

FOLLOW ME: MADE BY JESUS

STUDY NOTE · 04

THE KINGDOM WAS “AT HAND.” SO WHAT HAPPENED?

• KINGDOM • CROSS • CHURCH • GLORY



BY WAY OF THE WORD
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The Kingdom Was “At Hand.” So What Happened?

From the Kingdom Announcement to Christ's Promise: “I Will Build My Church”

The Question

From the opening chapters of Matthew, the announcement is unmistakable.

John the Baptist came preaching:

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

— Matthew 3:2

When Jesus began His public ministry, He proclaimed the same message:

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

— Matthew 4:17

Then Jesus commissioned the Twelve and specifically directed them to **“the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”** Their message was again:

“The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

— Matthew 10:6-7

The promised King had come. The kingdom was being announced to Israel.

But by Matthew 16 something sounds different.

Peter correctly confesses Jesus:

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

— Matthew 16:16

If Jesus is the promised Christ—the Messiah and King—one might naturally expect the kingdom to follow.

Instead, Jesus says something He has never said before:

“I will build My church.”

— Matthew 16:18

Then, only a few verses later, He announces something even more shocking:

“He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things...and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.”

— Matthew 16:21

What happened?

Did God's kingdom promises fail? Did Jesus cease to be Israel's Messiah? Did the announcement of the church mean that the kingdom had disappeared from God's purposes?

Or is Matthew progressively revealing something the disciples had not yet understood?

To answer those questions, we need to follow Matthew's story.

1. THE KINGDOM IS AT HAND

Matthew 3-10

Matthew opens his Gospel by identifying Jesus in unmistakably royal and covenantal terms:

“The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”

— Matthew 1:1

“Son of David” is not incidental. God had promised David a descendant whose throne and kingdom would be established (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

Matthew presents Jesus as that promised Messiah.

Accordingly, the early proclamation centers upon the kingdom.

John announces it.

Jesus announces it.

Then the Twelve announce it.

And when Jesus sends the Twelve in Matthew 10, their initial mission has an important restriction:

“Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

— Matthew 10:5-6

Their message to Israel is:

“The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

The King has come to His covenant people.

But Israel must respond to her King.

2. THE KING IS REJECTED

Matthew 12

By Matthew 12, opposition to Jesus has intensified dramatically.

Jesus heals a demon-possessed man who had been blind and mute. The crowds begin asking the obvious messianic question:

“This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?”

— Matthew 12:23

The Pharisees cannot deny that something extraordinary has happened. Instead, they attack the **source** of Jesus' power:

“This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.”

— Matthew 12:24

The works being performed by God's Messiah through the Spirit are attributed to Satan.

This becomes the context for Jesus' solemn warning concerning blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in Matthew 12:31-32.

Matthew presents this rejection by Israel's religious leadership as a decisive turning point in the narrative.

But notice carefully what **does not** happen.

WHAT DID NOT HAPPEN

Israel's rejection did **not** cause Jesus to stop being the Messiah.

God's promises did **not** fail.

Jesus did **not** cease to be the Son of David.

The kingdom did **not** disappear from God's purposes.

Human rejection cannot overturn divine promise.

That becomes unmistakably clear when Peter later declares:

“You ARE the Christ.”

Not You were the Christ until You were rejected.

Jesus remains the King.

The question becomes:

What happens now?

3. THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM

Matthew 13

Immediately after Matthew 12, something changes.

Matthew 13 opens with Jesus teaching the crowds in parables.

The disciples notice and ask:

“Why do You speak to them in parables?”

— Matthew 13:10

Jesus answers:

“To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.”

— Matthew 13:11

That word **“mysteries”** matters.

Jesus is revealing truths concerning the kingdom that had not previously been disclosed in this form.

And according to Jesus, the parables serve more than one purpose.

They **reveal** truth to those who have been granted understanding.

They also **conceal** truth from those who have persisted in rejecting God's revelation.

