



“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom,” Luke 12:32.

Jesus Speaks on the Kingdom of God

Lesson Aim: To find inspiration for service in Jesus' teachings concerning the reign of God.

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Topic: Kingdom: Of God.

INTRODUCTION

“The Kingdom of God has arrived!” This is the astounding message of the New Testament. Men are living in a unique moment. God is instituting a new era. Human history is drawing to its climax. The kingdoms of this world are soon to become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

The message of John the Baptist was, “. . . **Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,**” Matthew 3:2. The message of Jesus, when He began to preach was, “. . . **Repent: for the kingdom of heaven it at hand,**” Matthew 4:17. When Jesus sent out the twelve disciples, He instructed them to preach and say, “**The kingdom of heaven is at hand,**” Matthew 10:7. It is evident that early New Testament preaching was the announcement of the coming of the kingdom.

Jesus taught all His disciples (including you and me) to pray, “. . . **Thy kingdom come. . .**” Luke 11:2. He appealed to the miracle of His casting out demons as positive proof that “the kingdom of God is come upon you,” Luke 11:20.

The disciples caught this theme and delighted in it. They misunderstood it, of course, and made some foolish statements as a consequence. On one occasion the mother of James and John asked that they two might sit on either side of Jesus in His kingdom, Matthew 20:20-28. On many other occasions the disciples protested among themselves as to who would be

greatest in the kingdom, Mark 9:33-34. But though they misunderstood the detail, they were correct in their assuming that the gospel preached by Jesus was the announcement of the kingdom of God.

The following commentary will seek to present what Jesus taught about the kingdom of God. It will not cover every detail of His teaching, of course. Neither will it seek to interpret all the “parables of the kingdom.” But it will set out the basic concepts of the kingdom as Jesus presented them. The aim of the study is “to find inspiration for service in Jesus' teachings concerning the kingdom of God.”

EXPOSITION

I. THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1. There are many who do not understand what is meant by the term “the kingdom of God.” Some think of it as a utopia built by men upon the teachings of Jesus—a kind of Sermon-on-the-Mount society. Others consider it the natural result of evolutionary progress as man climbs upward toward the ideal world. Both of these ideas overlook the basic truth that the Kingdom of God is not evolved from within men but is a Divine intervention among men.

Many Christians consider the Kingdom of God means the church. This, too, is incorrect. The kingdom of God is the dominion of God. The church is under His dominion, of course, but much more than the church is under Him also.

Most Jews in New Testament times thought of the Kingdom of God as Israel's political supremacy over the world. It must be preceded, so they thought, by the overthrow of the Roman Empire and elevation of the Jews as world rulers. While Jews have a part in His kingdom, Jesus taught the Kingdom of God was much larger than this.

2. The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven is the same. The term “Kingdom of God” is used 4 times in Matthew, 14 times in Mark, 32 times in Luke, 2 times in John, 6 times in Acts, 8 times in Paul's epistles, and 1 time in the Revelation. The term, “Kingdom of Heaven” is used 33 times in Matthew and nowhere else in the New Testament. Some teachings of Jesus are recorded as “Kingdom of Heaven” by Matthew and “Kingdom of God” by other gospel writers. Compare Matthew 8:11 with Luke 13:28-29.

Why the difference? Matthew was writing to the Hebrew people. They refrained from using the name of God, often using “heaven” rather than “God.” So Matthew used the expression common among the Jews

(“Kingdom of Heaven”) while other Gospel writers used the common Greek expression (“Kingdom of God”). They are the same.

3. The Kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God through Jesus Christ. The Bible gives several descriptive statements which tell what it is like.

(1) It is spiritual in essence. The present manifestation of the Kingdom of God is not political but spiritual. When Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. . .” (John 18:36), He meant it was not of the nature of worldly kingdoms—political organizations depending on military power to maintain them. He meant His kingdom was a spiritual dominion.

(2) It is redemptive in objective. The rule of God in that kingdom is a redemptive rule. One becomes a citizen of that kingdom by being born again, John 3. Jesus shall reign over that kingdom until all rebellion against God is put down. Then He will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, I Corinthians 15:24-27. But in its present expression, the rule of the Kingdom is a redemptive rule.

(3) It is fraternal in spirit. The King of the Kingdom of God is the God who is a Father! The sovereignty He exercises in His kingdom is the sovereignty of grace. Thus if men seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all necessary things will be added unto them, Matthew 6:33.

