

“Where Is the Kingdom?”

If the kingdom of Christ has already come, where is it? What is it? We continue our series of studies today on “The Kingdom of the Lord.” It is one of the most primary subjects in the Bible, yet one of the most misunderstood in the religious world today. In fact, it is not only misunderstood today, but it was even misinterpreted in the first century when Christ was here, heralding its imminent establishment. Much of the conflict that occurred between Jesus and the Jewish leaders of that day was fueled by their false assumptions concerning the Messianic kingdom. Even the Lord’s disciples had a difficult time understanding what Jesus meant in His many statements and teachings about the kingdom, all the way up to its establishment.

In our last study together, we pointed to multiple scriptures that plainly teach that the kingdom was to come in the first century A.D., during the lifetime of some of Jesus’ first disciples. The entire ministries of Jesus and of John before Him were devoted to preparing for the establishment of the long awaited and now imminent kingdom of God. In fact, even before Jesus was born, His mother was reminded of the Messianic promise by the angel of the Lord.

Luke 1:26-33 “And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed are thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

What a promise! Nearly all of those who claim to believe the Bible agree that Jesus was to sit upon the throne of the great King David one day. But what does that mean? If the kingdom came in the first century, and if it exists now, where is it? What does it consist of? How can Jesus be reigning in the world if there is so much sin, evil, rebellion and death in the world?

The word ‘*kingdom*’ is used almost 350 times in the King James translation of the Bible, Old and New Testaments. When used as an abstract noun, it refers to *sovereignty, royal power or dominion*, according to W.E. Vine. As a concrete noun, it denotes *the territory or people over whom a king rules*. Sometimes in scripture, it refers to *nations or governments of men*. Then sometimes, it refers to *the nation of Israel*, the people who sprang forth from Abraham as chosen nation separated unto God, through whom God worked to bring His purposes to pass in Christ. There is also the *kingdom of the world, the kingdom of Satan*—yes, he has a kingdom or sphere of rule, and it is a kingdom of darkness.

Then there is *the kingdom of God*: the kingdom given to Jesus Christ to rule over until the end of time on earth. It is this kingdom that is superior to all other kingdoms, in purpose, power, might and dominion. In our last study, we learned that Daniel prophesied of this kingdom hundreds of years before Christ was born. You recall that Nebuchadnezzar had the dream or vision of the man who had a head of gold, a

chest of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron and feet of iron and clay. Daniel interpreted that vision for the king and said that this man represented the kingdoms of earth, starting with the present Babylonian empire and ending hundreds of years later with the weakened Roman empire. All of those kingdoms were the mightiest to ever rule the world. Read what Daniel said.

Daniel 2:44 “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”

In other words, the kingdom of God would come and be not only the greatest kingdom to ever be established, but it would be an indestructible kingdom. Before Jesus came, the world was under the dominion of Satan. The earth had rebelled against God through sin, but there was coming a time when sin would no longer rule. It would be defeated. Men would submit to God by submitting to His Son, Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:2 “Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;”

During the days of the Romans, Jesus came, preaching that the kingdom was at hand. It was at the doorstep. Those people living then were very near the kingdom.

Mark 9:1 “And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.”

Later, He told some of those same disciples that after He ascended back to glory, they were to wait in Jerusalem and He would send the Holy Spirit to them, clothing them with power (**Luke 24:49**). The Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost, empowering the disciples (**Acts 2**), and the apostle Peter stood and used, for the very first time, what Jesus called ‘*the keys of the kingdom*’ (**Matthew 16:19**). Those keys allowed men and women entrance into the kingdom. 3,000 of them on that day alone believed, repented of their sins, and were baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins. Being then forgiven of their sins, they were added to the church.

Acts 2:47 “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

When they were delivered from sin, they were added to the church of Christ. Let’s see how Paul later worded that.

Colossians 1:12-13 “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”

Luke says they received *the forgiveness or remission of their sins and were added to the church*. Paul says they were *delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of Christ*. Can’t we see that they’re talking about the same process? The same thing? So friend, the kingdom came on the Day of Pentecost after Jesus ascended to heaven. What that tells me is that when Jesus ascended back to the Father, something else happened: He began to rule and reign from God’s right hand.

Psalms 24:7-8 “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.”

When Jesus entered glory, He did so as a king. That’s why the scriptures use the terms *church* and *kingdom* interchangeably. The church is the rule of Christ upon this earth. How do we know that?

Ephesians 1:18-23 “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

Paul says that Jesus now has dominion, He is supreme over all of these things. *All things are now put under His feet*. He is now head over all things to the church. Doesn’t that imply a kingly rule? But people will tell us that Jesus isn’t reigning as king yet. They say that He will one day reign, after this “church-age” is over and according to their theories, when His kingdom finally comes. But that’s not what Paul said.

Not only does the Bible show that the kingdom was in existence in Paul’s own day; Paul said that NOW all things have been put under His feet. He IS above all principality; that is, all other rulers. He IS above all power, might and dominion; that is, all governments, all earthly and unseen powers. No power is equal to Him. God has placed all of it under His feet.

What did Daniel say? He said that in the days of those kings, God would set up a kingdom and it would sovereign, supreme and indestructible. So, where IS this kingdom? Where is the throne of David that the angel told Mary that Jesus would occupy? Where is this reign that we’re talking about?

There are four things that constitute a kingdom:

1. A king

We all acknowledge that Jesus is appointed to be a king. He has all power and authority.

Matthew 28:18 “...All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

Luke 1:33 “And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

2. Subjects

The church is subject to Christ, as are the angels, other authorities and powers.

