



# Links Players

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## The Kingdom Experience

*Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15, NASB)*

When I qualified for the PGA Tour Canada in 2010 one of the TaylorMade tour reps sent me to The Kingdom at Reynolds Plantation in Georgia to get fitted with all the newest TaylorMade equipment. I had never had any custom-fitting experience like this in my life. They compared my ideal launch, speed, and spin numbers with different heads and shaft combos.

A week later, a package arrived with an entirely new set of clubs from top to bottom that fit me perfectly, along with dozens of balls, hats, and gloves. Something about knowing I had the perfect fit equipment for my swing allowed me to play with so much confidence. I was very thankful for my Kingdom experience.

Have you ever had a Kingdom experience?

I am not talking about a custom club fitting experience. I am talking about experiencing the good news that Jesus proclaimed and taught. This kingdom experience is the summary of Paul's ministry. "And [Paul] stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness unhindered" (Acts 28:30-31).

Verses in all three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) from the beginning of Jesus' ministry are similar to those in today's verse. The gospel that Jesus preached from the very start of his ministry was focused on the kingdom of God. Matthew often used the phrase "kingdom of Heaven" interchangeably.

The emphasis of Jesus' and Paul's ministry was not about how to go to heaven when you die. The New Testament is all about bringing the kingdom of God to earth. The prayer we were taught to pray without thinking says, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Nearly every parable Jesus taught started with the phrase, "The kingdom of Heaven [or God] is like..." He told us that his kingdom was *near, at hand, within you, upon you*, and that some of his followers would *enter the kingdom of God before they die*.

What is this kingdom that was preached from the beginning of Jesus' ministry to the end of Paul's? What is this kingdom often missing from modern-day Christian teaching?

It is the Good News! The way, the rules, and the reign of heaven are present and spreading here on earth. The challenge for most of us is believing that Christ's kingdom is already reigning here on

earth in and through our lives. We often do not recognize how God is fulfilling his plan through the lives of those who put faith in Jesus and follow what he taught.

I must admit that my greatest frustration with twenty-first-century Christianity is that we often focus more on the specific details in Paul's letters to correct and instruct Christ's body of believers than the reign of Christ's kingdom. This kingdom is built upon the very gospel that Jesus proclaimed and Paul affirmed.

Let me set the record straight. Jesus was very clear about communicating the Good News. He brought it to earth through his life and the presence of his Holy Spirit. And he intends it to penetrate each of our lives above all other worldly influences.

**Prayer – Jesus, open our eyes to see the kingdom of God.**

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Josh Nelson

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