

The Always Surprising Kingdom

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People used to think the kingdom of God was the domain of earthly governments. Hence the crusades. Now many think it's only about salvation, only spiritual, only a church thing. In truth, it's neither. Or actually some of both. But different and a whole lot more. It's a story, a really big one—an enormous epic written by the hand of God himself. It's always and forever increasing. And our lives are defined by how thoroughly we step into that story.

I began writing a new devotional last week on the kingdom of God, so over the next few months I'll need to find 365 distinct thoughts on that theme. That shouldn't be hard—it's a big deal in the Bible, and the Bible is a big book. It doesn't spell out for us a definition of the kingdom. It simply tells the back story and announces its coming. And it raises lots of questions. Is it political? (Not exactly, but it certainly impacts politics.) Is it the church? (No, but the church is part of it.) Is it spiritual? (Yes, but so much more.) Ultimately, it involves every area of life.

In preparation for writing, I've been reading a few books on the kingdom. I like to read a few foundational books to make sure I'm covering all the bases, but not so much that I feel compelled to cover everything everyone has ever written on the subject—or that I begin to parrot other people, many of whom I may not normally agree with. But one book that's resonating with me right now is Scot McKnight's [The King Jesus Gospel](#). I find myself thinking “yes!” to most of what I've found in the first few chapters, as he articulates a lot of what I've long believed. Whether he and I go in the same direction from there, I don't know—I haven't read the second half yet. But it's a great start.

Bottom line is that, contrary to the belief of many, the gospel of salvation and the gospel of the kingdom are not the same thing. The gospel of the kingdom is broader, fuller, deeper. Salvation is certainly part of it, but most of the church for the last few centuries has equated the two. The result is a reduced message of the kingdom cut off from its fuller meaning.

For anyone wondering how the good news of salvation and the good news of the kingdom are different, you'll just have to wait for the devotional to come out. (Or you can start by reading McKnight's book or anyone else's that draws a distinction between the two messages.) My thoughts will come out in *indeed* magazine over the next year and in a book in fall 2015. And no, the kingdom will not come before then. In fact, in many ways it's already here.