Seize the Kingdom
Introduction
- Today and next Sunday, I want to tell you about the most significant change that has ever taken place in my life: my understanding of the central message of the Scriptures
- This message has revolutionized my thinking and my actions, and has radically transformed my life
- This message can radically transform you/church

The Kingdom of God
- Read Matthew 11:1-15
- Jesus completed giving instructions to 12 Apostles
- Jesus departs to teach and preach in their cities
- What is the message He will be proclaiming?
- The same message He has been proclaiming since He began His public ministry: the Kingdom of God
- Kingdom would have been very familiar to His listeners, the Jews, but unfamiliar to us, as Gentiles
- The Hebrew prophets foretold of a Messiah who would be a descendant of Abraham, who as the obedient Son of David, would come and establish and rule over an earthly Kingdom
- We hear one of these prophecies every Christmas
  - Read Isaiah 9:6-7
  - And what would be the nature of this Kingdom?
    - Read Daniel 2:44-45; background: vision; statue; successive Gentile nations dominating history;
    - Prophets foretold of a glorious day when God will establish His reign on the earth in fulfillment of His promises to Abraham, David, and unknown HP, the Expected One, the Messiah
    - God’s kingdom will displace all other reigns, kingdoms, and authorities
    - God alone will be King in that day
    - Compare current world vs coming Apoc Kingdom
    - Jews longing for this K, as should we
    - Mighty manifestation of God’s power & might
    - Righteousness, justice, and peace established by the Christ, the Son of God, the “Expected One”
    - His kingdom sustained into the ages of the ages

Prepare for the Coming Kingdom
- The prophets also foretold of a coming forerunner of the expected Messiah and His Kingdom
- Jews expect Elijah to be the coming herald
- Yet, Jesus equates John with promised forerunner
  - Read Matthew 11:7-10
  - As John begins his ministry, what is His message?
    - Read Matthew 3:1-3
    - John calls people to prepare for Messiah
    - How are they to prepare? Make His paths straight?
    - Through repentance; define & illustrate repentance
    - Why? The Kingdom of God has come near!
  - Read Matthew 3:4-6
    - Who was John calling to repent? People of God!
    - John was calling God’s people away from the status quo, from ungodliness and indifference
    - To repentance toward God/faith coming Messiah
    - Those believing John’s message: baptized as they confessed their sins; “I am changing my life”
  - Read Matthew 3:7-10
    - No one is exempt from John’s message
    - All of God’s people, including the religious leaders: preachers, teachers, of that day
    - Everyone is to prepare for K and M by repenting
    - Evidence of repentance & faith: a changed life
    - Being Jew, Baptist, churchgoer won’t rescue you
    - They/we confused: don’t think we need to repent
    - “I prayed a prayer”; “I walked down a aisle”
    - God’s prophet says to God’s people:
      - Prepare for the Messiah and His kingdom: Repent
      - If you don’t prepare, expect judgment

The Messiah’s Ministry
- When Jesus begins His public ministry, proclaimed same message as John; Read Matthew 4:17
- And as Jesus began to proclaim the K of God, His ministry was accompanied by great miracles
- Prophets foretold Messiah’s ministry would be accompanied by great miracles: Read Isaiah 35:5-6
- That is what we see: the blind receive sight; the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed; the deaf hear

Where is the Kingdom?
- Jesus appears to be the “Expected One” who will usher in the expected Kingdom
- He is proclaiming the K of the Hebrew Scriptures and performing the signs associated with it
- Yet, where is the coming of His Kingdom in great power and righteousness?
- Where is the removal of the wicked kingdoms?
- Why do Herod & Rome still rule?
- This is the thinking behind John the Baptist’s question to Jesus: Are you the Expected One, or shall we wait for someone else? (Matthew 11:3)

