

Real. Present. God.

The King in the Psalms

Leader Notes

by Rev. Casey Kegley

When you look at the life and ministry of Jesus, you discover that the kingdom of God lies at the core of who Jesus is and what Jesus came to do. One of the first things Jesus says when He begins His ministry is, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

Even before Jesus’ earthly ministry, God had promised to send a Messianic King to save His people and rule over everything He had created. Some of the clearest Old Testament promises of the Messianic King come in the book of Psalms.

This five-part Bible study series explores some of the ways the Psalms point toward the hope of a Messianic King and unpacks how Jesus fulfills this hope.

Session 1 introduces you to the theme of the Messianic King.

Session 2 shows how the King rules over creation.

Session 3 highlights the King’s concern for the lowly and needy.

Session 4 emphasizes the King’s power to save His people.

Session 5 focuses on the size and scope of the King’s kingdom.

This study series could be used for a Sunday morning Bible study, a weeknight youth group gathering, or even as a theme for a retreat.

Leader’s notes are in red throughout.

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STUDY 1 – INTRODUCING THE KING

Goals:

1. This study will introduce participants to the core theme in the Psalms of the Messianic King, looking especially at Psalm 2.
2. This study will help participants begin to reflect on their own life in Christ's kingdom.

Materials:

1. Bible Study Handout (Participant Version)
2. Bible Study Leader Notes
3. ESV Bible

Introduction

We're about to embark on a journey exploring a kingdom—God's kingdom. The kingdom of God is an important theme running through the entire Bible. Perhaps you've noticed that the Bible is full of references to kings, kingdoms, ruling, reigning, and other royal activity. One of the first things Jesus says when He begins His ministry is, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). God is repeatedly referred to as "the LORD" in the Old Testament. The LORD puts kings on the throne to rule over His people. He sometimes fights against kings like in the story of the Exodus. Kings and kingdoms are all over the place in Scripture.

In this study, we are going to take some time exploring the picture of the King presented in the Psalms, but before we jump into that, let's take a few minutes to consider what comes to our minds when we think about kings and kingdoms.

OPENING ACTIVITY

The following activity can be done with partners or in small groups of 3 to 5. Give each group a piece of paper.

Let's play a game of royal "MINUTE TO WIN IT." Each group is going to have one minute to name as many kings or queens as they can. Whoever comes up with the most at the end of one minute wins the game.

Feel free to tell participants that they can be creative in their lists. Kings and queens don't have to be limited to royals either past or present. For example, participants could name LeBron James as a king. Elvis is the king of rock and roll. A lion is the king of the jungle, etc. Have fun with it.

At the end of the minute, have the group discuss what they came up with.

What did you come up with?

Why did those things come to mind?

We can come up with all different sorts of ideas of kings and queens, can't we? Sometimes, our pictures of kings and queens look a lot like what we see on playing cards. We envision distinguished men or women from medieval times who live in castles and have both knights and court jesters in their service. Some of us may picture Kate and William or Harry and Meghan Markle. Still others of us picture the Burger King.

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With all these pictures in mind, let's jump into the Psalms now to see what kind of picture they paint of the King.

Scripture

One of the major themes in the Psalms is the theme of the Messianic King. Repeatedly in the Psalms you'll hear references to a King who is going to arrive on the scene and do some amazing things. To point out just a few examples: He'll save His people. He'll defeat their enemies. He'll rule forever. There are many places in the Psalms where you'll find God's people expressing their eager expectation for this King to come. God's people are waiting.

The first time we are introduced to the King in the Psalms is in Psalm 2.

Now, maybe you're asking yourself, "Why is the Messianic King such a big deal in the Psalms?" For a large portion of their history, the people of Israel lived under the rule of a king. The idea of a king would have been something quite familiar to God's people at the time the Psalms were written. The king was someone the LORD anointed and put on the throne to lead his people. David himself (the author of numerous Psalms) was one of these kings. Even before the time of the kings, God had made promises that there would be kings in Israel (See Genesis 49:10, Numbers 24:7,17, Deuteronomy 17:14-20).

As you read through the Psalms, you'll find numerous references to the King that point backward to the historical kings of Israel like David. At the same time, when you read the Psalms in light of Jesus in the New Testament, you'll often see lots of these passages pointing forward toward a special future King called the "Anointed" or "Messiah." The Messiah is a unique kingly figure designated by the LORD to accomplish a monumental task. When you consider the life and work of Jesus, you begin to see how these Psalms point in two directions. Not only do they point backward to historical kings from Israel's past, they also point forward to the Messianic King Jesus who rules forever.

As you lead your group through these studies, encourage them to be thinking in both these directions. Know that each of these studies will make a clear jump forward to Jesus in the "New Testament Connections" section.

Instruct participants to open their Bibles to Psalm 2. Begin by reading the whole Psalm together as a group. Then go back through the Psalm more slowly, chunk by chunk, to unpack what's happening.

Read Psalm 2:1-12 as a group.

At first glance, what do you notice about the king in this Psalm? What does the Psalm explicitly say about him?

Possible answers could include:

The King is on Zion, the holy hill.

The King is the Son of the LORD.

The King possesses the ends of the earth.

The King has nations for a heritage.

The King is powerful enough to defeat enemies (breaking with a rod of iron and dashing them in pieces).

