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Our Bibles, as we hold them this morning, consist of 66 books written by 35 men who we can name with some books that we really don't know who the physical author was.

We contend, earnestly, as Jude orders us to, that all of the writings by all of the authors in the canon you hold in your hands were written under the inspiration of God. God breathed.

So then, we have a Canon of manuscripts, some more ancient, some slightly less, the revelation period spanned 1500 years, by 40 or more physical authors that all have in common a single author who is God.

We choose to believe that the Bible is a collection of writings by reliable first hand witnesses written during the lifetimes of other first hand witnesses about miraculous events that were prophesied beforehand by men who claimed to be writing under the inspiration of God.

If that is true, and it is, it means that this one book holds ultimate authority of what is true over all other books. All other writings. ALL other writings must be compared to the truths of this book as the standard. What agrees with this book is true. What dis-agrees with this book is false.

At the beginning of my lifetime, every published work could be known and catalogued. At the end of my lifetime, that is no longer possible. The internet has made every person an author and a publisher and the words have poured out like so much sewage, and the pipe to hold it all just keeps expanding.

Billions of words at the beginning of my lifetime. Trillions of words at the end. The name google was a word we kids bandied around and it was a 1 with a million zero's. A made up number like double dog dare that trumped all the

other numbers because it was the biggest one. You just had to be the kid that got there first.

Googles and googles of binary bits that form words out in cyber space, in memory chips or clouds or whatever. Every word on twitter and facebook and google and anywhere else in the cyber cloud in every language and doubling over and over and over, all of those words that form ideas and opinions and whatever else are subject to the authority of this single book that is God breathed.

If they agree with the words of this book, they are true. If they say something different or counter to the words of this book, they are error.

God wrote a book over a period of 1500 years with 40 authors. He revealed everything we know about Him to us in this book. And what He revealed is unknowable, it is beyond human reason to find out, unless He graciously revealed it. He kept some secrets for Himself. Some things even revealed are beyond our limited capacity to understand.

29 *“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”* Deut. 29:29

*Do you not know? Have you not heard? the LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will never grow faint or weary; His understanding is beyond searching out.* Isaiah 40:28

God is beyond finding out. The only way we can know anything about Him, is if He tells us, and He has graciously done that in this book we hold. Therefore, if this book is revealed truth that has authority to declare every other word ever written or spoken, truth or error depending on how it compares to this standard, this revelation, do you think perhaps we ought to find out what this book says?

Most people want to think this book is too big to grasp. Most people will go

to that default. Or I should say copout. That's a copout. Compared to the googles and googles of things written down and stored in some cloud some place, all of a sudden, this book actually seems manageable. Compared to trillions of words, the thousands in this one book are quite small, quite manageable.

*And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.* Isaiah 35:8

God did not write His book only for the brilliant minds to understand. This book is a highway that even fools can follow and get home. Little ones can understand it. In fact, that's why Jackie loves teaching kids. They don't question these truths. They just take it all in and believe at the level they can understand. And God says, even fools can understand enough to get home. This book is a highway that leads home.

It's not that tough. And if you neglect it because you've decided it's too difficult for you to understand, I'm here this morning to tell you, that's a copout. On judgement day, try that argument with God. It ain't gonna fly.

You need to open it up and join the rest of us fools, and read it. My email address is prominent on the home page of our church's web site. Feel free to send your questions to me. I'm just another fool, but I might know something you don't yet know, and I'm willing to share what little I've got.

That brings us to our question this morning. Is there a common theme that runs continuously throughout all 66 books? One thematic idea that ties 66 books by 40+ authors over a 1500 year period all together as a whole?

I'm going to go out on a limb this morning. Something I do. Crawl out on a limb with a chainsaw and cut the wrong side. Most evangelicals would immediately answer my question, yes, yes, there is a common theme, and it's redemption, the forgiveness of sins by the death of the Son of God on a cross, and His resurrection and ascension into heaven. Redemption and forgiveness.

I would tell you that redemption and forgiveness are a sub theme. A terribly important sub theme, because otherwise I'm lost and without hope, but redemption from sin makes me the center of the theme of the book, and I'm really not.

