

Harvest Christian Fellowship
January 22, 2012
Theology @ 9
Facilitator: Chad Seay

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Christians Must Manifest Kingdom Life

Luke 17:20-21

²⁰ *Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, ²¹ nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."*

The kingdom of God is the reign and rule of God established and acknowledged in the hearts of sinners. The theme of the kingdom of God runs through both testaments, focusing God's purpose for world history. In Old Testament times God declared that He would exercise His kingship (his sovereignty, Dan. 4:34-35) by setting up His kingdom (His rule or reign over people's lives and circumstances) under His chosen king (the Davidic Messiah, Isa. 9:6-7) in a golden age of blessing.

Daniel 4:34-35

³⁴ *At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.*

*His dominion is an eternal dominion;
his kingdom endures from generation to generation.*

³⁵ *All the peoples of the earth
are regarded as nothing.*

*He does as he pleases
with the powers of heaven
and the peoples of the earth.*

*No one can hold back his hand
or say to him: "What have you done?"*

Isaiah 9:6-7

⁶ *For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.*

*And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor,^[a] Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

⁷ *Of the increase of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.*

This kingdom came with Jesus the Messiah as a worldwide relational reality, existing wherever the lordship of Jesus is acknowledged in repentance, faith, and new obedience. Jesus, the Spirit-anointed, Spirit-filled ruler-designate, died, rose, ascended, and is now enthroned in heaven as ruler over all things, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Matthew 28:18

¹⁸ *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*

Revelation 17:14

¹⁴ *They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."*

The kingdom is not an external and natural kingdom of the Jews but can be entered only by regeneration. The golden age of blessing is an era of present spiritual benefit (salvation from sin and fellowship with God) leading to a future state of unmixed joy in a reconstructed universe. Thus the kingdom is present in its beginnings though future in its fullness; in one sense it is here already, but in the richest sense it is still to come.

Mark 4:30-32

30 *Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? **31** It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. **32** Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."*

Luke 13:20-21

20 *Again he asked, "What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? **21** It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount[**a**] of flour until it worked all through the dough."*

1 John 2:8

8 Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

So, as believers, we have received this kingdom and we are receiving this kingdom.

Hebrews 12:28-29

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."

The kingdom came as not only mercy but also judgment, just as John the Baptist, its forerunner, had said it would (Matt. 3:1-12). Those who obediently received Jesus' Word and put their destiny in His hands found mercy, while the Jewish leadership, which would not do this, was judged. Strictly speaking, the Jewish leaders were self-judged, for they chose to live in darkness by retreating from the Savior.

John 3:17-20

17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. 19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

The task of the church is to make the invisible kingdom visible through faithful Christian living and witness-bearing.

Matthew 24:14

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

The gospel of Christ is still the gospel of the kingdom, the goodness of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit through entering a disciple's relationship to the living Lord.

Romans 14:17

17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,

The church must make its message credible by manifesting the reality of kingdom life.

The coming of the kingdom meant a new stage in God's redemptive-historical program. The Messiah arrived, redeemed, and withdrew to His throne with a promise that He would come again. All that was typical, temporary, and imperfect in the God-given arrangements for Israel's communion with Himself became a thing of the past. God's Israel, Abraham's seed, was redefined as the company of believers in Jesus.

Galatians 3:16, 26-29

¹⁶ The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

²⁶ You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The Spirit was poured out and a new way of life, namely life in Christ and with Christ, became a reality of this world. Thus the new internationalism of global church fellowship and global evangelism was born.

Although these were great changes, none of them meant that a new set of moral standards emerged, as is sometimes supposed. The moral law for Christians, the law of God's present kingdom, is the law found in the Ten Commandments and the prophets, now applied to the new situation. Jesus has not abolished that law but has merely filled out its meaning.

Matthew 5:17

¹⁷ "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

The term "kingdom of God" is sometimes employed in a sense which makes it practically equivalent to the visible church. While there is a close connection between the kingdom of God and the church, they are not the same thing. Wayne Grudem, in his "Systematic Theology" records George Ladd's summary of five aspects of the relationship between the kingdom and the church from his book, "A Theology of the New Testament". They are as follows:

- 1) The church is not the kingdom (for Jesus and the early Christians preached that the kingdom of God was near, not that the church was near, and preached the good news of the kingdom, not the good news of the church: Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31).
- 2) The kingdom creates the church (for as people enter into God's kingdom they become joined to the human fellowship of the church).
- 3) The church witnesses to the kingdom (for Jesus said, "this gospel will be preached throughout the whole world," Matt. 24:14).
- 4) The church is the instrument of the kingdom (for the Holy Spirit, manifesting the power of the kingdom, works through the disciples to heal the sick and cast out demons, as he did in the ministry of Jesus: Matt. 10:8; Luke 10:17).
- 5) The church is the custodian of the kingdom (for the church has been given the keys of the kingdom of heaven: Matt. 16:19).

Louis Berkof describes the kingdom of God as "the rule of God established and acknowledged in the hearts of sinners by the powerful regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, insuring them of the inestimable blessings of salvation, -- a rule that is realized in principle on earth, but will not reach its culmination until the visible and glorious return of Jesus Christ. The present realization of it is spiritual and invisible."

As for king Jesus, Berkof adds, "the fact that Christ is a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek, would also seem to argue in favor of the eternal duration of the spiritual kingship of Christ..." Further, "The eternal duration of the spiritual kingship of Christ would seem to be explicitly taught in the following passages: Ps. 45:6 (comp. Heb. 1:8); 72:17; 89:36,37; Isa. 9:7; Dan. 2:44; 2 Sam. 7:13,16; Luke 1:33; 2 Peter 1:11."

*Most of the foregoing material was taken from "*Concise Theology*" by J.I. Packer, "*Systematic Theology*" by Louis Berkof, and "*Systematic Theology*" by Wayne Grudem.