

The kingdom of God

Matthew 6:10

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The Bible tells us of two kingdoms. One is the kingdom of God. The other is the kingdom of this world. We see a glimpse of the kingdom of God in the Garden of Eden, in Genesis 1. God created and it was good. The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, the stars in the sky, the animals, the plants, and even Adam and Eve. No suffering. No pain. No death. Perfect communion between God and man. It was *Shalom*, perfect peace, everything as it was meant to be. It was the Garden of Eden.

This word “garden” was not meant to communicate a portion of soil behind one’s house where they grow vegetables. Neither was it meant as the grass area in front of one’s house as some cultures understand the word to mean. The “Garden” of Eden was to portray the beautiful botanical estate that would surround a king’s palace. It identified the Garden of Eden as a place where a King dwelt.

But then we read on to Genesis 3, how Satan, the serpent, deceived and tempted Adam and Eve. Their sin ushered in a fallen world and separated mankind from God. The kingdom of this world and all mankind were now set against the kingdom of God. God still sat on His heavenly throne as the sovereign King of all things, but in John 12:31 we read how Satan was now allowed to become the *“ruler of this world”*.

This does not mean that God was not in control. In God’s infinite wisdom, Satan was allowed to rule this world within the boundaries which God set for him. Throughout the New Testament we see this struggle between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the world.

2 Corinthians 4:4 states that, *“The god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.”* Those who do not believe are described as being *“in the snare of the devil”*, *“in the power of the evil one”*, and *“in bondage to Satan”* (2 Timothy 2:26; 1 John 5:19; Ephesians 2:2).

But Satan does not rule over all mankind. Colossians 1:13 tells that, *“God has delivered all believers from the domain of darkness and transferred them to the kingdom of his beloved Son.”*

There is a choice that must be made by each person regardless of who they are or where they are from. James writes how, *“whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God”*.¹ John 2 then tells us,

“¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.”

There is a battle being waged. We see its results in the news and even feel its effects in our own hearts. In our world we see the struggle between truth vs deceit, generosity vs greed, peace vs war, faith vs doubt, love vs hate, contentment vs covetousness, humility vs pride, and holiness vs sin. We see its results, but the true battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world is happening on a spiritual level.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus to *“put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”*

The kingdom of this world seemed to have the upper hand. All seemed to be lost. But in Romans 8:20-21 we see that God had a purpose for it all:

²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

The world was subjected to futility, brokenness, and hopelessness. Who brought that to pass? Most would say Satan, but this verse says that the reason that creation was subjected to futility was hope. Satan does not bring hope. God brings hope. Creation was subjected to futility in hope that creation would be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

God allowed and still allows creation to suffer under the rule and ruler of the kingdom of this world, so that we will turn from our sin and be saved. That we will turn away from trusting in the world and trusting in ourselves and finally realize that it is only as we trust in God that we can find hope. We can't save ourselves. Even when surrounded by the brokenness of the world and the brokenness within, mankind does not have the ability to escape the corruption of the kingdom of this world.

This world had been consumed by spiritual darkness and under the oppression of Satan, since Adam and Eve's sin in Genesis 3.

It is similar to C.S. Lewis' book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. The book tells the story of four children who are playing hide and seek. They choose to hide in this huge wardrobe and as they move through the coats towards the back of the wardrobe they suddenly find themselves coming out into a forest, a magical land that they had never seen before. This land is governed by a wicked queen. And in

this land in the words of C.S. Lewis, it is, *“always winter, but never Christmas.”* But they soon find out that *“Aslan is on the move.”* In the story he is a mighty lion, who is the rightful king, come to retake that which was rightfully his. By the book’s end the wicked queen is vanquished, and the land in all its splendor has returned to spring, filled with life and happiness.

In some ways that is the picture that we are presented in the scriptures. As Galatians 4:4 proclaims, *“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son.”* Jesus, the rightful King, had come to take back that which was rightfully His.

