

# Kingdom People

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] turn to Acts chapter 1 and today we'll start from verse 15. Though I'm going to read a bit further back because we need to get the context of today's chapter.

So what happens today is just after Jesus has ascended into heaven he's gone back to be with the Father and while the disciples are mesmerized by this sight of Jesus going up into heaven their minds must have been going in a million directions at once wondering what does this mean for us? We never thought we'd see a day when Jesus wouldn't be with us. What does this actually mean? And two men in white robes suddenly appeared to them and said men of Galilee this is verse 11 men of Galilee why do you stand looking into heaven? This is Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. Now there's a promise that hasn't been fulfilled yet but when you consider God's track record at fulfilling promises that's something to look forward to. Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet which is near Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey away that's about 45 minutes really and when they had entered they went up to the upper room where they were staying Peter and John and James and Andrew

Philip and Thomas Bartholomew and Matthew James the son of Alphaeus Simon the zealot and Judas the son of James that's a different Judas. All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers. In those days Peter stood up among the brothers the company of persons was in all about 120 and said brothers the scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.

Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out and it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that the field was called in their own language Akel Dammah that is field of blood for it is written in the book of Psalms may his camp become desolate and let there be no one to dwell in it and let another take his office.

So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection. And they put forward two. Joseph called Barsabbas who was also called Judas and and Matthias and they prayed and said you Lord you who know the hearts of all show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.

[ 3 : 3 6 ] May God be blessed for his word which is timeless it doesn't have a shelf life so let's think today about what the Lord is bringing to us from his word. Last week we started a new series with Carl called The King and the Kingdom. A new series called The King and the Kingdom and I'm not sure if the is the clicker working though. I don't think it is. Or maybe it's not switched on. There we go.

Is that us? Yep, that's good. So last week Carl was helping us to see how the kingdom broke through into this world and it was an inspiring piece of thinking really just to see the Lord using the most unlikely people but with the most extraordinary power to bring his kingdom to bear upon this world. So in actual fact what we're looking at is a parallel kingdom a kingdom that's at work in this world and that this world by nature would reject.

So what we're thinking about today is I think that today's passage really helps us think about the king and his people what sort of people are they in the kingdom and what marks them out from the people of the world.

So the first thing we want to think about here is these people are we sing a song called Standing on the Promises but I want us to think for a moment about the fact that these folk are actually standing on a particular promise.

The reason they're able to stand on the promises of God in the general and multiple sense is because they're standing on the promises that are not yet fulfilled because they have actually seen with their own eyes a promise that has been fulfilled.

[ 6 : 01 ] That's a particular promise. Jesus promised them again and again he kept teaching his disciples this they never really got it they didn't understand what he was trying to teach them but he kept saying to them again and again before he went up to Jerusalem the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him and when he is killed after three days he will rise.

Well folks he kept that promise. So you can once you know he's kept that promise you have every right to expect he's going to keep the other ones.

Now I don't know about you but I could imagine if I was one of that group then I would be wanting to say to my friends hey listen can we all just feed into each other what are the promises he made to us?

Can you remember what he said? Can you remember what he said would happen? What he said he would do? What he said we would be like? What he said would happen to us?

What kind of people we would become? How we would achieve? What we're to do? Can you remember these promises? Because we need to build each other up with these promises. We need to share these promises with each other.

[ 7 : 11 ] We need to remind each other of these promises because he's kept the big one. He's actually risen from the dead. He said he would do that none of us thought he could do a thing like that.

He's kept the big ones so he's going to keep all the others. Brothers and sisters that applies as much to you and me today as it does as it did in the first century.

Do we know the promises of God? Do we know the promises that he has made to us? Are we familiar with our Bibles to the point where we can actually take, instead of just singing, standing on the promises, we actually do it.

We actually say there's a promise that God has made. On the day of Pentecost, Peter spoke to a crowd of thousands and he said to them, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the Holy Spirit.

