



The KINGDOM^{of} GOD

Understanding God's original intent
of establishing His rule on earth through mankind

BIBLE STUDY OUTLINE

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All Peoples Church & World Outreach
First Edition Printed December 2009

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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New King James Version.

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Kingdom
THE KINGDOM
OF GOD

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INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of God is a major theme through the Bible. Jesus began His earthly ministry proclaiming the arrival of the Kingdom of Heaven. During His final days before His ascension, He taught concerning the Kingdom of God. The Early Church taught and preached from a Kingdom perspective. In fact we are to be preaching the gospel of the Kingdom in all the world before the end comes (Matthew 24:14). And yet we hear very little being preached and taught on the Kingdom of God in our churches today. We find little or no emphasis on how we must fulfill the mandate Jesus gave us when He told us to pray, “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Obviously, if we were to pray that prayer, He fully intended for it to be answered in and through our lives.

We must understand that this Kingdom is within us. We must recognize that we are sons and daughters of the Kingdom, sown as good seed into this world. This study will teach you how to live and operate out of a “Kingdom of God” perspective, where everything you do is an extension of the King’s domain here on earth—His rule being released in you and through you. You will learn how to fulfill the Kingdom mandate that is on your life—to see His Kingdom come and His will be done through you, right where you are.

The Bible Study Outline is in a format intended for personal or group study and meditation. While brief comments are presented, we encourage you or your Bible study group to meditate, and listen

to the Holy Spirit for understanding, insight and personal application of Scripture. Record, share or discuss these insights and life application.

Our desire is to see His Kingdom come in and through our individual lives, and through Christ-centered, Kingdom loving communities in our nation. Thy Kingdom Come, Lord Jesus!

Ashish Raichur

1



A KINGDOM PLANNED



I

A KINGDOM PLANNED

God as King and the Kingdom of God is a major theme all through the Bible. In fact the Lord Jesus began and closed His earthly ministry speaking about the Kingdom of God. There are about 150 verses in the New Testament that talk about the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven.

The word “Kingdom” in the New Testament is the Greek *bas-il-i'-ah* meaning royalty, rule, reign, a realm of the Kingdom. Kingdom therefore refers to the realm of the King’s rule, reign or the King’s domain.

In the New Testament, we have the phrase “Kingdom of God” and the “Kingdom of Heaven.” We understand these to be synonymous and therefore they can be used interchangeably. The Kingdom of God is with reference to “who” the Kingdom belongs to, that is, God. The Kingdom of Heaven is with reference to “where” the Kingdom originates, that is, Heaven or the spiritual realm.

A Kingdom Prepared

Matthew 25:34

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

“... from the foundation of the world”

The phrase “from” or “before the foundation of the world” appears about 10 times in the New Testament. One of these, as mentioned

in Matthew 25:34 has to do with God's Kingdom prepared for a people. It indicates something designed for the saints, and they for it, before time began, from all eternity, before the work of creation commenced. The phrase "the foundation of the world" means the beginning of the world, the beginning of history and so on. This was already God's intention in eternity, which was then followed by His execution in time. This describes a purpose that has been eternal in the mind of God. It was not an "afterthought." It was not commenced in time. The purpose was far back in the ages of eternity.

"... the kingdom prepared for you ..."

God, even before the foundation of the world, intended to have a Kingdom (a realm under His rule) which He prepared or made ready for a people who would inherit that Kingdom.

"... inherit the kingdom ..."

To inherit meant "to be an heir." To be an heir of the Kingdom is very different from being just a subject or a slave in the Kingdom. God's intent was to have a Kingdom of people who would be joint-heirs of the Kingdom. The people would be "princely" so to speak. The authority of the King would be in them as fellow-heirs of the Kingdom. They would be involved in the administration and execution of that Kingdom.

The Kingdom Introduced

In Genesis, God began to execute that which He had designed and intended, which is to have a Kingdom of heirs, a Kingdom of kings.

Genesis 1:27,28

²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have

dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

As God went about executing His intent to have a Kingdom of heirs, He placed **them** (i.e. man and woman) to have dominion (lordship) over the earth. When God blessed them and issued a decree stating “have dominion,” He was releasing His authority through man on the earth. His Kingdom would now be extended on the earth through mankind. Mankind carried delegated power, authority and dominion over the earth, given to him by God Himself.

However this process was temporarily interrupted with the “Fall of man.” Two important things in this context took place. First, lordship over the earth went temporarily into the hands of the devil. Second, man’s concept (understanding or perception) of being an “heir of the Kingdom” was totally marred coming under severe oppression of the devil.

So God went about the plan of redemption (which He also foreknew) that would eventually lead right into the plan of establishing a Kingdom of heirs.

In redemption, among other things, God recovers man’s lordship of this planet and also rebuilds the redeemed-man’s concept of being an “heir of the Kingdom.”

The Kingdom Re-introduced

John the Baptist was the first person who began announcing the arrival of the Kingdom. He came preaching, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2).

Jesus began His ministry by proclaiming the arrival of the Kingdom.

Matthew 4:17

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

Jesus went about announcing the good news of the Kingdom.

Matthew 4:23

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.

From the time of John the Baptist, the Kingdom of God began to make its entrance into the earth. To be "at hand" simply means to be near or within reach, to be accessible for every one.

The King of the Kingdom stepped into the world, to recover the people He intended to be heirs of the Kingdom. He personally came to usher in the Kingdom over the earth, where He intended to have His Kingdom executed by the heirs of the Kingdom. Many earthly kings when they wished to extend their kingdom over a certain realm, they simply sent out their army led by a captain, to conquer. However, this King was different. He sent a forerunner named John to announce His coming, and then He personally came to bring the Kingdom of Heaven into earth! He revealed to us first-hand, the nature of this Kingdom, what it would be like to live and operate as part of His Kingdom here on earth. He modeled for us the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth and left an open invitation for everyone interested to come into that Kingdom.

The Spiritual and the Natural Kingdom

There is the spiritual dimension of the Kingdom—which has to do with the King's domain being established in the hearts and lives of

people. From here, the Kingdom begins to pervade or affect everything around.

There is the natural dimension of the Kingdom—which is the literal government of the Kingdom that will be established in the not-so-distant future, when the Lord Jesus rules the earth out of Jerusalem in the Millennium and thereafter. The government of that Kingdom will be administered by the saints—the heirs of the Kingdom.

When John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus began announcing the arrival of the Kingdom of Heaven, they were introducing the spiritual Kingdom of God. We are presently in the age or time where the spiritual dimension of the Kingdom of God is at work in us and through us, thus extending the King's domain into every facet of our earthly lives.

Born into the Kingdom

John 3:3,5

³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁵ Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

How does one become part of the Kingdom of God? The Lord Jesus said that one has to be "born again" to see, meaning to partake or be a part of the Kingdom of God. To be born again is to be born from above. It is to receive a spiritual transformation that only God can impart into the human heart through the work of His Word and His Spirit. Being born again ushers us into the Kingdom of God. We then begin to experience the Kingdom of God in its

spiritual dimension, working from within us into every facet of our lives on earth. We are in His Kingdom and His Kingdom is in us.

Colossians 1:12,13

¹² giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

When we are born again, a transfer of citizenship takes place. We are brought out from the kingdom of darkness and ushered into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. These two kingdoms are opposites, just as light and darkness. Therefore as people who have been born again into a new Kingdom—the Kingdom of Heaven—we need to make several ‘adjustments’ or ‘adaptations’ to live in the new Kingdom we are now a part of. We will discover these as we progress in our study.

Sons of the Kingdom

Matthew 13:36–40

³⁶ Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” ³⁷ He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. ³⁹ The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. ⁴⁰ Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.

Having been born into the Kingdom, we must now understand our place in the world in relationship to our place in the Kingdom of God. Jesus referred to us as the “sons of the Kingdom” in one of the Kingdom parables. In this world, there are the sons of the Kingdom and the sons of the wicked one. The Son of Man, Jesus, has purposely “sown” us, the sons of the Kingdom, into the world.

Obviously He “sowed” us into this world with a purpose—that has to do with us being “sons of the Kingdom,” having to do with the Kingdom of God being released on the earth. This means that our place in this world has more to do with our being part of the Kingdom than any personal dream or ambition that we wish to accomplish. We have been sent into the world as agents, representatives or ambassadors of the Kingdom. As sons (daughters) of the Kingdom, we are here to bring that Kingdom—the King’s dominion, reign and influence into our world.

Operating from a “Kingdom of God” Perspective

As we progress in this study of the Kingdom of God, one of the things we desire to see happen in all of our lives is that we begin to live and operate out of a “Kingdom of God” perspective—because this was God’s original intent. His intent was for us to inherit a Kingdom prepared for us here on earth.

Perceive everything you do as an extension of the King’s domain here on earth—His rule being released in you and through you!

2



THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM



2

THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM

God, the King

The Bible reveals God's nature and character in many different ways—as Father, Savior, Healer and so on. Among all of these, the Bible also reveals God as the omnipotent and eternal King. He is a powerful Ruler with an unshakable, unending Kingdom. As people of God, we must learn to recognize this dimension of our God and relate to Him as God, the King. We must also understand how He operates His Kingdom—which in many cases is very different from kings and kingdoms we are familiar with.

Psalm 145: 1, 10–13

¹ I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. ¹⁰ All Your works shall praise You, O LORD, and Your saints shall bless You. ¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, and talk of Your power, ¹² To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom. ¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations.

We extol, praise and worship God as King. We speak of the glory of His Kingdom and His power. We know that His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom.

Praise is recognition of the greatness of our King, of the omnipotent sovereign Ruler of all the earth. It is an expression of His Lordship over our lives. It is a celebration of His excellent, compassionate and just reign over us. It is a declaration of His dominion over all. “Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises

to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding” (Psalm 47:6,7)

Psalm 44:4

You are my King, O God; Command victories (*Heb. Yeshua = salvation, deliverance, prosperity, healing*) **for Jacob.**

In prayer, the Psalmist is calling on God, recognizing His authority as omnipotent ruler, and asking Him to command (issue decrees) victories for Israel. This is something you and I can learn to do—to call upon our King to issue decrees on our behalf, knowing fully well that when He orders something to be done, no one can stop it!

Here are some obvious, but enlightening facts about the King and His Kingdom: (Some of these insights have been adapted from the book “Rediscovering the Kingdom” by Myles Munroe [Destiny Image Publishers, 2004, ISBN 0-7684-2217-50])

1. *As King, God is final authority. His authority is inherent, in who He is. No one brought Him into power and no one can remove Him out of power.*
2. *As King, God’s Word is also His Command. It is law, in the Kingdom.*
3. *As King, God’s presence is also the place of all Kingdom authority and glory. When you enter the presence of the King, you are entering the presence of His complete glory and authority.*
4. *As King, God’s name represents the full weight of His authority.*
5. *As King, God’s Kingdom is an expression of who He is.*

Isaiah 9:6,7

⁶For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

As Isaiah unfolds aspects about the government that the Son of God would administer, He points back to “His name.” His name effectively describes His nature—who He is. Therefore, the government that the Son of God administers, is an expression of who He is. It is expressed as:

Wonderful (Heb. = Miracle, marvelous thing)—expression of miraculous

Counselor (Heb. = Advisor)—expression of wisdom

Mighty God—expression of power

Everlasting Father—expression of compassion, love, care

Prince of Peace—expression of shalom (wholeness, total well-being)

The miraculous, the wisdom, the power, the fatherhood of God, the ruler who brings wholeness, judgment and justice—all of these are facets of God’s Kingdom or God’s government. Wherever God exerts His influence, throughout the realm of His dominion—these will be evident.

Hebrews 1:8

But to the Son He says: “YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER; A SCEPTER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE SCEPTER OF YOUR KINGDOM.

His scepter or rule is also one of righteousness.