Key Point:
When you consider the life and work of Jesus, you begin to see how these Psalms point in two directions. Not only do they point backward to historical kings from Israel's past, they also point forward to the Messianic King Jesus who rules forever.

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Now, take some time to read the Psalm again piece by piece.

Read Psalm 2:1-3 again.

What is the scene depicted in these verses?

Encourage participants to focus on the imagery presented in these verses. What kinds of pictures arise in the imagination when you read? It's a picture of kings and rulers of the earth plotting together against the LORD and His Anointed/Messiah. You get the sense that these are preparations for a big-time battle. What kinds of details could you fill into the picture?

This is a serious scene here. The writer of the Psalm offers us a picture of a large-scale battle between the powers of this world and the LORD. The most powerful forces in the world, whether they are entire nations, individual rulers, or other powers are making plans to fight against the LORD. Ultimately, this is a battle between good and evil, and God's people find themselves caught up in the middle of this battle.

Believe it or not, this battle continues even today. The cosmic battle between God and all that opposes Him—the battle between good and evil—is something the people of God have to deal with today, too.

Read Ephesians 6:10-13.

Read Romans 7:15.

Do you resonate either with what Paul says or what the Psalm writer says about the battle between God and Satan going on in the world? Why or why not?

As a leader, it is important to understand here that participants might vary widely and wildly in their experiences. Some may feel like they are caught up in a battle or struggle on a daily basis. Others might not feel this way at all.

It is in the midst of this battle scene that the LORD Himself enters and speaks. When the world is at its craziest, with all kinds of nations and powers trying to do whatever it takes to defeat God's plans and purposes, the LORD brings good news of a King who ultimately triumphs.

Read Psalm 2:4-9.

How do you see the LORD'S power on display here?

In verse 4, we have a transition from earth to heaven. As the nations are making their plans against the LORD, the LORD sits high above them, noticing their every move. His position and power make the schemes of the nations literally laughable. You know you have power over someone when they try to come at you and you respond by laughing. The LORD demonstrates His power in other ways, too, as the rest of the passage says.

Possible responses to this question could include:

- The LORD is so powerful that He just laughs at the plans other powers try to make against Him.*
- The LORD's voice alone is enough to strike fear in the hearts of His enemies.*
- No one could stop the LORD from setting His King on the throne in Zion.*
- The King is more powerful than any of the other nations.*
- The same nations that were once raging have now been broken and dashed into pieces. Their plans have fallen apart.*

Key Point:
When the world is at its craziest, with all kinds of nations and powers trying to do whatever it takes to defeat God's plans and purposes, the LORD brings good news of a King who ultimately triumphs.

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What do these verses tell you about the King?

Possible responses could include:

- *He's got the power over the nations.*
- *He is the begotten Son of the LORD, which means He has the power of the LORD.*
- *He is the servant of the LORD who puts an end to the battle.*

Ultimately, what will this King do to the enemies (the nations from verse 1) who stand against the LORD?

- *He will conquer the enemies of the LORD.*
- *He will rule over the nations. Often, the images of “breaking” or “dashing” are poetic ways to express a king’s rule over something.*

New Testament Connections

Let's put some flesh and bones to the King in Psalm 2. When Jesus arrives on the scene in the Gospels, a lot of what He talks about deals with the kingdom of God. Multiple times in the New Testament, Jesus Himself is referred to as the King who was expected to come. He's the same King from Psalm 2. Take a few minutes to explore some of the following references:

You may want to split participants up into small groups and have them read and discuss each verse before bringing their responses back to the larger group. Of course, all of this depends on your group size.

What do each of these verses say about either the kingdom of God or Jesus as a King? What connections do you see between these verses and Psalm 2?

Mark 1:15

Jesus announces that the kingdom is at hand when He begins His ministry.

Matthew 6:33

Seek the kingdom of God first.

Matthew 18:1-4

Whoever humbles himself like a child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

John 3:1-5

Jesus explains to Nicodemus that you must be born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God.

John 1:47-51

Nathanael calls Jesus the king of Israel.

John 19:17-22

Even Pontius Pilate emphatically calls Jesus the King of the Jews.

Key Point:
Multiple times in the New Testament, Jesus Himself is referred to as the King who was expected to come. He's the same king from Psalm 2.

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Application

Let's return to Psalm 2. It's in the last line of the Psalm that we can find powerful words for applying what we've learned about the King to our own lives.

Read Psalm 2:10-12.

In the middle of this crazy battle between good and evil, the LORD has promised to send His Son, the Anointed One, the King, to defeat all that stands against the LORD. We see nations that once raged and plotted against God commanded to serve with fear and trembling because there is no way they can compete against the all-powerful King. In the end, the King wins.

How does knowing that the King always wins change your outlook on the world and the way things seem to go in the world?

When asking this question, it is important to acknowledge the reality of Jesus' victory while at the same time recognizing that His victory comes in His way, not ours. It comes on His timetable, not ours. We have expectations for how and when God should act, but He works in the way that is best. Things may not be working out the way you want them to today, but you can be assured that God is going to work things out the way He wants in the end.

When you know that the King always wins in the end, it changes your perspective along the journey. With this victorious future in mind, the present that once looked hopeless can now look hopeful. The present that once felt lonely now feels full of the presence of Christ who fights for you. People who once felt afraid now feel assured in the promises of God that never fail.