As important as redemption and forgiveness are, there is a more important main theme that ties the entire book together as a whole. The theme of this book that ties the entire book together is the authority to reign of Jesus, the Son of God, God of very God, the authority to reign, or the kingdom of God, if you will, with Jesus enthroned with all authority over every created thing in all of the universes forever and ever.

The theme of the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation is the kingdom of God, the authority to reign of God, on earth, as it is in heaven.

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*

In this book we learn in the first chapters of the first book that God made man in His image and that He gave to man the authority to reign over this earth. But tragedy ensues. Man believes a deceiver, Satan, and dis-obeyes the authority of God and that single event throws this world into chaos.

That single sin forfeits the authority given to man by God and the authority to reign on earth defaults to Satan who is by that one event become ruler of this world. Every son of Adam, including you and including me is born with the genetics of the fall into sin. We are literally born condemned. Born into a chaotic world ruled by Satan. Authority to reign stolen by Satan.

And we learn in this revealed book that from that moment where everything was broken and lost, God has set a plan in place to ultimately take back the throne of this world from the deceiver, Satan, and depose him from this world into hell, and then He gives the authority to reign of this world to the King of kings, His own Son, the Lord, Jesus, Messiah.

Genesis begins with how everything is lost. Revelation ends with how everything is ultimately restored. So then, the theme of this book is the retaking of this world by Jesus. That's what we pray for every time we mindlessly say the Lord's prayer. **Your** kingdom come. **Your** will be done. **On earth!** like it is in heaven.

Let me re-state those simple requests in plain language. As if the original wasn't plain enough for fools. God already said it is. But listen again to what we are asking for in the Lord's prayer.

Your authority to reign on this earth as opposed to Satan who is now ruler come! And having done that the other follows automatically. Your will be done on earth, as opposed to Satan's schemes and lies, with You enthroned in power and him deposed. On earth as it is in heaven.

God has unquestioned unchallenged authority to reign and His will is done in all of the heavens. Every place but this one place, earth. Earth is in rebellion. All of heaven is aligned with God's will and purposes and glory.

We are praying for a great conflagration where Jesus returns and deposes Satan and all who are aligned with him are judged, ultimately and removed. A great battle over the authority to reign, on earth. Every rebellion crushed. Evil removed. Jesus enthroned. That's what this book is about, from beginning where it is lost, to end where it is regained.

The theme of the book is the authority to reign on earth of Jesus instead of and opposed to Satan who is the current ruler with a stolen authority. It's the story of the recovery of a stolen planet. A place that God created for His glory that was forfeited, along with the glory due God, and all of the glory stolen by Satan. God has a plan to recover His planet, His glory, and His people created in His image, returned to their rightful place in creation, of worshipping and glorifying Him. Those who He redeems will also rule with Him, here, on earth.

Now then, if the entire book has one theme, everywhere in that book should have something to do with the story of that one theme. And it does. Virtually everything in this book is someplace on that path to final restitution of what was stolen by Satan.

Now, caution. Do not read into what I just said some kind of universalism where every soul is saved. We can get into deep mud real quick. God in His wisdom created men, even lost men and women, with a free will. His glory depends on that part of creation. Where is glory if every soul is forced to glorify Him. The glory is completed in free will to choose to either glorify God or rebel against Him.

Multitudes will choose rebellion and they will suffer the doom created for Satan. Rebels will spend eternity in the lake of fire in torment. But multitudes will also choose to come out from under the authority to reign of Satan and to be aligned with God in this battle.

You can go to any chapter of any author in the entirety of this book, and all of it has something to do with the story of the unfolding plan of God that regains the throne and authority to reign of this place. All of it is about Jesus. He is the final solution. He it is who owns all authority to reign.

We could over simplify the running theme of the book and say that in the one theme of Jesus reigning forever and ever the story begins with single individuals. Adam. Abel. Seth. Enoch. Noah. Job. Abraham. These are the patriarchs who play roles in God's redemption of His rightful throne. Chosen elect men who had a special walk with God.

Then the story expands to a family that becomes a great nation. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the 12 tribes of Israel. Moses who is God's man to lead His family of people to a land of their own out of slavery. Moses who is the progenitor of the revelation contained in this book. He is author of the first 5 books of revelation.

