

POINTS TO PONDER

☞ WHAT IS THE KINGDOM?

Review last week: What is the overall message of the Bible? The overall message of the Bible, in one word, is this: “Redemption.” This world is not as it should be. Sin has corrupted everything. Man was designed to have a close relationship with God and partner with him in overseeing His Kingdom. God is restoring that original design through Jesus Christ. Soon He will return and finally put an end to sin and rebellion. Then his original plan will be fulfilled and we will rule and reign with him!

Today: What is the Kingdom of God?

☞ **God’s Kingdom is a recurring theme in the Bible... “Kingdom” is used over 150 times in the NT with 78% in the four Gospels, and of those in the Gospels, 95% were by Jesus, himself.** This was the first message Jesus preached in his public ministry. It was his emphasis throughout his ministry and even after his resurrection. (Matt. 4:17; Acts 1:3)

Paul, the principle writer of the NT, spoke about the kingdom repeatedly. Acts 14:22; Acts 19:8 (in Ephesus); Acts 28:23, 31 (under house arrest in Rome) At least a dozen times Paul wrote about the kingdom in his letters. And, it is explicitly mentioned by all the NT writers, except Jude.

☞ **There are various terms used when speaking of the Kingdom.**

- **The Kingdom of God**
- **The Kingdom of Heaven(s)**
- **The Kingdom of the Father**
- **The Kingdom of the Son**
- **The Kingdom of Christ**

These are often used interchangeably. Otherwise, the different terms speak of various aspects of the Kingdom.

--Nelson's Bible Dictionary...*THE KINGDOM OF GOD is the experience of blessedness, like that of the Garden of Eden, where evil is fully overcome and where those who live in the Kingdom know only happiness, peace, and joy. The Kingdom is God's rule of grace in the world and a future period foretold by the prophets and identified by Jesus as beginning with His public ministry.*

There is a present and a future aspect to the Kingdom of God. Healings and miracles today are evidence of the Kingdom now. However, the ultimate judgment of God's enemies is postponed. The future Kingdom will bring the present age to an end and usher in the perfect age promised in the prophets. In the eternal Kingdom, everyone will be perfect. Everyone will be royalty -- unlike any kingdom of this world.

☞ **His Kingdom is superior to the natural:**

Luke 7:28

I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is *least in the kingdom of God is greater than he*.

1 Peter 3:21-22

Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand-with *angels, authorities and powers in submission to him*.

Daniel 7:14

His dominion is *an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed*.

The Kingdom of God and the things concerning His Kingdom are of such incomparable value and significance that we should give our all for it.

☞ **However, planet earth is caught up in a rebellion against his authority and there is a kingdom of darkness in conflict with God's Kingdom and exerting influence on mankind.**

☞ **The enemy has some control: 1 John 5:19** ...the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

☞ **He works to keep people blinded from the truth: 2 Corinthians 4:4** ...The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel

☞ **Jesus came to destroy his work: 1 John 3:8** ...The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

☞ He has called all believers into the light and **we now work with Jesus to overcome the enemy: Ephesians 6:12** ...our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and *against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*.

☞ **Contrasting the Kingdoms**

*The fallen world, under the influence of the evil one, is **materialistic** and seeks, as its primary goal, earthly riches, success, **power**, recognition, and **status**. The Kingdom of God, on the other hand, is "**righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit**".*

☞ *In the fallen world, having an **aggressive, self-assertive** spirit is often regarded as a means to success. But, in the Kingdom of God, **meekness and gentleness** of spirit are extolled as virtues.*

☞ *The fallen world is driven by greed, covetousness and **self-centeredness**. The Kingdom of God, however, stresses generosity, genuine concern for others and a spirit of **self-giving**.*

☞ *The world exalts self-confidence, which is closely linked to **dependence on self**. Both self-confidence and dependence on self are contrary to the spirit of God's Kingdom. We need to constantly **depend on God** because we cannot live properly and meaningfully apart from Him.*

☞ *The world is characterized by preoccupation with the **outward appearance** of things, but the kingdom of God is characterized by **ultimate reality**.*

So, we join the battle and overcome by embracing the principles of the Kingdom and rejecting the principles of darkness.