Why was he saying that? He was confident of that because Jesus had just fulfilled that promise for him. He had just received the Holy Spirit. He was one of the tribe that came running out of the temple praising God and speaking in languages they had never learned.

[ 8 : 40 ] But praising God in languages that could be understood by the multinational crowd that was gathered around the temple at the time. God had just fulfilled that promise for Peter and for the apostles and for the 120 that were gathered.

He had fulfilled that promise. Jesus had said, wait in this city until you're clothed with power from on high. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

And that promise had been fulfilled so Peter could confidently say to the crowd if you will trust Jesus Christ the same will happen for you. And Paul the Apostle says no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

If you're in a position right now where you recognize Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord then you couldn't do that. That is utterly impossible for you to be in that position without the Holy Spirit indwelling you.

And what spirit is that? That's the spirit who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. That's the spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. He's the one who's indwelling you right now.

[ 9 : 54 ] That's why Peter could say the most astonishing thing. He could say God has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of his Son.

Everything we need. So in actual fact you'll probably find that the problem with most of us is not the lack of the Holy Spirit but it's the lack of faith. And it doesn't have to be a great faith.

Jesus said you can move a mountain with a tiny faith that's small as a grain of mustard seed. It's not the size of your faith that matters it's what you do with it. You actually act on it. So here we are.

I've lost my clicker. So they're standing on the promise. He had promised a big promise that he was going to rise from the dead three days later and these people were eyewitnesses.

He appeared over a period of 40 days to hundreds of witnesses. Eyewitnesses. Our faith we're not standing on nothing.

[ 10 : 59 ] God does not expect a person who's a believer to take a leap of faith into the dark. There's stacks of evidence to support the faith that we stand on. And the reports that we've got here in our Bible are eyewitness reports.

They can be proved to be eyewitness reports. If they were a fake it would be easy to show they were fake. Okay, let's move on.

So we're thinking of the king and his people. So now we see how they're actually standing on the promises. Peter said to the church he has given us his very great and precious promises.

Why did he give us these promises? So that through them you might participate in the divine nature. Does that cause a little thrill to run up the back of your neck?

That you might participate in the divine nature. that in some way the nature of God becomes a part of your nature. It doesn't make sense if that's not being indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

[ 12 : 09 ] It means. That must be what it means. That through the Holy Spirit indwelling us and the promises of God we actually begin to participate in the life of God himself.

Isn't that wonderful? I mean maybe we're sitting here thinking I don't really understand this. It doesn't actually matter if we understand it. What matters is that we take it on face value and we believe it and we trust it.

We reach out on the basis of it so that we participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. Peter is actually saying to the church that through the promises of God all the promises of God relating to his presence with us his power in us his word that will keep us and sanctify us all these promises are actually designed to help us escape the corruption in the world.

Why? Because he wants to create a people who bear a striking resemblance to his son. It's not a bad idea to go home and just have a quick glance in the mirror down again and say I wonder how much Father thinks I'm like Jesus.

You know? Because that's his goal it should be our goal. How do we know that's his goal? Romans 8 29 those whom he foreknew he predestined to become the image to be conformed to the image of his son.

[ 13 : 50 ] That's God's plan for your life and mine. So that yes we might be discouraged by the way that sin seems to grip us every now and again and old habits that we find it difficult to shake and character traits that we wish we didn't have even more so when we see them coming out in our kids and we think what am I passing on here?

You know? But in the midst of our discouragement we've got these tremendous promises from God to help us escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Not the world's evil desires but ours. Our evil desires. And we can escape these by the provision of God. And so we stand on the big promise that was fulfilled when he rose from the dead and that enables us to stand on the promises that are yet to be fulfilled and have confidence in them.

Is that not exciting? Hello? I think that's exciting. Okay, let's move on.

We're thinking about the king and his people. So sorry I've moved on one too far. If we go back to how did it do that?

