

# The Kingdom

What did Jesus say was His purpose for coming to Earth? What was the subject that Jesus expected His apostles to preach before and after His death? And what is it that men must be citizens of in order to be reconciled to their God? The answer to all these questions is ... THE KINGDOM.

Jesus said, "*I must preach the kingdom..., because for this purpose I have been sent*" (Luke 4:43); in fact, because of its importance, Jesus told people to "*seek first the kingdom*" (Mat. 6:33a).

Jesus sent His apostles out to preach the nearness of the coming kingdom (Luke 10:1-20 & Acts 1:1-8), and this they did (Acts 8:12, 19:8, 20:25, 28:23 & 31). Why? Because...

Jesus and His apostles made it clear that men must, even through many tribulations, become part of this kingdom if they want to be saved (Acts 14:22 & Rev. 12:10); after all, we do read such phrases as "*the good news of the kingdom*" (Luke 8:1 & Mat. 24:14).

Preaching the kingdom was so important that, even though one man wanted to wait until he had buried his father, Jesus told him to preach the kingdom instead (Luke 9:60), for, as Luke 14:15 reads, "*Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*" (cf. "joy" in Rom. 14:17). Well...

As I've done in the presentation of other studies, let's examine the biblical kingdom by answering the questions ... What?, When?, Where?, Why?, How?, & Who? Actually, albeit briefly, we just answered the question, "Why is the kingdom important," so let's move on to...

## What Is the Kingdom?

There are various designations in the New Testament for the kingdom (a word found more than 160 times).

"The Kingdom" (Mat. 4:23 & ten other times)

"The Kingdom of ... David" (Mark 11:10, but clearly implied 4 other times) (Cf. 3 more times in connection with Judah and Israel, 1 Sam. 15:28, 24:20, & 2 Chr. 11:17.)

The Kingdom of Men (Dan. 7:18, Heb. 12:28, Luke 12:32, 18:17, & 22:29)

"The Kingdom of Heavens" (Mat. 3:2 and thirty-two other times [in Mat. Only])

I believe Matthew had it as "heavens" plural each time because, as the Jews he was writing to knew, the Messiah's kingdom was to encompass all other kingdoms (Dan. 2:44, et. al.) And...

The word "heavens" was often (if not most of the time) used figuratively to bring to mind kingdoms and authorities (cf. Eph. 6:12, et. al.); besides, they were looking for an earthly K.

"The Kingdom of Christ" (Eph. 5:5; cf. Luke 1:31-33, 2 Pet. 1:11, Rev. 11:15, & Col. 1:13)

"Your Kingdom," referring to Christ (Heb. 1:8 & two other times)

"My Kingdom," when Jesus was speaking (Luke 22:30 & three other times)

"His Kingdom," referring to Jesus (Mat. 13:41 & three other times) (Thus 17 times altogether.)

"The Kingdom of God" (Mat. 6:33 & sixty-nine other times, thus the primary designation)

"The Kingdom of the Lord" (1 Chr. 28:5; cf. "K. of Judah," 2 Chr. 11:17 & "K. of Israel," 1 Sam. 24:20)

The Kingdom of the Father (Mat. 13:43 & 26:29)

"Your Kingdom," referring to the Father (Mat. 6:10, 13 & Luke 11:2)

"His Kingdom," referring to God (1 The. 2:12)

"Kingdom of our God" (Rev. 12:10) (Thus 91 times altogether.)

All these designations refer to the same institution; this is so clear that we'll only touch on it here.

"The kingdom of Heaven" and "the kingdom of God" refer to the same institution as seen by simply comparing Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

In Matthew 13:11 we read of Jesus saying to His apostles, "*It has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,*" while in Mark 4:11 we read of His saying to them, "*To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.*"

In Matthew 13:33 we read of Jesus saying, "*The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman hid in three measures of meal,*" while in Luke 13:20-21 we read of Jesus saying, "*The kingdom of God ... is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal.*"

Even check out Jesus' synonymous usage of these two in Matthew 19:23-24.

"The kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of Christ" are also the same: Ephesians 5:5 speaks of "*the kingdom of Christ and God.*" (Also cf. Luke 9:27 w/ Mat. 16:28, and see Rev. 22:1-3.) Now...