Since this world is still in conflict, God's Kingdom on earth consists currently of those people and areas in which his rule is acknowledged. Therefore, currently, God calls people to **voluntarily submit to his rule.**

Acts 3:19

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord

James 4:7

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

☞ **Entrance into the Kingdom is by new birth. When we choose to voluntarily submit to his rule we are born again as Kingdom citizens.**

John 3:3-6

*...no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is **born again**." ... the Spirit gives birth to spirit.*

☞ **You need to invite Christ into your life because the fundamental principle of the Kingdom is "Where the King is, there is the Kingdom."**

Luke 17:21 *...the kingdom of God is **within** (or among) you.*

You can join the Kingdom by inviting Christ into your life, being born again a Kingdom Citizen and submitting to his rule. This process seems strange to the world. The Bible speaks of the ☞ "mystery" of the Kingdom. ("Mystery" is used 21 times in the NT.) This is because currently, here on earth, his Kingdom is not fully accepted, and therefore, not readily obvious to all. It is only **recognized by those who believe and submit to his rule.**

John 3:3

*Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, **no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again**.*

1 Corinthians 2:14

*The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because **they are spiritually discerned**.*

The Father's desire is not that we leave the world behind someday to "fly away" to our mansion in the sky. His desire is for us to leave the world behind right now and press forward each day deeper and deeper into the depths of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The more serious we are in seeking to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom, the more insight into the truth we will gain. The more superficial our life is, the less insight into the truth we will receive.

So, currently, the Kingdom is mysterious, being only partially recognized and understood. But, ☞ one day very soon God will assert his rule universally and his Kingdom will be fully revealed.

Matthew 25:31-34

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 *All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.*

Philippians 2:9-11

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus *every knee should bow*, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and *every tongue confess* that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

☞ The Kingdom is both present and future. Present – the Kingdom is in those who believe and surrender to his rule. Future – the Kingdom will be over all with rewards for those who have believed.

☞ God's ultimate plan is for believers to share in ruling the Kingdom with him!

Matthew 25:34

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take *your inheritance, the kingdom* prepared for you since the creation of the world.

2 Timothy 2:12

if we endure, we will also *reign with him*.

Revelation 22:4-5

They will see his face... And they will reign for ever and ever.

Daniel 7:26-27

the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. 27 Then *the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most-High*. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.'

Colossians sums this up very well...

He has rescued believers from the dark kingdom: Colossians 1:12-13

Originally, everything and all rulers were subject to him: Colossians 1:16

Christ's work was to bring this back under God's control: Colossians 1:19-20

Those who believe are put back in place with God: Colossians 1:21-22

Jesus disarmed the enemy by his work on the cross: Colossians 2:15

Because of all this, we need to keep an eternal perspective and not get overly caught up in worldly concerns: Colossians 3:1-2

Since this world is still in conflict we see a mixture of good and evil. Just as the lives of non-believers are not fully characterized by the negative features of the world, it is also true that the

lives of believers are not fully characterized by the values of the Kingdom of God. We can be easily drawn into the world and our lives are often tainted by the world system. We prepare for the future Kingdom by living in it now by the renewal of our minds spiritually, in accordance with our King's teachings.

If we want to identify with the Lord and deepen in our relationship with Him, we must learn to ☞ focus on what He focuses on: the invisible, spiritual, eternal things of God's Kingdom and the development of the inner man in true spiritual life and power.

The fundamental principle of the Kingdom is “Where the King is, there is the Kingdom.”

☞ To live like a Kingdom Citizen, you need more of Jesus in your life.

☞ Video – the Kingdom