Other good questions to ask here might be:

- What kind of hope does Jesus' victory inspire in you?
- How does it feel to know that you have a God who fights for you?
- What is it like for you when you realize that God's promises never fail?

How do you experience the power of Jesus, the King, working in your own life?

There is room for lots of different answers here. Feel free to give participants the time and space to wrestle with this for a bit.

In his explanation of the second article of the Apostles' Creed in the *Small Catechism*, Luther talks about what it means to live as a servant in Jesus' kingdom under His power and authority.

He says,

"I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord,

who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death,

that I may be his own and live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness,

just as he is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.

This is most certainly true."

Key Point: In the middle of this crazy battle between good and evil, the LORD has promised to send His Son, the Anointed One, the King, to defeat all that stands against the LORD.

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Read again the last line of the Psalm.

What does this last line say?

It says, "Blessed are all who take refuge in him."

What does it mean for you to take refuge in Jesus, the King?

A refuge is a place of safety and security. It's somewhere you can go and know for certain that you are protected on all sides. What do you do when you are safe and secure? You rest. You breathe easily. You relax. You trust. The idea here is to help participants see a relationship with Christ as the most secure space they have.

Wrap Up

Close with prayer.

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

Spend just five minutes a day for the next week taking refuge in Jesus. You could take refuge in Him in a variety of ways. Use your responses from the last question of the study to get yourself started. If you don't know where to start, here are just a few suggestions:

1. Spend five minutes a day in prayer. (If you don't know what to pray, use Psalm 2 as an outline for your prayer.
2. Spend five minutes a day reading the Psalms that talk about God as a refuge. Here are seven of them, so you can use one a day.

Psalm 5, Psalm 25, Psalm 46, Psalm 61, Psalm 91, Psalm 118, Psalm 141

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STUDY 2 – THE KING RULES OVER CREATION

Goals:

1. This study will highlight the authority the King has over creation.
2. This study will help participants reflect on moments of awe and wonder at the beauty of creation as well as on moments of confusion or grief over the ugliness of this fallen world.

Materials:

1. Bible Study Handout (Participant Version)
2. Bible Study Leader Notes
3. ESV Bible

Introduction

We live in a world that is full of all kinds of beauty and majesty. You don't have to look very hard to notice the wonders of creation, either. They're all around us, right under our noses many times. Yet, at the same time, this impressively beautiful creation can be threatening and dangerous. The same things that lead us to stop and wonder can also cause us to cry out and sigh. On the same ocean there can be gorgeous sunsets and gigantic tsunamis. The same mountaintops can produce both panoramic views and perilous avalanches. Sunshine can give way to storm clouds sometimes in just a matter of minutes. Let's take some time in this study to explore both the wonders and dangers of this creation as well as the King who rules over it all.

OPENING ACTIVITY

The following activity is done best in small groups of 3-5 participants to allow enough time to share detailed responses to the following questions/prompts.

Split into small groups of three to five and answer the questions/prompts below. Go around the group and listen to everyone's answer.

Depending on your group, it may be best for the leader to give these prompts one at a time. Give 3-5 minutes for the first prompt and then give another 3-5 minutes for the second.

1. **Talk about a time when you were taken back by the beauty and majesty of God's creation. (This could be just about anything you found especially beautiful, breathtaking, marvelous, etc.) Consider these questions:**
 - What was that experience like?
 - How did it make you feel?
2. **Share a time when you experienced creation in a negative way or point to an example of a time when you saw creation affect others in a harmful way. (This could be a natural disaster, really bad sunburn, a story you saw on the news, etc.)**
 - What did that experience feel like for you or how do you imagine it felt for others?

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Scripture

God's Word has a lot to say about both the glorious beauty and the painful dangers of the things God has made. There are references all over the Psalms giving voice to the experiences of God's people. Check out just a few of them.

Sometimes, the writers of the Psalms express their joy and awe at the things God has made.

Read Psalm 8:1-4.

Read Psalm 19:1-5.

Read Psalm 95:3-5.

Other times, they talk about the challenges of living in a creation that is fallen and broken. Sometimes they talk literally about the creation, but they also use storm and disaster imagery as depictions of their real-life struggles.

Read Psalm 93:3.

Read Psalm 46:2-3.

Read Psalm 57:1-2.

How do the experiences of the Psalm writers compare and contrast to your own experiences?

Not only do the Psalms give voice to the kinds of things we experience in creation, but they also give us a picture of the King who rules over the creation. It's the King who has the power and authority over both the amazingly beautiful and the powerfully destructive forces of creation. Part of what it means for God to be King is that everything He has made serves Him, and this includes the forces of creation.

Read Psalm 24:1-2.

Read Psalm 93 (in its entirety now).

Read Psalm 96 (especially vv10-13 if you're short on time).

How in these verses (or in any of the verses referred to earlier) do you see creation serve the Lord, its King?

Here, consider the times in your own life (and encourage the participants of the study to do this, too) when you made or created something. Didn't it feel rewarding when the things you made did what they were supposed to do? There's something deeply satisfying about cooking something that tastes delicious, coaching a team that runs a play to perfection, or building something that gets the job done just right. In a way, the things you make serve you when they do what they were intended to do.

The same is true of God's creation. The things He makes serve Him when they do what He intended them to do. Events that we often take for granted are everyday examples of creation serving its Lord and King.