[ 15 : 12 ] I only pressed it once. There we go. Right. Verse 17 the king's love is shared. It's a shared love and he even shared it with Judas.

Judas was loved with a love that wouldn't run out. a love that wouldn't give up. I want us to take a few minutes to think about this.

Turn with me to John chapter 13 please because this is so important. If this is what God's love was like for Judas then you need to go home and think carefully about what you think God's love is like towards you.

Okay? But we're about to see something about God's love for Judas that I think is nothing short of astonishing. Here we go.

Jesus said he who has seen me has seen the Father. Okay? So if you want to know what the Father's love looks like you look at Jesus and here's Jesus in action.

[ 16 : 19 ] Now before the feast of the Passover when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father having loved his own who were in the world he loved them to the end.

During supper when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot Simon's son to betray him Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going back to God rose from supper.

Now let's stop for a minute.

He washed the disciples' feet. Let's just rephrase it slightly to get the point that's being made here. He washed Judas' feet. He washed the feet of the man.

Now Jesus we're told in Scripture had known from the very beginning who would betray him. So Jesus wasn't taken by surprise when Judas became a traitor.

[ 17 : 22 ] Jesus had known for all of the three years they were together that Judas was a bad egg and that he would really do the dirty on him at some point or other.

Jesus had known that all along and here he is on this is the last night of Jesus' life on earth and he washes Judas' feet. He came to Simon Peter who said to him Lord do you wash my feet?

Jesus said what I am doing you do not understand but afterward you will understand. Now we'll go on a wee bit because I don't want to linger too long over this section but verse 10 Jesus said to Peter the one who has bathed does not need to wash except for his feet but is completely clean and you are clean but not every one of you.

Now I think there's a real possibility that this just blew the delusion away for Judas if he had managed to fool himself into thinking that he had fooled Jesus with his hypocrisy for three years he knew now that Jesus had marked his car Jesus knew that they weren't all clean and he knew who he was referring to but the surprises are still coming not every one of you is clean so when he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place he asked them do you understand what I have done to you you call me teacher and lord and you're right for so I am if I then your lord and teacher have washed your feet Judas's feet you ought also to wash one another's feet they would remember after the crucifixion after the resurrection after Jesus appeared to them when he had come back to life again and after Jesus had ascended into heaven they would remember that Jesus had washed

Judas's feet and they would have to process that themselves what did that mean for them truly he says to you that a servant is not greater than his master nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him if you know these things blessed are you if you do them I'm not speaking of all of you I know whom I've chosen the scripture will be fulfilled and any quotes from Psalm 41 he who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me I'm telling you this now before it takes place that when it does take place you may believe that I am he and so here he is predicting that there's going to be some uprising against him the one who ate my bread has turned against me and then he's troubled at verse 21 he's troubled in his spirit and he says I tell you the truth one of you will betray me and to think about this for a moment here's here's

[ 20 : 23 ] Jesus making this astonishing statement to them on the last night that he's going to be with them one of you will betray me one who has eaten my bread shared my table is going to rise up against me and the disciples are thrown into a melee of conversation about this who can it be who is it going to be and Peter taps John on the shoulder and says ask the Lord who it is and there's this hubbub going on and I suspect that the only person who actually heard Jesus answer was John who's recorded it here and John recorded the answer Jesus said it's the one to whom I will give this morsel when I dip it in the bowl now you need to understand that this reveals two things first of all it reveals the table setting because

Judas must have been close enough to Jesus for him to do that they didn't sit round a table in those days they sat along a table and they didn't sit there reclined on the floor sort of like this and one elbow against each other so you've got them in ranks and the only way Jesus could have handed this morsel to Judas was if he was next to him John was on the right side Judas was on the left probably and it was a place of honor and not only was the seating a place of honor but so too was the handing of a morsel dipped in the bowl to a guest that was a mark of honor this isn't Peter this isn't Jesus being theatrical this is the love that will not let you go this is the love that's reaching out to Judas even at this late hour and trying to draw this man's wicked soul back into the light this is the love that just doesn't give up having having loved his own who were in the world he loved them to the end this is the love that loves you and me folks there is no basis ever for our discouragement there is no basis for our discouragement at any point because you will never wake it up one morning and discover that