Jesus explains this by quoting Isaiah 6:9-10.

Isaiah had been commissioned to minister God's Word to a covenant people who had repeatedly rejected God's revelation. Now Jesus applies that pattern to His own generation.

WHY PARABLES?

We sometimes hear that Jesus used parables simply because stories make spiritual truths easier to understand.

Matthew 13 gives us a fuller picture.

The parables function as both:

REVELATION to receptive disciples

and

CONCEALMENT in judgment from hardened hearers.

And within these **“mysteries of the kingdom,”** Jesus reveals something especially important about **timing**.

4. THE HARVEST IS AT THE END OF THE AGE

Matthew 13:24-43

In the parable of the wheat and tares, the servants ask whether the tares should immediately be removed.

The landowner answers:

“Allow both to grow together until the harvest.”

— Matthew 13:30

Jesus later explains:

“The harvest is the end of the age.”

— Matthew 13:39

And:

“So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.”

— Matthew 13:40

The Son of Man will send His angels. Judgment will occur. And then:

“The righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

— Matthew 13:43

Notice the developing revelation.

Earlier:

THE KINGDOM IS AT HAND.

Now Jesus speaks of:

THE END OF THE AGE → ANGELS → JUDGMENT → KINGDOM GLORY.

The kingdom has not been cancelled.

But its glorious consummation is not presented as immediately occurring.

There is more to God's program than the disciples yet understand.

5. THE KING IS CONFESSED

Matthew 16:13-17

Now we arrive at Caesarea Philippi.

Jesus asks:

“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

The answers are impressive:

John the Baptist.

Elijah.

Jeremiah.

One of the prophets.

But none is sufficient.

Jesus makes the question personal:

“But who do you say that I am?”

Peter answers:

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

The King has not ceased to be King.

Israel's rejection has not altered Jesus' identity.

Jesus tells Peter:

“flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”

Peter has correctly identified the King.

So what should happen next?

If Peter's expectation is simply:

MESSIAH → KINGDOM → GLORY

what Jesus says next must have been astonishing.

6. “I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH”

Matthew 16:18-20

Jesus announces:

“I will build My church.”

This is the first occurrence of **ἐκκλησία (ekklēsia)** in Matthew.

And Jesus speaks of His building work in the future:

“I WILL build.”

The disciples had been proclaiming the kingdom.

Now Jesus announces His church.

We should not require this one statement to carry everything Acts and the Epistles will later reveal concerning the church. The disciples themselves could not yet have understood all the implications of what Jesus was announcing.

But something significant has unquestionably entered Jesus' instruction.

And notice something equally important.

Jesus does **not** say:

I will build My church, therefore forget about the kingdom.

Quite the opposite.

The very next verse says:

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”

— Matthew 16:19

Within two consecutive verses Jesus speaks of:

MY CHURCH

and

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

They are closely related within God's unfolding purposes.

But Jesus does not simply use the terms interchangeably.

CHURCH AND KINGDOM

Distinct, Yet Closely Related

The **kingdom** concerns God's royal rule through His Messiah and its ultimate manifestation under the King.

The **church** is the people Christ announces that He Himself will build.

Matthew 16 therefore guards us against two opposite errors.

We should not say:

“The kingdom failed, so God abandoned His promises and replaced them with the church.”

Nor should we simply say:

“Church and kingdom mean exactly the same thing.”

Jesus speaks of both.

The King remains King.

The kingdom remains certain.

And Christ now announces:

“I will build My church.”

But before Peter can understand what all of this will mean, Jesus reveals something even more unexpected.

7. THE CROSS MUST COME BEFORE THE GLORY

Matthew 16:21-26

Matthew marks the transition unmistakably:

“From that time Jesus began to show His disciples...”

What does He begin showing them?

He **must** go to Jerusalem.
 He **must** suffer many things.
 He **must** be killed.
 He **must** be raised on the third day.