So, some possible answers could include:

- *The sun serves its King by rising in the morning and setting in the evening. (Psalm 19 says the sun loves doing its job so much that it's like a groom.)*
- *The rains make the earth sprout and grow.*
- *Trees provide much-needed oxygen.*
- *New plant life emerges every spring.*

Key Point: Part of what it means for God to be King is that everything He has made serves Him, and this includes the forces of creation.

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Application

One of life's most serious struggles involves the reality that bad things continue to happen even though we believe in a good God who has the power and authority over everything. Christians in every day and age have wrestled with why bad things happen. How do we begin to account for all of the natural disasters we hear about in the news? How do we make sense of the challenging things that happen in our own lives?

Has there ever been a time in your life where you've questioned God? What was that like?

Model for participants here that it is okay to have questions. Living a life of faith does not always mean having everything figured out clearly. Throughout the history of God's people, you find that even some of the pillars of the faith come to God with serious questions. The Psalms are a prime example of language God's people can use to come to Him with questions.

It is important to encourage participants to see the value of bringing questions to God. It is much better to bring your questions directly to Him than to let your questions drive you away from God. Questions ought to serve as inspiration to engage with God rather than disengage. He is God who can handle questions.

Have you ever witnessed some kind of natural disaster or other calamity and wondered how God could allow something like that?

In moments of difficulty in our lives, we are often led to believe that the most appropriate question to ask is "Why?" Now, it's certainly understandable that we would ask that question, but the trouble is that there usually isn't a good answer to that question. While we can say confidently that God is good and that He is always working out His good plans, answers like that don't always satisfy hearts that are broken by the brokenness of this world.

It is important that we as leaders try not to answer questions for which we don't have true answers. It is extremely difficult to allow some of these difficult questions to remain unanswered, but there is a lot of value in saying, "I don't know." Teaching our young people to live in this tension is a powerful exercise in faith.

When asking the question, "Why?" doesn't get us satisfying answers, there is another question we can ask. When "Why?" doesn't work, we can always ask, "Where?" "Where?" questions can take a variety of forms. We can ask, "Where are you, God? Are you here? Do you see? Do you know what's going on here?"

New Testament Connections

Jesus' disciples found themselves in the middle of a natural disaster one time when they were out on the sea. It is in this moment that Jesus, the King of all creation, shows His power over the forces of creation and His presence in the midst of His follower's times of trial. Take a moment to read this story to see what the disciples ask Jesus and to see how Jesus responds.

Read Mark 4:35-41.

Key Point:
It is much better to bring your questions directly to God than to let your questions drive you away from God.

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How are Jesus' disciples experiencing the forces of creation in this story?

They are experiencing the destructive forces of a storm and the sea. The waters are overwhelming them and leaving them powerless.

How do they respond to their situation?

They cry out to Jesus. Instead of asking Him why this is happening, they ask Him, "Don't you see that we are perishing?" In essence, they are asking Him where He is and if He cares about the situation.

How does Jesus respond to them?

Jesus rebukes the winds and the waves and calms the storm with His words.

What does Jesus' response teach us about Him?

It teaches us two things: 1. Jesus is the King over creation described in the Psalms. He has the power over all the forces of creation. (He was there when they were made and was involved in their creation, after all.) 2. Jesus is present in the midst of these troubling events.

How might this story begin to change the way you view not only the disastrous events you see around the world but also the challenging times in your own life?

What difference does it make to you that you have a King like Jesus whose power extends over everything, including the forces of creation/nature?

Key Point:

1. Jesus is the King over creation described in the Psalms. He has the power over all the forces of creation. (He was there when they were made and was involved in their creation, after all.)
2. Jesus is present in the midst of these troubling events.

Wrap Up

Close with prayer.

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

Get outside this week! Whether it's warm and sunny or cold and rainy, spend some time in God's creation. Here are a few ideas for you.

1. Snap a photo of something in God's creation and share it with no filter. Thank the Lord for making it the way it is.
2. Find a comfortable, outdoor spot to pray for ten minutes or go for a prayer walk through your neighborhood or at a local park. Use your senses and thank God for things you experience when you're in His creation.
3. Find a way that you can care for what God has made. If it means just picking up the trash you see on the sidewalk as you walk through your neighborhood, go for it.

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STUDY 3 – THE KING CARES FOR THE LOWLY AND NEEDY

Goals:

1. *This study will highlight the King's concern for those in need.*
2. *This study will help participants begin to wrestle with waiting for Christ to return and make everything right and just.*

Materials:

1. *Bible Study Handout (Participant Version)*
2. *Bible Study Leader Notes*
3. *ESV Bible*

Introduction

My father always said that you could learn a lot about someone by how he or she treats those people underneath him or her. He's right. For example, you can tell what kind of a coach a person is by how he or she treats his or her players. You discover a lot about a boss by the way they interact with employees. Some of the world's best teachers are the ones who treat their students with the deepest respect. How you treat those below you says a lot about your character.

In this study, we are going to explore how Jesus, the King, treats the lowliest people in His kingdom. Specifically, we are going to look at how He shows His concern for those who have the greatest need.

OPENING ACTIVITY/DISCUSSION

This discussion is done best in smaller groups of 3-5 participants to allow enough time to share detailed responses to the following questions/prompts.

Split into small groups of three to five and answer the questions/prompts below. Go around the group and listen to everyone's answer.