God doesn't love you anymore you'll never discover that his love is unchanging but the love of the king was rejected by Judas and Satan's paycheck was fierce it was a field of blood Judas went out and it says it was night and there's a power of meaning in those three little words it was night it was it was it was Satan's night it was the dark night that Judas had chosen for himself now I can't get my head around this I'm sure you can't either but here's a man who had shared Jesus bread and fellowship and experienced his love and his friendship and the wisdom of his teaching and witnessed his miracles Jesus sent the twelve disciples out at one point he sent all of them out it doesn't say he sent eleven of them out it doesn't say he sent everybody except

Judas out it says he sent the twelve out and he gave them authority over evil spirits and he said to them heal the sick raise the dead cleanse the lepers cast out demons and they went out and they did that Judas went out and did that he was gifted to do these things can you understand why a man who was so privileged and so brought into the inner circle of Jesus great astonishing love and affection and his wisdom could reject all that love because he loved money that he couldn't take with him and all he ended up doing was investing in a field of blood it's really really sad but what's glorious is that the tender love of Jesus was reaching out to this man until the very last minute Jesus wouldn't give up on him so he's not about to give up on any of us that's astonishing he should give up on us you know what I think he should give up on us but he doesn't and he won't and he prays his name so Satan paid his wages and

Judas committed suicide we're told by one of the other gospels that he hanged himself and some people want to say oh well you know there's a bit of a conflict there you've got two different stories about how he died one says he hanged himself another one says he fell over and he burst open all the rest of the likelihood is it's just a two different versions of the same story he hung himself possibly from a tree that was overhanging a cliff and jumped off and the rope broke or the branch broke or something and he ended up in the rocks below but there's no need to worry about two different stories we're going to look a wee bit more about what the Lord is actually how reliable the Lord is with his word we're thinking tonight today about the king's book as well these are people of a book a particular book and it says in Psalm 138 that God has exalted above all things his name and his word so in other words

[ 26 : 25 ] God has actually staked his reputation on his word his name is his reputation so if you can find a fault with the Bible then you're finding fault with God it's God who's flawed not the Bible but if God is not flawed then this book here questions us but we don't question the book we don't find fault with the book because it's much more honest to suppose that we should find fault with ourselves than the book some of you have heard me say before that many years ago I did a lot of proofreading and typesetting for a company down in Norfolk and we had titles by people like Ruth Rendell and famous writers like that and Oxford University with tons of titles from them and it was amazing how often those books would hit your desk and you say I've just handled that book just a few weeks ago and here it's back again and this is because the authors took a colossal amount of trouble to be sure that they were saying things the right way around and sometimes the corrections to the text were very expensive but they still said

I want that text changed and I thought to myself my goodness here's these people going to all this trouble and all this expense to make sure that the text and what it says on the page is exactly what they want it to say and there's no possibility of error and we're supposed to believe that God inspired about 40 people over 1400 years to put this book together and didn't bother to proofread his work and that it's full of errors and contradictions brothers and sisters that is just not the case I've heard people argue that because well we'll look at it in a minute I'll just move on from that but the word is not only eternal it's also external and I get this idea from Martin Luther the reformer Martin Luther was astonished to realise that God had put his mind his great mind and his great heart into a book that he had committed everything about his character into a book that was external to us that's what

