

Lesson 2 The Kingdom of God

1) The Kingdom of God

a) *Why should we study about the Kingdom of God?*

- i) A central theme of Jesus' teaching (and some say the central theme) was the kingdom of God. He spent much time talking about it, and many of his parables were directed toward it.
- ii) The word "kingdom" appears 342 times in the KJV. Of those appearances, over a third (127) are in the gospels. By comparison, the word "church" appears 3 times in the gospels, and the word "grace" appears 5 times in the gospels. Clearly, the kingdom was very important to Jesus. Shouldn't it then be of the utmost importance to us?

b) *What does the Bible mean when it uses the word "kingdom"?*

- i) In Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, the primary meaning of "kingdom" is kingship. The word more often refers to the reign than to the realm in which the reign is exercised.

(1) For example, in Daniel 4:30-31, God told Nebuchadnezzar that the kingdom had passed from him. Babylon as a realm remained. What passed was Nebuchadnezzar's exercise of kingship over that realm.

(a) Nebuchadnezzar did not become a king without a kingdom. Babylon became a kingdom without a king.

(b) As an aside, no book in the Bible sets forth the sovereignty of God more clearly than the book of Daniel. A complete commentary on that book is available at www.thywordistruth.com.

(2) But sometimes the word "kingdom" is used to refer to the realm as in the "kingdom of Judah."

- ii) The phrase "kingdom of God" in the Bible may refer either to God's kingship or to the realm over which God is king.

c) *Why is there so much confusion about the kingdom of God?*

- i) Some commentators say that the kingdom and the church are the same thing. Other commentators say that the kingdom and the church are different but overlap. Still other commentators say that the kingdom and the church are completely separate things.
- ii) Some say that Jesus is reigning today. Others say that Jesus has the right to reign now, but he is not exercising that right today. Some say the kingdom is with us now. Others say that the kingdom is still yet to come, and in its place we now have the church.
- iii) To steer through this confusion and discover the truth about the kingdom, we must (as with any study of the Scriptures) pay close attention to the context of the passages that we read.
- iv) The term "kingdom" is used in many different ways in the Bible.
 - (1) In Matthew 8:12, Jesus refers to faithless Jews as the children of the kingdom.**
 - (2) In Matthew 12:26, Jesus tells us that Satan has a kingdom.**
 - (3) In Matthew 12:28, Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God had already appeared.**
 - (4) In Mark 9:1, Jesus said that the kingdom would appear in the first century.**
 - (5) In 2 Timothy 4:1, Paul tells us that the kingdom was yet to come.**
 - (6) In Luke 21:31, we are told that the kingdom would come with the destruction of Jerusalem.**
 - (7) In Revelation 11:15, we find that the kingdom would come with the judgment of Rome.**
- v) Are these statements contradictory? Of course not. They all are just speaking of different aspects and manifestations of the kingdom of God.
 - (1) In one sense the kingdom appeared when the king appeared.**
 - (2) In another sense the kingdom appeared when the king came in judgment against Jerusalem and against Rome.**

(3) In yet another sense the kingdom will appear when the king comes again to claim his own.

vi) This lesson is organized around several key facts about the kingdom -- each of which is based on a key verse about the kingdom. Although there are admittedly many difficult verses about the kingdom, we can use the verses that follow as a framework in which to interpret the more difficult passages.

2) Fact #1: The Kingdom of God is Universal (Genesis 1:26)

a) *God is King over all because He is the creator of all.*

i) The first reference to a kingdom in the Bible occurs in Genesis 1.

(1) In Genesis 1:26 we read of God giving dominion to man over the rest of the world. Clearly God could not have given something that he did not possess. In Genesis 1, we see God the Creator exercising kingship over his created kingdom and delegating some of that authority to man.

(2) The first key point to understand about the kingdom is that God is King, and the Universe is His Kingdom. If we ever find ourselves saying that God is king over some and not king over others, then we must have taken a wrong turn somewhere. God is king over all creation, and all creation is subject to him.

ii) David tells us that God is king over the whole earth.

(1) Psalm 47:2 --- a great King over all the earth.