Then the kings and the prophets. All of it is types and pictures of the final

king and prophet and priest. Jesus, comes to the 12 tribes, the nation set apart by God, He is the messiah, and He is rejected and murdered by His own people.

All of it is in the plan of God. Jesus completes the possibility of complete redemption from sin for all who belong to God before the death of Jesus, and after the death and resurrection of Jesus. All redemption back to God is paid for in the blood of Jesus. He died for us. In our place. He lived in perfect righteousness. He gives His righteousness to us who believe. He dies in our place to accomplish the punishment we deserve. He rises from the dead and ascends back into heaven to prove that what He came to do was effective. Redemption for sinners, past, present and future accomplished. Old testament saints look forward to the cross. New testament saints, the church, looks backwards to the cross.

But there's still more to the story, isn't there. Satan is still ruler of this chaotic world to this day, which explains a lot, doesn't it. So where are we today, this day, in this plan, this great story of the taking back of this world from Satan the deceiver and ruler of this dreadful still lost world?

That long introduction is to prepare you for what Jesus will say to some pharisee's in our verses this morning. With the big picture in place, we can listen to what Jesus tells these folks in answer to a question about the Kingdom of God, and it will make perfect sense.

*20 Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming,*

The pharisees hold an incorrect view of the kingdom of God. Their view is very small. Small God, small view. The prophets have written down prophecies about a great conflagration, a battle, a king who comes, Messiah who comes and reigns.

And their version, their take on what the prophets wrote is that Messiah will come and He will make Israel the center of world domination. Rome is in

charge. If Jesus is Messiah as they know He claims, then He needs to conquer Rome and get rid of Rome and Israel should be the new Rome where all of the other nations bow down to her.

That's their view, and they don't see that happening with this Jesus. Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, who actually hangs out with tax collectors who are Israelites who have sold their soul to Rome in order to be rich.

You aren't friends with those guys. You crush those guys and everybody else. Israel is the new boss. World domination is from Messiah's throne in Israel. This Jesus doesn't look anything like that.

They were partially right. Messiah does come and rule all of the nations, forever, and His throne is in Jerusalem, and Israel is the center of world domination. They don't see that happening with this guy who is friend with sinners and tax collectors for Rome. Therefore they reject Him, even though He performs astonishing miracles second only to the miracle of original creation. Because they can't see their small view of world domination coming to pass in this Jesus, they reject Him.

Where did they go wrong? They're thinking too small. They're thinking of physical domination, but what they failed to understand is that the prophets were speaking of a spiritual dominion as well as a physical one. The prophets are envisioning a war where Jesus returns to this planet and does battle with Satan to regain the rule and authority to reign on this planet of everything and everybody.

The pharisee's look at Jesus and they reject Him because they're looking for a ruler who is too small. Jesus kingdom is far greater than the kingdom they were envisioning. He's coming to depose Satan and take back the throne of rule of this world. *On earth, as it is in heaven.* God rule. A World Theocracy with Satan banished and evil removed. That's the kingdom Jesus is ruler of.

But in the time and place of the pharisee's He's accomplishing redemption. The church age that follows for 2000 years that we woke up in this morning

was a mystery that was hidden. They didn't understand that Messiah would come once to accomplish redemption, theirs and ours, and a second time after He has gathered in multitudes from all of the nations for His name, He comes a second time to depose Satan and set up His throne IN this world at Jerusalem.

So the pharisee's pose the question about a Kingdom that is far too small. Kick out Rome. Israel is top dog in Satan's world. Ain't gonna happen. What *is* going to happen is redemption from sin, and the authority to reign of God, the kingdom of God will happen inside individual person's hearts until the great day comes when Jesus returns and actually deposes Satan and all rebellers to hell.

Listen again to Jesus answer. And please note that the truth I just decribed very plainly to you is veiled to them. Within His answer is judgement. Their dis-belief, in spite of all the miracles has left them in a position of judgement to where He will answer their question but they cannot understand His answer. The truth is veiled in judgement. Dis-belief always causes judgement which causes further dis-belief. Like a downward spiral in an airplane that had it's wing shot off and you can't get out of it.

*20 Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; 21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!'"*

The kingdom of God is not a physically identifiable political realm. Rome was a very identifiable physical truth. It was there and it had power. That's their definition of a kingdom. Authority to reign. Rome was the perfect model. They had the power and authority to dominate the world.

