

SPIRITUAL GROWTH STUDY SERIES

THE KINGDOM OF GOD, PART 1

The central aspect of Jesus' ministry on earth and teaching was the kingdom of God.

In actuality, the kingdom of God is the skin of the entire word of God; it is the thing that keeps everything together and ties in all of the other themes, truths, and aspects of the Bible.

It is therefore important that we begin to understand what the kingdom of God is.

The Kingdom of God on Earth

Genesis 1:31; 2:8-9; 2:16-17

- God's creation was just as God wanted it; the Garden was, in effect, God's kingdom
- God created humans to live in harmony with him, being his representatives and caring for his creation
- God's kingdom has to do with realizing the rule, reign, and kingship of God in the realm [or entire earth] of earth
- Humans were made to be in God's kingdom by doing his will

Losing the Kingdom

Genesis 3:6-7; 17-19; 23-24

- Humans chose to do their own will rather than God's which kept us from representing God, from being part of his kingdom and rule, and separated us from God
- Ever since that moment, God has been at work to restore us to his kingdom.

Hints of the Kingdom

Exodus 19:3-8

- God entered into covenant with the descendants of Abraham, the Israelites
- God rescued them, brought them out of Egypt
- God was their king, they were to be his people

- He called them to be obedient
- He called them to be priests (people who could enter into God's presence and help others to do so as well)
- Israel agreed to be God's people
- This would not be the kingdom in its fullness but would show people what the kingdom would be like
- Sadly, the Israelites broke their covenant with God and refused to be the people that God wanted them to be

Isaiah 2:2-4

Israel, the covenant with them, and the Law were always temporary measures for God to bring about his kingdom through the **Messiah**

- The mountain of the Lord was another way of talking about the kingdom of God
- The Messiah would bring about a new wave of the kingdom and allow it to break into the present realm
- Notice that it prophesies that the kingdom would consist of people from all nations who would live in peace and harmony with one another within God's kingdom (this means that the fulfillment of the kingdom could not be Israel if the promise was to consist of all nations)
- Why is it important for us today to understand that part of the kingdom has always been that it would consist of all people of all nations and "races"?

Jeremiah 31:31-34

- God promised a New Covenant that would surpass the Old Covenant with Israel
- This New Covenant would not be by birth but by choice as each individual had the choice to enter into relationship with God and to be part of his kingdom

Daniel 2:44

God promised to establish his kingdom on earth during the times of the "great" kingdoms of the earth

Daniel 7:13-14

- The **Messiah**, the son of man, would establish the everlasting kingdom that would never end

2 Chronicles 36:23

- In the Hebrew Bible that Jesus used during his lifetime, this was the last verse of what we call the Old Testament (the texts were the same, they just used a somewhat different order for the books)
- This verse was a prophecy that pointed to the fact that the kingdoms of the earth were lacking
- Someone needed to return to Jerusalem to build God a proper Temple
- This would not be another physical Temple
- The term translated “go up” was a specific term in the Hebrew language
- It referred to one going into holy war for the cause of God and his people
- The basic question that the Hebrew Old Testament left off with was who would go to battle for God’s people in Jerusalem and finally bring about the promised Kingdom and Temple that Israel had been waiting for?
- In other words, who would establish God’s kingdom on earth?

Things to Ponder

- If we consider that the Kingdom of God is “God’s will being done on earth as it is in heaven,” then how does that help us to understand the Old Testament prophecies of God’s kingdom?

The Kingdom of God, Part 2

THE KINGDOM COMING IN WAVES

Matthew 6:10

One of the key things that Jesus taught his disciples to pray for was that the kingdom would continue to come and that God's will would be done—that is the kingdom in essence, the place where Gods' will is done

Quiz are you doing the will of God? If not you are not in his kingdom though it's here!

It would make little sense for Jesus to ask his disciples to pray for something that was largely irrelevant in their time

Jesus asked them to pray for the kingdom to come because it was breaking in all around them through Jesus' ministry and would come in a special, new way soon

Matthew 4:17

- ❖ Jesus was preaching from the very onset of his ministry that the kingdom of God had come near
- ❖ The kingdom would be the central aspect of Jesus' teaching throughout his ministry

Matthew 12:28

- ❖ Through Jesus' actions and ministry the kingdom of God was breaking into the world just as the prophets had foretold
- ❖ The Messiah was ushering in the kingdom of God

Mark 9:1

Jesus told his disciples that some would be alive and, by implication, some would be dead, at the coming of the kingdom