Depending on your group, it may be best for the leader to give these prompts one at a time. Give 3-5 minutes for the first prompt and then give another 3-5 minutes for the second.

1. **Talk about a teacher/coach/boss/other authority figure you've had in your life who treated people underneath them in a special way.**
 - *What made this person someone extraordinary to learn from, play for, work for, etc.?*
 - *What makes them different from others in their position?*
 - *How did they treat you and how did that make you feel?*

If participants can't think of any real-life examples, encourage them to talk about what they imagine an authority figure could be like.

2. **Talk about a time when someone looked up to you as an authority figure.**
 - *What did that feel like?*
 - *How did you treat those people who were looking up to you?*

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Scripture

Just like you learn a lot about a teacher, coach, or boss by how they interact with the people underneath, you can learn a lot about the King by watching the way He interacts with the lowliest and the neediest people in His kingdom. Listen to the ways the Psalms talk about how the King treats people like the poor, the lowly, and the outcast.

The first reading we'll look at comes from Psalm 72. This is a prayer of Solomon asking God to give the King justice and righteousness. Now, justice and righteousness are kind of big words, and they're not the kinds of words we use regularly in our speech. Before we read the Psalm, let's take a minute to talk about what these words mean.

What comes to your mind when you hear the words “justice” and “righteousness?”

When the Psalms talk about righteousness, they are talking about a characteristic of God. God is the source of righteousness and acts in righteousness. When God “acts in righteousness” (or “acts justly/ in justice”) He is keeping His promises to save and to make things “right.” At the heart of what righteousness means is God’s action to make everything right—making it the way it should be again.

Read Psalm 72:1-12, focusing especially on verses 4 and 12.

How does the King interact with the lowly and the needy in His kingdom?

He defends their cause, meaning He stands up for what they need. He delivers them from those who oppress them. He is the helper for the one who has help from no one else.

What does this tell you about the King’s character?

The King is a selfless King. He has an uncommonly big heart. He is willing to stick up for those who have no voice in society. He is willing to defend people who have no other defense. He cares about the ones no one else cares about.

New Testament Connections

When we look at the New Testament, especially at the works of Jesus, we see that He embodies this same kind of royal concern for the lowly and needy. Many times throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus can be found hanging out with the social outcasts and others on the margins. Jesus puts real flesh and bone to the King that was described in Psalm 72.

When Jesus interacts with the poor, the crippled, and others in need, He is enacting the righteousness of God. He is making things right again, restoring them to the way they should be. Check out the following episodes from Jesus’ life and ministry and talk and answer the following questions:

- 1. How does Jesus show His concern for the needy in this story?***
- 2. How is Jesus beginning to make everything right in this story? In other words, how does He show His righteousness?***

One of the major themes you see running through all of the Bible is the restoration of everything that God has made. When God created the world, it was good. It was perfect. That changed after the Fall into sin, but God promised that He would work to make things right again. He promised that He would restore it to a good and perfect state. Throughout the Old Testament, you find

Key Point: When Jesus interacts with the poor, the crippled, and others in need, He is enacting the righteousness of God. He is making things right again, restoring them to the way they should be.

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God making beautiful promises to renew His broken creation. (See Isaiah 35 or Isaiah 61:1-2 for some examples.)

When Jesus arrives on the scene, the works He does, especially His miracles, give us a small glimpse of God beginning to renew His broken creation. When Jesus heals someone, He is working to make things right again. He wipes away disease. He feeds those who are hungry. He forgives those who are crippled by sin. He brings life where there once was death. Wherever Jesus goes, you find renewal and restoration. Another way to say this would be to say that wherever Jesus goes, you find righteousness or “rightness.”

Depending on the size of the group, you may want to split the group into smaller groups to talk about one of the stories and bring a report back to the whole group.

Read Mark 2:1-12.

Read Matthew 8:1-4.

Read Matthew 14:13-21.

Read Luke 7:11-17.

Everywhere Jesus goes He makes things right again. When people encounter Jesus they end up having their sins forgiven, diseases healed, stomachs filled, lives restored, etc. The kingdom Jesus has come to establish is one in which everything works the way it is supposed to work. Disease, sin, brokenness, and death are not a part of this kingdom. Many of the acts Jesus does throughout His ministry to establish His kingdom of righteousness are just small glimpses anticipating the greatest work of righteousness Jesus came to accomplish. The greatest work of righteousness Jesus ever accomplished was His death on the cross and His resurrection from the grave.

The apostle Paul summarizes it this way:

“For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.” (Romans 5:17-18)

It is because Jesus has died and risen again to new life that a new kingdom is already here. It is a kingdom that includes all those who have been baptized into His death and resurrection (cf. Romans 6).

If you have split the group into smaller groups, bring them back into the larger group to talk about the following questions.

Based on the ways you see Jesus interacting with those on the margins of society and those in need, what kind of a King would you say He is?

What do Jesus’ actions say about His character?

Help participants see just how unique Jesus is as a King. When we picture kings or other authorities, we usually picture people of high standing in the community who for the most part associate themselves with others just like them. Jesus is unique because He steps out of the heavenly throne room to associate with those of the lowest standing and the greatest need.

Key Point:
Jesus’ interactions with those on the margins show us that He is a King who possesses a deep care and compassion on those who are the farthest from God. His kingdom is not exclusive, but inclusive in a marvelous way.