The pharisees are looking for a Rome, but it exists in Israel, and the ruler is a son of David. Very physical. What they envisioned could exist in Satan's world. It's not more than a change of despot and a change of real estate from where that despot rules. Israel. Son of David. When?

And Jesus says no. The kingdom isn't coming with physical signs. It isn't observable. There won't be a news flash. The kingdom of God is over there or over here. It isn't a physical happening in one place in one time.

*For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."*

What does that mean? *in your midst* What is in your midst. This can go several ways and they are all correct. How fascinating that a few simple words can mean so much. Let's first look at what some of the different translators have done with these three greek words;

New International Version  
the kingdom of God is in your midst."

New Living Translation  
For the Kingdom of God is already among you."

English Standard Version  
for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

Berean Study Bible  
For you see, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

Berean Literal Bible  
For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

New American Standard Bible  
For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

New King James Version  
For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

King James Bible  
for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

Christian Standard Bible

For you see, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

Contemporary English Version

God's kingdom is here with you."

Good News Translation

because the Kingdom of God is within you."

Holman Christian Standard Bible

For you see, the kingdom of God is among you."

A Faithful Version

For behold, the kingdom of God is standing in the midst of you."

Aramaic Bible in Plain English

for behold, the Kingdom of God is within some of you."

King James 2000 Bible

for, behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.

American Standard Version

for lo, the kingdom of God is within you.

Young's Literal Translation

for lo, the reign of God is within you.'

I don't want to be guilty of causing little ones to stumble, but isn't it interesting what the different interpreters get from 3 greek words;

*entos in the midst hymōn of you estin is*

You can't do much with hymon, of you, or estin, is, so what can we do with the single defining word here. entos. in the midst.

The word in this exact form is only used two times in the New Testament. So perhaps the other time it's used will throw some light for us. What did Jesus mean? In Matthew 23:26 Jesus compares the pharisees to a cup that is washed white and clean on the outside, but the inside is filthy.

*"You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside (entos) of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.*

Let me give you two ideas, and both are completely correct.

Jesus could be saying, you're looking for the kingdom in terms of a Rome type kingdom of whole earth domination where Caesar is on the throne but you're wanting that to be Israel, God's people the jews in place of Rome, and the Son of David, Messiah as king. That's actually what was going on in their brains when they asked the question.

But Jesus answers in a veiled way. Picture him surrounded by between 10 and 20 thousand people all trying to see Him and hear Him. He could be saying, the authority to reign of God on earth is standing right here in your midst. In other words *entos* here means Jesus himself in the midst of the crowd.

In that case the "of you" refers to the crowd. The one person in the universe who holds the keys and the power and the authority of God to reign on earth as opposed to Satan is Jesus. Here I am. I'm standing here in the middle of you. All the power of the universes standing in your midst.

That would be a veiled truth to them. They don't understand that the man who created the worlds, who holds the power in His breath that formed the words that spoke the creation into existence from nothing is the One who can dominate Satan ultimately and is in fact the Son of David who will rule in Jerusalem on David's thrown in dominance of all of the nations of the world.

The kingdom of God is not just world domination with Satan still in control, the authority to reign of God is spiritual domination of Satan and all of his

hosts of demons, as well as world domination of all of the nations. When Jesus said; ALL authority has been given to me in heaven and in earth, that's exactly what His kingdom consists of. It's much bigger than a Rome type world domination.

He could be saying; I'm right here. I am that person. Hello. I'm standing right here. In your midst.

The fact that they wouldn't understand the full ramifications of what He just said doesn't change the possibility that that's exactly what He meant even though nobody would understand Him, and the reason that's possible is judgement.

When it comes to dis-belief, God stands right in the middle of the crowd and says the simplest of things and nobody understands what He said, because unbelief veils their minds. Read Isaiah 53. It couldn't be simpler as far as words and grammar and language. And yet the jews to this day look at that passage like it's a foreign language from outer space. Why? Because unbelief demands that it can't possibly mean what it very simply says.

