

PRAYER STUDY #104

The Kingdom of God

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Matthew 4:17 KJV

When they, therefore, were come together, they asked of Him saying, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And He said unto them, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth." And, when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

Acts 1:6-9

What was the central theme of Jesus' ministry?

1. His teaching was designed to show men how they might enter the Kingdom of God(Matthew 5:20, 7:21).
2. His miracles were to prove that the Kingdom of God had come upon the people(Matthew 12:28).
3. His parables illustrated to the disciples the truth about the Kingdom of God(Matthew 13:11).
4. The prayer He taught included the words, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"(Matthew 6:10).
5. Before He was arrested, He assured His disciples that He would share with them joy and fellowship in the Kingdom(Luke 22:22-30).
6. He promised after His resurrection that He would come again on earth to bring the blessings of the Kingdom(Matthew 25:31, 34).

So, how important is the Kingdom of God teaching?

1. It was the subject of the first message Jesus preached.
2. It was also the subject of the last message He preached

Are Kingdom of Heaven and Kingdom of God the same thing?

Yes! Matthew used Kingdom of Heaven because He was writing primarily to a Jewish audience. The Jews believed writing the name of God out was disrespectful to the deity. The other Gospels use Kingdom of God terminology.

What is a kingdom?

The primary meaning of both the Hebrew and Greek words translated in English as *kingdom* is not a land mass as we think of kingdom but is an authority to rule and reign as a king.

What is the Kingdom of God?

According to Gotquestions.org using *The Moody Handbook of Theology* by Paul Enns, "The kingdom of God is the rule of an eternal, sovereign God over all creatures and things(Psalm 103:19, Daniel 4:3). The kingdom of God is also the designation for the sphere of salvation entered into at the new birth(John 3:5-7) and is synonymous with the *kingdom of heaven*. The kingdom of God embraces all created intelligence, both in heaven and earth that are willingly subject to the Lord and are in fellowship with Him. The kingdom of God is therefore, universal in that it includes created angels and men. It is eternal, as God is eternal, and it is spiritual-found within all born-again believers. We enter the kingdom of God when we are born-again, and we then are part of that kingdom for eternity. It is a relationship *born of the spirit*(John 3:5), and we have confident assurance that it is so because the Spirit bears witness with our spirits(Romans 8:16)."

Is the Kingdom of God a present reality?

1. Some believe a person enters into the Kingdom fully only when they accept Christ.
2. Some believe the Kingdom the Kingdom began on earth in the person of Jesus and has been present and is present now.
3. Some believe the Kingdom will begin only at the end of history when a new heavenly order of existence begins.
4. St Augustine taught that the Kingdom of God is the Church on earth today. As the Church grows, the Kingdom grows and is extended in the world. The Gospel offers not only salvation but transforms all relationships of life here and now causing the Kingdom in the person of the Church to prevail on the earth now.
5. Still others believe that the Kingdom is not about individual salvation but about society as a whole. These believers are concerned with societal problems. People build the Kingdom of God as they solve problems of poverty, sickness, social inequalities, race relationships, labor relations, etc.

6. I believe the Kingdom embraces all of these viewpoints, i.e. it is a present reality, albeit in an embryonic sense, but also a future hope. The Lord allows us to walk in the Kingdom now by faith but will bestow more to us as our inheritance when Jesus comes. In a sense, the followers of Jesus have already entered the realm of the Kingdom(Col 1:13 and Luke 16:16), but the Kingdom is also a future reality which will be culminated in the return of Jesus(II Peter 1:2).

George Eldon Ladd in *The Gospel of the Kingdom* pp. 13-33 puts it this way: *The Kingdom is a present reality(Matt 12:28), and is a future blessing (1st Corinthians 15:50). It is an inner spiritual redemptive blessing(Romans 14:17) which can be experienced only by way of the new birth (John 3:3), and yet it will have to do with the government of nations of the world (Rev. 11:15). The Kingdom is a realm into which men enter now (Matthew 8:11). It is at the same time a gift of God which will be bestowed by God in the future (Luke 12:32) and yet which must be received in the present(mark 10:15). The Kingdom of God is like a tiny seed which becomes a great tree; it is like leaven which will one day have permeated the entire bowl of dough (Luke 13:18-21). God's Kingdom is the realm of the Age to Come, popularly called heaven; then we shall realize the blessings of His Kingdom(reign)in the perfection of their fullness. But the Kingdom is here now.*

