

# Kingdom of God

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hJ basilei÷a touv qeouv e` nto\B

Kingdom defined - reign of God, rule of God.

It is not defined in a spatial sense, as on a map. It can have that meaning, but is not used that way by Jesus.

It is God's rule that is near, or comes, or will come in the Gospels.

Being in the Kingdom implies that one is under God's rule, God's reign.

Our confession that Jesus is Lord at our baptism brings us into God's Kingdom, implying we acknowledge He is right to rule our life, He is Lord!

Must be born again of water and Spirit to enter this Kingdom, John 3.

Let's look at this central theme that Jesus preached from the very beginning of his ministry,

**Mark 1:14** After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. **15** "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

## I. Background

The expression "Kingdom of God" is totally absent from OT.

So how much did Jesus' audience understand when he used that phrase?

It may not have been mentioned, however, the idea is more frequent.

Yahweh is King - tetragrammaton YHWH, I Sam. 12:12, Ps 24:10, Is 33:22, Zeph. 3:15, Zech. 14:14-16.

He rules Israel - Ex 15:18, Nu 23:21, Dt 33:5, Is 43:15

He rules the earth or creation. II Ki 19:15, Is. 6:5, Jer 46:18, Ps 39:10, 47:2; 93; 96:10; 145:11,13

He possesses a royal throne - Ps 9:7; 45:6; 47:8; Is 6:1; 66:1

Reign is ongoing - Ps 10:16; 146:10; Is. 24:23

Rule or Kingship is His - Ps 22:28

The Son of David is said to sit on Yahweh's throne - I Chr. 17:14; 28:5;  
29:23;  
II Chr 9:8; 13:8

When Israel was overrun, a longing began to exist that one day God would reestablish his rule on behalf of his people and show His sovereignty to all humanity.

They began to hope of a future kingdom of God not made by human hands contrasted with the kingdoms of men in Daniel 2 and 7.

It is in this context of such an expectation that Jesus used the term "Kingdom of God."

What was hoped for was something that had existed in the past, but really only as a mere glimpse of what had been promised, that is a rule and reign to come involving total peace for God's people.

In the Babylonian captivity they had a vision of the fullness of God's rule showing up one day. It was this hope that Jesus preached!  
The Kingdom became linked to the Messianic hope.

God's powerful presence will involve the removal of Satan's influence. He will destroy His enemies and free his people. These enemies are described in both earthly terms, like the Romans in Psalms of Solomon, 17-18 and 2 Baruch 36-40, and in spiritual terms, when Belial stands among the evil forces who will be defeated. This Kingdom was seen as being preceded by turmoil, upheaval, and tribulation, Psalms of Solomon, 17-18, the most detailed expression of messianic hope in all the texts.

To this backdrop Jesus preached his hope.  
Could Jesus use the phrase and be understood?

Jesus would have to explain his usage because of the poverty of OT usage. He would use the term then fill it with a variety of detail. He is developing and complementing it.

He does the same thing with the term "Son of Man," in Daniel 7:13 "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. **14** He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. Same thing with agape - love.

Jesus takes this one image and uses it as a collection point for his Christology. In same way, Jesus would take the Kingdom concept and use it as a collection point for both soteriology and eschatology.

Let's look at how He does this.

## **I. The Kingdom as Present/Future or Both?**

-slide on overlap

The coming of God's kingdom would bring divine judgement crashing into the earthly party down below, and in-breaking of God's authority. Luke 17:26-27 in the days of Noah, people were eating and drinking, marrying, then the flood came, Sodom and Gomorrah - days of Lot, eating, drinking, buying and selling, Luke 17:28-29, and like lightning, v. 24, breaking into time.

The parables of the sower, mustard seed, leaven, husbandmen, place the kingdom invading human history. It operates more like a covert CIA operation, so unnoticed, hardly appreciated, as the presence of the Kingdom of God.

This is the mystery. It will be both future and present.

Mark 9:1 - it will come with power and those standing there, some(not counting Judas) will see it come with power.

The Kingdom of God usage in Gospels:

5xs in Mt  
24xs in Mk  
32xs in Lk  
2xs in John.

Kingdom by itself:  
13xs in Mt  
7xs in Lk  
3xs in Jn  
0x in Mk

Usages together:  
50xs in Mt  
14xs in Mk  
39xs in Luke  
5xs in John

Jesus preached the message of the Kingdom, the arrival of the Messianic age. He contrasts the greatness of the Kingdom with the OT, Luke 4:16-30, and the era of John the Baptist, 7:23ff, Mt. 11:12-14

In Mt. 13:19, it is the Word about the Kingdom that is sown.  
It is like a Mustard seed, Mt. 13:31, tiny but grows into a tree where birds nest. It is not future but present, but not as expected.

It breaks in through a seemingly insignificant start in the present with the “planting” of seeds. Jesus’ Word about it brings leaven, it starts small and spreads, Mt. 13:31ff.

The Kingdom is not delayed by Israel’s rejection is shown in the parable of the Great Banquet(Lk 14:15-24).

