

The Kingdom of God

Introduction:

This morning I want to take us on a quick refresher course regarding the Kingdom of God. Over the coming months there will be various messages spoken that relate to the Kingdom of God – its' vision and values and they way we interact with it on earth. So much could be said in the context of an introduction, therefore I want to share with you a few foundational Scriptures that have spoken to me over the years relating to the Kingdom of God.

Psalm 24:1-2 - The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. 2 For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters.

Matt 3:1-2 - In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

Mark 1:14-15 - 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."

Matt 6:33 - But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

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

There are many other Scriptures that speak of the Kingdom of God. Time does not permit discussion on all of the Scriptures relating to God and his Kingdom. Here is a summation of these opening Scriptures.

- God is the owner of all; the heavens, the earth and all those who dwell in the world. Therefore, as believes we are stewards not possessors. One of the best ways to be successful is to see yourself as a steward of God's life and blessings but definitely not owners.
- The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are interchangeably terms.
- The truth of the matter is simply – the kingdom of Christ is upon us. The King of kings has entered this earthly realm bringing his authority and power to bear upon mankind. The gospel is all about King Jesus and what he has accomplished for mankind and how we are to repent.
- One of our primary focuses should be to seek *first* the kingdom of God along with his righteousness. When our priorities are aligned with God's Kingdom, he shall be our Provider.
- The Kingdom of God is first spiritual and then natural. We must embrace and experience the righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit allowing this to touch the natural world around.

In light of these thoughts I want to lead us further into spiritual understanding and practical application with regards to the Kingdom of God.

God's Kingdom Vision:

In the beginning when God created mankind in his own image we see the initial groundwork for the Kingdom of God. Adam and Eve were to be fruitful and multiply, not just physically, but also in the reality of the Kingdom. I believe the original plan of God was for many "gardens of Eden" so to speak, where God and man could walk together all over the face of the earth. In this context mankind was to rule and have dominion over the earth and to be in continual communion with their Creator.

As a result of the fall of mankind, God's Kingdom vision took on redemptive foresight in the person of Jesus Christ – the King of kings. In Jesus, the vision of the Kingdom of God is both present and future. John the Baptist and Jesus themselves told us the Kingdom is at hand or near.

The proclaiming of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is the central topic of the Gospels and is also mentioned in the apostolic letters as well. The message was clear, whether in the form of parables or in direct communication. The King was here and his kingdom is theocratic, therefore, there is a great need to submit to this King and his Kingdom. The reality of the Cross and the Resurrection add to the seriousness of the submission to the King. He is the only person that can grant full access to the Kingdom of God and its origin design. **Col 1:13-14** tells us - **For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

The Kingdom is Present:

As a result of the Kingdom message being preached and demonstrated, "the kingdom of God has come upon you" signifying the confrontation between Jesus and the devil, the church of Jesus Christ comes into existence. The church comes to life out of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and once again – although substantially different – God's Kingdom Vision comes into reality. The effects of sin can be seen all over the face of the world and the hope of a "garden of Eden" has withered away. However, in the church, God's Kingdom vision comes into focus once again. In the context of the church, the gathering of God's people, we once again have a glimpse of God's original design. This is the present reality of the Kingdom of God we are experiencing today. This is to be our cry and prayer, "let your kingdom come and let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

To some degree I like the imagery of an embassy in describing the Kingdom of God in partnership with the church. Wherever there is a gathering of God's people there is to be the Presence of the King and his Kingdom. Whenever I think of a spiritual embassy (i.e. the church) there are several pictures that come to mind.

- A place of gathering where people identify with their country of origin. In this case we are citizens of heaven above, not of this world. In this place of community we encounter the reality of the King and his Kingdom. We share life and testimonies together, celebrating our King.

- The members of the embassy trust their country of origin to protect and provide for their needs. In the context of the church this is also true. Jesus our King is our protector and provider while we engage in the work of the embassy.
- Lastly, I see the concept of the embassy as an opportunity for missions. Embassies are always located on foreign soil. In this case the church is on foreign soil, “the whole earth lies under the power of the evil one” and therefore has the message and a mission and the means to carry out Kingdom business on behalf of the King.

The Kingdom is future:

Another key reality of the Kingdom of God is the Kingdom is coming speaking of the future. In the Old Testament the kingdom of God encompasses the past, present, and future. To some degree the Jewish community of Jesus’ day was looking forward to the future coming of the Messiah. Unfortunately they missed the present reality of the King of Kings when he was in their midst. However, Jesus continued to preach and demonstrate the reality of the Kingdom revealing himself as the King, Messiah and Saviour for those who chose to believe.

The kingdom of God is “now” but “not yet” fully completed, both a present and future reality existing side by side. The present reality of the Kingdom was established in the incarnation of the King Jesus Christ and through his life, ministry, death, and resurrection. In this life God’s kingdom blessings are in some measure possessed now and yet not fully. People can enter God’s kingdom and come under his authoritative rule now, however, the fullness of the Kingdom will be completed at the Second Coming of the King. For now members of the Kingdom of God currently dwell alongside inhabitants of the kingdom of darkness. It is this future Kingdom that fuels the message given to us. Someday there will be an account given by all mankind with regards to the King of the Kingdom.

In Conclusion:

Jesus often speaks of the now and the not yet aspect of the Kingdom in the parables he spoke. One of the parables speaks of the ten virgins.

Matt 25:1-13 - “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise. 3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. 4 The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. 5 The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

6 “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’

7 “Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’

9 “ ‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’

10 “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

11 “Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’

12 “But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’

13 “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

This parable highlights both the present and future aspects of the Kingdom of God. He likens the Kingdom to that of a wedding ceremony. The Kingdom is something delightful, full of anticipation and excitement, just like a wedding ceremony. In this parable ten virgins are getting ready to meet the bridegroom; five were foolish and five were wise. The five foolish took their lamps and the oil within their lamps in contrast to the wise who took their lamps and extra oil.

The bridegroom took a long time in coming, revealing the present and future reality of the Kingdom. When he finally came it was the wise virgins with the extra oil who made it into the wedding, while the foolish virgins received the message – “I don’t know you.”

Here comes the punch line - **“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”**

In Application:

We are a part of God’s Kingdom and members of God’s Church. Each one of us has the responsibility of being an “embassy worker” so to speak. The Kingdom of God, past (in the beginning), present (Jesus with us today) and the future (Jesus’ coming again), invites us into this; a mission with a message by the means of the King. Whether at home in our neighbourhoods or in our corporate gatherings we are citizens of the Kingdom of God and know personally the King.

- We have also been given a mission – to be fruitful and multiply the Kingdom of God on earth.
- The message is simply – Jesus. We talk about our life and experience with the King.
- As well, we trust him for the means to proclaim and demonstrate the reality of the Kingdom now which confirms the reality of the Kingdom coming.

There are times when we are so immersed in the Kingdom now, full of worship and the presence of Jesus. Oh how wonderful those times. Then there are times when we struggle through trials and temptations’, feeling like Jesus is so far from us, only to be reminded that his Kingdom is coming again in fullness. There are times when we pray and the Kingdom of Heaven seems to break loose and there are times when we pray and nothing happens because the Kingdom of Heaven is coming in the future.

Let’s not lose heart in the midst of our struggles, let’s keep watch and pray with and for each other as the Second Coming of Christ approaches.