We must learn to embrace all aspects of His Kingdom and rule in our lives. The problem is that some of us emphasize one particular aspect of God's Kingdom, and sound like that is all there is to the Kingdom. For example, some emphasize only the Fatherhood of God—His loving, caring, forgiving, nurturing, providing aspects. This is good, but not the only aspect of the King. His Kingdom is also one of wisdom and righteousness and justice. The danger is that an overemphasis of one genuine facet of God can lead to a misrepresentation of God, because it prevents people from knowing who God really is.

6. *As King, God is to be feared and honored*

Jeremiah 10:7,10

⁷ Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? For this is Your rightful due. For among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like You. ¹⁰ But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, and the nations will not be able to endure His indignation.

One of the finest tributes to God came from Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king:

Daniel 4:34–37

³⁴ And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. ³⁵ All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?" ³⁶ At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.

Praising and worshipping our King is one of the finest ways of honoring Him.

I Timothy 1:17

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

I Timothy 6:15

Which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

(See also Revelation 17:14; 19:16)

How the King Introduced His Kingdom

John the Baptist had the greatest honor of being the forerunner of the King and announcing that the Kingdom of Heaven has come (Matthew 3:2). While John had the honor of announcing the Kingdom, yet he could not be part of the Kingdom. One had to be born again to enter the Kingdom, and this could not take place until after the resurrection. So Jesus declared that the least one “in the Kingdom of God” is greater than John, the greatest of Old Covenant prophets. “For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he” (Luke 7:28). Being born into the Kingdom brings you into a realm of spiritual experience, position and authority that none of those who lived without the born-again experience could enjoy.

The Lord Jesus took a 3-fold approach in introducing the Kingdom:

- *Preaching the good news about the Kingdom*
- *Teaching the principles of the Kingdom*
- *Demonstrating the power of the Kingdom*

Matthew 4:17,23

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."²³ And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.

Matthew 9:35

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Luke 4:43

But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent."

Preaching the Good News About the Kingdom

What could be good news about the Kingdom that Jesus preached? I believe it was a message that declared that satan, the enemy of the Kingdom was overthrown (John 12:31), that people no longer needed to be in fear and oppression of the enemy, and that a way was being made for everyone to come out of the kingdom of darkness and enter into the triumphant Kingdom of God's Son.

Teaching the Principles of the Kingdom

The Lord Jesus taught many things about the Kingdom of God. He communicated clearly what kind of life we would need to live as people who belonged to the Kingdom. Here is a small brief on some of the things He taught about the Kingdom:

Poor in spirit

Matthew 5:3

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

To be poor is to be in a state of need, to want, to beg, to ask for more. To be poor in spirit is to be "needy" in the spirit. Your

spirit is hungry for more. There is an insatiable hunger, an unquenchable thirst, a continuous state of wanting, begging, crying out for what you do not have—in your spirit. To such, Jesus promised, that they will experience the Kingdom of Heaven. The experience of the Kingdom is granted to those who are poor in spirit—who in their spirit are desperately crying out for what they do not have.

Persecuted for doing right

Matthew 5:10

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

When you are being persecuted, wrongly judged and mistreated for doing what is right, just remember that the Kingdom of Heaven is yours. The glory that shall be revealed in you and through you both in this life and in the life to come, because of the Kingdom, far outweighs the light affliction we suffer momentarily (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Doing and teaching the Word

Matthew 5:19

Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

To be great in the Kingdom is to come to a place of stature and honor in the Kingdom. There were a few occasions when Jesus described what led to greatness in the Kingdom. He taught us that if we become childlike and humble ourselves like little children in our relationship with the Father, it would make us great in the Kingdom (Matthew 18:4). He also showed us that if we humble ourselves to become a servant to others, He said that would bring

us to a place of greatness in the Kingdom (Matthew 20:26). In Matthew 5:19 Jesus instructs us that if we do His Word in our personal lives, live by it and follow it, and then teach others to live by the Word, then it leads to stature and honor in the Kingdom. Notice, that the doing precedes the teaching. First we live it out in our own lives and then we share with others how, and help them live out the Word in their lives as well.

Thy Kingdom come

Matthew 6:10,13

¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. ¹³ And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

When we pray, we are to invite His rule and dominion here on earth. The obvious outcome of such prayer is that the King's dominion is expressed in and through us. In prayer, we also acknowledge His Kingship, His rule and reign over all.

Seek first the Kingdom

Matthew 6:33

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

In our priorities, we are to pursue first and foremost the Kingdom of God and doing what is right before God. This means we focus on having the rule and reign of the King established in our lives and extend on earth through our lives through everything we do—our choices, plans, activities and so on.

Doing the will of the Father

Matthew 7:21

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Jesus emphasized doing the will of God, rather than providing mere lip service. He even revealed that knowing Him personally is critical, more important than being familiar with the mechanics of using His name or supposedly ministering in His name (Matthew 7:22,23).

He taught many mysteries of the Kingdom in parables—illustrations from everyday life. We will study the parables of the Kingdom later.

Demonstrating the Power of the Kingdom

The Lord Jesus not only preached and taught about the Kingdom, but He also demonstrated or gave evidence to the presence and reality of the Kingdom by healing sicknesses and casting out devils. He had come to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8) and Jesus pointed to such works as a clear expression and indication of God's Kingdom among us. He said "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matthew 12:28).

Jesus instructed His disciples to introduce the Kingdom of God using the same approach He implemented, that is to preach and demonstrate the Kingdom. "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:7,8).

2000 years later, we have the responsibility of introducing the Kingdom of God to our generation—the world in which we live. Should we follow the King in the approach He took to introduce

His Kingdom or should we come up with some other methodology or way of doing things? I believe the answer is simple. Follow the King! Follow His approach of preaching, teaching and demonstrating the Kingdom—as the way to introduce the Kingdom of God in our generation. We must both announce (communicate) and also demonstrate the presence and power of the Kingdom through miracles, healing and deliverance.

3



THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM



3

THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM

Kingdom Emissaries

While His disciples were still trying to understand the dynamics of a spiritual Kingdom called the “Kingdom of Heaven,” the Lord Jesus announced the building of a “church” that would have the keys of the Kingdom vested in it.

Matthew 16:18,19

¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Jesus said that He would build His Church and the gates of hell would not overpower the Church. The city gates in Old Testament times, was the place where rulers sat and judgments were passed. It was also a place of protection and control. Whoever controlled the city gates controlled the city. It represented the seat of power. The “gates of hell” therefore represent the “powers of hell.” The powers of hell cannot stop the Church. Gates are stationary. Gates do not move. So it is the Church that must advance toward the gates of hell. The Church does not sit around waiting for the gates to come to it! So in essence, the Church Jesus is building is a Church that confronts and overthrows the powers of hell.

To this Church, Jesus said, “I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.” Keys represent authority. Jesus said that He

had the keys of hell and death (Revelation 1:18), meaning He had conquered and therefore had authority over hell and death. The Church has the authority of the Kingdom of Heaven. To do what? The correct rendering of the rest of the verse is: “to bind on earth what has been bound in heaven, to loose on earth what has been loosed in heaven.” The Church Jesus is building is a Church that has the authority of heaven to bind on earth what God has declared bound in heaven and to loose on earth what God has loosed in heaven. The Church brings heaven to earth.

The Church is part of the Kingdom of God. On earth today, the Church—those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb—have been vested with the authority of the Kingdom to overthrow what the devil is doing and to usher into earth what is in heaven.

Let us recap what happened in Genesis:

Genesis 1:26–28

26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

When God said, “Let them have dominion,” He was delegating His authority to mankind, setting them with the ability to rule and subdue on the earth. God’s original intent was for mankind to have dominion on the earth. This was the first introduction of the Kingdom of God on earth, by God through man. God’s rule or government would fill the earth through man.

Man's authority on earth came from God. Man derived His authority from God who created Him. God is Spirit, in the invisible realm. Man therefore derives his authority from the spiritual realm and extends that into the natural visible realm. Man rules the natural realm from the spiritual realm. Man rules the visible realm from the invisible realm. Disobedience broke the flow of this authority and brought man under slavery to the powers of darkness.

In redemption, the Church, is now vested with Kingdom authority on the earth, re-establishing God's original intent released in Genesis. Whenever the Church exercises authority, we are executing God's original intent—to extend His rule on the earth through man. The Church, in this age, has been vested with the spiritual Kingdom of God. It is through us, the redeemed of the Lord, that His rule and reign is extended on the earth. As a Kingdom community, we must learn to worship our King. We must extend His Kingdom—His rule and reign—in the hearts and lives of people as we preach, teach and demonstrate the Kingdom. We have been vested with Kingdom authority, to usher the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth. We are Kingdom emissaries—people sent on a mission to represent the interests of someone else—in this case the Kingdom of God!

I believe that we need a lot more emphasis on the Kingdom of God in the Church today!

The Kingdom of God and the Early Church

The final message

The Lord Jesus began His ministry proclaiming the Kingdom of God. He spent much of His ministry time teaching and

demonstrating the Kingdom. And then, in His final forty days, which we could safely assume that He reserved to speak just those things that were absolutely important, we see the Lord speaking of the Kingdom of God.

Acts 1:3

To whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Philip

It is quite obvious that the apostles and the Early Church focused on teaching and demonstrating the Kingdom of God. Philip, who served in the church, when he went out, ended up preaching what he had been taught—"things concerning the kingdom of God!"

Acts 8:12

But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.

Paul and Barnabas

Acts 14:21,22

²¹And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. ²²Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

Paul at Ephesus

Acts 19:8

And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

Acts 20:25

And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.

Paul's testimony to the elders from Ephesus indicates that he emphasized the preaching of the Kingdom of God in his ministry.

Paul's final assignment

Paul, on what seemed his final assignment, under house arrest, continued doing what He had been doing—preaching the Kingdom of God.

Acts 28:23,31

²³So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. ³¹Preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

Workers and companions for the Kingdom

Paul saw himself and his ministry team as workers for the Kingdom of God. Whatever they did in ministry was for the Kingdom. Similarly, John the beloved saw himself and others with him as companions suffering for the sake of the same Kingdom!

Colossians 4:11

And Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.

Revelation 1:9

I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The Early Church taught about the Kingdom. We need to recapture this emphasis, understanding and focus on the Kingdom of God in the Church today. In fact, in our present time, the Church

is to be preaching the gospel of the Kingdom—the same good news that Jesus preached. “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

The Church: A Nation Bearing the Fruits of the Kingdom

Matthew 21:33–46

³³“Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. ³⁴ Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. ³⁵ And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. ³⁷ Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ³⁸ But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ ³⁹ So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰ “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?” ⁴¹ They said to Him, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.” ⁴² Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: **‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE. THIS WAS THE LORD’S DOING, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES?’** ⁴³ “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. ⁴⁴ And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.” ⁴⁵ Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. ⁴⁶ But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet.

God offered to establish His Kingdom on earth through the nation of Israel. They temporarily rejected it and so now the Kingdom of God is offered to another nation—the Church comprising of believers from all over the world. The Church is the

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

nation that will bear the fruits of the Kingdom. As believers, we are here to bear the fruits—the outworking of the Kingdom of God through our lives. God desires His rule and reign to be expressed through us here on earth.

Are people around you seeing the fruits of the Kingdom through you?

4



KINGDOM THINKING



4

KINGDOM THINKING

The teachings of Jesus on the Kingdom of God radically affect our thinking—our perspectives, our value systems, our priorities. Our entire frame of reference and our frame of mind are altered. We will focus on some of the key teachings of Jesus on the Kingdom of God in this chapter. There will be additional insights as we discuss Kingdom parables in a later chapter.

In a New Kingdom—A New Paradigm

Colossians 1:12,13

¹² giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

There are two contrasting kingdoms—the kingdom of darkness and the Kingdom of Light. One is the kingdom of the devil and the other is the Kingdom of Jesus. We have been transferred into the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. As light differs from darkness, the Kingdom of Light is completely different from the kingdom of darkness. Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). The Kingdom that we belong to is “not of this world.” Therefore we are in a Kingdom where perspectives, lifestyles, values, purposes—everything—is very different from what is of this world. Apostle John wrote: “They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us” (I John 4:5,6). The people of the world speak as of the world. We who are of God speak as of God. There is a difference even in our speaking! We must therefore change or adapt to a new

way of speaking. Similarly, we must adapt to a new way of thinking, a new paradigm, and a new frame of mind. We call this “Kingdom Thinking.”