The Messiah's suffering is not an accident.

The cross is not Plan B.

Jesus says it **must** happen.

And Jesus does not announce His death without announcing what lies beyond it:

resurrection.

But Peter cannot reconcile this revelation with his expectations.

He takes Jesus aside and rebukes Him:

“God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.”

Jesus has said:

MUST.

Peter responds:

NEVER.

Peter has correctly identified **who Jesus is**.

He does not yet understand **what the Christ must do**.

Jesus' correction is severe:

“Get behind Me, Satan!”

Peter expected the King to move toward kingdom glory.

Jesus reveals that God's road to that glory runs first through suffering, death, and resurrection.

Then Jesus goes even further.

The cross will not only reshape Peter's understanding of Messiahship.

It will reshape his understanding of **discipleship**:

“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”

The disciple does not determine the road.

The disciple follows the King.

8. THE KINGDOM GLORY IS STILL COMING

Matthew 16:27-17:8

Jesus does not end His teaching with death.

He points forward:

“For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels...”

— Matthew 16:27

Then:

“There are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

— Matthew 16:28

Six days later, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a high mountain.

Jesus is transfigured before them:

“His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.”

— Matthew 17:2

Peter has just been told that suffering comes before glory.

Now Peter receives a preview of the glory.

Decades later, Peter himself looks back upon that moment:

“We were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”

— 2 Peter 1:16

The kingdom promise hasn't vanished.

The glory is still coming.

Peter simply did not yet understand what must come first.

9. AFTER THE RESURRECTION, THE KINGDOM IS STILL IN VIEW

Acts 1:1-11

The resurrection does not make kingdom teaching disappear.

Luke tells us that for forty days the risen Jesus appeared to His apostles:

“speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.”

— Acts 1:3

The apostles therefore ask:

“Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”

— Acts 1:6

Notice Jesus' response.

He does not tell them that God's kingdom promises have been abandoned.

Instead, He addresses the **timing**:

“It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.”

Then Jesus gives them their present assignment:

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses...”

Jerusalem.

Judea.

Samaria.

The remotest part of the earth.

Then the King ascends.

And the apostles are promised:

“This Jesus...will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

The present mission does not erase the future promise.

The King is coming again.

WHAT CHANGED?

Matthew's narrative reveals developments the disciples did not initially expect:

The kingdom's glorious consummation would not occur immediately.

Jesus announced that He would build His church.

The Messiah must first suffer, die, and rise.

His followers would live as cross-bearing disciples.

Their mission would ultimately extend beyond Israel to the nations.

The King would return in glory.

WHAT DID NOT CHANGE?

Jesus is still the Christ.

Israel's rejection did not alter His identity.

Jesus is still the Son of David.

God's promises have not failed.

The kingdom remains certain.

Jesus continues teaching about it after His resurrection.

The King will return in glory.