Not postponed but others are invited instead.

Mt. 12:28; Lk 11:20; 17:21

**Luke 17:21** - no need to look for future signs. The sign of his preaching being the only sign this wicked generation must respond to, Lk 11:29-32.

The Kingdom, is not as in the Old NIV translate - "within you," as some potential within each person's heart to establish the kingdom, the Romantic ideas of the 19c or some new age notions.

Jesus' audience is Pharisees. Such a heart potential does not exist without a powerful work of God.

Rather - NIV 11 translates - "in your midst."

In other words, it is right in front of your face in Jesus. It is "in their midst" or "within their reach" in that it stands before them, present tense, Lk 11:14-20 - "has arrived"

It is no longer near, it is there.

The image in Luke 11:20 - a man overcoming a strong man and plundering his possessions. Jesus is describing what is taking place now. God is working now through Jesus to defeat Satan. The Jewish claim could not be more incorrect.

The Kingdom is about divine deliverance thru Jesus in the releasing of authority and power that overcomes the presence and influence of Satan. It is an invasion of a realm this evil one controls.

Miracles are signs not ends in themselves.

They would be audio/visual displays of the authority and victory of Jesus over Satan.

Eschatology has moved into the present. Future hope becomes a present reality, but with much more reality to come.

This miracle is unlike others. Usually details about the miracle and little response. Here, one verse on the miracle, v14, the rest 15-23 is explanation.

Kingdom is about God's work to redeem humanity according to his promise.

A Kingdom long views as strictly future and greatly anticipated was being pulled in to the present and made initially available in an exercise of redemptive power showing the struggle was not just against flesh and blood but principalities and powers.

In Mt. 11:12, Luke 16:16 - Kingdom is contended over, it is breaking in, landing on the beach.

The image is of a realm introduced into the world and as an object of contention within it. Violence and force is about this Kingdom, this invasion into the present.

At Judgement there will be a separation - Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43

Wheat and Darnel -

Slide

Field is the world. Good seed and evil ones are weeds. Jesus will not sort them out until the end of the age.

The Kingdom operates in several levels at once depending on the context.

1. Comprehensive Presence - looks to the future and the comprehensive establishment of peace and fellowship, after a purging judgement. This includes hopes of the old from Israel in OT. And yet looks also to all creation - even Gentiles.
2. Realism of the Present - It is operative but invisible, at work in the community Jesus is forming, as the power and presence of God is at work among those "sown by the Son of Man." It is invisible but the power of God is at work in the midst of Jesus' absence in anticipating his return and rule. It is community that recognizes and responds to Jesus as Lord, Son of Man, Christ. It is the place where He is the Head.
3. There is a "claimed, potential" realm, in that the Kingdom makes a claim on the entirety of humanity in anticipation of judgement. It is the basis of taking the Gospel to the World. It justifies preaching to every tribe. It establishes an accountability for every person before the one true God and his chosen One - only one way to God.

Responding to Him bring one into the realm. What is at stake is eternal fellowship with God and unending and renewed life.

The community is called the church, ekklesia,. But the Kingdom is bigger than the church.

## II. Kingdom and Ethics

It is not just the in-breaking of the kingdom, as some abstract theological truth. It is designed to impact life.

God's in-breaking and rule among a people he has claimed as his own, forming them into a community that looks forward to one day to the totality of his Kingdom.

The relationship described is the life of the disciple, a total response to the rule/reign. Through grace, He enable us to move into that demand and grow in one's experience of it.

Relationship to that rule, sovereignty is more important than any other relationship - family, possessions, vocation, even one's own life.  
(Jesus' true family - Mk 3:35.)

#### 4 Themes of the Kingdom

##### 1. Faith/Repentance

- As John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus, he declared that as the Kingdom drew near, in preparation one responded in a baptism of repentance, a baptism that included a concrete call for turning expressed in practice towards others - Lk 1:16-17. Reconciliation with God shows itself in reconciliation with others.

- Jesus' taught that one cannot enter the Kingdom unless they enter it like a child(Mt. 18:2-4), yes Nicodemus like a child. Here humility and dependance is invoked.

In fact, it is humility that defines greatness in the Kingdom.

This has a present aspect of the Kingdom, Mt. 18:17. It expresses itself that one has faith in God that extends to recognizing that even daily needs are in his hands and that he will care for his own, Mt. 6:11, 25-34, Lk 11:3; 12:22-31.

Faith that recognizes one needs God relying on his rule and provision and one relies on the work of the cross for this relationship.

Not only does he provide but enables us by the gift of his Spirit to live the life he has called us to.

##### 2. Theme of Following at all Cost

Issue of how "demanding" Jesus' call to discipleship was. It was a cost to be fully counted and not entered into lightly - Lk 14:25-35

Many disciples left their nets or tax collectors booths to follow Him, Mk 1:16-20, Lk 5:28.

-hating or leaving mother and father for his sake or the Kingdom's sake, Mt. 10:37, Lk 18:29.

