

COME INHERIT THE KINGDOM

During his time upon the earth, Jesus Christ taught many things, but he taught mostly about the Kingdom. When he began his mission, he said:

“The appointed time has been fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has drawn near.” (Mark 1:15)

He explained how people may enter into the kingdom. (Matt 5:20, 7:21)

His miracles proved the Kingdom had arrived. (Matt 12:28)

Many of his parables were designed to explain “the sacred secrets of the kingdom” (Matt 13:11)

When giving his model prayer, he opened it with “let your kingdom come” (Matt 6:10)

Indeed, Jesus said it was his mission to “declare the good news of the Kingdom of God”. (Luke 4:43)

WHO POSSESSES THE KINGDOM

Seeing then, how important this subject is, each of us must consider his subjection to that Kingdom, for this is a Kingdom that rules forever, dispensing God’s undeserved kindness to all under it.

Therefore we must discern from Scripture, for ourselves, who will enter the Kingdom of the heavens - indeed, even possess it.

Jesus Christ himself said that the Kingdom is the possession of:

- Those conscious of their spiritual need. (Matt 5:3) Are you conscious of your spiritual need?
- Those persecuted for righteousness sake. (Matt 5:10) Are you being so persecuted?
- “Child-like ones” (Matt 19:14; Mark 10:14,15; Luke 18:16,17). Are you a childlike one?
- “The poor” (Luke 6:20; see also James 2:5) Are you one of the poor?
- The sheep-like persons. (Matt 25:34) Are you a sheep-like person?
- “The one doing the will of my Father”. (Matt. 7:21) Are you doing his father’s will?

Jesus also taught that the one who, concerning the Law, “Breaks one of these least commandments and teaches mankind to that effect, he will be called ‘least’ in relation to the kingdom of the heavens,” indeed “whoever will humble himself like this young child, is the one that is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens.”(Matt 5:19,20; 18:314)

The qualities, therefore, are that of a humble, obedient sheeplike slave towards God. Are you such a one? If so, then you have, according to Jesus’ very own words, entered the kingdom.

A LITTLE FLOCK

At one time the crowd around Jesus built up until there “so many thousands that they were stepping upon one another.” (Luke 12:1). At times he addressed the thronging multitude (for example Luke 12:13-21) while at other times he addressed himself to his disciples only (for example Luke 12:1,22).

During a discourse addressed to his disciples, Jesus called them his “little flock” (verse 32). For in contrast to the thronging crowd, among whom were critics, skeptics, and the merely

curious, Jesus' band of followers were truly "little". They were but few in number compared to the hordes of unbelievers.

Because his flock were unlike the rest of humankind, in that they were poor, obedient, persecuted, sheep-like and child-like, Jesus was able to say to them - "your Father has approved of giving you the kingdom." (v.32).

Peter was not exactly sure whether Jesus was speaking to the whole crowd, or only to the disciples; so he asked:

" 'Lord, are you saying this illustration to us, or to all?' And the Lord said: 'Who really is the faithful steward, the discreet one, whom his master will appoint over his body of attendants to keep giving them their measure of food supplies at the proper time? Happy is that slave, if his master on arriving finds him doing so!'" (vs. 41-43)

Further, Jesus said that the slave who once was a faithful, discreet slave, but says the coming of his Master is delayed, and beats the menservants and the maidservants is considered to be an evil slave. (Verse 45).

It is necessary, therefore, to be not only giving out the correct spiritual food, but also to be behaving in a manner that is not causing spiritual oppression or spiritual coercion. That is what Jesus calls being of the Devil slave".

Peter obviously understood Jesus to mean that the 'faithful and discreet slave' includes ALL who are shepherding the flock of God, for he writes to every elder:

"Shepherd the flock in your care, not under compulsion, but willingly; neither for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly; neither as lording it over those who are God's inheritance, but becoming examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd has been made manifest, you will receive the unfadable crown of glory." (1 Peter 5:1-4)

Thus not only do the sheep-like ones "inherit the kingdom" (Matt 25:34), but so also do those leading out as under shepherds - the faithful and discreet ones, all of the upright elders of the flock of God.

WHAT IT MEANS

When Jesus Christ said, "Enter into the kingdom of the heavens" what did he mean? Examples from his words make this very clear.

When the disciples asked Jesus Christ a question concerning the kingdom, he answered using the expressions, "enter into the kingdom" and "enter into life" as having the same meaning. (Matt 18:1,3,1.9)

Likewise, when Jesus was asked a question as to how "eternal life" may be obtained, he first replied using the expression, "enter into life", and then twice substituted the expression "get into the kingdom." (Matt 19:16,17,23)

Also in Luke's account, Jesus parallels the expressions "enter into life" with "enter into the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:43-47).

Do you want to "enter into life"? Of course you do! And in so doing you shall enter into the kingdom of God. The two are synonymous; you cannot do one without the other. As the Apostle John says, "He that has the Son has this life." (1John 5:12). Do you have the Son? If you answer "yes" then you have "this life". And what is "this life"? These very verses penned by John, tell us:

"You may know that you have (present tense!) life everlasting, you who put your faith in the name of the Son of God."(1John 5:13)

And if we do not believe this? - John says we are calling God a liar! (Verses 10-11)

ASK YOURSELF

We have seen that the conditions of entering God's Kingdom are quite different from that of earthly kings. God accepts those who are humble, child-like, upright, obedient, and in union with his Son, Jesus Christ. Our past lives have definitely not been blameless, and we still fall short at times. So how may we satisfy God's requirements? Apostle Paul has likewise considered this situation also.