In Mark 1:14-15, we read Jesus’ first sermon and immediately He begins to proclaim, *“The kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”*

Jesus came to reclaim the kingdom. Jesus was coming to take back that which was His.

Many times, this idea of the Kingdom of God is lost amongst so many other doctrines and teachings of scripture, but it was not like this for Jesus. In the New Testament, the word *basilea*, which meant kingdom, occurs 162 times. In Luke 4:43, Jesus even says, *“I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God . . . for I was sent for this purpose.”*

We even see it in the writings of Paul. When he preached to the Ephesians we read that Paul, *“entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God”* (Acts 19:8). In Acts 20:25, in Paul’s final conversation with the Ephesians, Paul said, *“And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again.”* When thinking of all that Paul had done with them in ministry, he summed it up with the phrase, *“proclaiming the kingdom”*. When Paul was in prison in Rome, for two years he *“welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness”* (Acts 28:30-31). As we read the writings of Paul we see that the coming of the Kingdom of God was at the forefront of his mind. Whether Paul was preaching, teaching, doing miracles, starting churches, in Paul’s mind it was all part of the greater purpose of proclaiming the coming of the kingdom of God.

In Jesus’ life and ministry we see the kingdom of God at work. Through His teaching, His compassion, His love, His miracles, His selflessness, His grace, His truth and His sacrifice, we see the King beginning to model for us what it looks like when the kingdom of God comes. What it looks like when the kingdom of God enters into a relationship. What it looks like when the kingdom of God enters into a conversation. What it should look like when the kingdom of God comes into contact with the kingdom of this world.

In the final days before Jesus’ crucifixion, when speaking to His disciples to encourage them, Jesus said, *“I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father”* (John 14:30-31). During this same week Jesus spoke these words, *“Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out”* (John 12:31).

At the crucifixion it appeared that Satan had won, and that Christ had been defeated, but in reality, on Sunday, when the tomb opened and Jesus was raised from the dead, it proved that sin had now been paid for and that the kingdom of God was at hand (Mark 1:14-15). Although the final victory had not yet come, the tide had turned in the battle, Satan had been dealt a mortal wound, and nothing would prevail against the coming of the Kingdom of God. But how does the Kingdom of God come in our lives and in our world? That is where we now turn our attention.

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As we seek to understand the concept of the Kingdom of God it would help if we turn to Matthew 6, where we find the portion of scripture known as the Lord's Prayer. In Matthew 6:10, we find these words:

"Your Kingdom Come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

This verse is best understood when we recognize its use of a literary tool called synonymous parallelism. This writing style was often used in scripture. The first phrase states an idea, then the second phrase restates the same idea using different words. In that way the writer helps us understand what he meant when writing the first phrase. We see this style in:

(Psalm 46:1) ***"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."***

(Psalm 23:1) ***"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."***

Once we recognize the parallelism in Matthew 6:10, it gives us the definition of the kingdom:

"Your Kingdom Come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

We will know that the Kingdom of God has fully come on earth when God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven. But how is His will done in heaven? Psalm 103:19 tells us that, ***"The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all."*** As King Nebuchadnezzar declared in Daniel 4:3, ***"His kingdom is an eternal kingdom."*** Every authority that exists has been instituted by God (Romans 13:1).

In heaven all is lived under the rule of God, in obedience to God, for our enjoyment of God, for the glory of God. So, that is to be our goal, our prayer, our deepest longing. That God would have complete dominion over this world as He does in heaven.

In the words of Pastor Kevin DeYoung, the kingdom is, ***"Where God is acknowledged, where his subjects are saved, where his enemies are vanquished, where his ways are obeyed, there we see the coming of the kingdom."***¹

As previously mentioned, the word translated "kingdom" in the Greek was the word *basilea*. This word meant "the realm in which a sovereign king rules". In days past a king's realm might have included a certain geographical region, or a certain ethnicity of people, or a certain group of cities that were under his rule, but God's kingdom is different. It is a spiritual kingdom. It is not seen with the eye or touched

¹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/thinking-about-kingdom/>, read February 4, 2022

with the hand. It is determined by the heart. If one is not living under the rule of God, then God is not their king and thus they are not part of the kingdom. The kingdom of God is made up of all who have willingly submitted their hearts and lives to God as their King. As Jesus clearly said in Mark 1:14-15, ***“The kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”*** All who have repented of their sin and believed in Jesus Christ are citizens of the kingdom. If God, through Christ, is not one’s King, then they are not a part of the kingdom of God.