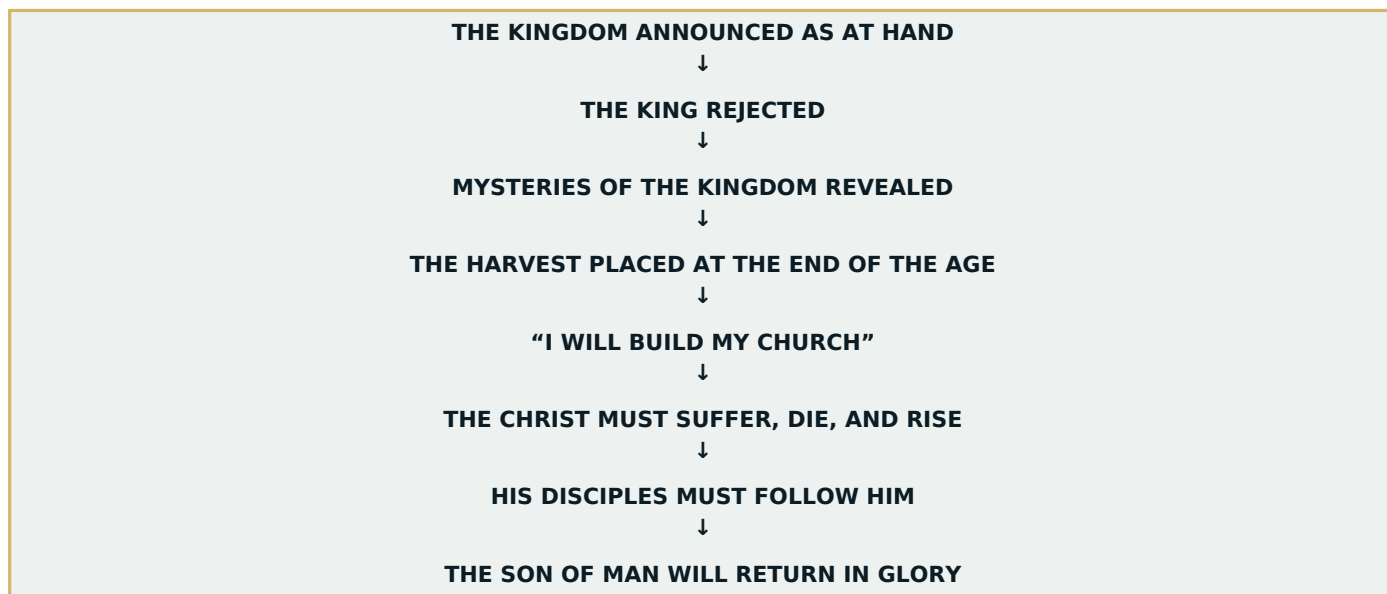
Matthew 16 ends by pointing forward to the coming glory of the Son of Man.

READ THE PROGRESSION CAREFULLY

Our goal is not to make one passage say everything the New Testament will eventually reveal about Israel, the church, and the kingdom.

God's revelation unfolds progressively, and the disciples themselves did not yet understand everything Jesus was teaching them.

What Matthew does show us is a remarkable progression:



We should therefore avoid two conclusions the text does not require.

First, the announcement of the church does not mean God's kingdom promises failed. Jesus remains the Christ, and Matthew continues pointing forward to His future coming in glory and His kingdom.

Second, the church and the kingdom should not simply be treated as interchangeable terms. Jesus speaks of **“My church”** in Matthew 16:18 and immediately speaks of **“the kingdom of heaven”** in

verse 19.

Matthew 16 does not tell us everything Acts and the Epistles will later reveal about the church.

But it does tell us that Christ will build His church, that the cross and resurrection must come before the anticipated glory, and that the King's kingdom purposes remain certain.

NOW PUT YOURSELF IN PETER'S SANDALS

Peter had heard:

"The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Peter had personally proclaimed:

"The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Now Peter knew:

Jesus is the Christ.

The King was standing in front of him.

Peter's expectation is understandable:

KING → KINGDOM → GLORY

But Jesus begins revealing a road Peter had not expected:

KING → CROSS → RESURRECTION → HIS CHURCH & MISSION → RETURN → GLORY

Peter wants the glory.

Jesus tells him about the cross.

Peter says:

"This shall never happen to You."

Jesus says:

"Get behind Me."

Peter correctly identified the King.

Now Jesus must correct Peter's understanding of **the King's road to the kingdom**.

And that is where the next stage of Peter's formation begins:

"FROM THAT TIME..."

DIG DEEPER — KEY TEXTS

Read these passages in sequence and watch the progression unfold:

Matthew 1:1
Matthew 3:1-2
Matthew 4:17
Matthew 10:5-7
Matthew 12:22-32
Matthew 13:10-17, 24-43
Matthew 16:13-28
Matthew 17:1-8
Luke 19:11
Acts 1:1-11
2 Peter 1:16-18