The Mystery of the Kingdom
- In response to John’s question, Jesus responds:
  - Read Matthew 11:4-6
  - Jesus: I am performing prophesied signs; I am the Expected One; You will be blessed if you do not take offense at me! Why?
• Because something John/we don’t understand
• New truth Jesus was to reveal re: Kingdom of God
• Truth about Kingdom that had never been revealed by prior prophets including John the Baptist
• Jesus reveals in a series of parables this new truth which he calls the “Mysteries of the Kingdom”
• The parables that are found in Matthew 13:
  Read: Matthew 13:1-9; 31-33; 44-46; 47-50
• These parables illustrate this central truth:
  The Kingdom that Jesus proclaimed is the SAME Kingdom that the prophets foretold
  K has been inaugurated, but not in manner people expecting
  God’s Kngd has come, but quietly, unobtrusively
  One day it will transition to one of power, glory, might at return of Jesus
  Evil nations replaced by sovereignty of God
  Wickedness will be judged
  Righteousness will be established
  However, at this time, the Kingdom is not:
  Crushing unjust rulers
  Abolishing sin on the earth
  Establishing righteousness, justice, & peace
• Now it has come as:
  As a farmer unobtrusively sowing seed
  Or as an insignificant mustard seed
  Or as a trivial amount of leaven in a loaf of bread
  However, though this kingdom has come quietly, unobtrusively, it is not to be despised!
• Make no mistake!
  It is the SAME kingdom that will one day be fully revealed in great splendor & power
  Currently present, but tiny, seemingly insignificant
  Yet, one day tiny seed will become a great shrub, the Kingdom of glory, power, might
• Therefore, to be highly prized as hidden treasure or pearl great value
  Though Kingdom has come, it is not “in your heart”; not “heaven when you die;” not “spiritual”
  It is here now!
• Those that have eyes to see can perceive it
• Those that have ears to hear can understand it
• If it has been granted to you to perceive it and understand this mystery, Jesus: repent!
• Amazingly, when Messiah proclaims message of K
  Only a few receive and bear fruit; 1 out of 4
  Satan works to snatch is away from some
• Others fall away due persecution/things of world
• Although Satan’s kingdom still stands, K of G has invaded & delivers from power of sin those who believe/persevere in Gospel of Kingdom Read Matt 11:14-15: If you understand that K has come, John is your Elijah
• If you have ears to hear, you must hear (obey)!
  Truth Will Set Your Free
• For years, I had missed the main message of the Scriptures, the Kingdom of God and its Gospel
• I knew Christian jargon, sang the songs; went through the motions of “Christianity”
• I was a pastor; I went to seminary
• Because of “heaven when I die” I didn’t think sin was a big deal; OK if I sinned; I was “forgiven;” God’s grace overlooked my sin
• I lived with sin instead of dying to it; a slave to sin
• In reality, Jesus was just an “add-on”
• I was living a charade; not gospel that Jesus proclaimed; or Abraham, or Moses or prophets
• But when I began to see that the focus of the Scriptures was not “heaven when you die” but entering the Kingdom now
• And that sin was not OK, but had to be dealt with ruthlessly through repentance, in order to enter K
• I realized Jesus was not an “add-on”
• He was the Holy One that demanded that I be holy
• I mourned over my sin, but rejoiced in the message of the Scriptures was not “heaven when you die” but entering the Kingdom now
• I had missed the main message of the Kingdom of God and its Gospel
• I was a pastor; I went to seminary
• Through the motions of “Christianity”
• I knew Christian jargon, sang the songs; went
• Today, you have the opportunity
• We are truly His disciples; will be set free from sin
• And if we don’t, we aren’t His disciples; slaves sin
• If you were honest, many have to admit
• Focus has not the Kingdom; Jesus is an “add-on”
• You are a slave to sin
• Unloving toward wife; lying at work; disrespectful to parents; pornography, etc
• The effects of you sin are evident in your life, your marriage, your family, your relationship
• But today, you have the opportunity to begin to truly be a disciple of JC; to be set free from sin
• Challenge: John 3:19-21