



spiritual infant

DISCIPLE ME

THE ONE ABOUT GOD'S KINGDOM PART 1: NOW AND NEAR

ICEBREAKER: ROYALTY FOR THE DAY

Imagine waking up tomorrow and finding out you've just been crowned ruler of your own kingdom. No elections, no debates - you're in charge! You have the power to make one rule or change that everyone in your kingdom must follow right away. What's the very first thing you'd do? Would you outlaw bad drivers? Make naps mandatory? Eliminate taxes on coffee? Give everyone a 3-day weekend? Free healthcare or college for all? Take a minute to think about it, then share your "royal decree" with the group.

After everyone has shared:

- What do your answers reveal about the kind of world you'd want to create - or the kind of leader you'd want to be?

STUDY: THE KINGDOM IS NOW

Today, we're going to look at how Jesus announced a very different kind of kingdom. Most kingdoms are built on power, status, and control. They have borders, thrones, and armies. But when Jesus showed up, He didn't come to take over Rome or set up a political government. He came to bring a kingdom that didn't look like any the world had ever seen.

Read Mark 1:1-8

- In verse 1, where does Mark say the story of the good news about Jesus begins?
- How does Mark describe who John the Baptist is and what role he plays in the story?
- From these verses, what similarities are mentioned about John and Jesus? What is different about them?

Mark begins his Gospel by reminding us that the story of Jesus didn't appear out of nowhere. It's the continuation of a story God had been telling for generations. From the prophets to John the Baptist, God was preparing His people for the moment when His promises would come to life.

When Jesus finally steps onto the scene, He doesn't start something brand new; He fulfills everything God had been building toward. The waiting is over. The story is unfolding in real time.

That's why, just a few verses later, (**Mark 1:14-15**) we see Jesus begin His ministry with this simple but powerful announcement:

"The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news."

That phrase would've stopped people in their tracks. The Jews had been waiting hundreds of years for God to establish His kingdom, a day when He would make everything right once again. But Jesus' message was shocking: the Kingdom wasn't just coming *someday*. It was breaking in *right now*.

It's important to note that the word *kingdom* in the Bible doesn't just mean a place; it means *God's reign*. So, wherever God's will is done, that's where His Kingdom is active. When Jesus healed the sick, forgave sins, welcomed outcasts, and restored what was broken -He was showing people what life looks like under God's rule. He was saying, "The Kingdom isn't far away- it's happening wherever I am."

Read these other references: **Matthew 12:28, Luke 17:20-21, Colossians 1:13, Matthew 10:7-8**

- How do you see evidence of God's Kingdom breaking into the world around us today?
- Why do you think God chose to begin His Kingdom work through Jesus instead of instantly fixing everything?

STUDY: THE KINGDOM IS STILL COMING

Jesus also taught His followers to pray, *"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."* (Matthew 6:10) That means it's not here *"in fullness"* yet. Which means we live in the tension between what has *already begun* and what is *not yet complete*. We still see pain, injustice, and brokenness, but we also see glimpses of renewal wherever people follow Jesus' ways. We trust that one day, Jesus will return to finish what He started - completely restoring creation - and bringing justice and peace to His world. Until then, we live as citizens of His Kingdom in a world that's still catching up.

Read these other references: **Revelation 11:15, Romans 8:18-21, 2 Peter 3:13, 1 Corinthians 15:24-26**

- When you look at the world around you, where do you see both the brokenness of what's not yet and the beauty of what God is already renewing?
- Knowing that Jesus will one day finish what He started, how can you live right now as a citizen of His Kingdom - bringing hope, justice, and peace into the places you influence?

CHALLENGE: KINGDOM EYES

This week, watch for moments that feel a little like heaven - a kind act, forgiveness, beauty, or hope breaking through. When you see one, pause to thank God and text the group to share it. Let's celebrate where we see God's Kingdom breaking through into the world and look for ways to join in.