- ❖ This would seem to indicate that the kingdom, although was breaking in through Jesus' ministry, would come in a very strong wave, in power, during the lifetimes of at least some of the disciples
- ❖ As we will see, when the kingdom did come in power, Judas Iscariot (who was

present here) would be dead while the others would be alive, thus Jesus' words were quite accurate

- ❖ The kingdom came in waves and it seems that this coming in power would come in a series of waves as well through the death and resurrection of Christ as well as the events of Pentecost described in Acts 2 (we'll look at that in the next study)

Luke 24:44-49

This takes place after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead

He tells them:

- ❖ All prophecies in the Old Testament must be fulfilled
- ❖ Forgiveness of sin would be proclaimed to all nation beginning at Jerusalem
- ❖ The Spirit would come upon them in power as a means to this

Acts 1:3-5

- ❖ Jesus resurrected after 3 days, then spent 40 days teaching his disciples about the kingdom of God
- ❖ He then ascended to heaven and 7 days later Pentecost took place in Jerusalem
- ❖ We will turn to the events of Pentecost and following as it relates to the Kingdom of God in the next study

The Kingdom of God, Part 3

The Spirit Opens the Door to the Kingdom for the Jews

Acts 2:1-12

- ★ The festival of Pentecost took place 50 days after Jesus' death (Passover)
- ★ Jews from all nations were present in Jerusalem to celebrate
- ★ The Holy Spirit came in power (v. 4)
- ★ The miraculous sign that the family of God, the kingdom of all nations, had come was that each person heard the proclamation in their own language

Acts 2:22-24

- ★ Jesus was killed but God raised him from the dead showing him to be the true Messiah, the one who would be king of the kingdom

Acts 2:36-39

- ★ God demonstrated that Jesus was both Lord and Christ
- ★ He was the king of the kingdom and a large wave of the kingdom had come
- ★ Those who recognized Jesus as their Lord and king were prepared to follow and wanted to know what to do
- ★ They were told to enter into the life of Christ, the life of the kingdom, by being baptized and receiving the forgiveness of sin and the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit
- ★ The door to the kingdom had been opened for the Jews

THE SPIRIT OPENS THE DOOR TO THE KINGDOM FOR THE GENTILES

Acts 10:44-49; 11:15-17

- ★ It seems like no large controversy to us that Gentiles would be welcomed into the kingdom of God but it was a topic of great concern in the first century
- ★ Even the earliest Christians would have assumed that Gentiles would not just be allowed into God's New Covenant family; surely they must become Jews first and follow the Law of Moses
- ★ The entirety of **chapters 10-11** make clear that the Holy Spirit was making it clear that this was not the case
- ★ The work of Christ had changed their assumptions
- ★ God's family and kingdom really would include people of all nations through nothing more than entering into Christ
- ★ The Spirit came upon them just as he had come upon people in the Old Testament (this was different than the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit)
- ★ The Spirit came upon them in power just as he had come upon the disciples to open the door of the kingdom at Pentecost
- ★ Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit the door to the kingdom had been opened in these events that were once-for-all and need-not-be-repeated events

THE PEOPLE OF THE KINGDOM

1 Peter 2:9-10

- ★ The people of God are the people of the kingdom
- ★ We are the kingdom of priests that God had always desired
- ★ Some have mistakenly assumed that this means that the kingdom of God is the same thing as the church
- ★ The church is to be the clearest example of the kingdom but the kingdom is the rule of God
- ★ The kingdom should be made manifest through the life and activities of the church

STILL WAITING

1 Peter 1:3-5

- ★ We have access to the kingdom, but it has still not come in all its fullness
- ★ It is waiting in heaven until it comes in fullness with Christ when he returns at the resurrection of all believers

★ Revelation 21:1-7

- ★ One day the kingdom will come in all of its fullness and God will restore the heavens and earth and he will dwell with his people forever

End of 3rd session

PART 4 IN THE IMAGE OF THE KING

Gen 1:26a; Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image

From genesis we learn that we were created in the image of God but something happened!

Genesis 3

Because of sin we lost God's image, we corrupted the image of God for which we were intended.

From this study we are going to see how Jesus is the only solution to this problem.

1. The Purpose of Man

Genesis 1:26-27

For what stated purpose did God make humans?

God made humans in his image, a word that referred representing God

Humans, made in God's image, had the ability to perfectly represent God and do his will as they cared for his creation

Psalm 8:4-9

This is a picture of man in his perfect created state, representing God's image

But does this sound like the average human being today?