This spiritual kingdom of God is evident in various verses in the Bible. In John 18:36, Jesus is asked by Pilate, ***“Are you the King of the Jews?”*** Jesus responded, ***“My kingdom is not of this world.”*** In John 3:5-7, Jesus describes one’s entrance into the kingdom as being born again. Romans 14:17 states that the kingdom of God is a matter ***“of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”***. 1 Corinthians 6:9 tells how the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. Why? Because God is not their King.

Let’s stop for a minute and talk about the idea of king. In the modern world the understanding of king has changed greatly. Today you have kings who are little more than figure heads attending state functions and relating with representatives of other countries, but having no real role in the governance of the nation.

These are completely different than the roles of kings in biblical times. In those times, there was a covenant between the king and those in his kingdom. The king was to be the protector, the provider, the leader and the guide of all who lived in his kingdom. He was to care for His people, but in return they were to give undying allegiance to him. To obey his commands. To often yield what they had for the furtherance of his goals and his agenda.

In 1 Samuel 8:10-17, we read Samuel’s warning to Israel when they demanded that God give them a king. Samuel said:

“These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen to run before his chariots; and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers.”

The kings would own and completely rule over everything and everyone in their kingdom, with no accountability. For those who had great kings, like King David, it was a pleasure to be part of their kingdom. But for those who lived under the rule of bad kings, it would be a nightmare. This was like the stark contrast between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world.

Citizenship in the kingdom of God is given to all who submit their hearts to the God as their king.

The kingdom of God is not a geographical kingdom or a political kingdom. That is why the Jews of Jesus day did not recognize it. They were looking for a kingdom that would free them from the Romans, but that is not why Jesus had come. He was bringing a spiritual, eternal kingdom. When asked by the

Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus responded, ***“The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst (among) of you”*** (Luke 17:20-21).

In Christ, the kingdom of God had come near (Matthew 4:17; Luke 10:9). Jesus came, ushering in the kingdom of God into our world and into our lives. Jesus, living in their midst, gave them and us an example of what a kingdom life looks like. His life was one fully lived under the rule of the Father. The Father’s will was done completely in Jesus’ life. He was tempted as we are, but sinned not (Hebrews 4:15). In John 5:19, Jesus declared, ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing.”*** The greatest picture of this was when Jesus wrestled in prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. He knew His arrest, torture and crucifixion were near. In desperation He prayed, ***“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done”*** (Luke 22:42). The Kingdom of God had come so completely in the life of Christ that even in desperation His deepest longing was still that God’s will would be done.

That is what kingdom living is to look like in our lives. Yes, we become citizens of the Kingdom of God when we turn to Christ through faith and repentance, but the fullness of the kingdom God is to grow day by day in the life of every believer. That is the idea behind the words ***“Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*** God’s will is done completely in heaven. That should be the goal for our lives as well. That the kingdom of God would take such a radical hold of us that every part of our lives would be subject to God as King.

We often find ourselves in situations where kingdom living seems impossible, but nothing is impossible for God. Those who have entered the kingdom of God have been freed from their bondage of sin, which had bound them to this world (Galatians 4:3-9). God now works in us to will and to act according to His purpose (Philippians 2:13). As a member of God’s kingdom, God’s will is to be our constant pursuit. That God would continue to take lordship over more and more of our lives. That we would walk by faith and experience the blessing of God.