(2) Psalm 103:19 The LORD has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.

(3) Psalm 145:13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations.

(4) Psalm 29:10 The LORD sat enthroned at the Flood, And the LORD sits as King forever.

(a) That last verse is important because it tells us that God is still King even when the world is in a mess. Some people today argue that Jesus cannot be reigning as King because the world is in such a mess. But wasn't the world in a mess at the time of the flood? God reigned as king then.

- (5) **Isaiah 37:16 connects God's kingship with his having made heaven and earth.**
- (6) **These verses were written during the monarchy of Israel. That is, King David tells us that God is king. Why is that important? Because it tells us that God did not abdicate his kingship when he set up earthly kings over Israel. God reigned then and he reigns today as King over all the earth.**
- (7) **How God reigns may change, however. At one time, he reigned through King David. Indeed, the throne of David and the throne of Solomon are often called the throne of God. Today he reigns through the Messiah.**
- iii) Even during the monarchy of Israel, God reigned over all the kingdoms of the earth.
- (1) **Did you ever wonder why Jonah went and preached to Nineveh? Nineveh was full of Assyrians, not Jews. God reigned over Assyria just as he reigned over Israel.**
- (a) From this we have a very important truth about the kingdom of God --- God is king over all without regard to whether they accept him as king. God rules the righteous, he rules the ungodly, and he rules the indifferent. He has a special relationship with the righteous, but he rules over all.
- (b) Transgressing the royal law of God does not mean that God is no longer your king. It just means that you are no longer his faithful subject.
- iv) In the same way today, Christ is king over His church --- but he is not king just over the church. He is King of kings and Lord of lords.

b) *Does someone who is lost need to make Jesus "Lord of his life"?*

- i) As you flip through our song book you will find several songs that speak of us making Jesus king and crowning him (Examples: #332, #577). But what do you find as you flip through the Bible? Is there any scriptural basis for the idea that we somehow crown Jesus King or make him Lord when we obey the gospel?
- ii) If we leave here today with nothing else, I hope that we all leave here today understanding that Christ is your King and your Lord whether or not you are in His church.

(1) No one needs to make Jesus Lord of their life! Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus is already Lord of everybody's life and he is already everybody's king! We do make him King or Lord when we obey him.

(2) Song #577 (which we have sung many times) pictures us as placing a crown on Jesus' head. Have you ever stopped and thought about what we are saying when we sing that song?

(a) The song is entitled "We Bow Down" -- but who is bowing down before whom if we are placing a crown on Jesus' head?

(b) God crowned Jesus with glory and honor; we did not crown him. (Hebrews 2:9)

(c) As you flip through the Bible, you will find only one example of men placing a crown on the head of Jesus --- and that crown was a crown of thorns.

(3) We do not crown Jesus king or make him lord when we decide to obey him. We obey him because he is already king and lord!

(a) In Acts 2:36-38, Peter told his listeners to repent because Jesus was already Lord of their life. If he is not our king and lord, why do we need to obey him at all?

(b) We do not become subject to the law of Christ only after we are added to the church. All men everywhere are subject to the law of Christ regardless of whether they obey that law.

(4) Where did this idea come from that we make Jesus Lord of our lives and crown him king?

(a) This language is very typical of humanistic thinking -- the sun revolves around us. We stay the same; Jesus changes. Jesus was X, and now we have made him Y. No! Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Jesus is the fixed point; not us. We change; not him!

(5) Jesus will give us a crown -- not the other way around.

(a) 2 Timothy 4:8 "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

3) **Fact #2: Israel Became a Kingdom Within a Kingdom (Exodus 19:5-6)**

a) *Israel became a kingdom within a kingdom.*

- i) Moses recognized that God was king (and therefore had a kingdom) at the time of the Exodus from Egypt. Indeed, in Exodus 15:18, Moses looked at the dead bodies of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and he declared that God was the eternal king.

(1) Exodus 15:18 "The LORD shall reign for ever and ever."

- ii) Yet Israel was not yet a kingdom in Exodus 15. This changed in Exodus 19:5 when God began to view Israel as a separate kingdom that was special to him.