So Jesus says, You're looking for the kingdom. The authority to reign. Of God. Hello.? I'm standing right here. And there is zero connection of His words with the synapses in their brains. The language connection is an internal fail because of unbelief. God compounds unbelief. Their own book told them they will not hear or understand. It's astonishing to watch God's judgement at work. We're seeing it every day.

There is a second correct possibility here in these simple words.

*“The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; 21 nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or, ‘There it is!’ For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.”*

The preponderance of the translators have leaned towards this truth in their translations. The kingdom of God is in your midst. Did He mean the

kingdom of God is inside of you. In your midst. Like the dirt is inside the cup but you washed the outside. The authority to reign of God is inside you. Inside your heart. That's a compelling truth.

Think about the ramifications of that truth. Truly, God has no authority to reign in any heart that rejects Him. And every human in Adam's family is born in sin. Born dead to God. Born separated from God. Born into a rebellion with God as the enemy.

Jesus will reign over every rebellious hater. Every knee will bow in submission to Him. Every tongue will confess that He is Lord of everything. That day is coming. It isn't pretty for the rebels. It is glorious for our King. Even rebels will bring Him glory as they bow in judgement on their way to eternal damnation. The smoke that comes from hell for eternity is a constant reminder that Jesus is the victor.

But put your thinking caps on for a moment now. Within the theme of this book from Able to John on Patmos, and even to us today, there is a running theme of those who came out of Satan's world and lived their lives for the glory of the Lord.

Every saint in every age, Patriarchs, Israelites, Christians from every nation to this day have in common that they lived under the authority to reign, not of Satan, but of God. True in the OT. And true always in church history from the NT forward. God's people are sanctified, separated out of this world and its cosmos controlled by Satan.

The very definition of the saints is that they are separated unto God. Individually, God reigns in their hearts. They belong to Him. Every saint, old testament and new testament has been purchased out of this world, unto God, paid for by the blood of Jesus. The authority to reign of God, in Satan's fallen world, begins in each person's heart.

We move out of the realm of Satan's rule, and into the realm of God's rule, the kingdom of God, one person at a time, and it happens inside our hearts.

*Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ **is in you**-- unless indeed you fail the test? 2Cor. 13:5*

The kingdom of God is inside of you. Salvation is a transfer of ownership. From Satan and his cosmos, his rule, his world systems; to God. And it happens one person at a time, inside individual hearts.

Since the fall in the garden, the Kingdom of God has always co-inhabited this planet. In every generation throughout history and throughout every dispensation if you're a dispensationalist, the Kingdom of God has been present.

Satan is currently ruler of this world. But within his kingdom, his authority to reign, God has always had a remnant, purchased out of this world that belong to Him. The Kingdom of God has always been present.

Like enemy combatants inside a warring land. We belong to another King and we are working for the overthrow of the government of Satan. Spiritual warfare. The Kingdom of God, present now. Massively outnumbered, but our firepower from afar trumps anything the warring king can muster.

That's now. But there's a whole lot of prophecy yet to be fulfilled. We will be called to heaven for our wedding ceremony to our husband, Christ. Meanwhile on earth there will be seven years of hell on earth in preparation for the ultimate return in victory of the King who owns this earth.

We will charge out of heaven, with Him, and He will depose Satan and his throne on this earth, and He will eliminate every rebellion, every rebel, and He will set up His reign, His kingdom, on this earth, un-opposed. Glory and promises to the church and to the sons of Israel, totally fulfilled.

Both possible ways to interpret what Jesus meant and was saying are equally true. The only person who has authority to dominate Satan and take back the

thrones of this world was standing in their midst. And the only way for us to belong to His Kingdom, His authority to reign, is if He lives inside our hearts.

The authority to reign of God lives in your midst. Inside your heart, if you've given your heart to Him to be ruler of. We are about to celebrate the birth of THAT King, 2000 years ago.

IN 1855 Charles Wesley wrote;

*Come, thou long expected Jesus Born to set thy people free  
From our fears and sins release us Let us find our rest in thee  
Israel's strength and consolation Hope of all the earth thou art  
Dear desire of every nation Joy of every longing heart  
Born thy people to deliver Born a child and yet a king  
Born to reign in us forever Now thy gracious kingdom bring  
By thine own eternal spirit Rule in all our hearts alone  
By thine own sufficient merit Raise us to thy glorious throne*

Merry Christmas!