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Jesus' interactions with those on the margins show us that He is a King who possesses a deep care and compassion on those who are the farthest from God. His kingdom is not exclusive, but inclusive in a marvelous way. His interactions also show us that He embodies a humility unlike anyone else. He is not above hanging out with the outcasts. He is a King who serves. Because He is this kind of King, He is someone you can trust and someone you can relate to.

Application

Let's bring some of these ideas closer to home now. Sure, it's great that Jesus has come as the King of righteousness who has already begun to make everything right by His death and His resurrection, but we continue to live in a world where a lot doesn't go right. Life with parents can feel like a challenge. Relationships don't always go the way we want them to. People disappoint us. School is hard. Calculus, am I right? Cancer happens. Loved ones pass away. There are so many times when this world and the people in it (ourselves included) just don't work the way we believe they are supposed to. So, what do we do with what we've just learned?

In what ways does the world feel like it is a place where things go right? In what ways does it feel like the opposite?

These are questions and struggles that God's people have wrestled with for millennia. Over and over, God's people have wondered what to make of the reality that God has come in Jesus to make everything right and yet, the world is still filled with all kinds of brokenness.

It is during a situation like this that psalms like Psalm 72 take on new significance. Remember, the Psalms are the prayers of God's people throughout the ages. They have used the Psalms as tools to come before God and express to Him a variety of emotions, thoughts, and experiences. In Psalm 72, we get a prayer of hope—hope that God will send a just and righteous King to execute justice on the earth and make everything right. Since we find ourselves in a similar spot to the people of God in the Old Testament, we can pray this prayer like they prayed it. They were waiting for a king to come. We are waiting for a king to come, too. As we wait for the day Jesus will come back to fulfill all His promises, use Psalm 72 as a guide or a roadmap leading you to pray for God to fix all that is wrong in the world.

Key Point: Since we find ourselves in a similar spot to the people of God in the Old Testament, we can pray this prayer of Psalm 72 like they prayed it. They were waiting for a king to come. We are waiting for a King to come, too.

Wrap Up

Close with prayer.

Read Psalm 72:1-14 as a prayer to conclude your time.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Write a prayer journal entry this week using Psalm 72 as your guide. Take time each day to pray for someone different who is in need of Jesus' help.

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STUDY 4 – THE KING SAVES HIS PEOPLE

Goals:

1. *This study will highlight the King's power to save his people from all enemies.*
2. *This study will help participants reflect on the realities of the enemies God's people face today and the salvation Jesus grants from these enemies.*

Materials:

1. *Bible Study Handout (Participant Version)*
2. *Bible Study Leader Notes*
3. *ESV Bible*

Introduction

In this study, we will explore this characteristic of the king: his ability to save. Repeatedly in the Psalms, the Messianic King is described as someone with the power to defeat the enemies of God's people. We will point to a handful of examples from the Psalms, connect these passages to what we see in Jesus, and make an application to our own lives as people who require Jesus to save us.

OPENING ACTIVITY

For the opening activity today, we are going to discuss victory celebrations. Either as a large group or in smaller groups of several participants, respond to one of the following prompts and share with the group.

1. *Let's say your favorite pro sports team has just won the world championship (Super Bowl, World Series, NBA Finals, Stanley Cup, Premier League, etc.). If you got to plan the victory celebration and parade when the team got back to town (and money is no object) what would the victory celebration look like?*
2. *You personally just achieved one of your really important goals. (Maybe you got an A on a test. Maybe you got your driver's license. Maybe you got a job or an acceptance letter from a college.) What would you do to celebrate?*
3. *What is the most important symbol of accomplishment in your house/room right now? It could be a trophy, plaque, certificate, etc.*

Key Point:
Repeatedly in the Psalms, the Messianic King is described as someone with the power to defeat the enemies of God's people.

Scripture

One of the major themes that comes out of the Psalms is the idea of the Lord triumphing in victory over His enemies and the enemies of His people. In several places in the Psalms, you see how God plans a victory party.

But before we get there, we have to look at the reality that God's people have been in spots that require saving. When you look at the stories of God's people in the Old Testament, they are frequently facing threats from surrounding enemies and need God to be victorious and save them. Sometimes, it's from the Philistines. Other times, it's from the Canaanites. They even wind up needing God to save them from one another. Finally, they need Him to save them from the Assyrians and Babylonians that ultimately defeated the kingdoms of Israel and Judah and carried

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them away into exile. In the face of enemy threats, there are many Psalms that give voice to the people's cry for a savior.

Check out just a few examples.

Depending on the size of your group, it may be helpful to split participants up into smaller groups to read, take a few minutes to discuss, and bring a report back to the larger group.

Read Psalm 143.

Read Psalm 64.

Read Psalm 56.

Read Psalm 3.

What are the problems the writers of these Psalms are experiencing?

There are lots of possible answers for this question. Here are a few examples:

Psalm 143:

No one is righteous (v.1)

The enemy has crushed them (v.2)

The writer is tired and appalled (v.2, 7)

Psalm 64

Enemies threaten with secret plots (v.2)

Enemies' words are weapons used to do harm (v.3-4)

Psalm 56

The speaker is being attacked by enemies (v.1-2)

Enemies stir up strife (v.6)

Psalm 3

Foes are rising and saying there is no salvation in God (v.1-2)

How are their enemies threatening them?