Jesus in His teaching shared with us this new paradigm—Kingdom Thinking. The more we think as people of the Kingdom of Light, the more we will behave like people of that Kingdom—and hence manifest (demonstrate) more of that Kingdom here on earth.

The Kingdom Framework of Thinking

It is good to create a ‘framework’ for thinking, sometimes also called a frame of reference. When our frame of reference is the Kingdom of God and our thinking patterns or framework are in alignment with the nature of God’s Kingdom, we not only perceive things differently but are able to truly “seek first” the Kingdom of God in our daily lives. Let each of the aspects we consider below become part of our framework for Kingdom Thinking.

Higher Standards for Daily Living

Matthew 5:21–30

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ ²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire. ²³ Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand

you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny. ²⁷ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.' ²⁸ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

(See also Mark 9:43–50)

If the Old Testament law seemed to be heavy, the Lord Jesus, as He introduced the Kingdom raised the bar several levels higher to describe standards for Kingdom living. It is not just the wrong act (murder, adultery and so on), but also the very harboring of a desire to perform the act (anger, lust and so on) that is sin. And the expected response is not a passive tolerance toward the wrong desire but a serious and painful severing of whatever is close and personal to it. We do this in order to experience the Kingdom of God (Mark 9:47).

This challenges our thinking. We are inclined to judge others and ourselves by the external behavior. But the Lord Jesus goes beyond that and challenges us to address the deeper issues that cause such behavior—the attitudes, passions and desires of the heart. We will be judged not only by the deeds but also by the motives—the silent inner attitudes—of our heart.

Kingdom thinking goes beyond external behavior and examines the heart; exposes wrong motives, attitudes and desires, and eliminates them at any cost.

Love Power

Matthew 5:43,44

⁴³ **"You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.'** ⁴⁴ **But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.**

In the Kingdom, we think love and walk in love even toward those who wrong us and hurt us. People of the world would retaliate in a situation where they have been wronged. But as part of the Kingdom, we respond with love. Look at every situation with love in your heart.

Kingdom thinking follows where God's love leads.

Faith

Matthew 6:31-33

³¹ **"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'** ³² **For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.** ³³ **But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**

Luke 12:31,32

³¹ **But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.** ³² **"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.**

The Lord Jesus taught a lot about faith. Faith in God should affect every area of our lives including the realm of daily needs. When it comes to "all these things," He taught us to have faith in God. As people of the Kingdom, we live our lives by faith in God. We must come to a place where we know beyond a doubt that it is the Father's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom. In other words, God not only is willing to give you the necessities of life, but His

Kingdom itself. If God is ready to give you the Kingdom, how much more willing would He be to give you “all these things.” So do not let fear grip your heart. Let faith arise! Pursue the Kingdom, for the Father who is willing to give you the Kingdom will also ensure that “all these things” are granted to you in this life.

Kingdom thinking is thinking inspired by faith in God.

For the King's Sake

Mark 8:34,35

³⁴ When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ³⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.

(See also: Matthew 10:39, Matthew 16:25, Luke 9:24, Luke 17:33, John 12:25)

Kingdom people count it an honor to “lose” in this world for the sake of the King and His Kingdom. In fact, we perceive it as a privilege, for which we have opportunity only in this life. There will be no sacrifices asked of us in heaven! “Losing” one's life could mean giving up some opportunity that would fulfill one's own interests but may not necessarily position one to advance the Kingdom of God. “Losing” one's life for the King's sake and the gospel's, could also mean taking up some responsibility which not many others would wish to bear, but you do it, simply because you know that it is what God wants you to do in order to advance His Kingdom here on earth. Such decisions and actions might seem so foolish to the world, and yet is considered a great honor for those in the Kingdom. It is for the King's sake!

Kingdom thinking does not perceive a “loss” as too much for the King's sake!

Childlikeness

Matthew 18:1–4

¹ At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ² Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, ³ and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

(See also Mark 10:13–15)

Matthew 19:14

But Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

Mark 10:15

Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.

Entrance into and greatness (stature, honor or significance) in the Kingdom is gained as one becomes like a little child. God is not encouraging childishness but rather childlikeness in our relationship with Him. A little child never questions whether its parent has the ability to feed it, clothe it and so on. It willingly abandons itself to the arms of its parent. A little child does not doubt its parent. It requires a great amount of humility for grown adults to be as little children in relating to the Father. But this is what He desires of us. And whenever we are “as little children” just trusting the Father, we will experience His Kingdom. The Kingdom of Heaven is made up of such—people who have become childlike—to simply trust the Word of their heavenly Father.

Kingdom thinking is childlike thinking—no reservations in leaning on the Father.

Servant Humility

Matthew 20:20–28

²⁰ Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. ²¹ And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom." ²² But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." ²³ So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father." ²⁴ And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. ²⁵ But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷ And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Greatness in the Kingdom does not come by holding on to a position, as the mother of James and John thought was necessary to do. Rather greatness in the Kingdom comes as we give up our positions where we can be served and instead humble ourselves to serve others. This must form part of our thinking. Think servanthood. Think giving your life away for others. Think serving others. Then serve. Remember Jesus taught, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

Kingdom thinking knows that when we humble ourselves to serve others, we are being like the King—the One we represent.

Celebrating the King's Perspective

Matthew 20:1–16

¹ "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² Now when he had agreed with the

laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.³ And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,⁴ and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went.⁵ Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise.⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?'⁷ They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.'⁸ "So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.'⁹ And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius.¹⁰ But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius.¹¹ And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner,¹² saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.'¹³ But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?'¹⁴ Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.¹⁵ Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?'¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

The Lord Jesus used this story to reveal to us that it is entirely up to the Master to do as He wishes with His own. God decides how He wishes to use, reward and work through His people. We do not measure God or dictate His actions by the terms and ways of this world. Many times, we make the mistake of judging what God is doing for other people, through our own perceptions and our own measuring standards. We become judges of another's servant. And as Apostle Paul wrote, "Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4).

Kingdom thinking is to celebrate everything that God does for and through His people. As long as it is God at work—let us celebrate it!

Kingdom Resolve

Luke 9:57–62

⁵⁷ Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.” ⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” ⁵⁹ Then He said to another, “Follow Me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” ⁶⁰ Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.” ⁶¹ And another also said, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.” ⁶² But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

The challenge that Jesus presents to these men definitely sounds harsh especially in the light of burying a father or saying good-bye to family. Want to “follow” the King? Then this is what He expects—your assignment for the Kingdom of God must supersede earthly obligations and earthly affections. If going home to do the funeral will keep you from pursuing the Kingdom in your life, then let go of the funeral and pursue the Kingdom. If your affections for family is causing you to look back and turning your attention from following the King, then you cannot be controlled by those affections. Keep plowing without going home! This is not to say that we neglect our responsibilities toward family. Elsewhere in His Word, we are required to take care of our families (1 Timothy 5:8). And yet we must maintain our focus and resolve to serve the King and follow Him wherever He leads us. We are not to get entangled with the affairs of this world to the point where we are unable to follow Him (2 Timothy 2:4).

Kingdom thinking includes a level of resolve and commitment to the King and the cause of His Kingdom that are unhindered by earthly responsibilities and affections.

Handling Rejection

Luke 10:11

The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.

As representatives of the Kingdom, we must understand that we will not receive a red carpet welcome everywhere we go. There will be people who will reject us and the message we bring. This must not in any way decrease our commitment to the Kingdom or taking the Gospel of the Kingdom to every people. When we face rejection, we know it is not because there is something wrong with the Kingdom we represent, but simply that men prefer darkness to light (John 3:19).

Kingdom thinking in the face of rejection is to know that you have brought the Kingdom of God to people who rejected it, but you now move on undeterred to advance the Kingdom among others.

The Eye of a Needle

Mark 10:17–31

¹⁷ Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY,' 'DO NOT MURDER,' 'DO NOT STEAL,' 'DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS,' 'Do not defraud,' 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER.'" ²⁰ And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth." ²¹ Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." ²² But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. ²³ Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴ And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those

who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶ And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, “Who then can be saved?” ²⁷ But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.” ²⁸ Then Peter began to say to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You.” ²⁹ So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, ³⁰ who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

(See also Matthew 19:16–30)

The Lord Jesus challenges our thinking about money, riches and wealth when He states that those who trust in riches will find it really hard to enter and experience the Kingdom of God. And yet He assures us that with God all things are possible, implying that God is able to see to it that there will be those who are rich in this world and yet have the necessary grace not to allow their wealth to keep them from entering into the Kingdom. The love for wealth and riches can keep people out of the Kingdom.

Kingdom thinking loves the King and His Kingdom far more than wealth and riches. Wealth and riches are seen as tools to honor and serve the King and His purposes. These will never be allowed to become a hindrance toward experiencing the Kingdom.

More Than Outward Form

Matthew 5:20

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

The Lord Jesus was very strong in addressing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. He said that by their hypocrisy, the scribes and

Pharisees were hindering others from entering into the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 23:13). He rebuked them sternly and said that even tax collectors and harlots would enter the Kingdom of God ahead of them (Matthew 21:32). The problem with the Pharisees was that they told others what to do but did not practice it themselves. And whatever they did, they did in order to be seen and praised by men (Matthew 23:3,4). Jesus challenges us to have a lifestyle that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. Only then can we experience the Kingdom of Heaven.

Kingdom thinking understands that it is not enough to have the right knowledge, right teaching or even the right intentions. This must be translated into action. We must live by what we know and what we teach.

5



KINGDOM LIVING



5

KINGDOM LIVING

The Kingdom Is Within You

Luke 17:20,21

²⁰ Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; ²¹ nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”

The Pharisees were interested in determining when the literal kingdom would be established. Jesus responded by describing the nature of the spiritual Kingdom—a Kingdom that was at that very moment amongst them. He also indicated that this spiritual Kingdom does not come with much external fanfare or pompous display. Rather the spiritual Kingdom of God is within. It is a Kingdom that works from within a person, in the individual first and then through the person.

We need to become conscious or continually recognize the Kingdom of God within us, and working through us. The King’s rule and domain, work inside us and through us. It permeates everything about us, thus affecting our lifestyle—the way we live, our choices, habits, and decisions. Kingdom lifestyle is an outworking of the Kingdom within.

Characteristics of Kingdom Living

The Kingdom that we belong to is “not of this world.” We are in a Kingdom where everything— perspectives, lifestyles, values, and purposes—is very different from this world. We would now like to examine some of the characteristics of a Kingdom lifestyle.

Holiness and Reverence

2 Corinthians 6:14–18

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM. I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE." ¹⁷ Therefore "COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM AND BE SEPARATE, SAYS THE LORD. DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN, AND I WILL RECEIVE YOU." ¹⁸ "I WILL BE A FATHER TO YOU, AND YOU SHALL BE MY SONS AND DAUGHTERS, SAYS THE LORD ALMIGHTY."

Apostle Paul draws a stark contrast between the believer and the unbeliever. The believer is called righteousness, light, of Christ and the temple of God. On the other hand, terms such as lawlessness, darkness, of Belial (means worthless, a title of satan), and idols are used to describe the life of an unbeliever. It is easy to see that the life of a believer, someone in the Kingdom, is very different from that of an unbeliever.

It is normal for people of the world to prefer darkness because they practice evil (John 3:19–21). However, as people of the Kingdom of God, we are called to walk in the light, and practice holiness. For us, holiness is a Kingdom norm, our Kingdom lifestyle.