(1) Exodus 19:5-6 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

(2) Here in chapter 19, we see God promising to enter into a special kingdom relationship with Israel.

(3) God was not giving up any sovereignty. Indeed, he affirms in verse 5 that "all the earth is mine." He was simply entering into a special relationship with Israel.

- iii) Although God reigned over the entire Universe as King, God chose a special people, and he called that special people a kingdom. They became a kingdom within a kingdom. We are going to see this again later in our lesson.

4) **Fact #3: God Promised to Establish an Eternal Kingdom (Daniel 2:44)**

a) *Although Israel was a special kingdom of God, God promised that there would one day be another kingdom.*

- i) As the earthly kings of Judah and Israel descended into wickedness and rebellion, the prophets began to speak of the kingdom of God in future terms.

(1) Although God is always king and always exercises his kingship, the prophets said there would be a time in the future

when the kingdom of God would be manifested among his people in a special way.

- (2) Isaiah 24:23 Then the moon will be disgraced and the sun ashamed; For the LORD of hosts will reign On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before His elders, gloriously.
- (3) Zechariah 14:9 And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be -- "The LORD is one," And His name one.

ii) We see this most clearly in Daniel 2:44.

- (1) Daniel 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.
- (2) Daniel said that one day God would set up an eternal kingdom. When would this eternal kingdom be established? Daniel tells us that it would be set up "in the days of these kings."
- (3) A study of Daniel shows that "these kings" are the first century emperors of Rome. (See the notes on Daniel available at www.thywordistruth.com.) These kings did not arise until 600 years after the book of Daniel was written.
- (4) Thus, Daniel gives us a very important time frame for the establishment of this eternal kingdom. We will refer to this time frame later in our lesson.

5) Fact #4: God Made a Covenant with King David Regarding the Kingdom (Psalm 89:3-4)

a) *God made a covenant with King David that is still in force today.*

- i) We read about the God's covenant with David in Psalm 89 -- a crucial chapter in our study of the kingdom.
 - (1) Psalm 89:3-4 "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, 4 Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations."

(2) This covenant is called the Davidic covenant. It is separate from God's covenant with Abraham and it is separate from the Mosaic covenant.

(3) Indeed, the prophets spoke of a day when a son of David would sit on the throne of David and the Mosaic covenant would NOT be in force!

- (a) In Zechariah 6:9-13, the prophet placed a crown on the High Priest and then referred to him by the Messianic title "the Branch." (Isaiah 11:1) Thus, he pictured a son of David (from the tribe of Judah) as the High Priest.
- (b) Yet, under the Mosaic covenant the High Priest could be only from the tribe of Levi. (See also Hebrews 7.) Thus, the picture in Zechariah 6 could not become a reality while the Mosaic covenant remained in place.
- (c) Similarly, in Psalm 110:1-7, we see that Messiah would be "priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Likewise, this passage could not be fulfilled while the Mosaic covenant was in force --- and yet Acts 2:29-36 tells us that it was fulfilled in the first century.
- (d) Premillennialists argue that the Mosaic covenant will return during the so-called 1000 year reign of Christ. And yet, Hebrews tells us that Christ is our High Priest. Jesus cannot be our High Priest under the Mosaic covenant.

(4) We also see from Psalm 89 that the Davidic covenant had a punitive element.

- (a) Psalm 89:30-34 If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; 31 If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; 32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. 33 Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. 34 My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.
- (b) History tells us that for a long time the house of David did not rule over the kingdom of Israel. Instead, the kingdom was first divided, and then the two halves were taken into captivity by the Assyrians and the Babylonians.
- (c) But the prophets looked to a restoration of that former kingdom of David.

- (i) *Amos 9:11 In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old.*
- (ii) *Why did the prophets look for a restored kingdom of David? Because the covenant with David remained in force even while sons of David were no longer ruling. That is what Psalm 89:34 tells us. Indeed, the Davidic covenant remains in force today.*

6) **Fact #5: Jesus Reigns as King Today Under the Davidic Covenant (Luke 1:31-33)**

a) ***Jesus reigns today under the Davidic covenant..***

- i) Isaiah and Luke tell us that Jesus would rule a kingdom while sitting on the throne of David.