Again, there are many ways participants could answer this question. Here is what the Psalms themselves say:

Psalm 143

Enemies pursue the soul.

They crush lives to the ground.

They make the speaker sit in darkness.

Psalm 64

Enemies plot and scheme in secret.

They use their tongues and words like weapons.

Psalm 56

Attackers oppress and trample all day long.

They injure the cause of the speaker (v.5).

They stir up strife and lurk (v.6).

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Psalm 3

The speaker's foes are saying there is no salvation in God.

What kind of help are they asking from the Lord?

Psalm 143

The speaker is asking to be heard (v.1,7)

The speaker asks for the Lord to show His face, making Himself known (v.7)

The speaker asks to hear of the Lord's steadfast love and to receive wisdom to know the way he should go (v.8).

Psalm 64

Again, the speaker asks to be heard and preserved from his enemies (v.1).

He asks to be hidden from their secret plots (v.2).

Psalm 56

The speaker asks for the Lord to be gracious (v.1).

The Lord is the one who delivers the soul from death and keeps feet from falling (v.13).

Psalm 3

The speaker asks from the Lord to arise and save him (v.7).

Application

Now, we today aren't living in a world where we face the same kinds of threats that God's people were facing. We don't have the Babylonians knocking on our doorstep threatening to take us into exile. Even though we don't experience enemy threats in same way God's Old Testament people did, we continue to require the help of a Savior.

In the *Large Catechism*, Luther talks about the daily attacks that God's people face. Luther says,

"Therefore we Christians must be armed and daily expect to be incessantly attacked, in order that no one may go on in security and heedlessly, as though the devil were far from us, but at all times expect and parry his blows. For though I am now chaste, patient, kind, and in firm faith, the devil will this very hour send such an arrow into my heart that I can scarcely stand. For he is an enemy that never desists nor becomes tired, so that when one temptation ceases, there always arise others and fresh ones."

The devil is always threatening the people God, using their sinful flesh, the world, and other means attack and counteract the work God has done in their life.

Read 1 Peter 5:6-11.

How does Peter describe the ways Satan works to attack the people of God?

In what ways do you believe you have had to face the enemy?

What do you think it looks like to resist him, firm in faith?

How might the Psalms you read earlier help you when you face attacks from the enemy today?

Key Point:
Even though we don't experience enemy threats in same way God's Old Testament people did, we continue to require the help of a Savior.

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Psalm and New Testament Connections

Just as the Psalms give voice to the cries for help that come from God's people, they also point to the real-life help God sent in the Messianic King. Now, we get to talk about how God plans His victory party over the enemies His people face.

One of the most common images the Psalms use to talk about the victory of the King is a "horn." A horn is a symbol of power. Some of the most powerful animals like oxen had horns. An ox with his horns and head held high symbolizes strength and triumph. It is like a victory parade. Whenever the Scriptures talk about a horn being raised, it is communicating the magnitude of God's victory. Read the following passages that talk about a horn of God's victory and salvation.

Read Psalm 92:9-11.

Read Psalm 132:13-18.

What does God's victory look like in these passages?

When you look at these passages, you find that there are two dimensions to God's victory. First, He defeats His enemies. These Psalms describe the defeat with lots of image-rich language. In these Psalms, God's enemies perish, scatter, fall down, are clothed with shame, etc.

Second, God's victory involves the raising up of a King. Not only are enemies defeated, but God Himself is promoted and lifted high. Psalm 89:22 says that enemies can't outwit or humble Him. He cannot be taken down. Psalm 89 28-29 says that His kingdom will be established always. There's no term limit on God's victory. It stands forever.

Another piece of this victory is the presence of God. When God is victorious, He promises to be present in that place. Psalm 132:14 highlights this reality.

Finally, God's victory results in praise from his people. Psalm 148 captures this.

Now, let's take a look at how God raises the horn of salvation in Jesus. The way God displays His victory over His enemies and the enemies of His people is an unusual display. Through His death on the cross, Jesus raised the horn in triumph over Satan, over sin, and over death.

Read the following New Testament verses.

Read Colossians 2:13-15.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-19, 25.

Read Romans 8:37-39.

How do you see Jesus' triumph over His enemies in these passages?

How have you experienced the victory of Jesus in your own life?

Key Point:
Through His death on the cross, Jesus raised the horn in triumph over Satan, over sin, and over death.

Wrap Up

Close with prayer.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Keep the victory of Jesus in front of you this week. Here are a couple ways you could do that.

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Write Romans 8:37-39 on a piece of paper and hang it somewhere you'll see it. Put it in your locker, on your bedroom door, on the bathroom mirror, or wherever you know you'll see it several times a day. Instead of going the paper route, make Romans 8:37-39 the lock screen or the home screen of your phone, tablet or computer.

Praise God for the victory he won over sin, death, and the devil for you. The Psalms are filled with Psalms of praise that would be great ways for you to praise him for what he has done for you. Take one of the Psalms from this list and pray it every day this week.