Do human beings rule over creation and flawlessly represent God?

Clearly we do not, so what happened?

2. Image Corrupted

Genesis 5:2-3

Humans were made in God's image, to represent him but something has changed since the Fall of humans due to sin (Genesis 3)

Rather than being God's image bearers, humans have corrupted the image of God

Adam's son is born in his own image not in God's image!

Humans who sin by doing their own will can no longer fully bear God's image

3. The Perfect Image-Bearer

Colossians 1:15; 2 Corinthians 4:4

Jesus is the only perfect God's image bearer and why we should imitate his life

John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.)

Jesus came to do God's will which made him God's image-bearer

Jesus represented God perfectly, did his will, and was the very image of God

4. Restored to God's Image

Colossians 3:9-10; Ephesians 4:21-24; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Corinthians

15:49; Romans 8:29

In Christ we are being restored to the image of God

This process comes through knowing the life of Christ and doing it more and more

We are not immediately restored in God's image the moment we are baptized into Christ

When we enter into Christ it begins a process of being able to do God's will through the power of the Spirit

We grow into the image of God

Romans 8:29

Paul's letter to Romans tells us that this was God's plan from the very beginning

God's plan from before the foundations of the earth were laid, that we would be restored to God's image by entering into the life of his son

His plan was always to have a Messiah-shaped family

In Christ is the only way that we can be restored to the image of God

No other religion, spiritual leader, prophet, can restore humans to God's image

That is why Jesus said that he was the way, the truth, and the life

Restoration to God's image is found in Christ alone—Never forget that

5. Give to God's

Matthew 22:15-22

The Pharisees thought that they could trap Jesus by asking him whether Jews should pay

taxes to the much-hated Roman Empire

If he answered “yes” then he would be quickly rejected as a traitor by his Jewish listeners

If answered “no” then he would be quickly arrested by Rome for inciting people to rebel against paying taxes

Jesus’ answer was shockingly amazing to those that were listening to him

He asked for a coin with Caesar’s image on it

The Jews shouldn’t have had one on them because with Caesar’s image it would have been a violation of the ten commandments

When they did produce it Jesus asked whose image was on it

The clear answer was “Caesar”

His response was incredible “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s”

His point was that the coin had Caesar’s image on it and if he wanted it back, then fine, give it to him

But humans had been made with God’s image, and God wanted what was his

They should all be giving themselves entirely to God, because they had his image imprinted on them and right so to us

PART 5 THE WILL OF THE KING

One of the most important themes of the Bible and the kingdom of God is the issue of doing God's will.

Simply sin, is doing our own will rather than God's. Therefore being restored to doing God's will is very important for our walk in the family of God as kingdom people.

Made for God's Will, but . . .

Genesis 3:1-6

- Adam and Eve decided to do their own will and what seemed best rather than following God's will
- Man's heart, or the seat of their will, had become totally focused on doing their own will rather than God's
- As beings made in God's image to do his will, not doing his will makes us less than fully human

A New Plan

Ezekiel 36:26-27

- God had a plan to renew the hearts of humans so that we could become fully human, doing his will once again
- This plan would come through Jesus

God's Will on Earth

Matthew 6:10

- Being part of God's kingdom means to do God's will here on earth as it is done perfectly in heaven

John 4:34

- In the Jewish culture, food was symbolic for the substance that sustained your life
- Can you say that doing God's will is the most important thing in your life?

John 6:38 (For what purpose did Jesus say he came?)

Matthew 7:21-23

- Not everyone who thinks of themselves as religious or as knowing Jesus will be known by Jesus
- Jesus says that only those who do God's will are those that he will know
- When considering your own judgment before Christ, are you confident that you have given your life to doing God's will?

Romans 12:1-2

- A sacrifice was something that was offered up and given completely to God
- On a personal and practical level, what does it mean to offer you as a sacrifice to God?
- What does it take to begin to do God's will rather than your own?

Matthew 26:36-46

- Jesus serves as the ultimate model of doing the Father's will rather than submitting to the will of his human flesh
- Jesus turned to the Father in prayer to align himself with the Father's will
- Humans first disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden by refusing to do his will and doing their own will instead
- Jesus reversed that by going into another garden and doing the Father's will rather than his own will
- Jesus was completely surrendered to God's will are you or am I?

Conclusions

- ❖ What have you learned from this study that might have been new biblical information for you?
- ❖ Is there anything you learned from these Scriptures that was new for you?
- ❖ What specific steps are you going to take to apply the things you have learned from these Scriptures?