## **Where Is this Kingdom Located?**

When Jesus was asked about the coming of the kingdom, He said that it wouldn't come with *observation*; i.e., as He went on to illustrate, it wouldn't be something about which men could rightly say, "*See here!*" or "*See there!*" (Luke 17:20-21). Incidentally...

Jesus spoke of His coming against Jerusalem in the same way: "*If someone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There [is the Christ]!', do not believe it*" (Mat. 24:23). Why? Because His coming would be invisible, as a thief in the night (v. 43), indirect through the Roman army. After all...

In Matthew 16:28 Jesus associated the coming of the kingdom with His own coming, saying, "*there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in [or, being in the dative case, with] His kingdom,*" meaning that one would be as invisible as the other. So...

In a sense, we're having to answer the question, How Does the Kingdom Exist? in order to answer Where Is the Kingdom Located? So the point is...

The definitive coming of the kingdom in consummation that Jesus and the apostles preached about wasn't of a physical, tangible nature (at least no more so than was Christ's coming against Jerusalem), meaning that it was of a spiritual or heavenly, intangible nature. To support this further...

Jesus once said, "*My kingdom is not of this world*" (John 18:36). And...

Paul wrote that, unlike the kingdom of old Israel, "*flesh & blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God*" (1 Cor. 15:50), and "*the kingdom of God is not food & drink*" (Rom. 14:17a). Now we can answer our question.

Where is the kingdom located? Well, being spiritual in nature, it is wherever the righteous are!

After saying that the kingdom wouldn't come with *observation* in Luke 17:20, Jesus went on to say that "*the kingdom of God is within you*" (v. 21), reminiscent of John 4:21 & 24 where Jesus said to the Samaritan woman that "*the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the Father.... God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit....*"

The spiritual and universal nature of this kingdom was indicated in prophecies such as Daniel 2:44 where it says that "*it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms [of men]*"; and then in Revelation, wherein we're shown the consummation of all such prophecies, 11:15 says that "*the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!*," which is what is meant by His being "*King of kings and Lord of lords*" (Rev. 19:16).

Apparently speaking prophetically, David wrote in Psalm 103:19 that "*The Lord has established His throne in Heaven, and His kingdom rules over all.*" So, because the kingdom is spiritual in nature, it can and does—*through evangelism*—infiltrate every earthly kingdom (cf. Rev. 21:24—22:2). Lastly...

## **When Did the Kingdom Arrive?**

In order to answer this question in such a way as to be the most relevant for us today (which is all we have time for), we must first understand that the idea of the kingdom of God is used in many different ways in the Bible; let's briefly look at some of the most prominent ways. (Diagram on the Board.)

Since God created everything (nature as well as mankind), obviously everything (in one sense) is His kingdom in which He ultimately rules (Acts 17:24-29). [Allude to "third heaven" in 2 Cor. 12:2 in order to set up an understanding of the diagram for this point.] Next...

There's His kingdom in the Judahite & Israelite senses (1 Sam. 15:28, 24:20, & 2 Chr. 11:17).

This is in part what was referred to in Mark 11:9-10a when people went before Jesus into Jerusalem crying, "*Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord.*" Notice three things here...

- (1) It's David's kingdom that's said to be coming, but (2) *that* kingdom is ultimately the Lord's.
- (3) The coming of the Lord is joined to the coming of the kingdom. See...

It was the kingdom of Israel & the throne of David thru which came Christ the King & the Kingdom of Christ, for "*salvation [which came via the kingdom] is of the Jews*" (John 4:22).

Let's read **2 Chr. 13:4-8**, noting the relation of the kingdoms of Israel, David, & God.

Then in Isaiah 9:7 we read about King Jesus, "*Of the increase of His government ... there will be no end (cf. Luke 1:33), upon the throne of David and over His [Christ's] kingdom [the two being one and the same in God's eyes], to order it [singular] and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever.*"

In Acts 2:29-30 Peter, speaking to the Jews of his time about David, said that "his tomb is with us this day. Therefore, being a prophet ... [he knew] that God ... *would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne.*" [Or should it be "**His** throne" as above in Isa. 9:7?] In one sense...

