

Coming of the Kingdom

Introduction

In our previous lessons we discussed the Eternal Kingdom of God that has always existed in the heavenlies. The Devil rebelled against God and 'fractured' the Kingdom by deceiving a third of the angels of God causing them to no longer do the will of God resulting in what we call the kingdom of darkness. Instead of simply 'slapping the devil out of existence', God chose to reveal His multi-faceted wisdom by resolving the Kingdom conflict in a different manner that would not only bring resolution to the 'fractured' Kingdom but would also accomplish the purpose of God that He had hidden in His heart.

So, God made a covenant with Himself before the foundation of the world. This 'mystery' covenant has been unfolding in time as God reveals more and more of His multi-faceted wisdom. All that God has done, is doing, and will do involves bringing to completion the fulfillment of His purpose and the restoring of His Eternal Kingdom to unity and purity. We saw in our last lesson that God had His Kingdom in mind at Mt. Sinai and it was His intention to begin to bring it about in the earth.

The King and the Kingdom

The Hebrews equated the Kingdom of God with the Kingdom of Israel. They couldn't see that the Messiah was applicable to more than Israel, nor that the Kingdom of God was also bigger than Israel. Even the disciples continually asked Jesus if He would now restore the kingdom to Israel.

At one time, God had directly governed Israel through the prophets and judges of the Old Testament. Under God, the government of Israel was completely and dramatically different than the governments of the heathen nations that surrounded them. However, there came a time when Israel was not satisfied with this arrangement, but wanted to be more like the nations around them and have a visible king that could be seen and would represent them in battle and other occasions of royal pomp and circumstance.

Israel rejected God as king over them by demanding a human king like the nations around them. They selected a king after the flesh but God selected one after the spirit. From this selection God would bring forth the seed of David as His King who would rule the Kingdom.

1 Samuel 8:6-7 NKJV But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD. (7) And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.

But even in their rejection of Him, He had a plan that had already been established. Isaiah spoke of the coming future King.

Isaiah 9:6-7 NKJV 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.

The coming child, who has Prince of Peace as one of His names, will have the government on His shoulders. He will sit on the throne of David and over his kingdom. The kingdom will be established and upheld with justice and righteousness. The major characteristic of His government is peace and His rule and His peace will continually increase. This is one fantastic promise of the coming of the Kingdom of God, where Jesus rules as King in justice and righteousness, where the atmosphere is peace.

The Time of the Messiah

Since the child, the son that was given is Jesus and He, as King, is necessary for the Kingdom to function, when and where is the Kingdom of God? Is it something that we can see now or is it all still in the future?

John the Baptist, who was the one to prepare the way for Jesus, preached a simple message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 3:2)

[NOTE: Some have tried to make a distinction between “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God”; but, in the Scriptures, there is no distinction. Matthew, a Hebrew, writing to Hebrews used “heaven” instead of “God” because of their reluctance to use God's name, lest they use it in vain. Scripture references describing the same events between the four Gospels refer to the “kingdom of God” where Matthew refers to the “kingdom of heaven”.]

The declaration of the Kingdom of God was continued by Jesus and He continued to speak of the kingdom repeatedly as He was “about the Father's business”. His first public sermon began with “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17) Mark's version of this is even plainer.

Mark 1:14-15 NKJV Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, (15) and saying, **"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."**

Mark is linking the “gospel of God” with the Kingdom. This is important because we, in our evangelism and Church services, have un-linked the gospel and the Kingdom making them to appear to be unrelated. However, this is not what Jesus did.

Matthew 4:23 NKJV 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 NKJV 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.

Matthew 24:14 NKJV 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.

Notice that with the gospel of the Kingdom goes healing and deliverance. These are demonstrations of the validity of the Kingdom of God and the fact that the King has overcome all of the power of the enemy and has been given all authority in heaven and in earth. The Church has lost much of her demonstrations of power because she has stopped preaching the gospel of the Kingdom.

Transition From the Law and the Prophets

Jesus after continuing with John's message made an interesting statement revealing the transition between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

Luke 16:16 NKJV "The law and the prophets *were* until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.

John was the transition point in God's message. Until John, all of the Word of God and His requirements were contained in the Law and Prophets. Since John, the Word of God and His requirements are contained in the gospel of the Kingdom.

