome and strong and rich and powerful like everyone else has. And so God grants them this request in Saul, who quickly degenerates into a self-serving coward who will not face God’s foes and who eventually goes on a crazy crusade to kill one man. That one man is David, a simple shepherd boy whose zeal for the Lord was used by God to defeat the entire philistine army! David, although a nobody in terms on any of the worlds criteria for leadership, is a ‘man after God’s own heart’, and is the one God chooses to become the model king in Israel. Not that he is perfect, far from it. At one point he ends up committing adultery and murder! But he is one that seeks God and his honor, and who when confronted with his sin repents and returns to God. So God promises to make his kingdom an everlasting kingdom, which is eventually fulfilled in the Messiah reigning on David’s throne.

David, and his son Solomon, go on to build Israel into a great kingdom. God blesses them with great riches and land. He blesses David with a great musical talent and ability to communicate his inner-most feelings in poetry. So we get many psalms that have been used mightily in the worship of God, as well as to minister to those in all kinds of distress and persecution. To Solomon is given great wisdom, from which come many of the proverbs of the Bible, along with the observations of life in Ecclesiastes and the great love Song of Solomon. In addition to these more visible works of the kingdom, God is working out his master plan in many small, unseen ways. Raising up a prostitute named Rahab in to aid in Joshua’s day, and placing her in the genealogy of the Messiah. Sending Boaz as the arch-typical kinsman-redeemer to marry a poor Moabite woman named Ruth. Testing Job to show Satan how faithful God’s people can be. Redeeming sinners and setting events in motion that will effect all mankind.

Yet the cycle of sin still remains. In the midst of this great and growing kingdom, Solomon, the wisest man to ever live, disobeys God and takes foreign wives for himself. They bring in foreign gods, and before they know what has hit them Israel is trying to mix the worship of God with ungodly practices. And so the kingdom is divided in two, and kings come and go who grow further and further from God. In fact, as God gives his verdict on each king it becomes clear that the northern kingdom of Israel will never have a good king. And the southern kingdom of Judah will only have a handful. That handful, like David and Josiah, will work hard to turn the people back to God and to destroy objects of false worship. But in the end each good king gets replaced by a bad and things continue to degenerate.

In the midst of the sin and rebellion of the people and their leaders God sends the prophets. They are sent to speak on God’s behalf, to remind the people of God’s law and the punishment promised for transgression. They are to call the people to repent before it is too late, recording for all time their lack of response as well as God’s righteous judgment. Some, like Elijah, are sent to the people to demonstrate the power of God by miraculous. Others, like Elisha and many of the Minor Prophets, speak not just to the people but to the leaders as well. Others, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, speak in pictures and parables or with powerful oratories. Still others, like Hosea and Jonah, are called to be living representations of the love of God. Some, like Isaiah and Joel, primarily point beyond the current day to the Messiah to come. Through all these means God works to wake up his people to their sin. He also uses the prophets to comfort his remnant that still follow him, giving them confidence in God’s plan for future redemption.

In the end the people harden their hearts against God. And so they are defeated and sent into exile. First Israel falls to the Assyrians, and is absorbed into their nation. Later Judah, who did not even learn from their brother's calamity, is conquered by Babylon. God withdraws and allows even his own temple to be utterly destroyed and plundered. Finally, in exile, Judah does begin to wake up and return to God. We see examples of particularly faithful men, like Daniel, who reach high office while remaining faithful in spite of persecution. We also see godly servants like Nehemiah and Esther who are willing to step up to kings and plead on behalf of God's people. Through it all God is at work, preserving his remnant. And eventually some do return and do rebuild the temple and the walls of Jerusalem. And yet, even here there is both sin and disappointment. The temple is not nearly as glorious as it used to be, the city is not all that was expected. Somehow, somewhere there must be more. God promised a glorious kingdom that is blessing all nations. While what they now have is certainly better than exile, it is also much less than all that was promised. What is God up to? And why, for 400 years after the return, does God not raise up any prophets to speak directly to his people?

The longing grows. The rulers of Jerusalem change, but one thing remains the same, the Jews do not have their own land, they remain scattered and to varying degrees oppressed. The religious leaders set up the synagogues to teach people the Word of God and reinstitute the temple sacrifices, all the time waiting and hoping for a Messiah to one day reestablish the Nation of Israel. They try to take the lessons of the Kings seriously, seeking to put in place laws to assure the people walk in righteousness and that they themselves are wholly true to God so that when the messiah comes they will be found worthy to be part of his kingdom. And so they work and serve and wait. In 400 years of silence they wait. Stephen and Anna and Zechariah go to the temple and watch and pray, awaiting the long expected Jesus.

