

The Everlasting Kingdom

Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

Psalms 145:13 KJV

Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology provides this summary of the subject of the Kingdom of God in its opening paragraph on the topic of the "Kingdom of God".

The heart of Jesus' teachings centers around the theme of the kingdom of God. This expression is found in sixty-one separate sayings in the Synoptic Gospels. Counting parallels to these passages, the expression occurs over eighty-five times. It also occurs twice in John (3:3, 5). It is found in such key places as the preaching of John the Baptist, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matt 3:2); Jesus' earliest announcement, "The time has come... The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15; cf. Matt 4:17; Luke 4:42-43); the prayer Jesus taught his disciples, "your kingdom come" (Matt 6:10); in the Beatitudes, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3 Matthew 5:10); at the Last Supper, "I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25); and in many of Jesus' parables (Matthew 13:24 Matthew 13:44 Matthew 13:45 Matthew 13:47; Mark 4:26 Mark 4:30; Luke 19:11).

As the introduction above relates, The Kingdom of God is the central part of Jesus' teaching. Moreover, it is central to the discussion of being born again in salvation (John 3:3-5; Matthew 7:21-22; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 15:50; James 2:5; et al.). As Baker's goes on to say, although there has been great debate about the meaning of this the proclamation of the Kingdom, there remains yet significant disagreement as to what Jesus actually meant by it. Yet, for a subject such as the "Kingdom of God", being the very substance of the Gospel, it should not be a mystery that is out of reach for the people of God!

The scriptures tell us that the Kingdom is Spiritual, a Kingdom of the heavens, and of God, who is Spirit. It is both invisible and un-enterable by the unbeliever (John 3:3-5). It is of a realm, but it itself is not that realm. It itself is the reign and rule of God who is in heaven. It is not simply the "reign of God in the hearts of believers", but it is the Kingdom that is of the Heavens that has increased its governance by extending itself into the hearts of men. It is entered by the believer by Grace, through faith, and is evidenced in the lives of men through the in-breaking of God into the creation.

It is an Everlasting Kingdom. While it may have had some formation before the world was made, it has no ending. It was by the authority of the Kingdom that the worlds were created by the Word of God and of that dominion that Adam was granted stewardship of the world (Genesis 1:28). In Biblical study, we see the Kingdom of God breaking into the lives of men and women, wherever men sought the Lord, and certain conditions were met. These conditions were a broken spirit, and a broken and contrite heart. They were faith, hope, and love. But, most specifically, they were poverty of Spirit, mourning, meekness, hungering for righteousness, mercy, purity of heart, peacemaking, and persecution for righteousness. Jesus said in Matthew 13 that He was revealing mysteries hidden since the foundation of the World. That is, Jesus was answering the question asked by all who sincerely desire God in our lives, "How do you get God to do that for you?" God, the creator of men's hearts, is He who extends kindness, justice, and righteousness in the Earth, and it is based upon the conditions of

the Beatitudes that He has and always will continue to move. Most Happy are the men in these conditions, because in them, God Himself will show Himself strong. As Paul wrote, His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

This was the Kingdom that God gave to Israel. David was granted a throne that the Lord said would endure forever in the Messianic line. Four times in the books of Chronicles it calls either the Kingdom or the throne the Lord's, and not David's. Truly, when David sat on his throne, he sat on the very throne of God! Yet, it was specifically in the anointing, that is, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the King and the Prophets, that was the conjunction of heaven and man. When the prophet spoke, there was an unction upon the words, a substance other than merely sound, that Jesus spoke of when He said that the words He spoke were spirit and they were life (John 6:63). So, when ever God spoke through His prophets, the Kingdom had come through them.

The pattern continues, though, through all of the Old Testament. Whenever we see those who are meek in the Old Testament, we see them inheriting the Earth. Whenever a righteous and faithful person mourns, God responds with comfort. When they finally reach the end of themselves, God's deliverance is right at hand. The Old Testament, then, interprets the beatitudes. God comforted Adam and Eve with provision of clothing. After Cain slew Abel, after warning him that sin was at his door, He extended His Kingdom mercy upon Him, placing a mark on him to keep him from being killed by others.

All throughout the Old Testament, we see the Kingdom of God, that is the reign of Heaven, demonstrated. When Hannah prayed without a sound in the presence of Eli, she demonstrated her meekness. In response, God answered her through the mouth of the priest, and she inherited the Earth, the things of the Earth, a son, the desire of her heart. To people of Israel in the Judges, though the people regularly departed from the Lord, and had to cry out some times for many years, it was their poverty of Spirit to which the Lord ultimately responded in raising up a deliverer, a judge. In Psalm 119:126, it reads, "It is time for you to act, LORD; your law is being broken." This is an example of "persecution for righteousness sake". When the Lord acts, it is on the basis of His Kingdom. Hence, He is just and the justifier of the wicked, as Paul wrote (Romans 3:26), and He only ever acts upon the solid foundation of righteousness and justice (Psalm 89:14).