In addressing believers in his letters to Corinth, Galatia and Ephesus, Paul is absolutely clear in indicating that a sinful lifestyle is unacceptable before God and will prevent entrance and experience of the Kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 6:9,10

⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor

homosexuals, nor sodomites,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:19–21

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Ephesians 5:3–5

³ But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; ⁴ neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

We understand that we are not saved by good works or a holy life. Rather, we manifest good works and a holy life because we are saved. Salvation and sanctification go together. Salvation affects sanctification in the life of the individual. If I am saved by grace through faith and not by my works—and yet the Bible states that if I practice unrighteousness, I will not have any part in the Kingdom—then what role does the grace of God have?

Hebrews 12:28

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

We are in an unshakeable Kingdom. And since we are part of such a powerful and glorious Kingdom, there is no need for us to be messing around with sin in our lives. Rather, let us appropriate the grace, which is given to us, and walk in reverence and godliness. The Greek meaning for “let us have grace” literally means “let us hold fast the grace” which we have received, so that by that grace

we can walk before God in reverence and godly fear. A genuine experience of God's grace will always result in reverence and godly fear. If we are talking about receiving a grace that 'liberates' us to sinful indulgence, gratification of sinful desires and being casual about sin—then this grace is not the kind of grace that comes from God. It is not the kind of grace that is given to those in the Kingdom. Rather, it is a misunderstanding and a misrepresentation of the true grace of God. Being born into the Kingdom of God, leads us into an experience of God's empowering grace that generates reverence and godly living in our lives. This grace leads you to "walk worthy of God who calls you into His own Kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

Righteousness, Peace and Joy

Romans 14:16–19

¹⁶ Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; ¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹ Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

In Romans chapter 14, Paul is addressing the subject of food and meat. He sums up his instruction by teaching us that as part of Kingdom living we do not do those things that could become an offense or stumbling block or a hindrance to the faith of a new believer. We know that the Kingdom of God really comprises of the things of the Spirit such as righteousness, peace and joy. For us the things of the Spirit are of greater importance than matters of eating and drinking. Therefore we are willing to relinquish our rights to what we eat and drink (i.e., enjoy in the world) for the sake of edifying the faith of another believer. When we do this, we are both accepted by God and approved by men. We therefore pursue things

that promote the work of the Spirit and result in the edification of believers.

A Kingdom lifestyle is one in which I am willing to relinquish my rights to personal choices and tastes in order to pursue righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit and for the benefit of other believers.

Power, Authority and Dominion

1 Corinthians 4:19,20

¹⁹ **But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power.** ²⁰ **For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.**

In a situation where people were creating dissent and discord in the local Corinthian congregation with their “words”—gossips, backbiting, slander and so on, Paul announces that he will come with Kingdom power.

The earthly life that Jesus lived is our example of Kingdom living. While it was a life filled with grace and truth, compassion and humility, it was also a life of power, authority and dominion. As Christ ushered in the Kingdom of God, demons ran in terror and sicknesses were healed. The Lord Jesus dominated situations and circumstances—uproar of men, storms at sea, need for food and so on. This is true Kingdom living here on earth. A life of authority and power should therefore be the norm for every believer. We will discuss more on this in a later chapter.

Endurance and Suffering

2 Thessalonians 1:4,5

⁴ **so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,**

⁵ which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer.

In this earth, we will face persecutions for the sake of the King and His Kingdom. We are in a territory that presently is under the influence of the wicked one. There are people who detest the Kingdom we represent. And therefore it is just normal that demonic forces and people would oppose and persecute us. Kingdom lifestyle is not devoid of such experiences. In fact, it is a joy and honor to suffer for the Kingdom of God.

Extending Forgiveness

Matthew 18:23–35

²³ Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. ²⁶ The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' ²⁷ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' ³⁰ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. ³¹ So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. ³² Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. ³³ Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' ³⁴ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. ³⁵ "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

In teaching us about the importance of extending forgiveness in God's Kingdom, the Lord Jesus narrated the parable of the

ungrateful servant above. In the Kingdom, God expects us to extend mercy and forgiveness to those who have wronged us, in the same manner in which He has extended mercy and grace to us. Extending forgiveness, unconditionally and freely is Kingdom lifestyle.

Stewardship

Matthew 25:14–30

¹⁴ “For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. ¹⁵ And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. ¹⁶ Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. ¹⁷ And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. ¹⁸ But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money. ¹⁹ After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ “So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ ²¹ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ ²² He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ ²³ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ ²⁴ “Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’ ²⁶ “But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. ²⁷ So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. ²⁹ ‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰ And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

The parable of the talents reveals to us the importance of stewardship in the Kingdom of God. As with other parables, Jesus began this story by saying “the Kingdom of heaven is like” implying that this is a principle or way of life in the Kingdom of God. God expects us to be good stewards with the resources, talents, opportunities, connections and so on that He has placed in our lives. He requires productivity, profitability, multiplication, fruitfulness and increase from what He has entrusted to us. Simply giving back what He gave to us, like the man with the one talent, is insufficient and unacceptable. He requires that we invest effort, sacrifice, diligence, endurance, wisdom and so on, to the gifts and assignment He has given to us to bring forth fruit that He will be pleased with. This is Kingdom stewardship. Kingdom living requires Kingdom stewardship.

No Partiality

James 2:1–5

¹ My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. ² For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, ³ and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,” ⁴ have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

True Kingdom living has a heart that embraces all people across all races, languages, cultures, class or social barriers. We perceive each other as heirs together of the Kingdom. We see Kingdom value in each person. It is true that we give honor to those whom honor is due. We hold in high regard those who serve in the Lord, who labor in the Word and who have spiritual oversight of

our lives (I Thessalonians 5:12,13). And yet in the way we do things, we do not show partiality or provide preferential treatment based on earthly criteria—wealth, social standing or even gender (I Peter 3:7).

Readiness for the King

Matthew 25:1–13

¹ “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. ³ Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ⁵ But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. ⁶ “And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ ⁷ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. ¹¹ “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ ¹² But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³ “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

The Lord Jesus gave us this parable about the Kingdom of Heaven to teach us to live in a constant state of readiness for the King’s coming. Not only must we have sufficient oil to have our lamps burning now, but must have enough reserve to keep our lamps burning until He comes. When we ensure that we have enough reserve to keep our lamps burning, Jesus calls it being wise.

One way of applying this parable is to understand that our lives and our works is our lamp giving out light. Jesus said that we—our lives, who we are—are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). Our good works—ministry, things we do in His name and

for His sake, our Kingdom assignment—is the way people see the light shining before them and thus glorify our Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:16). To keep our lives and our ministry emanating light continually, until Jesus comes, is what we must ensure. To make this happen, we must have an ongoing supply of oil. The oil is God's life, presence, anointing, the working of His Spirit—without which we ourselves and the good works we do are lifeless. We must ensure that through each passing day there is a continual supply of this oil. How can we do so? The oil comes from a life of “abiding in Him”—of remaining connected to Him in prayer, obedience and intimacy. It is remaining connected to His heart at all times. Without this etched in our lives on a continuing basis, we are like the five virgins who had lamps burning for a while, but not long enough till the King came.

Kingdom living calls for a lifestyle of constant intimacy with God, to keep our lives and ministry shining His light, until He comes.

Celibate for the Kingdom's Sake

Matthew 19:9–12

⁹ And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.” ¹⁰ His disciples said to Him, “If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” ¹¹ But He said to them, “All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: ¹² For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it.”

The term “eunuch” is used here in the context of not marrying—being celibate. It is not undergoing some physical change as is

commonly understood. There are those who were born to be celibate, with no inclination or desire for marriage. Then there are those who have been made celibate by man—whatever form of social, religious or other influence that compelled them to take on celibacy. And then there are those who chose a celibate lifestyle for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Apostle Paul is a great example of this third category. Paul knew that he had a right to take a believing wife and yet he chose to forego this right for the sake of preaching the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:5,15,16) so that he could serve the Lord without distraction (1 Corinthians 7:35).

6



KINGDOM CULTURE



6

KINGDOM CULTURE

Kings and Priests

As believers we have been washed from our sins by the blood of Jesus, and He has made us kings and priests to our God (Revelation 1:5,6). There is a present-tense application of us being kings and priests to our God. In the present, as kings, we represent God's rule and reign here on the earth. We are here to see His Kingdom come into our earthly realm. As priests, we glorify our God in worship and we take the matters of the earth to heaven, to seek God's heart and to bring in heavenly intervention in the affairs of this life. And there is also a future-tense application of being kings and priests when we will reign on the earth in His literal Kingdom (Revelation 5:9,10).

As a royal priesthood, kingly priests or kings and priests, we are a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9). The word "nation" is the Greek "ethnos" which can also mean race or tribe. A nation, race or tribe of people, are in essence people of the same habit, customs or culture. As kings and priest, we are people of a common Kingdom Culture. We have a set of shared attitudes, values, goals and practices that characterize us. We share a common system of beliefs and behavior. When we as a community of believers follow Kingdom Thinking and Kingdom Living, we are able to create a Kingdom Culture in our environment.

A Prevailing Culture

When a community of believers, have truly established Kingdom Culture amongst them, they will find that it is a prevailing culture. KINGDOM CULTURE will overpower the evils of any culture around it. When people come into a Kingdom Culture environment, bringing with them the evils of their existing culture, the only thing that will change is the culture with which they once walked in.

The challenge then is to establish such a culture amongst a community of believers who truly function as kings and priests of the Kingdom. If we can get believers to understand Kingdom teaching and begin to think and live from Kingdom perspective, we can then truly establish a strong Kingdom Culture in any community, in any part of the world. Such a community will become a prevailing force for advancing the Kingdom of God. They will truly be salt and light in their world.

Here are just a few facets of Kingdom Culture:

A Culture of Honor

Kingdom Culture is a culture where we practice giving honor, reverence and respect. We honor our King, our Lord and our God who is the Head of the Kingdom. We also bestow honor on those who have been appointed by God to serve in specific functions in the Kingdom. Those who lead God's people well and those who labor in Word and doctrine are to be given "double honor" (1 Timothy 5:17). When you honor someone, you are expressing the value you place on who they are and what they mean to you personally. You give honor through what you say and what you do. When you speak highly of someone, you are giving honor. When

you refuse to defame someone, you are giving honor. When you stand up in the presence of the person, applaud, give financially or serve in any way, you show honor to that person.

When you honor someone, you are able to receive through their life. When you receive or honor a prophet, a righteous man or a disciple for who they are in the Kingdom, you receive a reward that represents who they are (Matthew 10:41,42).

I like what I heard pastor Bill Johnson of Bethel Church (Redding, CA) share. Elisha was trained by Elijah and carried a double portion of anointing and power, and produced twice as many miracles. Yet, John the Baptist, Jesus' forerunner, came in the spirit and power of Elijah, not Elisha. Why was that? Pastor Bill explains that God honors the fathers of a movement. He places the honor on the one who paid the price and sowed the seeds, to pioneer a fresh move of God in a place.

A Culture of Selfless Giving

A Kingdom Culture is described by its selfless giving. There is joy in the process of giving. It could be the giving of time, efforts, comfort, encouragement, support, finances and many other things. Whatever form of giving it might be, people do so cheerfully. People sacrifice gladly. It is spontaneous, without coercion or compulsion. It emanates from the heart. Selfless giving is seen in Kingdom men and women who serve behind the scenes unnoticed and often unappreciated. Selfless giving is seen in Kingdom men and women who forsake their earthly opportunities and successes and invest their time and energies for serving people, and the furtherance of the Kingdom. This is not a kind of giving that takes place only if the

recipient is able to give back to the giver. Rather, it is a kind of giving, where we expect nothing back from those who have received from us, knowing that God will reward us in due time. It is a kind of giving that is motivated by the Words of the King when He said “in as much as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Matthew 25:40). It is a kind of giving that is motivated by love for God and love for people.

A Culture of Daring Faith

Kingdom Culture is also characterized by a people of daring faith—people who stand strong in the face of adversity with a smile on their face and abounding joy in their hearts. This is a kind of faith that enables one to take some risks—stepping out of the boat, so to speak, in everyday life. People of daring faith are risk takers. They do not mind putting their reputation on the line in order to see God’s Kingdom come and His will be done. Their motivation is to see God glorified at all costs. It is this kind of faith that sees the advancement of the Kingdom of God whether it be in the marketplace, in communities or unreached territories. It is this kind of faith that causes miracles, healings and deliverances to take place.