(1) Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.

(2) Luke 1:31-33 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

(3) And John tells us in Revelation 3:7 that Jesus was ruling with Davidic authority during the first century.

(4) But while Jesus sits on the throne of David in the restored kingdom, his reign is universal in scope.

(a) And this brings us to another important fact about the Davidic covenant. It is not the scope of the authority that determines whether the authority is Davidic.

- (i) *David ruled 12 tribes and Abijah only 2 tribes, and yet Abijah was still able to say that he ruled the kingdom of Jehovah as a son of David in 2 Chronicles 13:8.*

(ii) *The size of the realm is not important. What matters is whether the king is from the line of David and whether he reigns with God's approval.*

(iii) *That Christ rules over more than David and Abijah ruled over less than David doesn't matter. Both ruled (and Jesus continues to rule) according to the Davidic covenant in Psalm 89.*

(iv) *Jesus rules the Universe from the throne of David. Every person on earth today (including every Arab in the Middle East) is ruled by a son of David!*

b) *A second thing we learn from Luke is that the eternal kingdom is a restored kingdom.*

i) Luke 1:32 tells us that Jesus did not get a new throne. He received the throne of his father David. His kingdom is a restored kingdom.

ii) Acts 15:15-16 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up.

iii) The kingdom of the gospels is a restored kingdom! It is not a new kingdom, but is instead the Davidic kingdom of Psalm 89. There is certainly much about this kingdom that is new (as Jesus said repeatedly), but the kingdom itself is a restored kingdom.

iv) We hear a lot today about the restoration movement, but that was not the first restoration involving the church. The first century church itself began as a restoration movement!

7) *Fact #6: The Eternal Kingdom Spoken of by Daniel was Established in the First Century (Mark 9:1)*

a) *Daniel told us very clearly when the eternal kingdom would be established.*

i) As we saw earlier, Daniel writing 600 years before the fact, told us that in the days of the Roman empire God would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed.

b) *Jesus also told us very clearly when the eternal kingdom would be established.*

- i) The New Testament did not waste any time in telling us when the eternal kingdom would be established. Jesus began his ministry by announcing that the time for the kingdom was at hand.

(1) Mark 1:14-15 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into 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 ye, and believe the gospel.

- ii) Later, Jesus told his listeners that some of them would be around to witness the establishment of the eternal kingdom.

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

c) *In fact, the Bible tells us the very day when the eternal kingdom was established.*

- i) Acts 1:6-8 is one of the most important passages in the Bible regarding the kingdom.

(1) Acts 1:6-8 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.

(2) Although this passage is one of the most important passages in the Bible regarding the Kingdom, we often discount it. Why? Because for some reason we have concluded that the apostles were confused and were still looking for an earthly kingdom in Acts 1.

(3) I submit that there is no reason to believe that the apostles in Acts 1 misunderstood the nature of the kingdom -- and there is every reason to conclude that they knew by that time exactly what type of kingdom was about to be established.

- (a) Luke 24:45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.

(b) Acts 1:3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

(c) Further, Jesus' answer gives absolutely no indication that the apostles were mistaken in their view about the kingdom.

(4) So, if we assume that the apostles actually knew what they were talking about in Acts 1, what then can we learn about the kingdom from that passage?

(a) Verse 6 confirms that the kingdom is a restored kingdom, and it tells us that the kingdom had not yet been restored. The apostles spoke of it as a future event.

(b) Verse 8 tells us how we could know when it was restored. Jesus told them that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

(i) *Remember that Mark 9:1 told us the kingdom would come with power, and remember that the Holy Spirit fell with power upon the apostles in Acts 2.*

(5) McGuigan rightly says that Acts 1 is a bridge between the gospels and the establishment of the kingdom. The eternal kingdom spoken of by Daniel 600 years earlier was established in Acts 2 on the first day of Pentecost following the resurrection.