I mean when I say the book judges us we don't judge the book this word is external to us it's not just eternal it's external to us this is not subject to our judgment but we are subject to its wisdom so if we don't understand it don't let's say well the Bible must be wrong let's say Lord help me understand because your mind is greater than mine that's not a difficult thing to say really is it is it difficult for us to say that the mind of God is better than ours or do we think somehow or other that God's intellect could do with a bit of help from us it's always laughable really isn't it but people question the scriptures all the time because they assume that the scriptures are just the product of men's minds just opinions when in actual fact the scripture testifies itself all scripture is God breathed and this is what Peter said to the church no prophecy was ever produced by the will of men but men spoke from

God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit now that's the basis on which on which Peter here is speaking to the believers because he's quoting from the Psalms he's quoting may his camp become desolate let no one to dwell in it let another take his office he's quoting from the Psalms he's quoting as though the Psalmist has predicted Judas and I can think of scholars who would say oh well that can't possibly be the case David couldn't have predicted Judas well I'm sorry but Peter just think of the kind of training Peter had there were two disconsolate souls on the Emmaus road after Jesus had died and risen again but they didn't know he'd risen again and Jesus met up with them and walking at their pace graciously walking with them along the road he opened the scriptures to them he says starting with

Moses and all the prophets he opened unto them the scriptures that concerned himself so they had a bible study to die for on the Emmaus road one that any one of us here would have loved to be in you might think what's the point of spending half an hour with David Andrew but if you got half an hour with Jesus of Nazareth taking you through the scriptures you would not say Lord don't let us go home come on stay for a while and that's exactly what they did they wanted them to stay their hearts were burning within them as he opened up the scriptures to them now just consider this those men had a couple of hours with Jesus on the Emmaus road Peter had three years with Jesus three Emmaus years for Jesus to open the scriptures to him and show him how to use them do you think do you think Peter was in any danger of misusing the scriptures here when he quotes from the Psalms and says that

[ 32 : 21 ] David predicted the death of Judas I don't think there's any possibility that Peter was misusing the Psalms or that he was mishandling the Bible he had been taught by the master teacher and he had sat at the feet of Jesus for three years not a couple of hours on the Emmaus road but three years with the master teacher we need to have more confidence in what's on God's page and praise his wonderful name and let's think about the king's witnesses we're just about done the king's witnesses you know the reason Peter opened his mouth here was because he was standing on a promise from Jesus he said to the twelve disciples he says do you not know that you will sit on thrones twelve thrones judging the tribes of Israel now that was an interesting thing to say for a couple of reasons one because for hundreds of years ten of the tribes of Israel to all intents and purposes had been lost the kingdom was split after Solomon's death and ten tribes went off and did their own thing and eventually built a capital city in Samaria and they were idolaters and to all intents and purposes those ten tribes of

Israel ceased to be identifiable and they were left with Judah and Benjamin in the south and that became the tribe of Judah and so it was a sad thing but here's Jesus actually saying you're going to sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel so were the tribes lost to Jesus were the ten tribes lost to God absolutely not he is well able to bring the people back from the tribes that were scattered in those days and he will do it he will bring back his ten tribes and there will be one king over the whole twelve tribes of Israel and we know who that king will be it will be King Jesus but there's another thing going on here too because the reason Peter's opening his mouth is to say well we clearly need a replacement for Judas his reasoning for needing a replacement for Judas is because he knows that there have to be twelve apostles for the prophecy that Jesus made to be fulfilled there have to be twelve apostles there can't be eleven because there's going to be twelve tribes and there'll be twelve thrones so there needs to be a replacement for

Judas and that's why Peter opens his mouth here he's standing on the promise of Jesus and saying we need a replacement for Judas you see what I'm saying here faith is really at work here in this situation these people really believe and one of the key things about a witness is that the witness really believes what they saw and if they're a false witness they're testifying to something they don't really believe but a witness really believes what they saw and they testify to that and this man that they're looking for there's one qualification he needs to have let me read it to you here Peter says this one of these men one of these men what men the men who accompanied the apostles and Jesus on their travels from the time that Jesus was baptized by John which was like three years ago to the very present day he says one of these men must join us why he must become with us and this is verse 22 of our chapter he must become with us a witness to his resurrection that's the exciting fundamental thing that the disciples that the apostles had to announce to the world