Psalm 33

Psalm 65

Psalm 66

Psalm 98

Psalm 103

Psalm 148

Psalm 149

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Leader Notes

STUDY 5 – THE KING’S KINGDOM INCLUDES ALL NATIONS

Goals:

1. *This study will highlight the extent of the kingdom, namely that the kingdom extends to all nations.*
2. *This study will help participants see themselves as part of this universal kingdom.*

Materials:

1. *Bible Study Handout (Participant Version)*
2. *Bible Study Leader Notes*
3. *ESV Bible*
4. *Computer and projector (to show images during opening activity)*

Introduction

In this study, we are going to unpack one final aspect of the king’s reign—the extent and the scope of His kingdom. We’ve talked about His rule over creation. Now we are going to zero in on the people over whom Jesus rules. When we look both at the Psalms and corresponding verses in the New Testament, we find that the kingdom Jesus comes to establish is much bigger than we could ever imagine, including people we least expect.

OPENING ACTIVITY

The following activity involves a series of pictures that show you just how big certain things are. When introducing this activity to the participants, it is important to name the item to be shown before showing it so participants develop an idea of how big they believe something to be before they actually see the picture that puts it in perspective.

Take a look through the following gallery of pictures.

1. The Pyramids of Giza
2. The actual flag that inspired the Star-Spangled Banner
3. Statue of Liberty torch
4. Wind turbine
5. Anchor chains
6. A snail
7. A sequoia tree
8. A saltwater crocodile
9. Japanese Spider Crab
10. World’s largest clock (in Mecca, Saudi Arabia)

Which one of these pictures surprised you the most? Why?

Scripture

When we dig into the extent and scope of the king’s kingdom in the Psalms, we find that it is bigger than any of us ever could have imagined. The kingdom the King comes to establish includes people others never saw coming. All nations are a part of this kingdom.

Key Point:
When we look both at the Psalms and corresponding verses in the New Testament, we find that the kingdom Jesus comes to establish is much bigger than we could ever imagine, including people we least expect.

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Check out these verses from the Psalms that talk about this.

Again, if your group is large, you may want to consider splitting the group into smaller groups that take one verse, discuss it, and bring a report back to the larger group.

Read Psalm 72:15-20.

Read Psalm 22:27-31.

Read Psalm 45:16-17.

What do these verses tell you about the king's kingdom?

Why do you think it is important that this kingdom includes all nations, all generations, etc.?

If the kingdom of the King includes all nations—peoples from different backgrounds, ethnicities, places, and experiences—it means that the kingdom includes you, too. You are a part of all nations.

New Testament Connections

While God had prophesied many times in the Old Testament that His kingdom and people would stretch to all nations and generations, it was in Jesus that the reality of the kingdom's size came into sharper focus. Throughout the Gospels, you see Jesus interacting with Gentiles, tax collectors, sinners, and others you wouldn't expect the Son of God to hang out with.

Read Luke 2:25-32.

How does Simeon say that Jesus has fulfilled what had been prophesied about the coming King who would even be king over the Gentiles?

Read Luke 17:11-19.

Who is it that experiences the full effect of Jesus' healing in this story?

The Samaritan who returned to give Him thanks.

Read Matthew 8:5-13.

How does this centurion fit into the picture of the kingdom for all nations?

He is not from Israel. He is a Roman soldier. Yet, it is his faith that connects him to the works and promises of Jesus.

Application

We've already touched on this just a little bit, but the reality of a kingdom that includes all nations means that the kingdom includes you. It doesn't matter where you're from. It doesn't matter what you've done. Christ's kingdom is big enough to include you.

How do you see yourself fitting into Christ's kingdom?

What has Christ done in your life to make you a part of it?

The vastness of Christ's kingdom means that others are included in it, too. In fact, that means all of your brothers and sisters in Christ are a part of it. The people you like are a part of it as well as the people you don't. People who look like you are part of it as well as people who don't. Servants of the King come in all different ages, colors, ethnicities, and life experiences. This makes the

Key Point:
The kingdom the King comes to establish includes people others never saw coming. All nations are a part of this kingdom.

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kingdom of God a complicated thing sometimes. Whenever different and imperfect people get together, there is the potential for our sinful nature to rear its ugly head.

This has been an issue for the church since its inception. In fact, many of the letters the apostle Paul wrote addressed issues that arise when imperfect people from a variety of backgrounds are gathered together to live together as servants of the one true King.

Listen to some of the things he has to say to these churches and to us.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10.

Read Romans 15:5-7.

Read Philippians 2:3-8.

What does Paul say it looks like for us all to live together as different people who all are still servants of the King?

How might you go about living in this way with those around you at your church, in your youth group, at your school, at your house?

Wrap Up

Close with prayer.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

This week let's make our responses to that last question real. Find a way to count someone else as more significant than yourself. Get creative. If you need some help getting started, you can try one of these suggestions:

- Engage in a conversation with an older member of your church. Ask them some questions about their life of faith. You could ask them what Bible passage has been most meaningful to them or you could ask them to share the stories of some of the most powerful things the Lord has done in their life.
- Do something you know your parents want you to do without them asking you to do it.
- Talk to someone you wouldn't normally talk to at school.
- Let your sibling sit in the front seat all week.
- Ask your youth leader what you could do to help make his or her life easier. Offer to lead a prayer when you gather together, to send out invites to the next event, or make an announcement in church.

Key Point:
The vastness of Christ's kingdom means that others are included in it, too. In fact, that means all of your brothers and sisters in Christ are a part of it. The people you like are a part of it as well as the people you don't. People who look like you are part of it as well as people who don't.