The kingdom was present as it was working its way through time (after all, Jesus did say while He was alive that "*the kingdom of God is [present tense] within you*" Luke 17:21b), but it needed to be cleansed as Jesus indicated in Matthew 13:41, saying, "*The Son ... will gather out of His kingdom all THINGS that offend (e.g. OT ways [perhaps cf. Rom. 7:13ff], esp. during NT times) AND THOSE who practice lawlessness*"—so "things" and "people." Then, of course...

There's the kingdom in the church sense (or at least many believe this): This is supported by Matthew 16 where it's held that Jesus was paralleling the "*church*" of verse 18 with "*the kingdom of heaven*" in verse 19 (which may or may not be the case); personally I don't believe there's any injustice to this passage in believing this since the church is obviously the earthly part of the next and last kingdom that we'll discuss [after showing the diagram for this one]. Now on to the primary kingdom...

There's the ultimate kingdom that was prophesied by the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles to be established once and for all time—the kingdom that would encompass every saved soul since Adam & Eve (inc., the Patriarchal, Mosaical, Christian ages, mentally incapacitated, & children, cf. Luke 13:28, 18:16, Mat. 13:36-43, et al). So...

Incidentally, we've answered, in passing, the question, "Who Are Subjects of the Kingdom?"

The only thing I'd like to add in answer to the WHO question before pressing on with our current WHEN question is to emphasize that only the righteous (the saved) can enter and remain citizens of this kingdom (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-10 & Rev. 21:7-8). (More verses on the question of WHO will present themselves when we get to Daniel chapter 7.) Now let's get back to...

When did that kingdom arrive on the scene in all its glory? AD 70.

As just implied in our introductory remarks to the answering of this question, this kingdom has been in the works since the beginning, even before the beginning, in fact: in Matthew 25:34 Jesus said, "*Come..., inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*" And...

This kingdom found its fulfillment when all things that God had anything to do with concerning the Law of Moses (e.g. the city of Jerusalem & its Temple) were finally removed and the transitional grace period of a generation for the Jews ended (a period that began with John the Baptist, Luke 16:16).

In order to vindicate the saints of old (cf. Mat. 23:29-36), as well as Jesus, His apostles, and His church ... Jesus, while discussing the termination of Judaism in AD 70, said, "*These are the days of vengeance that all things which are written may be fulfilled*" (Luke 21:22), which, by the way, was just a little bit before He went on to say that "*This generation will by no means pass away till all things are fulfilled*" (Luke 21:32). What things? All things that were associated with the demise of Judaism that Christianity may be all that was left with a connection to God's OT system.

Related to this is the cutting remark Jesus made to the Jews in Matthew 21:43: "*The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it,*" implying that the fruits they were bearing were actually not at all the fruits God meant for His kingdom to bear.

Things were going to change in that God, in the lifetime of that generation, was in the last stages of the process of transforming His kingdom from that which might be considered primarily physical to that which is ... without a doubt ... spiritual; this is evidently why Jesus said to them, "*Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times*" (Mat. 16:3). In other words...

The Messiah had fulfilled the necessity for a physical kingdom by being born of a Jewish woman, so now that which couldn't save man would be supplanted by that which could and does! Besides all this...

Let's conclude with some more evidence, mainly from Daniel chapter 2 & 7.

After prophetically alluding to the time when Rome would rule the known world in Daniel 2:40, Daniel went on to say in verse 44, "*In the days of these kings [the Caesars like Nero], the God of Heaven will set up a kingdom....*" When? During the rule of Rome, the rule that was in effect during the first century.

Speaking again of this same period of time in parts of 7:13-22, Daniel said, <sup>13</sup>*Behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with clouds of heaven!* <sup>14</sup>*To Him was given dominion & glory & a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, & languages [the WHO] should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and His kingdom shall not be destroyed.* <sup>18</sup>*The saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess it forever, even forever and ever.* <sup>21-22</sup>*I was watching, and the same horn [probably Caesar Nero] was making war against the saints and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.* Now how could all of this NOT point to the horrific times leading up to AD 70? Besides...

Let's remember that this kingdom had to come within the lives of the men in Matthew 16:28 (within about forty years), but ... note this ... after the mid AD 60s when Paul spoke of Jesus coming in His kingdom in Second Timothy 4:1, et. al., leaving AD 70 as the only logical choice.

[Tony Denton, 6/07; Slightly revised 10/08.]