This, then, is the Kingdom Jesus declared. He was not so much bringing a new thing, as He was properly portraying and interpreting the Old Covenant (John 13:34), the Kingdom that had been Israel's once before (it was taken away in Ezekiel 21:27). The Sermon on the Mount, as well, is nothing more than God's original intent before the Law even existed. It is nothing but the Law properly interpreted on the heart level to say that to look with lust is adultery, because that is case at the heart level. While the law restrained outward actions, God has always wanted a people that were His all the way within, from the outside to the in. Yet, while this was impossible for man, God did it by providing His Son's blood for the removal of our sins and our sinful nature, and the Spirit to live within us, so that, in living by the Spirit, we will not gratify the desires of the flesh. What God wanted from the beginning, and made a covenant with Himself before Abraham, He accomplished through the finished works of Christ.

Consider, then, Luke 13:18: "What is the Kingdom of heaven like, and to what shall I compare it?" This was Jesus' main thought, His main point of teaching, and, whether we realize it or not, it is exactly what we divide and separate over today. He spoke of the Kingdom, and described in His parables, such as the parable of the leaven hidden in the dough. Like the power of sin within a people which had its operation through unclean spirits which could spread through and corrupt an entire body, so too, the work of the Holy Spirit among believers would be an invisible but active leavening agent, working through the whole lump, and making them His.

Leaven, which was forbidden in many of the sacrifices, was required in two: Pentecost and the Fellowship offering. Like Paul said, the yeast of malice and wickedness will spread through the whole body if unchecked, but so too, the Holy Spirit, in a people rightly prepared, left separate, and without any other yeast. Unleavened bread is the most bland, boring flavor in the world. This was what the Jews were to be before Pentecost. Why? So the sugars and sweetness of their lives could be wholly reserved for the pure yeast of the Holy Spirit. They did not miss out by not participating in the world's entertainments, they were saved from them, and saved to the ultimate goodness of the Kingdom of God.

When we consider the Scriptures, we must understand then that the Kingdom is a real thing in itself. It was not new when Jesus declared it to be “at hand” any more than it was new in David's day, but here He, Jesus, was making the declaration that the waiting period for access to it had been fulfilled. Mark 1:15 is one of the clearest declarations of this, “The time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at Hand.” But, what is in view here is not that the Kingdom, because in Acts 1:6 the disciples asked when the Kingdom Israel once had would be restored to them, in that they had had it before. Rather, what Jesus declared was that what was once available only to the kings and prophets was now available to the nation. Or, when Jesus talked about coming in His Kingdom, or the Kingdom being near in the sense of the end, the emphasis is on the coming, not on the Kingdom itself. Up there, in the heavens, God already reigns, already has a Kingdom, and is secure. But, what matters is when God is able to be found!

While many have divided over what the Kingdom is based on the various mentions of it in Scripture, the Kingdom is simply what has always been since the world began. It is not a “Kingdom Now”, because God is Eternal, and His Kingdom lasts forever. To say “Kingdom Now” is not what Jesus said, because of course the Kingdom is now. What Jesus said, however, was different. He said that now Kingdom was here.

There was no “inauguration” of the Kingdom in the coming of Christ. In Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar both made and set up a statue for his kingdom. But, the stone of Christ's coming in Daniel 2:44 was not its beginning, because it was a “stone not made with hands”. As opposed to Babylon's image, Christ, the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15), was only “set up” in His first coming. There was no beginning, merely the bringing near, to be a little more “on Earth as it is in Heaven”.

Living in the Spirit, then, is seen to be the life of the Kingdom. This makes sense, since the Kingdom was all Jesus talked about. Indeed, the Kingdom was certainly not put on hold for the “church age”, because the church and all the preaching of the apostles was about the Kingdom. In Acts 8:12, Phillip was preaching the Kingdom of God, and at the end of the book, the last verse, Acts 28:31, the apostle Paul is still preaching the Kingdom of God. Surely, the Gospel of the Kingdom is the only Gospel there is.

This Kingdom then, the Everlasting Kingdom, is ours today. It cannot be separated from who God is, as it is in accord with the very nature of who God is Himself. It's coming is our salvation, and the Lord's coming in it, our Blessed Hope.

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