It means hating mammon, Lk 12:14-21.

-carrying one's cross, even daily, even at the risk of life, Mt. 10:38-39, Luke 9:23.

The way is not easy. Victory comes through suffering and rejection like that Jesus himself experienced.

It makes a claim on all parts of life. We seek his Kingdom first, Mt. 6:33

Must be a response from within, Mk 7:1ff - sin comes from within, response must start within. Sermon on the mount - antitheses of murder and anger, adultery and lust.

### 3. Theme of Imitation

Child is to be like the Father.

Jesus issues a call to love and serve that is an imitation of His life and God's character, Lk 6:27-36

-loving one's enemies

-being salt and light

-showing mercy

-loving each other, a sign of true disciples, Jn 13:34

-major goal was to produce children in kind, which is why the standard for character is so high and the demand so great, Lk 6:36; Mt. 5:48

### 4. Fourth theme - Kingdom is not Without Rewards

Primarily - acquittal at judgement

-unending relationship with God as represented in the image of the banquet table.

The Father sees the sacrifices and honors them. Such is the promise of Jesus to an uncertain Peter, Lk 18:23-30, Mt. 25:31-45

Our security rests in God's hands, power, presence, and he can empower us to be what he has called us.



We reflect as light that we are becoming and will be. We inherit the earth and also illuminate it.

Parable of the soils, we hear the Word, take root, and have as a goal, fruitfulness.

It is the goal of the Kingdom to produce sons and daughters to God who are fruitful for Him.

One reward is less clearly developed in Jesus' preaching is the theme of responsibility for a faithful steward. Mt. 25:14-20, talents, Luke 19:17, 19. The rewarded servants are "set over much" for their faithfulness.

There is both Present and Future parts.

I Cor. 15:26-28

The Kingdom over which Christ is currently ruling( I Cor. 15:25, Rev. 1:5-6) is tied to and related to the ultimate realization of the Kingdom is seen in I Cor. 15:26-28, where Paul describes the ultimate giving over of this same Kingdom to the Father at the end.

There is a reversal of the Fall's effects.

In Revelation 21-22 the imagery looks back to the Garden of Eden and the new Jerusalem.

Book of Revelation is about the completion of the Kingdom program.

In the return, the Kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of "our Lord and His Christ, Rev. 11:5).

### **III. Kingdom Outside the Gospels**

The term Kingdom, basileia, is not so prevalent in the epistles.

Example - basileia appears:

Over 100xs in Synoptics

5xs in John

8xs in Acts

14xs in Paul

5xs in the general epistles

9xs in Revelation

There is some basis of this infrequent usage based on the Roman Govt. But the confession "Jesus is Lord" written about so clearly in Romans, seems to negate all of that as the only reason.

3 observations:

1. Kingdom is present in many other concepts that show up so that lexical counting is not an accurate indicator.
2. dividing epistles from the Gospels is an artificial exercise. Though the Gospels speak of an earlier time, pre cross time, they were written to express theology that was useful to the Churches at that moment. Gospels were written mostly after the epistles in some sense to bring back discipleship to those churches misunderstanding God's grace through Paul's teachings as expressed in II Peter.

#### **IV. The Church as An Audio/Visual**

The church is meant to be an AV pulling the future into the present until the Kingdom comes.

Kingdom is distinct but intimately associated with the church.

The Kingdom is more than the church but the church is in the Kingdom.

God has invested in the church. His investment is the indwelling Spirit, mediated through the Cross, and given in the context of forgiveness, baptism, and promise, and eschatological down payment on the rest of the hope.

The church is a beneficiary of God's power and presence. Satan and sin stand defeated as the confident language of Romans 8 declares.

When the Son of Man returns, he will make all of his authority clear to the cosmos. Those who confess Jesus as Savior and Lord are recognizing this authority.

If being prepared for the Kingdom community in the time of John the Baptist meant turning to God in the context of reconciliation and being reconciled with others, then the call to the church is to demonstrate the presence of the Kingdom through transformed relationships before a needy world.

A major responsibility we have in witnessing to the world is that the quality of our own relationships, especially to one another, should show itself to be decidedly different from the world.

Jesus' new command "to love one another" is really a Kingdom command.

Sacrifice and service stand at the heart of relational dynamics.

If the world is to understand community in a context of a loving God and relating to others, the place where it should most be visible in this cosmos is in how those in His community relate to God, each other, and to the world.

The church is meant to be a sneak preview, a trailer, an AV presentation of what God's transforming lives mean.

I Peter 2:9-12

So Kingdom has come through the Son invading the world - defeat of Satan, forgiveness of sins, gift of the Spirit. And yet, the Kingdom comes one day through the returning Son of Man to vindicate the saints, and render God just and His promises true.

Then Satan and evil will be removed, even so, come Lord Jesus.

Meantime, we pray, give us strength to your enablement to be light to show what the Kingdom is and is like

God has pulled the future into the present. Let us illuminate the future in an incarnated way through God's rule/reign in our lives.