**\*\*\* Song switches to Narration before 1<sup>st</sup> verse of Come, O Come, Emmanuel \*\*\***

**\*\*\* Everyone sing with above, then Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus \*\*\* (songs 4:30)**

#### **ACT 4: God Becomes Flesh – the Light shines in the darkness (4-5 minutes - This section)**

In the fullness of time, after centuries of foreshadowing and preparation, God finally reveals the heart of his eternal plan for man. A plan so surprising no one on earth understands it or fully sees it coming. A plan so amazing the angels stand in awe. God himself actually steps into the world as a man. In the person of Jesus, the second person of the trinity, God humbles himself and becomes as one of us! He is born of a virgin, laid in a lowly manger, having no stately form or visible majesty. Yet even on his birth we get a glimpse into his life, as the angels in heaven break forth in song, as lowly local shepherds and exalted wise men from afar both bow at his manger, and as the king issues a decree that he is to be killed!

Mark writes first, proclaiming the “beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”. Mathew picks up the theme by stating with Abraham and tracing Jesus line all the way through David Joseph and Mary, declaring him to be the promised one foretold. Luke takes it further back to Adam and to God himself, and giving many of the details of his birth as son of God and man. John then begins with “the Word was with God and was God”, tracing Christ back to all eternity and showing his part in the Godhead, yet declaring that in Christ “the Word has become flesh and dwelt / tabernacle among us” No more flaming mountains or arks or holy places ... God now walks and talks and lives among us as one of us. He has humbled himself, taken on human nature and death itself, death on a cross.

Jesus, the Christ, grows like any other child, being raised in the house of a carpenter. Yet even as a child he amazes the people as he debates the religious leaders in the temple. At around the age of 30 he begins his more public ministry. He is baptized by John, the forerunner who has been calling people to repentance and faith for years. At his baptism the Trinity is manifest as the Spirit comes on Jesus with the Father speaking to acknowledge his so. After which Jesus is immediately driven onto the wilderness for 40 days to be tested by Satan. But unlike Israel in

the desert, he does not grumble against God, or fall for Satan's deceitful offers of food or power. Instead, he obeys perfectly where we have all failed, and in so doing defeats Satan. As he leaves the desert he announces that the kingdom of God is at hand and calls for people to repent and believe. He then goes about cleaning Satan's house by kicking out demons and healing people everywhere. Yet in the midst of the great miracle tour, Jesus focuses not on the miracles but on the people. Calling 12 to be with him and sent out by him. Teaching and showing compassion on the crowds, shepherding them and calling them to give up all else and follow him. Promising them the bread of life, a river of living water within, rest for their weary souls and eternal life with the Father. He is the true light, the light of all men.

Then, just as the ministry is picking up and crowds everywhere are standing in awe of this man who speaks with authority unlike any they have ever seen, Jesus turns the tables on his disciples. Right as they start to figure out that he is the promised Messiah and are getting excited about this new kingdom he is bringing, he announces that he is going to die. While many have gotten excited about his message, many others have felt threatened, and they are plotting to kill him. Then the real bombshell drops, this is not a surprise, but rather it is the plan. The plan all along has been that Christ would come as the final sacrifice. He, the perfect man, God incarnate, would give his life freely to take the punishment we deserved. But he would not stay dead, in three days he would rebuilt the temple of his body and rise. He would defeat death and sin once for all, and offer forgiveness and salvation not just to Israel but to all men.

During his final weeks on earth Jesus confronts the religious leaders on their hypocrisy and he calls the crowds to give up everything and follow him. Then, as they finally turn on him and crucify him, he prays for mercy for them. Jesus spends much of his time these weeks walking closely with the disciples, training them to take his place in the world. It will not be easy, they will need to give up their lives for him, and they will be hated and persecuted, but they will gain eternal life. He pushes them out into ministry, he deals with their heart issues, he loves them and serves them and prays for them. And after his death and resurrection he re-gathers them, grants them his authority and presence, then sends them out in his name.

In the end Jesus claims that he is the fulfillment of all that God has done and written before. The entire story that has gone before was to prepare mankind for God's ultimate sacrifice. The promises and covenants, the priests and sacrifices and the temple, the kings and prophets, the law itself, and all of creation was designed from the start to reveal God and to show forth the glory of his son. Yet Jesus' coming was not the end. While he fully secured the redemption of God's people from sin and death, he did not actually bring in the kingdom in it's final form. He desires all the nations to come to him, and so he has left for a little while, and given his followers the task of introducing others to the kingdom. One day he will come and complete what was begun in eternity past and accomplished on the cross. But there is much to be done between now and then. ... **(To be continued next week)**

### **... But the Darkness has not Understood it! (10 minutes this section)**

John said: "But this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people lived the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God."