Ephesians 5:24 “Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”

I Peter 3:21-22 “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”

When did all of these become subject to Him? When He comes back one day? No! Peter says they became subject to Him when He went away to heaven—not when He comes back from heaven. The subjects of King Jesus are those who obey the gospel.

3. Law

Without a law, you don't have a kingdom. You have anarchy and chaos. Despite what many try to tell you today, Christians ARE under a law. They're not under the law of Moses, but we are subject to *the perfect law of liberty*. We are under the law of Jesus Christ.

James 1:25 “But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

4. Territory

This is where so many become confused over the kingdom and the reign of Christ. What is His territory? Where is His territory? Get your globe or atlas out and look for the kingdom of Christ. You'll find Great Britain and Russia, France, Germany, the United States...but where is the kingdom of Christ? If it's here, where is it? You see, you'd be looking in the wrong place.

Luke 17:20-21 “And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”

Where is the territory of Christ's kingdom? It's within the hearts of men. It's not over here or over there. There is not a national boundary to be mapped somewhere on earth. Its lines are those lines that divide darkness from light; sin from righteousness; those in the world from those in Christ.

Jesus went on to say in **Luke 17** that there would come a time when those to whom He was speaking would not be able to enter the kingdom. In **verses 22-37**, He basically says that they would miss the kingdom. Why? because they weren't looking for the true kingdom of the Lord. They thought they were, but they weren't really. The Jews had a terrible misconception about the kingdom of the Messiah, just like many in religion do yet today. Those Jews were subservient to the Romans when Jesus came and they resented paying taxes and being subject to Caesar and Rome, and they didn't see themselves at this point as sinners in need of a savior; they saw themselves as political captives in need of a national hero. They thought that the Christ would come riding in on His white horse and conquer the Romans, restoring the sovereignty of the Jewish nation and David's throne, and rule over a restored Israel.

When Jesus came, not encouraging rebellion to Rome, rather that they were to *render to Caesar what is Caesar's*, that infuriated them. When He came teaching submission, they rejected and despised Him.

Ultimately, they crucified Him. If they did not open their eyes to the truth and embrace Him as the king of their hearts and lives by obedience to the gospel after the greatest proof of all was offered—that being His resurrection from the dead—He warns them that, as a nation, they would be destroyed in the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. They wouldn't see or enter His kingdom. In fact, in another place, Jesus said that He would take the kingdom away from them and give it to another nation—that is, the Gentiles.

Matthew 21:42-43 “Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

Even Jesus' own disciples had a difficult time understanding the nature of Christ's kingdom, wanting to think that it was a national, literal, earthly kingdom. On one occasion, we read of the mother of James and John wanting seats of honor for her sons when this new rule of the Messiah in the earth came. But Jesus rebuked them for their carnal conception of His kingdom (**Matthew 20**). The disciples were even willing to take up arms and fight for this kingdom when Jesus was apprehended before being crucified. Peter drew his sword, but Jesus told him to put it up. Jesus had no such desire. In fact, He later told Pilate this:

John 18:36 “Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.”

Jesus' kingdom is not a literal earthly rule or reign. It is a spiritual reign in the hearts of those who obey the gospel of King Jesus. You might say, *if Jesus' kingdom is here, then why doesn't He rule over everybody? Why do we still see sin, evil, rebellion and death in the world?* The Bible teaches that the devil may be working, he may be angry, and he may be doing all that he can to take people to eternal perdition. But don't forget this: he has been defeated. The victory is won! Sin was conquered at Calvary! We're not waiting for sin to be conquered; it HAS been conquered.

We can know freedom from sin NOW. We can know triumph over sin and condemnation in Jesus Christ. He triumphed over evil and the purposes of Satan when He died, resurrected and ascended to heaven, establishing His church and saving men from sin through the gospel. Those who will not submit to Him will be cast into the lake of fire along with the devil and his angels at the end of time. A terrible thought, but it's true. Through Jesus' grace and mercy, God is giving us the opportunity NOW to repent and to enter the kingdom. The kingdom is alive and well, and it continues to grow as men and women believe and obey the gospel and are saved and added to the church, translated into the kingdom. That's taking place yet today! Listen to how Jesus described it one time:

Mark 4:30- “And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.”

Jesus was not teaching a horticultural lesson here, and this is not supposed to be a science textbook, but the point He is making is merely illustrative. By parable, Jesus is saying that the kingdom is like a tiny

seed that is planted and it grows into something very large. That's how the kingdom began on Pentecost. A small band of disciples, a handful really, who were faithful to Jesus and were waiting for the kingdom: they were the beginning of something that would fill the earth with its glory. What began with a handful of fishermen, tax collectors, labourers, exploded--sometimes by thousands a day, starting on Pentecost--even yet today, 2,000 years later, men and women are STILL being added to this kingdom, by obedience to the same gospel that was preached when it all began in Jerusalem when Jesus sat down at the right hand of God. Peter took the keys, he opened the gate, and it began from that day forward to be flooded with the souls those made righteous by the blood of Jesus.

Yes, there is sin in the world because there are evil and rebellious men in the world, but it hasn't diminished the rule of Jesus. Those who reject His rule are lost, and their doom is sealed. The redeemed are reigning in righteousness with Jesus Christ over sin and condemnation. When the last sermon has been preached and the last soul who will enter the kingdom has entered the kingdom, Paul said this is what will come to pass:

I Corinthians 15:24 "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power."

Now, get that. When Jesus comes, He is going to deliver the kingdom up to God and lay down His rule. So, you can be in the kingdom NOW. Won't you submit to King Jesus and leave the kingdom of darkness, entering the kingdom of light? You can, if you'll only obey the gospel today.