
New Perspectives

The Kingdom

1) Introduction to the Kingdom.

A) The Kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus' ministry. When He began to preach, He told the Jews, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17, NASB). He proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom throughout Galilee (Mark 1:14; cf. Matthew 4:23; 9:35), and He did so with a sense of purpose and urgency (Luke 4:43; 8:1). He also sent His disciples out to preach the truth of the Kingdom (Luke 9:59–60; 10:1, 9–11).

B) After His death and resurrection, Jesus continued to teach His disciples about the Kingdom until His ascension to Heaven (Acts 1:3). They in turn carried the message of the Kingdom throughout the Roman Empire (Acts 8:12). We see this especially in the missionary journeys of Paul.

(1) Paul's custom was to go into the Jewish churches (synagogues) and persuade them concerning the Kingdom of God (Acts 17:1–3; 19:8).

(2) He wrote to his new converts about the Kingdom (1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5).

(3) He preached the Kingdom of God to the inquiring Jews in Rome, and to those who visited him while he was under house arrest (Acts 28:23, 30–31).

C) When you placed your faith in Christ, you were delivered from the power of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of God (Colossians 1:13). You are now a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven!

2) What is the Kingdom of God?

A) A kingdom is a nation that is ruled by a king. Those living in a kingdom are called “subjects.” This word signifies that they are under the authority of the king—they owe him their loyalty and obedience. They are also called “citizens” which means that they have a right to live in the kingdom because they were born there or were naturalized into the kingdom. The king is responsible for making the laws and for taking care of those under His rule. The laws of a kingdom form the foundation of its culture. A culture is a set of shared beliefs and practices that uniquely identify the group of people who follow them.

B) The Kingdom of God has all the elements mentioned above. The king is Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:8), and the subjects are those who have been saved. As Christians, we owe Jesus our loyalty and obedience. We are citizens of the Kingdom of God because we have been born again (John 3:3). Jesus has a law for His Kingdom—it is the law of love (see 1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2; 5:14; James 2:8–12; Romans 13:8–10; Matthew 22:37–40). This law—loving God and loving others—forms the foundation of the Kingdom’s culture. Indeed, the Bible tells us that the love we have for each other uniquely identifies us as citizens of the Kingdom of God (John 13:35; 1 John 3:10). Other expressions of this law of love include servanthood (Mark 9:35), self-denial (Matthew 16:24) and evangelism (Matthew 28:19–20).

C) God’s desire has always been to have a kingdom of people who live in a love relationship with Him and one another (Matthew 25:34; Isaiah 2:2–5; Micah 4:1–4). In the beginning, God created mankind and established the first earthly Kingdom by giving Adam dominion over the entire created order (Genesis 1:27–28). Adam subsequently sinned and forfeited his authority to Satan (John 12:31; Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13). As a result, every person born into this world is enslaved by Satan and under God’s wrath (Ephesians 2:1–3). God’s purpose in sending Jesus was to end Satan’s dominion over the world (John 12:31; Colossians 2:15), to provide a way for people to be redeemed from Satan’s enslavement (Hebrews 2:14–15) and to restore His Kingdom to its original state (Revelation 5:9–10; 11:15).

3) Is the Kingdom of God a physical or spiritual kingdom?

A) The Kingdom of God is both a physical and a spiritual kingdom. This duality has often been a source of confusion. It's why Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God as being present, yet future; revealed, yet a mystery; among us, yet not of this world; like a small seed, yet pervading everything.

(1) A Spiritual Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is manifested on earth today in the lives of Christians like you. As a spiritual kingdom, its focus is on righteousness (measuring up to the standard of God's word), peace (well-being in one's relationships), and joy (the satisfaction of having what is good from God's perspective) (cf. Romans 14:17).

(2) A Physical Kingdom. The Kingdom of God will one day exist on earth in a physical sense. In Daniel 2:44 we are told: "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever" (NASB).

(a) The Kingdom of God on earth will reach around the globe. It will have a capital city, Jerusalem, and Jesus Christ will rule and reign there. The law of love will be the law of the earth and everyone will be required to worship God (Zechariah 14).

B) Jesus' disciples remained confused about the spiritual aspect of the Kingdom all the way up to Jesus' ascension. Just before He left, they asked Him if He was now going to fulfill their expectations and restore Israel's political independence (Acts 1:6). They still failed to grasp the true scope of the Kingdom. They failed to realize that Jesus' Kingdom was within the hearts of men, and that He was teaching a new lifestyle with new values, attitudes, relationships—in short, a new culture: the Kingdom Culture.¹

4) What are the practical implications of being a citizen of the Kingdom of God?

¹ Jim Peterson, *Living Proof*.

A) Realizing that you are a citizen of the Kingdom of God helps you to understand:

(1) Spiritual Warfare. During World War II many catch phrases were used to remind people of the conflict being fought overseas. One of these phrases was, “Don’t you know there’s a war on?” The same truth needs to be understood by you as a new convert. The Kingdom of God is at war with the kingdom of darkness (Satan’s kingdom). Satan is opposed to God and resists every citizen of the heavenly Kingdom. As a Christ follower you can expect to be tempted and tested as Satan tries to defeat you.

(2) Earthly Life. When you were saved, God could have immediately taken you to Heaven. Why did He leave you here on earth? God’s purpose in leaving His servants on the earth is to conform them to the image of His Son (Romans 8:28–29), to have them make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18–20), and for them to do good works which will be rewarded in the future, physical Kingdom (Ephesians 2:10; Revelation 2:25–27).

(a) In Matthew 25:14–30, Jesus told a parable about a master who was preparing to go on a long journey. He called his servants, gave each of them some money (some more and some less) and then departed. When he returned some time later, he called his servants to account for their use of the money he had given them. All but one of the servants had invested the money and doubled the original amount. The master said to each of these servants, “Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” The point of the story is that God expects us to use our talents and opportunities here and now so that we will be prepared for usefulness and authority in His future, earthly kingdom.

(b) The kingdom is the framework for understanding that we work for Christ in whatever we are doing right now, and Christ Himself will reward us in the future for how well we perform our current task. In other words, the kingdom gives meaning to all the time we spend working at our jobs, in our homes, and raising our kids. It’s all for God’s Kingdom (Colossians 3:23–25).

(3) Suffering. When you suffer you can take satisfaction in knowing that you are destined for leadership in Christ’s Kingdom. 2 Timothy 2:12a says, “If we endure, we will also reign with Him.” Paul told the Thessalonians that he spoke “proudly

of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering" (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5, NASB). Suffering takes on new meaning when understood in the context of Christ's coming Kingdom.

(4) Evangelism. Winning others to Christ is part of expanding the Kingdom of God and taking back the hearts and minds of the world from Satan's captivity. As a Christ follower, you should be seeking to spread the Kingdom of God everywhere you go.