A Culture of Joy

When Philip preached in Samaria the name of Jesus Christ and things concerning the Kingdom of God, there was great joy in that city. Unclean spirits left, the lame were made whole and the people rejoiced. Righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit characterize a people who are living and experiencing the Kingdom of God in their midst. Nothing can steal this joy. No amount of

defamation, no amount of slander or persecution can cause them to lose the joy of the Lord. The joy of the Lord is expressed not only through cheerful laughter but also through a sense of calm assurance and peace in the midst of any situation. It is the ability to be light even when the world seems to be weighing in on you. It is a joy that enables people in the community to “stick together” even when things are pulling them apart. It is this joy that fosters unity and fellowship of the Spirit. A Kingdom Culture is an environment of such “joy inexpressible and full of glory” (I Peter 1:8).

A Culture of Heaven Invading Earth

A Kingdom Culture will not be complete without the manifestations of heaven on earth. We are told to pray His Kingdom come and His will be released here on earth, even as it is in heaven. His will is for the lost to be saved, the sick to be healed, demons to be cast out, the captives to be set free, the poor to hear the Good News, the homeless to have a shelter, the hungry to be fed, the naked to be clothed, the widows and orphans to be cared for, the mistreated and abused to receive relief and hope—everything that represents heaven invading earth. A Kingdom Culture will be an environment where these things are happening all the time.

7



KINGDOM PARABLES



7

KINGDOM PARABLES

Why Parables?

The Lord Jesus was in a conversation with a man named Nicodemus and was explaining to him the necessity of being born again or being born from heaven. Jesus said unless one is born again, he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. He used the analogy of childbirth to describe this work of the Spirit within a person. He said one has to be born of water and the Spirit. While the first birth, which is a natural process is understandable, the second birth, being born again, is something you cannot fully explain, but you know it has taken place. It is like the wind that blows, you cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes, but you can feel it blowing. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus found it hard to understand these things. Jesus challenged him by asking, "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (John 3:12).

Jesus had to bridge this 'understanding and believing' gap in his teaching about the Kingdom. How could he get people to understand the mysteries (hidden truth, secret things, unseen realities) of the Kingdom of Heaven?

Matthew 13:10–17

¹⁰ And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" ¹¹ He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ¹² For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away

from him. ¹³Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'HEARING YOU WILL HEAR AND SHALL NOT UNDERSTAND, AND SEEING YOU WILL SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE; ¹⁵FOR THE HEARTS OF THIS PEOPLE HAVE GROWN DULL. THEIR EARS ARE HARD OF HEARING, AND THEIR EYES THEY HAVE CLOSED, LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, LEST THEY SHOULD UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEARTS AND TURN, SO THAT I SHOULD HEAL THEM.' ¹⁶But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; ¹⁷for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

The disciples had been graced by God with "eyes that could see and ears that could hear" and hence understand the mysteries of the Kingdom. However, the people in the crowds had hearts that were dull, eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear. Jesus therefore used parables, stories from every day life to communicate mysteries of the Kingdom of God. Parables are stories from our world that teach us about His world.

Matthew 13:34,35

³⁴ All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, ³⁵ that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL UTTER THINGS KEPT SECRET FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD."

Parables reveal to us secrets that have been hidden from the time of creation. Parables are more than just nice stories. They reveal to us the principles of the unseen Kingdom. They reveal to us how God operates His Kingdom. It enables us to learn about the spiritual Kingdom of God and now avails us the opportunity of applying those principles while living in the natural earthly realm.

We have already looked at a few parables in earlier sections. We will cover a few more parables here. Many of these parables appear in the three parallel gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke.

The Sower and the Word of the Kingdom

Matthew 13:18–23

¹⁸ “Therefore hear the parable of the sower: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. ²⁰ But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. ²² Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. ²³ But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

The parable of the sower is one of the introductory parables. Jesus said that if we got to understand this parable, we can understand all other parables. If we can learn how to elicit spiritual truth from an ordinary daily life story such as this, we can then do so for all other parables Jesus gave. The parable of the sower teaches us that God works in His Kingdom by speaking the Word of the Kingdom. When the Word proceeds from the King, it is intended to be accomplished in the life of everyone in the Kingdom. The Word God speaks—the Word of the Kingdom—is like a seed designed to produce in our lives. It is full of potential and full of the creative power of God. There is nothing wrong with the seed of God’s Word, as it is the incorruptible seed whose life abides forever (I Peter 1:23). When God releases the Word, it is intended to take root in our hearts and produce in our lives. However, there are enemies—satan and his demons—who attempt to steal away that Word, if we allow them to do so. Then there are other factors that could prevent God’s Word from being fulfilled in our lives—things such as persecutions and afflictions for the Word’s sake. Also, if

our hearts are lusting after other things, overburdened by the cares of this world or drawn away by the deceitfulness of riches—God’s Word will not be able to produce in our lives. So the responsibility is on us to guard our hearts, maintain the condition of the soil in our hearts to ensure that the Word of the King produces in our lives. We must understand and live by this principle that in the Kingdom, God works in us by His Word. If we nurture His Word, we stand to benefit from the fulfillment of His Word in our lives.

The Good Seed and the Tares

Matthew 13:24–30; 36–43

²⁴ Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵ but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. ²⁶ But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. ²⁷ So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ ²⁸ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ ²⁹ But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn. ³⁶ Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” ³⁷ He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. ³⁹ The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. ⁴⁰ Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, ⁴² and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

The Son of Man, the Lord Jesus is sowing good seed in the world today. You and I, believers, are good seed. We are the sons of the Kingdom. We must therefore understand our present place in the world as a place where the Lord Jesus has “sown” us into, on purpose. He has placed us where we are, as sons of the Kingdom knowing full well that the enemy will also sow wicked seeds around us. However, we have the prevailing Kingdom within us. We are here to release the King’s dominion into our world and prevail over all that satan may seek to accomplish through the tares he sows in this world.

Rather than grumble and complain about where you are today, see it as a place where the Lord Jesus intended to have you as the good seed, as the son or daughter of His Kingdom in that place. Stand strong there! Of course at the end of the age, the angels will do the cleanup work and the righteous will shine forever.

The Dragnet

Matthew 13:47–50

⁴⁷“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, ⁴⁸ which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, ⁵⁰ and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

Jesus used the familiar scene of fishermen separating their catch to describe the end of the age and the separation of the wicked from the just.

The Pervasive Nature of the Kingdom

Matthew 13:31–33

³¹ Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, ³² which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.” ³³ Another parable He spoke to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.”

The Lord Jesus compared the Kingdom of Heaven like a mustard seed and like leaven. The understanding we received from both these parables is about the pervasive nature of the Kingdom of God. God’s Kingdom although it enters a place, environment or region in a small, unassuming manner, has the potential to pervade its entire environment and become an influencing dominant force. The Kingdom of God is within you and me. God’s Kingdom—that mustard seed, that leaven—is within us. In fact, we are the Kingdom of God in our present world. We must have confidence that wherever we go, the Kingdom of God is within us and through us will become a prevailing force in the environment around us. Whether it is in our homes, the community we live in, schools, colleges, workplaces, cities or nations—God’s plan is to see His Kingdom released through us to be the prevailing force it is, in our world. As believers, let us be bold and step into the seven spheres of society—the domain of art and entertainment, media, religion, family, government, business, and education—and allow the Kingdom of God within us, permeate and penetrate these spheres!

The Value of the Kingdom

Matthew 13:44–46

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, ⁴⁶ who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

How much should we value the Kingdom of God? How important should the Kingdom of God be to us? Is it just another theological idea, a nice topic to preach sermons about and write books on? Jesus described the attitude He expects from us toward the Kingdom of God by giving us the parables of the treasure hidden in a field and also the parable of great price. The underlying principle is that the Kingdom of God must be our all in all—that one thing we pursue with all we have, if we are to truly experience what it is all about. It must be our “pearl of great price.” It must be our “treasure hidden in a field.” We pursue God’s Kingdom—His rule and reign in and through us—with all we have. Anything less, is unacceptable.

Teachings of the Kingdom

Matthew 13:51–53

⁵¹ Jesus said to them, “Have you understood all these things?” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.” ⁵² Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.” ⁵³ Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there.

The teachings of the Kingdom are things both new and old. There are things that are “old”—things that have been spoken. There are things that are “new,” things that God is speaking in the

now. It is important that we learn to receive both things new and old with an open heart giving careful attention to both. We need the old, so that we can correctly interpret the new, because the new is given in the context of the old. And we cannot live with just the old, because we need to know what God is doing in the present so that we position ourselves correctly in time and in step with Him, in the now. In order to receive the teachings of the Kingdom of God, we must be willing to receive both the old and the new.

Present Stewardship and Future Authority

Luke 19:11–27

" Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. ¹² Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. ¹³ So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.' ¹⁴ But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' ¹⁵ "And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. ¹⁶ Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.' ¹⁷ And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.' ¹⁸ And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' ¹⁹ Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.' ²⁰ "Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. ²¹ For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' ²² And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. ²³ Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' ²⁴ "And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.' ²⁵ (But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.') ²⁶ 'For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. ²⁷ But

bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.’ ”

Most of us are familiar with the parable of the talents as given in Matthew 25. However, in the gospel of Luke, a similar parable reveals to us several additional insights into the Kingdom of God. The nobleman represents Jesus. Jesus' intent is for us to do business till He returns (vs. 13). To do business is to engage the world, to be involved in trade, commerce and busy oneself with the activity of the world. This is a strange assignment. We are to be “in” the world, engaging the world and yet not be caught up with the world so much as to become a part “of” the world. This immediately overthrows the tendency that many believers have of becoming monastic in their faith, secluding themselves from engaging the world for fear of being polluted by the world. On the contrary, believers must be encouraged to enter every sphere of society knowing that they have been commissioned by the Lord Jesus to “do business” till He comes!

The second insight we see is that the Lord Jesus expects us to be profitable, because He is going to come back to see how much each has gained by trading (vs. 15). So our engaging the world has to be purposeful, strategic, wise and for the purposes of gaining—being profitable. I believe that as Kingdom people, we must take this up as a serious Kingdom mandate—to gain by trading—to be profitable, useful and fruitful for the Kingdom of God in this world. The Holy Spirit is with us to give us the wisdom, understanding and insights we need to help us accomplish this.

The next interesting learning from this parable is that once the Lord Jesus sees that we have been profitable, He rewards each one with “authority over cities” proportionate to their stewardship

in this world. We know that in the literal future Kingdom, saints will rule the world and that the saints will administer or govern the nations in the literal Kingdom. So authority over cities can be understood from that light. It is interesting therefore to conclude, that our present stewardship will affect our future role of authority in the coming world. It is time to become serious and good stewards of what the Lord has given to us, right here and now!

8



KINGDOM AUTHORITY



8

KINGDOM AUTHORITY

The Kingdom Comes with Power

When the Lord Jesus ushered in the Kingdom of God, He did so with demonstration of power, authority and dominion. We have seen this in early chapters, but it will be good to reiterate this. Matthew tells us that, "Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them" (Matthew 4:23,24). As Jesus went announcing the arrival of the Kingdom of God, He healed the sick, cast out devils and worked mighty miracles.

In fact, the Lord Jesus pointed to casting out demonic forces as a sign of the arrival and presence of the spiritual Kingdom of God. He said, "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matthew 12:28). Jesus dominated sickness, disease, demons, situations and circumstances and pointed to these as an expression of God's spiritual Kingdom invading our world. God's Kingdom has not lost any of its power or miraculous elements. In our world today, when there is a genuine invasion of the true spiritual Kingdom of God, there will be such demonstrations of healings, overthrowing of demonic powers and miracles. Perhaps much of what we have in our churches are well-

organized substitutes in place of a genuine invasion of the Kingdom of God.