Matthew 11:11-13 NKJV "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (12) And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. (13) For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

Not only was John the transition point in the message of God, he was the greatest of men under the Law and Prophets. Even so, the one who is the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John! That means that John was not considered a citizen of the Kingdom! (This may mess up your theology a little.) But from John's time forward those who were violent about the government of God were pressing into the Kingdom, taking it by force. This tells us then that Jesus brought the Kingdom into the earth through the proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom.

As Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God, the Pharisees asked Him the obvious question.

Luke 17:20-21 NKJV 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.**"

What does Jesus' answer mean? He is saying that the Kingdom is not coming visually (Greek word means *ocular-evidence*) so, don't go looking here and there because the Kingdom is already "in your midst" or "among you". Where the King is, there is the Kingdom!

The question of when the Kingdom of God was coming was central to all of their thoughts. Jesus answered this plainly when He said this in Mark:

Mark 9:1 NKJV 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."

From this statement we learn several things:

1. The Kingdom had not yet come in power, even though Jesus had told the Pharisees that the Kingdom was in their midst (Luke 17:21).
2. Some of those that were standing there with Him would be alive to see the Kingdom of God come with power.
3. Although Jesus had been speaking and teaching about the Kingdom, shortly, within the lifetime of some of them, there would be a visible manifestation of the Kingdom coming with power.

To determine when this occurs, we have to take these words of Jesus about the Kingdom and add to them the definition of the Kingdom given to us by Paul.

Romans 14:17 NKJV for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

He tells us that the location of the Kingdom in its current form is in the Holy Spirit and that its characteristics are righteousness, peace and joy.

In the first part of the first chapter of Acts, the Scriptures tell us that Jesus appeared to the disciples over a period of 40 days after His resurrection and that He was speaking to them things concerning the Kingdom of God. He told them to wait until they received the promise of the Father because the Holy Spirit was coming on them with power. We know, of course, that this occurred on the day of Pentecost and is detailed in the second chapter of Acts.

I submit to you that this was the coming of the Kingdom in power since the Kingdom is in the Holy Spirit. After the day of Pentecost, look at how the Kingdom is mentioned in the book of Acts.

Acts 8:12 NKJV 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.

Acts 14:21-22 NKJV And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, (22) strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

Acts 19:8 NKJV 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 NKJV "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.

Acts 28:23 NKJV So 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.

The message of the book of Acts dealt with the Kingdom of God. It was a continuation of the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom in the same manner that Jesus preached it. Reading these verses suggests that our current evangelistic efforts leave out one of the primary points of the Gospel, the Kingdom of God with Jesus as King.

Adjustments to our Thinking

If what is listed above is true, and I believe that it is, then there are some serious adjustments that we need to make in our thinking and in our doctrine. One of those adjustments is the need to separate the concepts of Church and Kingdom. They are not the same. The Scriptures refer to us in two different ways.

Ephesians 2:19 NKJV Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

We are “fellow citizens” in the Kingdom and we are members of “God's household”. There are differences between the rules and requirements of a citizen and those of a family member. These two areas have a very different focus. We “grow up” in the family; but, we “go to work” in the Kingdom.

The values and standards of the family become the basic building blocks of a good citizen¹. Any society is only as good as the families that are its components. These two areas also comprise different types of work. With the family, we do “chores” such as taking out the garbage, mowing the lawn, or doing the dishes. The nature of the chores are things that are necessary to maintain an orderly family environment. However, when we “go to work” we go out into society and do work that produces a benefit to the society. We become a productive citizen when we produce more than we consume.

Most of the type of work that we do in society is not done alone but in conjunction with other workers. The nature of this work is quite different from our chores at home.

By confusing Church and Kingdom we have also confused the nature of our work. Much of the work done by the Church is not Kingdom work but rather “chores” to maintain the family and its facilities. We have done very little “real” work, which is done “in the field” and not in the family household.

These are things that we will address in coming lessons. In this lesson we have seen how the Kingdom of God has come in power as promised by Jesus. This occurred on the day of Pentecost and the Kingdom has been growing and increasing from then to now through the work of the Holy Spirit.

*The next lesson in the Kingdom of God Series will be
“The Kingdom of God Now”.*

¹ For further teaching on this subject see “Lesson 2: Building Blocks of God's Government” from the “Government of God Series” available on the website.