Jesus Christ has risen from the dead complete vindication this Jesus whom you crucified God has made both Lord and Christ and so finally we see that these people these people of the kingdom are people who live under the king's direction they look to God for guidance in this matter they don't just say right can we have some nominations for an apostle okay or can we have a church meeting and we'll see how many members want him and how many want him and all the rest they didn't do that it actually says they cast lots which is more or less the equivalent of throwing dice and you think that doesn't sound very spiritual at all but if you go to Solomon you'll find in Proverbs 16 that Solomon says the lot is cast into the lap but it's every decision is from the

Lord so in other words they're saying we might have a plan B but that plan B will prove to be God's plan A God doesn't do random everything is planned and so when we're really seeking the Lord's will and we're submitted to God's will and in actual fact we can trust you go you go along to the polling booth and you've prayed and you've said Lord honestly I'm at a loss Lord I don't know where to put my cross I don't know that I trust anybody that's on this voting list but you can put your number on your mark on the sheet and you can say Lord I'm just trusting you to direct my path direct my hand right now because Lord the outcome of this election is in your hands it's not in mine so you see we can actually have God's direction and that's one of the fundamental things of being a kingdom person is that you're constantly looking for

[ 38 : 31 ] God's direction not trusting your own Proverbs 3 5 and 6 is famous verse trust in the Lord with all your heart lean not upon your own understanding in all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths that's what we want we want God's direction so here we are here's a little summary of what we're doing we're standing on the promise you and me we're standing on the great promise that Jesus said he would rise from the dead and he did he kept the big one so we can therefore be standing on the promises that are still to be fulfilled we enjoy the king's love and it's an everlasting love it's a love that wouldn't even give up in Judas let alone his own children we're people who trust the king's book we're people who are witnesses to the king and to his resurrection and we're people who seek the king's direction in everything that's what it is to be the people of the kingdom and may



God be praised that we are so privileged let's pray God our father we we bless you now you know every heart Lord just as the disciples did they were looking to choose a successor for Judas and they said you know every heart Lord you know every heart here in this building today you know whether we are safely and securely and genuinely your children or whether we've been dithering whether we've never yet made up our minds whether we're not sure of you Lord we think of the way that the love of Jesus persevered with Judas if your love is so unchanging well that can only be because you are love and so you don't ever become less love you are love and that your love is constant because you are constant and your love can't be quantified because you can't be quantified we bless you father in

Jesus name for these wonderful realities and so we think oh Lord that it would be wonderful if you would just inspire some of us to either make a commitment to Jesus this very day and not assume that we're going to live forever because we don't know if we've got an afternoon today many many years ago on a Sunday afternoon people thought they had their Sunday afternoon but they didn't because Pan Am flight 109 was about to descend and wipe out most of their village people would be maybe in their beds for an afternoon sleep because they'd been on a shift or they would be watching the TV or they would just be finishing their Sunday lunch and suddenly a liner falls on top of them we don't know that we've got this afternoon father now is the day of salvation Jesus has power on earth to forgive sins but Judas got to the point where his time ran out and he rejected the most astonishing love in the universe father let there be none of us who would put ourselves in that mad position help us to make up our minds where we still can make up our minds and for those of us Lord who've maybe walked with you for a long time but who maybe are not as faithful as once we were not as fired as once we were then Lord we pray that you would help us by your grace and strength and the power of the Holy

Spirit to renew our commitment to you and to think seriously in the coming week as to how we would do that what it would look like we bless you for your goodness we remember our brothers and sisters who are not with us today and we think especially Lord of our brother Bill Murder who's quite ill right now so have mercy on your people oh Lord and we bless you for all your kindness to all of us and we ask that in the week ahead we would be people who are like the folks in the upper room devoted to prayer standing on the promises because they can stand on the promise that was kept we bless you in Jesus name