The Lord Jesus also passed this kind of ministry on to His apostles as well.

Matthew 10:1,7,8

¹ And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. ⁷ And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ⁸ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

As they went about announcing that the Kingdom of Heaven had come, they were to demonstrate power over unclean spirits, heal all kinds of sicknesses and disease, raise the dead—and do all this freely.

In the Great Commission, Jesus instructed the 12 disciples to make disciples of all nations and teach them everything He had taught them—including Matthew 10:1,7,8. All disciples of all nations, of all times, were to announce the Kingdom of God with demonstrations of power and authority following.

We know from the Book of Acts that the Early Church walked in this power and authority. They did it the way Jesus taught them to do so. Even Paul, went about proclaiming the Kingdom of God in power. It was Paul who wrote that, “The Kingdom of God is not in word but in power” (I Corinthians 4:20).

Authority to His People

As seen earlier, the Lord Jesus vested Kingdom authority in the Church. The Church has been given the authority (keys) of the

Kingdom of Heaven to bind on earth what has been declared bound in heaven, and to loose on earth what has been declared loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19). When the King vests authority in His people—they carry it wherever they go.

In fact, we have authority because we are heirs of the Kingdom. Remember that God's original plan was to have a Kingdom where people would inherit it—be heirs in the Kingdom (Matthew 25:34). The New Testament teaches us that as children of God, we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:16,17). We are (present tense) children and hence we are (present tense) heirs, and joint heirs with Christ. Heirs carry Kingdom authority. Our authority is recognized by the spirit realm.

We have Kingdom authority because we have been positioned in a place of authority.

Ephesians 2:4–6

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

This is amazing—God in His great love has placed us at His right hand in Christ. This is a place and position of high authority. We are presently seated with Christ.

You and I have been vested with the authority of the Kingdom of God. We carry Kingdom authority wherever we go. It is up to us now to exercise our Kingdom authority and do what Jesus told us to do, as we introduce the Kingdom of God.

Operating in Two Worlds

Our challenge is to learn how to operate in two worlds. We are ambassadors of Christ. We derive our authority from another world (the Kingdom of God) while we are presently in a world that is dominated by demons, sickness, sin and wickedness. Often, we struggle with our own mind and flesh in many situations. We try to rationalize and reason away difficult situations, demonic works and so on. Or we try to solve them with our reason. Many times such things hinder or limit the exercise of the authority, power and dominion we have. While it is not wrong to use our reason and do what we need to do in the natural, we must first see how we can minister as Jesus would with Kingdom authority and power. Step in and exercise Kingdom authority. See what happens as the Kingdom of God invades a difficult situation. We must learn to be conscious of and live out of the Kingdom within and the authority, power and dominion of the King that is vested in us at all times.

The traffic policeman in himself has no ability to stop a moving vehicle. He could easily get run over. Yet, because of the authority vested in him by the government and because of his uniform, when he exercises his authority by lifting up his hand to stop traffic, all vehicles—big or small—must stop. In a similar manner, we as believers, have Kingdom authority vested in us and we must exercise that authority here on earth.

Realms of Authority

The authority we have extends over satan and his works, situations and circumstances in this earth that oppose the will and purpose of God. Sickness and disease in general are works of the devil

(Acts 10:38). The elements of nature, circumstances or situations that come against hindering the will and purpose of God for our lives can be dominated with Kingdom authority. When God has declared that He wants something done, then anything that opposes it can be overthrown with the authority He has entrusted to us.

However we do not have authority over other people's wills. Just as the traffic policeman cannot enter your garage and tell you how to park your car there, we cannot step over another person's will. This is a realm outside the authority God has given to us. We cannot manipulate or control others. We can definitely exercise our authority to affect the spiritual influences entering their lives, but we cannot control their personal will.

Exercising Our Authority

The King has entrusted to us several ways through which we enforce authority on the earth:

Issuing decrees in Jesus name

The Lord Jesus has given us the right to use His name. In legal terms, this is called 'the power of attorney.' He said that in His name we can cast out devils, work miracles and lay hands on the sick to heal them (Mark 16:17,18). His name is the name of the highest authority in heaven, earth and hell (Philippians 2:9-11). When we speak His name, we are expressing that we have been sent by Him to do what He would do, just as if He were present Himself.

The power of the Spirit

It is the anointing that breaks yokes and removes burdens (Isaiah 10:27). It is the anointing that sets the captives free. The anointing

is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit working in and through our lives. We must pursue God for a greater anointing on our lives so that we can carry His presence and power into circumstances and situations to make a difference.

Prayer

Prayer is a great vehicle for us to affect changes by exercising our Kingdom authority as we pray His Kingdom come and His will be done, in any situation.

Dominion Thinking

Learn to look at circumstances and situations you face with the understanding that the Kingdom of God is within you, and that the King has placed authority, power and dominion in you. Without violating your realm of authority, exercise dominion over demons, their works and over situations and circumstances.

9



KINGDOM GOVERNMENT



9

KINGDOM GOVERNMENT

Our God is King. The Bible tells us that, “The Kingdom is the LORD’s. And He rules over the nations” (Psalm 22:28). Scripture teaches us that, “The LORD has established His throne in heaven and His Kingdom rules over all” (Psalm 103:19). Today, God extends His government or rule over the nations. God has set authority structures through which His government is to be extended. Even in a Fallen world, we are to recognize God’s influence over governmental or authority structures He has set up. God has placed authority structures for the family, for the local church, for the Body of Christ, for the workplace and for civil government. We must learn to correctly recognize, respond and rightly relate to God’s governmental authority that He has placed. In doing so, we are submitting to the government (rule) of God in our lives. We must also recognize that positions of leadership in God’s authority structures are roles and responsibilities entrusted to us, and not positions of superiority.

God’s Authority Structure

1 Corinthians 11:3,11,13

³ But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. ¹¹ Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. ¹² For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.

In God’s authority structure, the “head” of the woman is the man, the head of the man is Christ and the head of Christ is God.

To be head means to be the one in authority—the director. We know that Christ is co-equal with the Father and yet in His life on earth and for the sake of redemption, Christ submitted Himself to the Father’s directives and the Father’s will. Similarly, man and woman are interdependent and co-equal when it comes to receiving the blessings and privileges of the Kingdom. Yet, in God’s authority structure, man is to be the leader and the channel through which the government of God flows.

God’s Authority Structure for the Family

Ephesians 5:22,23

²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

For the home, the husband is the head. God’s Kingdom government is to be extended into the home through the leadership of the husband. The home comes under the jurisdiction of the husband. What happens within the jurisdiction of the home is his responsibility. He has to stand before God and before his family as king and priest, as leader and intercessor, as guide and teacher. The husband is the gateway of God’s government into the home. The husband has the ability to place a spiritual covering of protection over his wife and family as the head of the home. The wife is to submit and respect the husband as to the Lord. The wife yields, shows reverence and gives honor to her husband, as doing it unto Christ. While the husband is the head, he is not to behave like a “big boss” around the home. He is to live in an understanding manner, give honor to his wife because both are co-equal and co-heirs in the Kingdom of God. If the husband does not fulfill this responsibility toward his wife, his prayers will be hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

The husband needs to correctly discharge his responsibility given to him in God's authority structure. Failure in this will affect his relationship (i.e., prayers) to his Head. Similarly, the wife needs to rightly relate to the authority God has placed in the home, that is, toward her husband. Failure to do this is essentially failing in doing this for the Lord.

Similarly, God has instructed children to obey their parents in the Lord, as this is the right thing to do. Children are to honor their father and mother, which bring the blessing of a good life, well-being and longevity (Ephesians 6:1–3). Children must therefore learn to rightly relate to the authority structure God has placed in the home, which is, their parents. It is true that as time passes, children may know more than their parents in certain things because of their education, training and exposure. Yet, regardless of how qualified or successful a young man or woman becomes, the Biblical instruction is to show honor, reverence, respect and high regard toward one's parents. As children do this, they receive the promised blessing.

Parents being in a position of authority, as part of God's Kingdom government coming into the home are in a place of responsibility to train, discipline and nurture children in the ways of the Lord without hurting and destroying them (Ephesians 6:4). We are living in a time, before the Day of the Lord, when the hearts of the fathers will be turned toward their children and the children toward their fathers. God is bringing a restoration of His government in the home and families where parents and children will relate to each other as God intends. If this fails to happen, the Word declares that the world will be smitten with a curse (Malachi 4:6). However,

when this does happen, both parents and children become recipients of God's intended blessings!

God's Authority Structure for the Local Church

Acts 20:28–30

²⁸Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

Apostle Paul speaking to the Elders from Ephesus instructs them to watch over their own lives and over their congregation. He reminds them of their responsibility as being set in that position as overseers (*episkopos*, bishop) by the Holy Spirit Himself to watch over God's people who have been purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ. There is a need to do this as "savage wolves" as others can prey on God's sheep and lead them astray. In response, God's sheep—believers in a local congregation—are given the instruction: "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17).

In the local church, God's Kingdom government flows through the local church pastor, through the spiritual elders and on to the congregation. God's people must learn to relate rightly toward their pastor and spiritual leaders by submitting and giving honor to them (1 Thessalonians 5:12,13). When people begin to rightly relate to their leadership, they position themselves to receive not only spiritual equipping and impartation but also God's manifest blessing in all areas of life.

In the same vein, pastors and spiritual leaders in a local congregation have been given clear directives of what God expects of them, having placed them in positions of spiritual authority in His Kingdom government in the local church. Peter wrote to the Elders that they should shepherd God's people, not out of compulsion, but willingly. Not for dishonest gain or monetary benefits, or as being big lords over God's people but rather to be examples to the people of God (1 Peter 5:1–4). Peter clearly instructs the younger people to walk in submission to the older folks and invites everyone to walk in humility and submission toward one another (1 Peter 5:5).

When the authority structure in a local church is in place and functioning according to God's design and intended order, God's Kingdom government increases and flourishes among such a people. There is unity, cohesiveness and a strong fellowship in the Spirit that nothing can break. Everyone functions in their own ranks, place and in order. God's anointing flows freely from the head and on to the rest of the body in that local church. That local church becomes a place of refreshing, reviving and blessing (Psalm 133).

God's Authority Structure for the Body of Christ

1 Corinthians 12:28

And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

For the larger Body of Christ, the Bible describes governmental gifts that Christ has placed. The word "first" is the Greek word "*proton*" which means first in time, order, rank and importance. This does not mean that Apostles are "superior" as individuals, in

quality, in blessings, in anointing, in capabilities and so on. It does mean that in God's Kingdom government in the Body of Christ they hold the place through which God's government enters in from the Head, that is Christ, into the rest of the Body which Christ at that moment is ministering to, through that particular apostle. We understand that as believers, all are co-equal and all gifts and ministry anointing are important as they express the same Lord Jesus to the world. Yet, we must recognize and acknowledge Christ's government in the Body of Christ through the authority structure He has designed.

Those holding positions of authority in God's government in the Body are not to hold their positions as a title to brag about or a place of superiority over the rest of God's people. As always, God places people in such roles for them to discharge a responsibility toward the rest of the Body. Ephesians 4:11,12 describes this responsibility: "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The governmental roles of apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher and evangelist are to equip the saints for ministry, so that the Body of Christ can be built up spiritually and numerically.

When God's people rightly relate to God's authority structure they receive a reward. Those who honor a prophet, because he is a prophet receive a prophet's reward.

God's Authority Structure for the Workplace

Ephesians 6:5–9

⁵ Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; ⁶ not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷ with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, ⁸ knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. ⁹ And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

God's Kingdom government flows into the workplace through the authority structures prevailing in the workplace. When as employees, we do what we do with sincerity, with kindness as to the Lord and not just to please someone, we know that we will receive a reward that comes from the Lord Himself. Regardless of who the boss is, what kind of boss he or she may be, what injustice or malpractice may be taking place in our workplaces, if we work as "employees of Christ" and relate rightly to the authority structure in place, God is able to reward us in spite of bad bosses and injustices. Think about Joseph who was falsely accused and demoted (Genesis 39). Joseph not only found favor in his lower position, but soon God intervened and Joseph jumped several rungs of the corporate ladder and went straight to the vice-president's post! Only God can do such a thing. So also with David! While David was being persecuted by his boss for no fault of his, he remained true to Saul. It was not too long before David became king and grew to be one of the most powerful kings that Israel has ever known.