(4) It is supernatural in authority. It is the Kingdom of GOD, not of men. Jesus taught believers to pray, “. . . **Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever,**” Matthew 6:13. Men can witness of it but cannot build it. Men can receive it but cannot establish it. Men can reject it but cannot destroy it. Men can work in it but cannot bring it. Men can inherit it but cannot bestow it on others. It is the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

(5) It is present in its coming. Jesus interpreted the miracles He performed as proof that “. . . **No doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you,**” Luke 11:20. That was over 1900 years ago and the Kingdom of God was present then. It is still present.

(6) It is dynamic in its working. The parables of the kingdom, recorded in Matthew 13, picture it as seed which sprouts and grows, leaven which causes the dough to rise, a net which catches and draws in fish, etc. This pictures the dynamic nature of the kingdom. It does grow, permeate, draw, and hence deal with men. This is the present ministry of the Holy Spirit upon earth today.

The Kingdom of God simply means that God has invaded the human order to bring a forgiveness (Mark 2:5), a life (John 3:3), and a righteousness (Matthew 5:20; Romans 14:16) which belong to the age to come.

II. OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1. We can enter His kingdom today. The first step is repentance as preached by John the Baptist and by Jesus, Matthew 3:2 and 4:17. But such repentance is not alone for the call is, “. . . **The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel,**” Mark 1:15. But this still is not all involved in entering the Kingdom.

Repentance and faith are never in a vacuum. It is repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the way of salvation. In response to the graces of repentance and faith the Holy Spirit works the miracle of regeneration in the human heart. Thus a person is “born of the Spirit.” Being born again, one can both “see” (understand) and “enter” (share as a citizen) in the Kingdom of God, John 3:3, 5.

It is evident, therefore, that one becomes a citizen in the Kingdom of God by being born again. Each born-again person is in His Kingdom now.

2. We can live as citizens of His Kingdom today. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) sets forth the laws of the Kingdom. These are not guidelines for an unregenerate man, but principles to guide a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom is received with a child-like simplicity. Jesus warned, “. . . **Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein,**” Mark 10:15. This speaks of simple faith, willingness to be taught, yieldedness to its laws, and desire to realize its fullness.

Believers “seek” the Kingdom of God (Luke 12:31) by yielding more and more to the sovereign reign of God in their personal lives. The interests of the Kingdom thus come before personal concerns, Matthew 6:33. Therefore, through word and deed one testifies of the reality of God's redemptive rule on earth through Jesus Christ today, Matthew 10:7. I'm glad to be a citizen of His Kingdom. Aren't you?

III. THE FUTURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1. It will continue to exercise influence over the lives of its citizens. Each believer will continue to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, to trust in the Lord Jesus, and to love and obey God the Father. Thus his life will be marked by the will of God and people will take note of Him that He has been with Jesus.

No power will overthrow God's kingdom. The gates of hell shall not

prevail against it. It will continue “within you” (Luke 17:21) without ceasing until Jesus returns again.

2. It will be revealed in glorious power at Jesus' second coming. Matthew 24:29-31 records Jesus' summary of how it will transpire. Then will be seen the realization of the promise, “. . . **The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of His father David . . . and of his kingdom there shall be no end,**” Luke 1:32-33,

The Kingdom of God will then be manifest in political and social, as well as religious, jurisdiction of the whole world. The announcement will be made, “. . . **The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever,**” Revelation 11:15. We call this the “millennial kingdom” of Jesus Christ.

And so Jesus will reign as sovereign over this Kingdom until every enemy is put under His feet, (The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.) Then He will deliver the kingdom up to the Father who will reign eternally, I Corinthians 15:24-26.

It is a wonder of grace, yet it is true, that we shall share that victory. We have already received citizenship in “a kingdom which cannot be moved,” Hebrews 12:28. Believers wait for the “abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” II Peter 1:11. What a privilege to praise eternally Him whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and whose dominion continues through all generations. Oh, how wonderful to be a Christian!

CONCLUSION

The Kingdom of God is God's redemptive reign through Jesus Christ. It came into the world in Christ Jesus. It works in the world through the church, believers in general and the Holy Spirit in particular. When the gospel of the Lord Jesus has been preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, Christ will return and bring in the kingdom in universal glory over the earth.

Be sure you are ready for that awesome day. Be sure you are saved. Be sure you are serving. Watch and be ready, His coming may be today!

QUESTIONS

1. What is a kingdom?
2. What is the gospel of the kingdom?
3. How are the kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven related?

4. What does John 18:36 mean?
5. Why should we pray for His kingdom to come?
6. How can one enter His kingdom today?
7. How can one “seek the kingdom of God”?
8. How is it related to the Second Coming?
9. When will revelation 11:15 occur?
10. What does I Corinthians 15:26-26 teach about the Kingdom?