Wikipedia says: *Kingdom theology divides spiritual history into two great ages: This present age brought by the Fall of Man and lasting until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. This present evil age is governed by Satan's "kingdom of darkness", and through the influence of Satan and sin, has become characterized by death, disease, godlessness, war, poverty, and evil and suffering of all kinds. The age to come, was inaugurated in the ministry of Jesus Christ, and will last into the eternal future. The age to come is governed by the kingdom of God and is characterized by eternal life, freedom from sickness and suffering, humanity's intimate knowledge of God, universal peace on earth, and God's absolute reign over all creation. In the kingdom theology framework, the present day is caught between those two ages: Jesus Christ has established the kingdom of God on earth, but will not abolish this present evil age, and its kingdom of darkness until He returns.*

Because the kingdom of God is already here, believers in the kingdom theology expect to see God actively working, sometimes even miraculously, in the present day. Most of them testify they have seen this experience being fulfilled. In a kingdom theology framework, present-day manifestations of the kingdom of God, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, successful evangelism and missionary activity, as well as divine healing and other miracles. Additionally, the role of individual Christians and of the Church as a whole is to represent the kingdom of God to the world, through evangelism, missions, and social action.

Because the kingdom of God is not yet here in its full expression, the works of this present evil age continue though not as unlimited as it would have without the presence of the Kingdom of God. Although Christians have eternal life, they still sicken and die. Although they have been freed from sin, temptation to sin and sin itself continue to plague their lives. Although God dwells within them, their knowledge of God at times seems quite limited. War, poverty, sickness, godlessness, and death continue, and kingdom theology teaches that they will continue until the end of the age, though these things will be caused to go into retreat by the advancement of the Gospel.

And finally, VOICE OF JESUS.ORG, adds: *Jesus focused on the Kingdom early in His ministry. The primary thrust of early teaching was a call to repentance based upon an urgency imposed by the nearness of the Kingdom. He said: "Repent! For the Kingdom of God is at hand." (Mark 1:13) In this He was continuing the major theme of John the Baptizer, whose preaching had first aroused wide public interest. He was also gaining attention by appealing to the Jews' interest in this theme. But Jesus' call to repentance based on the nearness of the Kingdom was different from that of John. John's was a call to a higher state of morality, whereas Jesus was calling the people to change their whole attitude to life(Matthew 3:8-10; Luke 3:7-14). This was to be done by resetting their minds from earth to heaven and from time to eternity. He tied this call to the Kingdom, for it was because of the nearness of the Kingdom that He issued the call. Why repent? Because the Kingdom of God was at hand!*

Scriptural Characteristics of Those Living in the Present Reality of the Kingdom

1. Those who are humble: *Blessed(happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous with life, joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) are the poor in spirit(the humble, who rate themselves insignificant), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!* (Matthew 5:2-4 AMP) *God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.* Matthew 5:2-4 NLT)
2. Those willing to be persecuted for righteousness' sake: *God blesses those people who are treated badly for doing right. They belong to the kingdom of heaven.* (Matthew 5:8-11 Contemporary English Version)
3. Those whose priority in life is seeking God: *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.* (Matthew 6:32-34)
4. Those open to deliverance ministry: *But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you[before you expected it].* (Matthew 12:27-29 AMP)
5. Those who approach God childlike: *But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and don't try to stop them! People who are like these children belong to God's kingdom."* (Matthew 19:14 CEV)
6. Those who are repentant: *Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.* (Matthew 21:31-33 NIV)
7. Those who produce spiritual fruit: *I tell you, for this reason the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce the fruits of it.* (Matthew 21:42-44 AMP)
8. Those who do not look back: *Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."* (Luke 9:62)
9. Those who are truly born again: *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."* (John 3:3 NIV)
10. Those willing to go through hardships and tribulations: *Establishing and strengthening the souls and the hearts of the disciples, urging and warning and encouraging them to stand firm in the faith, and [telling*

- them] that it is through many hardships and tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22 AMP)*
11. Those walking in the Spirit: *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17)*
 12. Those who walk in power: *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. (1st Corinthians 4:19-21NIV)*
 13. Those who are righteous through the Blood of Jesus: *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, not effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God, and such were some of you; **but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.** (1st Corinthians 6:9-11)*

Other Scriptures Dealing with the Kingdom of God

1. Where is the Kingdom of God? *Nor will people say, "Here it is," or "There it is," because the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21 NIV)*
2. When did the Kingdom come on earth? *For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." (Luke 22:18)*
3. When will the end come? *After that comes the end(the completion), when He delivers over the kingdom of God the Father after rendering inoperative and abolishing every [other] rule and every authority and power. (1st Corinthians 15:23-25 AMP)*
4. What part of our being inherits the kingdom? *But I tell you this, brethren, flesh and blood cannot [become partakers of eternal salvation and] inherit or share in the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable(that which is decaying)inherit or share in the imperishable(the immortal). (1st Corinthians 15:50 AMP) My friends, I want you to know that our bodies of flesh and blood will decay. This means that they cannot share in God's kingdom, which lasts forever. (1st Corinthians 15:50 CEV)*