Many of us are in positions of authority in the workplace where we have subordinates reporting to us. We must understand that we are an expression of God's Kingdom government in the workplace

and must do all things representing God, doing things with kindness, justice and without threatening or partiality.

God's Authority Structure for Civil Government

We live under two governments—the government of the Kingdom of God and the government of the nation and state we live in, the civil government. We must understand that God's Kingdom government is expressed in our world through the civil government that is in place.

The Bible records that the Pharisees wanted to lay a trap for the Lord Jesus and catch him faltering in His words. So they came to Him, acknowledged that He speaks the truth and is not afraid of man, and then present Jesus with this question, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" This was a trick question. If Jesus said 'Yes,' they could accuse Him of not being a true Jew, of supporting the Romans and get the Jews to turn against Him. If Jesus said 'No,' then the Pharisees could accuse Jesus of leading a revolt against the prevailing Roman government and hand Him to the Roman soldiers. Either way, Jesus would be trapped. So the rest of the narrative tells us what Jesus did: "But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money. So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way" (Matthew 22:15–22). In essence, Jesus was teaching us to pay taxes to the prevailing government, regardless of who or what the government was.

Paul explains this for us when he tells us, “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God” (Romans 13:1). As believers we must learn to look at government authorities as those who are appointed by God. Paul continues, “Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor” (Romans 13:2–7). Those in civil government are referred to as “God’s ministers.” Paul was writing to believers living under a Roman government, many of whose rulers and leaders were idolatrous, oppressive, blood-stained, and tyrannical. And yet Paul is calling believers to see God’s Kingdom government being administered to them through the civil government that they were under.

Regardless of what kind of government—what form of governmental system, who is in power, what rules are made, what abuses are carried out—as believers we are to respect and give honor to those who are in governmental authority over us.

We must remember that a nation always receives the government it deserves. If a nation is filled with people who are corrupt, who have no regard for moral values, then they will have leaders who do the same, because after all the leaders grew up from among them. However, if the people change, then the government will change. The government therefore is an expression of the people it represents. As believers, we need to obey the laws of the land, pay taxes, and honor those currently in leadership. In addition to these responsibilities, we must also pray for the government (1 Timothy 2:1–3), exercise our rights under the laws of the land to vote and work to occupy positions of influence in the government, so that we can have a righteous government. “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan” (Proverbs 29:2).

Making a slight digression here, we must understand that unlike earthly governments, the Kingdom of God is a theocracy. Many of us living under democratic systems, like to bring our democratic mindsets in doing things for the Kingdom of God. This is not always good. In the Kingdom of God, which is a theocracy, God speaks, and we do. No one gets to vote whether what God said should be done or should we do something else. When God told Joshua to get Israel to march around the walls of Jericho once each day for seven days, and seven times on the seventh day as a military strategy to conquer the city—no one got to vote whether this was the right approach or not. God had spoken, and everyone had to obey. So also in our day, when we receive a clear directive from God, we follow, regardless of popular opinion, or community preferences, or collective mindsets. This does place a great responsibility on those in leadership to ensure that that they correctly hear from

God, receive His directives and communicate that accurately to His people. However this is the kind of leadership that is necessary in the Body of Christ in this day and hour!

There will be times when the government of this world is in conflict with the government of God. In such situations, we must walk with wisdom and understand that we are free to violate the government of man in order to fulfill the directives of the government of God. Peter and John standing before the high priests were instructed not to preach and teach in the name of Jesus. They responded saying, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge" (Acts 4:19). Later on, when Peter and John were brought before the council once again and questioned about their violation, they replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

When the Lord Jesus was brought before Pilate during His trial just before His crucifixion, Pilate said "Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin" (John 19:10,11).

Jesus acknowledged that Pilate was in the position where he was, because God had allowed it to be so. Regardless of what Pilate's decision was going to be, Jesus recognized that there would be no sin on Pilate's part. Pilate had to make a decision, either way, because of his position. However those who delivered Jesus to Pilate, Judas, the high priests and the Sanhedrin, had the greater sin. The amazing thing is about Jesus' acknowledgment of Pilate's position as being given from above, or allowed by God. Jesus did

not in any way devalue who Pilate was or the position he held in the Roman governmental structure. A lesson for us here is to recognize that those in governmental authority have been allowed by God to be there.

God works in spite of the form of governmental system and regardless of who is in power. We must acknowledge what Proverbs teaches us: "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes" (Proverbs 21:1). God is able to influence and supernaturally affect change in the heart of the leader. The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart for a season so that God could demonstrate His miraculous power through Moses. Then when God told His people to leave, they packed and left in a single night, no questions asked because they had seen the awesome power of their God. When Nehemiah wanted to go and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, God worked through king Artaxerxes, a Persian king to not only give Nehemiah permission to return, but materials to rebuild the walls and security to escort him back. God worked through Cyrus, again a Persian king to have the Jews sent back from captivity to Jerusalem. God works through leaders that have come to power to fulfill His purposes (Revelation 17:17). We just need to have this confidence in our King!

Blessings for Rightly Relating

We must understand that God's Kingdom government is released in our world through authority structures that are placed around us starting from the family, in the local church, the Body of Christ, the workplace and in civil government. We must learn to rightly relate to these authority structures for there is blessing in doing so. Rather than fighting it and looking at them as oppressive burdens or systems

that steal our liberty, we must acknowledge God's Kingdom coming to us through these structures. For those of us in positions of authority, in these authority structures we must understand that we have a responsibility toward God and toward those under our authority to judge righteous judgment and do what is right.

10



THE LITERAL KINGDOM



10

THE LITERAL KINGDOM

In all other chapters we have been addressing the spiritual Kingdom of God. The focus of our study is the spiritual Kingdom of God and how we relate to it here and now, in our present journey through life. However, it would be of interest to us to explore some highlights foretelling the literal Kingdom which the Lord Jesus will establish on the earth at the beginning of the Millennium—His thousand-year reign on the earth.

God's Original Plan

Matthew 25:34

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

God's original plan was to have a Kingdom with a people who would be heirs with Him in that Kingdom on the earth. This eventually will have its literal fulfillment when Christ the King ushers in His physical Kingdom on the earth.

Jacob's Prophecy

Genesis 49:10

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people.

As early as in the book of Genesis, we have the prophecy of the Lord Jesus being the Ruler, the Lawgiver, and Shiloh (meaning the Peacemaker or Prince of Peace) from the tribe of Judah.

The Literal Kingdom Foretold

As covenanted to David

2 Samuel 7:12,13,16

¹² "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." " "

Psalms 132:11

The LORD has sworn in truth to David; He will not turn from it: "I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body.

Isaiah 16:5

In mercy the throne will be established; and One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness."

Jeremiah 33:14–18

¹⁴ 'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah: ¹⁵ 'In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.' ¹⁷ "For thus says the LORD: 'David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; ¹⁸ nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually.' "

God had made a covenant with David that one of his descendants will have a kingdom that will last forever.

As prophesied by Isaiah

Isaiah 9:6,7

⁶ For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of His

government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

As foretold by Daniel

Daniel 2:44

And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

A Temporary Pause

Jeremiah 36:30

Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: "He shall have no one to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat of the day and the frost of the night.

In the lineage of the Kings of Judah, there was a temporary pause when Israel was taken into Babylonian captivity.

The Angelic Announcement

Luke 1:30–33

³⁰ Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³ And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

The angel announced that Jesus was the One who would sit on the throne of David and rule forever in a Kingdom that will have no end. He introduced the spiritual dimension of that eternal Kingdom in His first coming. When He comes back again, He will come to fulfill it in its physical dimension.

Jesus' Teaching on the Literal Kingdom

Matthew 8:11,12

¹¹ And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹² But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 22:1-15

¹ And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: ² "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, ³ and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. ⁴ Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding." ' ⁵ But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. ⁶ And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. ⁷ But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. ⁸ Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹ Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' ¹⁰ So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. ¹¹ "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. ¹² So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' ¹⁴ "For many are called, but few are chosen." ¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk.

Teaching on the literal Kingdom, the Lord Jesus indicated that there would be many others from the non-Jewish world who would be part of His eternal Kingdom. And the very ones through whom the Kingdom was to be released on the earth, because they had rejected Him, would be cast out.

A Preview of the Coming Kingdom

Matthew 16:28

Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

Mark 9:1

And He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”

Luke 9:27

But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God.

Matthew 17:1–8

¹ Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; ² and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. ³ And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. ⁴ Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁵ While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” ⁶ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” ⁸ When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus gave some of His disciples a preview of the glory of His coming Kingdom. He prepared them by saying that some of them will not die until they saw the power of the Kingdom of God and the Son of Man in that Kingdom. And then on the mount of Transfiguration, they had a glimpse of what Jesus would look like in His glorified state bright and radiant—similar to what John describes in the Book of Revelation.

Signs of the Coming Kingdom

Luke 21:27–32

²⁷ Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.” ²⁹ Then He spoke to them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰ When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹ So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place.

The Lord Jesus gave us a description of the end time, the period just before His coming to set up His literal Kingdom. He told us that all these signs will happen simultaneously in one generation, and that same generation will see the coming of the Kingdom of God.

The King Came Riding on a Donkey

Zechariah 9:9

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Mark 11:10

Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

What an anticlimax this might have seemed at that time! The One who was to be King of the Jews, the King of all the world, came riding on a donkey. Yet He had a mission to fulfill, the redemption of all mankind. Only when this was completed, could He have a people who would inherit that Kingdom and administer that Kingdom here on earth.

The Fruit of the Vine

Matthew 26:29

But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

Luke 22:16,18,29,30

"¹⁶ For I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁸ For I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ²⁹ And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, ³⁰ that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

The Celebration of the Lord's Table is also an expression of our faith in the coming Kingdom. He told us to keep eating the bread and drinking the cup, with a promise that He will drink it with us once again in the Kingdom! It is also an expression of our faith that we shall rule and reign with Him in His Kingdom for He said that He bestows on us a Kingdom, just as the Father has bestowed on Him a Kingdom. Each time we partake of the Lord's Table, we are declaring that through all eternity, we will sing His praises, and for evermore we shall reign with Him. As believers, we live with this blessed hope of a place in His heavenly Kingdom.

2 Timothy 4:18

And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!

2 Peter 1:10,11

¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ¹¹ for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Final Question

Acts 1:6–8

⁶ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷ And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Just after the resurrection and before the ascension, the disciples had still not fully understood the two phases of the coming of the King and His Kingdom. In the first phase, He has introduced His spiritual Kingdom. However, they apparently did all they did, thinking that very soon Jesus would set up a literal Kingdom. To their disappointment, Jesus was about to leave and He had done nothing about the literal Kingdom! So when they asked Him about it, He pointed them to a different mission—of proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom in the power of the Holy Spirit to the whole world. This is the time period we are in. This is our present mandate. And then, at the time which the Father has set in His own authority, the Kingdom will be established.

Then Comes the End

I Corinthians 15:24–28

²⁴ Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For “HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIS FEET.” But when He says “all things are put under Him,” it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. ²⁸ Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

At the right time, the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven and will come with His saints who have been taken to be with Him. He will overthrow the Antichrist and all the nations that support him (Revelation 19,20) fulfilling Psalm 2:6–10. Jesus will put an end to all other rule and all other authority on the earth. He will establish His Kingdom on earth, subjecting His Kingdom and rule to the will of the Father. In verse 25, Apostle Paul seems to be alluding to what the Psalmist described in Psalm 110:1.

The Saints Shall Possess the Kingdom

Daniel 7:13,14,18,27

¹³ I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. ¹⁴ Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed. ¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever. ²⁷ Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.