"Do you not know that unrighteous persons will not inherit God's kingdom? ... But you have been washed clean, but you have been sanctified, but you have been DECLARED righteous in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the spirit of our God."

Thus it is not by virtue of our deeds that we can enter the kingdom, but rather because of the name of "our Lord Jesus Christ", we have been declared as though WE Were righteous and can partake of the wonderful blessings of God's rulership over us. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:21,24)

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM?

Many English words in the Authorised Version of the Bible have dramatically altered in meaning since they were first written about 350 years ago. The word "kingdom" is one such word, and the only way to know the word's meaning is to see how it is applied in the Bible.

In doing so we soon discover that by "kingdom" the Bible writers mean the "rulership" or "kingship" of God; that is, they are not referring to any area or people ruled by God, but actually the power and authority of God himself. Therefore, since no person has this power or authority, then no person, church or Organisation may claim to constitute the kingdom of God.

Among the many definitions of "kingdom" are "kingship, the royal office or position of the King (Luke 17:21)" AID To Bible Understanding p.997. The Hebrew Scriptures understand "Kingdom" in this way, as do the Greek Scriptures.

For example, in the Hebrew Scriptures, God's Kingdom is identified with his power, or authority, in Psalms 103:19 and 145:11,13. Hebrew poetry does not rhyme, but is constructed in parallels of thought.

In Daniel 5:26 Belshazzar is told that the days of his kingdom were finished; indeed his rule, or authority, ceased that night, but the regions and peoples he ruled continued on, although under a different kingdom or authority. The kingdom, or kingship, ceased, but the area governed remained.

In the Greek Scriptures, the Kingdom parables depict the actions of a person (spreading the net, sowing seed, putting leaven in the flour). It is dynamic, it is God in action. The result of the action represents the kingdom but is not the kingdom itself.

Likewise, Jesus, in fulfillment of the parable of the noblemen who went to a distant land to secure a kingdom (Luke 19:12, margin), did not leave the Earth to obtain an area to rule, for he was already located upon Earth; No, he left Earth to receive the authority to rule.

Thus no church or Organisation may claim to be God's Kingdom.

Thus **kingdom** means: "Kingly powers, authority, dominion, reign ... The government of God is ... a rule by God ... Kingdom can refer to the royal dignity." (Aid to Bible Understanding, pages 997, 999, 1003)

WHEN DOES THE KINGDOM COME?

Inasmuch as God has always been king, his kingdom knows no beginning or end, However, the Scriptures do speak of the Coming of the Kingdom (Matt 6:10), This must be understood as increased manifestations of God's ruling toward humankind.

"God's kingship is absolute and unalterable" (AID, p.997), but in its progressively increasing self-revealing, is described by the Bible writers as having already come when Jesus preached and taught while on Earth, and also write of it as coming at the final manifestation (Epiphany, *Επισημνία*), when he shall judge the living and the dead. (Luke 17:21; 2 Timothy 4:1).

So real was that coming of the Kingdom when Jesus trod this Earth's soil, that people were able to press their way into it even then. (Luke 16:16; Matt 11:12, AID p.10)

The preaching of John the Baptist marked the end of the dispensation of the law; Jesus' marked the beginning of the Kingdom. Thus the least one who is in the Kingdom is greater than John the Baptist, since he was not of that dispensation. However, since people of that dispensation shall be in the future kingdom (Luke 13:26 - "all the prophets in the kingdom of God") this obviously referred to that temporary situation, and shows that the Kingdom dispensation had already commenced then.

Unlike the popular notions of the Kingdom coming in irresistible consuming power, it arrived quietly, like a man sowing seed, and may be rejected. It came as a sower, not as a reaper. It comes, but the sons of the evil one and the sons of the Kingdom still live together in the world until the end of the age.

It may be an insignificant mustard seed, a small piece of leaven swallowed by the dough, it may have come quietly, humbly, in the form of a Galilean carpenter, and not in a blaze of glory, rending mountains or clearing skies but it is, nevertheless, the Kingdom of God.

Its attack is on the sovereignty of Satan. "If it is by means of God's finger I expel the demons", Jesus said, "the Kingdom of God has really overtaken you." Indeed Jesus did cast out the demons, thereby clearly showing that the Kingdom had come. (Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20)

It is because the Kingdom of God has burst into the affairs of men already, that man may enjoy the benefits associated with the future manifestation of the Kingdom here and now, such as forgiveness of sin, eternal life, the authority of the Son of man, and so on. (Mark 2:5; John 17:3; Mark 2:10)

Thus, when he opened his ministry, Jesus could claim to have been anointed by the Spirit. He speaks in terms of the blessings to bring in at the last day. No wonder it was so natural for him to perform miracles - these foreshadow the blessings to be enjoyed in the New Earth.

These show that the Kingdom of God had broken into the affairs of men when Jesus Christ was walking upon the Earth some two thousand years ago. (Luke 4:18,19,21).

It also foreshadows the blessings that shall come when the Kingdom of God comes in the future in the grander final manifestation of God is universal rulership.

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