8) Fact #7: The Eternal Kingdom Spoken of by Daniel is the Church of Christ (Matthew 16:16-19)

a) *So far we know that Jesus established an eternal kingdom in the first century. But we also know that he built a church in the first century. How are the church and the eternal kingdom related?*

i) Jesus clearly identifies his church as the eternal kingdom in Matthew 16:17-19.

(1) Matthew 16:16-19 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give unto thee the

keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

(2) One commentator wrote "Jesus preached the kingdom, and the church came" as if the two were unrelated. Yet here Jesus identifies his church with his kingdom.

(a) There is no indication of a change in subject between verses 18 and 19. The church in verse 18 is the kingdom in verse 19.

(b) We know this as well from Acts 2. It was there that the church was established, and it was there that Peter unlocked the door to the eternal kingdom by preaching the first gospel sermon. The eternal kingdom is the church of Christ.

b) *Like Israel, the church is a kingdom within a kingdom*

i) Jesus has all authority and reigns over the Universe from the throne of David. Yet, the church (the eternal kingdom) consists only of those who are in God's favor. Those in rebellion against God are in his universal kingdom, but they are not in the eternal kingdom; they are not in the church.

9) Fact #8: There are Conditions for Entry into this Eternal Kingdom (John 3:3)

a) *God has established conditions for entry into the eternal kingdom.*

i) John 3:3 -- Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

ii) Matthew 7:21 -- Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

iii) In Acts 2, those who heard the first gospel sermon wanted to know what they had to do to be saved. They were asking Peter what they had to do to enter this eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ – his church. Peter told them to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. There are conditions for entry into the eternal kingdom – but entry his open to all who will obey their Lord and King.

10) Fact #9: Christians are Today in the Eternal Kingdom (Colossians 1:13)

a) *God adds people to the church when they obey the gospel, and the church is the eternal kingdom.*

- i) Acts 2:47 And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.
- ii) Colossians 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.
- iii) 1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.
- iv) The church of Christ in Matthew 16 is the kingdom of Christ in Colossians 1:13. If you have been added to the church of Christ, then you have been added to the kingdom of Christ.

11) *Fact #10: One Day the Eternal Kingdom will be Delivered up to God (1 Corinthians 15:24-28)*

a) *Despite what countless premillennial preachers have taught, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that Jesus is not returning to set up a kingdom.*

- i) 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 is another crucial passage in our understanding of the kingdom.

(1) 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. ... 28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

(2) We are told here that the kingdom of Christ that began soon after his resurrection will experience a transition at the final resurrection. At that time, the eternal kingdom will be delivered to God.

(3) Notice that verse 25 tells us that Jesus is reigning now – not that he will start to reign at some point in the future.

- (4) When the eternal kingdom is delivered to God, Jesus will cease to reign as the Messiah, and he will start to reign instead as part of the Godhead ("that God may be all in all").**
- ii) When Jesus comes again it will not be to set up a kingdom (as many teach), but instead will be to deliver up or hand over to God an already existing kingdom.
- (1) Jesus already has an eternal kingdom – one purchased with his own blood – he does not need another one.**
- iii) It is critical to recognize the continuity of the story of the kingdom from Genesis 1 to First Corinthians 15.
- (1) In Genesis, we discovered that God rules over the Universe as its King and Creator.**
- (2) In Exodus, God made Israel to be a special kingdom within a kingdom.**
- (3) God made a covenant with David that is still in force today.**
- (4) Jesus began his earthly ministry by announcing that the kingdom of God was at hand. That kingdom was established in Acts 2.**
- (5) Today, God is reigning over the Universe through Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who reigns under the Davidic covenant.**
- (6) Those who are in God's favor are part of a restored kingdom, which is an eternal kingdom within a kingdom. This eternal kingdom is the church of Christ in Matthew 16.**
- (7) At the end of time that special eternal kingdom, the church, will be delivered to God, and those outside the eternal kingdom will be eternally lost.**
- (8) An understanding of the kingdom is crucial to our study of the church, which will continue next week with a lesson on the establishment and nature of the church.**