1 Corinthians 6:2,3

² Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? ³ Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

Obadiah 1:21

Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S.

The saints of the Most High will be responsible for executing the earthly Kingdom. And all of this will culminate in the final Great White Throne judgment described in Revelation 20:11–15.

2 Timothy 4:1

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.

11



KINGDOM MANDATE



II

KINGDOM MANDATE

Matthew 6:9,10

⁹ In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus came to introduce His Kingdom to us in its spiritual form. We are now living and sharing in that Kingdom. He did not intend for it to fade away but rather to be like the mustard seed that keeps growing or like the leaven that keeps permeating and infiltrating the environment in which it is placed. He expects that to continue today through us, the sons and daughters of the Kingdom that He has placed in the earth. There is a Kingdom mandate on our lives to see His Kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Kingdom Within You

Luke 17:20,21

²⁰ Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; ²¹ nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.

God's Kingdom—His rule and reign—works out from within us, in us and through us. We must live with the consciousness of the Kingdom of God within us. The righteousness, peace and joy of the Kingdom are within us. The power and authority of the Kingdom are within us. The prevailing force of the Kingdom of God is within us, and wherever we go the Kingdom of God is being taken. There is an opportunity for Kingdom advancement wherever

we are. There is an opportunity for manifestation of Kingdom authority and dominion into every situation we enter.

Pressing into the Kingdom

Matthew 11:12

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.

Luke 16:16

The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.

This seems to be a dichotomy. The Kingdom is within us, and yet we are to press into the Kingdom of God. The preaching and teaching of the Kingdom of God must spur us to press into it. "Pressing into" means to forcefully or violently enter into. There is an element of 'violence' or 'forcefulness' with which we must take the things of the Kingdom.

Here is another paradox. We are called to be both Kingdom-children and Kingdom-warriors. It takes wisdom to know the correct posture—to be childlike or to be warrior-like—to receive what God has for us.

On the one hand there are things of the Kingdom that we must receive as a little child. Jesus said, "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). God just gives it to us and we receive as little children.

And yet on the other hand, we have to be warrior-like when we have to aggressively pursue what the King has made available to us in His Kingdom. We are not fighting the King because He is not the One keeping it away from us. Rather we are fighting our

own flesh, fleshly thinking, the influences of the world, the tares—the sons of the wicked one—and demonic powers that hinder us from experiencing what is ours in the Kingdom of Heaven. There are some things in the Kingdom that we will never experience, unless we are willing to contend for it with a violent aggressiveness that will not let go until we have it. As a community, we need to come together and contend together to become a force for God in our city, our nation and in all the nations. We must contend together to become a Church that will overthrow the powers of hell and bring the will of God into any situation.

Everything in Submission to the King

As a first step in fulfilling our Kingdom mandate, everything in our lives must be in submission to the King. We must welcome the King's domain into every area of our lives and allow it touch our everyday living. We must live and operate out of a "Kingdom of God" perspective, where everything we do is an extension of the King's domain here on earth—His rule being released in us and through us. As Jesus said we must seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. To us the pursuit of the Kingdom must become all-consuming. Like the pearl of great price and like the treasure hidden in the field, we must put everything we have—all our dreams, our ambitions and our purposes into the "Kingdom basket." The only thing that matters to us and the only thing that we live for—is to see His Kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Unleashing Kingdom Influence

We must also be willing to position ourselves in this world. Jesus instructed us to do business till He comes, not hide in monasteries

or church meetings till He comes. He has told us to engage the world with the intent of becoming profitable. The only way we can unleash Kingdom influence in the world is by engaging the world.

Step into your mountain or mountains. What is your mountain or sphere of influence that God has called you to—arts and entertainment, media, education, business, government, family, religion? Position yourself on your mountain. Expect the mustard seed of the Kingdom within you, the leaven of His Kingdom within you to begin permeating and penetrating your environment through you. You begin to influence your world through Kingdom thinking and Kingdom living. You do not conform to the ways of the kingdoms of this world. You operate from a different Kingdom Culture. Yours is a prevailing culture—the culture that is stronger and more powerful than the culture of the world around you.

Advancing Kingdom Invasion

Begin to pray, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” wherever you are. Pray this for your home, your neighborhood, your school or college, your workplace and wherever you have a chance of bringing in the Kingdom. When you pray this way, you are expressing your desire to see God’s Kingdom advance through your life into your world. When you go to school, you are not only going there to receive an education, but you are there as a son or daughter of the Kingdom. In your workplace, you are not going just to earn a salary, but you are there for Kingdom advancement. You have a message to proclaim—“The Kingdom of heaven is here!” You have a mandate to see God’s Kingdom come and His will be done in your school. So start praying. Even a simple whisper will get things started. Look for ways to see how His

Kingdom can advance in that area. Keep your heart and mind open for ideas, strategies and things that God will want you to do to advance His Kingdom in that place. He may want you to start something, perhaps a prayer meeting. He may want you to engage people in that place in some way. He may want you to address a specific need in that place by serving the people there. He may want you to engage in intense prayer for a season and then step out in action. He may want you to stay and work your way into a place of influence so that your life can be a testimony to many. He may want you to integrate Kingdom principles in what you do, so that like leaven working through a lump of dough, you can progressively influence the culture of that organization. You are there to see the advancement of Kingdom invasion in that place.

Walking in Kingdom Power, Authority and Dominion

Luke 10:1,9

'After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. ⁹And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

Remember that the Kingdom always comes with power. The Kingdom we represent and are part of, is more powerful than any demonic power. Whenever you get an opportunity, exercise Kingdom authority that is vested in you. All of heaven backs you up, when you use the name of Jesus. Be forceful about exercising authority. Sometimes, demonic forces are stubborn and do not give in easily. We have to be more persistent than the devil, knowing that we have greater authority and it is the devil who must retreat. We must desire to become a community of believers who manifest Kingdom power and authority everywhere we go. Works of power, destroying

demonic works, miracles must become the norm for us as a believing community.

It Is All About the King!

Finally, in our Kingdom mandate, we must remember that it is all about the King. It is not even about our local church, ourselves, our ministry and our reputation. None of these matter! At the end of it all, it is all about Jesus! We are here to see Him exalted, glorified, worshiped and adored. Whatever we do, it is to see Jesus lifted high, a banner that flies across this land!

Matthew 6:13

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.



All Peoples Church & World Outreach, Bangalore, India, has extended its ministry by launching its Bible College & Ministry Training Center (APC-BC&MTC) in August 2005. APC-BC&MTC equips, trains and releases faithful men and women to impact villages, towns and cities in India and other nations, for Jesus Christ.

APC-BC&MTC offers 2 programs:

- The two-year and three-year **Bible College** programs are for full-time students and provides spiritual and practical ministry training along with academic excellence. The programs are designed to equip and empower students to successfully fulfil the call of God upon their lives. Upon completing the two-year program students will receive a **Diploma in Theology & Christian Ministry (Dip.Th.&CM)**. The three-year program will lead to a **Bachelor's Degree in Theology & Christian Ministry (B.Th.&CM)**.
- The **Practical Ministry Training** is for graduates from the Bible College who desire to undergo practical training. Those completing one or more years receive a **Certificate in Practical Ministry** indicating the duration of involvement.

Classes are conducted in English. The faculty comprises of both trained and anointed teachers of the Word. All faculty and students have access to APC's Study Centre and Library (SC&L). The SC&L contains books, teaching tapes, videos, VCDs/DVDs and music CDs.

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About All Peoples Church

At All Peoples Church (APC), **our vision is to be salt and light in the city of Bangalore** and a **voice to the nation of India and to the nations of the world.**

At APC, we are committed to presenting the complete, un-compromised Word of God in the anointing and demonstration of His Holy Spirit. We believe that good music, creative presentations, brilliant apologetics, contemporary ministry techniques, latest technology and so on, can never substitute the God-ordained approach of proclaiming the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4,5; Hebrews 2:3,4). **Our theme is Jesus, our content is the Word, our method is Holy Spirit power, our passion is people, and our goal is Christ-like maturity.**

For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect (mature, Christ-like) in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:5; Colossians 1:28).

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All Peoples Church Locations in India

All Peoples Church has the following church locations in India at present.

All Peoples Church – Bangalore (Karnataka)

All Peoples Church – Berhampur (Orissa)

All Peoples Church – Dimapur (Nagaland)

All Peoples Church – Kalyan, Mumbai (Maharashtra)

All Peoples Church – Nagpur (Maharashtra)

All Peoples Church – Raichur (Karnataka)

All Peoples Church – Tezpur (Assam)

All Peoples Church – Thokkottu, Mangalore (Karnataka)

All Peoples Church – Vishakapatnam (Andhra Pradesh)

New churches are being planted all over India periodically. To get the current listing and contact information of All Peoples Church locations, please visit our website at www.apcwo.org or send an email to contact@apcwo.org

DO YOU KNOW THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU?

About 2000 years ago, God came into this world as a man. His name is Jesus. He lived a perfectly sinless life. Since Jesus was God in flesh, everything He said and did revealed God to us. The words He spoke were the very words of God. The things He did were the actions of God. Jesus performed many miracles on the earth. He healed the sick and suffering. He opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame walk and healed every kind of sickness and disease. He fed the hungry by miraculously multiplying a few loaves of bread, calmed the storm and did many other wonderful things.

All of these actions reveal to us that God is a good God who wants people to be well, whole, healthy and happy. God wants to meet the needs of people.

So why then would God decide to become a man and step into our world? Why did Jesus come?

All of us have sinned and done things that are unacceptable before the God who created us. Sin has its consequences. Sin is like a great unsurpassable wall between God and us. Sin separates us from God. It prevents us from knowing and having a meaningful relationship with the One who created us. Therefore, many of us try to fill this void with other things.

Another consequence of our sins is eternal separation from God. In God's court, the penalty for sin is death. Death is eternal separation from God in hell.

But, the good news is that we can be free from sin and be restored to God. The Bible says, **"For the wages [payment] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our**

Lord” (Romans 6:23). Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world, when He died on the cross. Then three days later He rose again, showed Himself alive to many and went back to heaven.

God is a God of love and mercy. He does not wish that any person be lost in hell. And so He came, to provide a way for the entire human race to be free from sin and its lasting consequences. He came to save sinners—to rescue people like you and me from sin and eternal death.

To receive this free forgiveness of sins, the Bible tells us that we have to do just one thing—accept what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross and to believe in Him whole-heartedly.

Through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:43).

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9).

You too can receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins if you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is a simple prayer to help you make a decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for you on the cross. This prayer will help you express your acceptance of what Jesus has done for you and receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins. This prayer is only a guideline. You can also pray in your own words.

Dear Lord Jesus, today, I have understood what You did for me on the cross. You died for me, You shed Your precious blood and paid the penalty for my sins, so that I could be forgiven. The Bible tells

me that whoever believes in You will receive forgiveness for their sins.

Today, I make a decision to believe in You and to accept what You did for me, by dying for me on the cross and rising again from the dead. I know I cannot save myself by my own good works, neither can any other human save me. I cannot earn forgiveness for my sins.

Today, I believe in my heart and say with my mouth that You died for me, You paid the penalty for my sins, You rose again from the dead, and by faith in You, I receive forgiveness and cleansing for my sins.

Thank You Jesus. Help me to love You, to know You more and to be faithful to You. Amen.

Notes

The Kingdom of God is a major theme through the Bible. Jesus began His earthly ministry proclaiming the arrival of the Kingdom of Heaven. During His final days before His ascension, He taught concerning the Kingdom of God. We must understand that this Kingdom is within us. We must recognize that we are sons and daughters of the Kingdom, sown as good seed into this world.

This study will teach you how to live and operate out of a "Kingdom of God" perspective, where everything you do is an extension of the King's domain here on earth—His rule being released in you and through you. You will learn how to fulfill the Kingdom mandate that is on your life—to see His Kingdom come and His will be done through you, right where you are.

Ashish Raichur