Why did the leaders miss Jesus? Why did the Religious leaders crucify the Christ rather than bowing down and worshiping him? And why do even his own disciples keep asking when he will restore Israel to her glory?

Precisely because they, like us, misunderstood God's message in the Old Testament in the Kings.

As they read Kings they drew the conclusion that they should not have high places, they should worship God in the temple, they need to be wholly-true to God as David was, and then they will be declared righteous and given a spot in the Messiah's new kingdom. They were looking for a wise and powerful king like Solomon to come and cleanse the palace, wiping out Herod and Caesar and setting up a prosperous, permanent kingdom anchored with its eternal throne in Jerusalem.

Luke seems to confirm this, as the angel declares to Mary "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and called Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

But Matthew adds that the Angel also spoke to Joseph, and to him he declared "You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins"

The problem the Pharisees had was they forgot the words of Amos 5 "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! Why would you desire the day of the Lord? It is darkness, and not light. As if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him. Is not the day of the Lord darkness and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?"

If the messiah showed up to take his throne and kick out all unrighteousness, then not only would Herod and Caesar be throne in the Lake of Fire, but so would every Scribe and Pharisee and Sadducee, and all the people, and everyone in this room.

They missed the point of the prophets and thus missed the Messiah precisely because they missed the point of the Kings. The kings are not a warning against unrighteousness and a call to follow God more whole-heartedly. They are actually just the opposite. They are an indictment against humanity. They prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that all sin and fall short of the glory of God. What is the repeated refrain? "except for the high places".

Every King but two specifically do one of two things. The evil ones set up and worship at the high places, instead of worshipping the true God in the way He has set up. And the good kings go to the temple and worship God, but fail to remove the high places. Even Hezekiah and Josiah who attempt to remove the false worship and restore true worship end up having the kings immediately after them go back to even worse perversions than before.

That is the theme of the entire Old Testament. From the garden to the wilderness to the judges to the kings, men always turn aside to their own ways, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Even David, the man after God's own heart, the man the kings are measured against, has this as God's description in I Kings 15: "David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and did not turn aside from anything he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite"

Every king, including David, had an "except in the matter of" somewhere. And that except, that high place where we worship self rather than God, that is sin and worthy of death. It is those 'excepts' that the Messiah came to deal with.

He did not come to cleanse the palace, but rather to cleanse the temple. He did not come to call the righteous to rise against the unrighteous. He came for just the opposite, he came to call the unrighteous, the sinful, the sick and oppressed. He came down from the throne of heaven not to kill the unrighteous but to be killed, to die so that the unrighteous might have a perfect sacrifice before God and thus might be spared. He came to be called Jesus because he would finally save his people from their sins.

As much as the longing through all time was not so much about God restoring a people or establishing a nation or kingdom, it was the longing since the garden for the one who would finally crush the serpents head and free mankind from its endless slavery to sin. It was a longing not for redemption and deliverance from earthly poverty, sickness and oppression, but for redemption and deliverance from death itself, and from eternal death in Hell.

The message of Kings and Chronicles is not of a people longing for the Messiah as it is a picture of a God longing to save his people. It is a God waiting 40, 400, 4000 years, patiently bearing with sinful men who rebel on every side, waiting until the time was right. A God waiting to take naked, disgraced Israel and lure her into the wilderness where he can speak word of comfort and love once again. A God of refining fire waiting to purify his people, to remove the heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh. It is the voice of one calling in the wilderness, prepare a highway for our God – and so John came preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. It is Jesus himself, emerging from the dessert of temptation and declaring “The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel”.

“For God so loved the World that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him shall have eternal life”

This Christmas will you come to the light? Will you come not as one declaring his own righteousness, but as one who would fall on his knees before the true king and confess that you have no been wholly-true. Will you come down from your high place and bow down to the King of King and Lord of Lord confessing the “except fors” in your life and trusting in Jesus, the Jesus who died and rose again, the Jesus who came to save his people from their sins. It is only then, as he gives you a new heart and a new life that you can hope to live wholly-true to God and god alone.

Come, join me at the manger as we look at this king who has stepped into our world to save us. Sing with me:

**\*\*\* Everyone sing *Who is He in Yonder Stall, then Thou Doest in a Manger Lie* \*\*\***  
**\*\*\* Pray in between \*\*\* (songs 7:40)**

### **Next Class:**

- ❖ **Summary** - a few key themes and other notes
- ❖ **Q & A** – Last chance for your questions!
- ❖ **Application / Conclusion / Worship** – a look at the NT and Revelation