Our second way to think about God’s kingdom should be that God’s will would be done in our world. We have been called to be more than just citizens of the kingdom. We are to be ambassadors for our King. This world is not our home. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, ***“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”*** We are to herald the coming of the King, urging others to submit to the rule of Christ in their lives. We are to be kingdom-bearers to our workplace, neighborhood and homes.

We must realize that being an ambassador for Christ is difficult work. Matthew 7:13-14 describes it with these words, ***“The gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many . . . The gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”***

It is not hard as in difficult or complicated. Coming into the kingdom of God simply requires one to turn from their sin and put their faith in Jesus Christ. It is hard because people do not want to repent and humble themselves under the rule of God. They do not want to give up lordship of their lives. They do not want to turn away from the pleasures of the world. They would rather live in the darkness than the

light (John 3:19). Many would rather cling to their sinful identities than being born again and made new in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). But still, as children of the King, we are to reclaim the world for the kingdom of God. That the kingdom of God would grow in our lives to the point that others would see Him in us and be drawn to the kingdom as well.

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We presently are surrounded by the kingdom of this world. We have become very familiar with fear, frustration, discontentment, insecurity, anxiety, greed, jealousy, pride, and all the results that they bring. We should not be surprised when following Christ is not popular or trendy. We are in enemy territory preparing for a spiritual revolution. We are swimming against the current of the world around us. We are lights called to drive back the darkness, while inviting others into His marvelous light. Our lives, our homes, our churches are outposts, lighthouses, for the kingdom of God.

For now, in the midst of the darkness of the kingdom of this world, we add one light at a time. One disciple at a time. One church at a time. It seems overwhelming, but we must keep our eyes on the horizon. Our individual lights seem inconsequential, but there will be a day when Christ will return like a sunrise and, in an instant, his overwhelming, undeniable light will chase away every hint of darkness in this world. The kingdom will no longer be hidden from their view.

Christ will show Himself clearly. The kingdom of God that governs our lives will then take complete dominion over this world. As Daniel prophesied, ***“the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed”*** (Daniel 2:44 cf. 7:13–14). As Habakkuk proclaimed, ***“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”*** In the words of Zechariah 14:9, ***“The Lord will be King over all the earth.”*** As John writes in Revelation, Jesus will come as a conquering King, riding a white horse, eyes blazing like fire, wearing a crown upon His head, and leading the armies of heaven, and ***“On his robe and on his thigh He will bear the name: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”*** (Revelation 19:11-16). And at the name of Jesus, ***“every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”*** (Philippians 2:10-11).

As we are told in Revelation 11:15, the seventh angel will blow its trumpet, and the loud voices of heaven will proclaim, ***“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” “Then comes the end, when Christ delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power”*** (1 Corinthians 15:24).

As is written in Revelation 21:3-5, the dwelling place of God will be with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away . . . Behold, He will make all things new.

That will be the climax of the story, as the darkness is done away with and the holy light of Christ shines forth into every corner and crevice of this world.

One evening this week we watched much of the championship tennis match of the Australian Open. Rafael Nadal, the Spaniard, was in the championship, so through dinner and afterwards we continued to watch the match. Very early in the match Nadal got so far behind that there was almost no hope that he would be able to win. The tendency would have been to turn it off and go do something else more beneficial with my time, but I knew better. You see, the match had happened earlier in the week and I had already read about the final outcome in the news. It would end up being one of Nadal's greatest matches ever. So, with that in mind, we kept watching.

As children of the King, we have that same advantage. Although the world is a dark place, and at times it feels as if our light is not making much difference, we know how the story ends. So, let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time . . . the Son will rise and the Kingdom will be ours.

Discussion questions:

1. What words would you use to describe a "king"?
2. Why do you think people find it difficult to let God be the King of their lives?
3. How would you explain "Your kingdom come" in your own words?
4. What part of your life do you need to better bring under the kingship of Christ?
5. Where do you think God wants you to be an ambassador for His kingdom?
6. What do you think God wants you to remember from this lesson?
7. What do you think God wants you to do in response to this lesson?