

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Our modern democratic countries have brought a lot of development and benefits to our society. This, nonetheless, is a Greek-Roman concept that was never presented in the Bible, and for us as followers of Jesus, it brings a disadvantage. God presents himself as a sovereign king, a ruler, in glory and majesty, and the message of the gospel is directly related to this monarchical worldview. Is it relevant to our lives as disciples of Jesus to comprehend what a kingdom is like? You bet it is, and let me show you why.

The Lord taught a lot on this subject. There are about 75 teachings of Jesus and more than 100 verses specifically talking about the Kingdom of God in the gospel, and 19 parables deal directly with the topic of the Kingdom of God. The book of Acts mentions the disciples preaching the Kingdom, Paul and the other epistles mention it at least 20 times. The Lord Jesus after His resurrection appeared for 40 days to His disciples speaking only about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

The message of the gospel used to be presented as a message of *good news*. That is the meaning of the Greek word *euangelion*, translated as *gospel* in our bibles. It meant first the reward for bringing good news, as when a war had been won and a messenger was sent to announce it in the city of the winning kingdom. But with the time it became the word used for the good news themselves.

On the following list we can read how many times the concept of kingdom was used as the message to be preached as good news, as the Lord Jesus' main proclamation. Try to read these texts loudly, replacing the word "gospel" for the words "good news."

*Matthew 4:23 → And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching **the gospel (good news) of the kingdom**, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.*

*Matthew 9:35 → And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and **preaching the gospel (good news) of the kingdom**, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

*Matthew 13:19 → When anyone hears the **Word of the kingdom** and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and catches away that which was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown by the wayside.*

*Matthew 24:14 → And this **gospel (good news) of the kingdom** shall be proclaimed in all the world as a witness to all nations. And then the end shall come.*

*Mark 1:14-15 → And after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming **the gospel (good news) of the kingdom of God**, 15 and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God draws near. Repent, and believe the gospel (good news).*

*Luke 4:43 → And He said to them, I must proclaim **the gospel (good news), the kingdom of God**, to other cities, because I was sent on this mission,*

*Luke 8:1 → And it happened afterwards, He traveled in every city and village, **proclaiming and announcing the gospel (good news) of the kingdom of God**. And the Twelve were with Him,*

*Luke 9:2 → And He sent them to **proclaim the kingdom of God** and to heal the sick.*

*Luke 9:60 → Jesus said to him, Let the dead bury their dead, but you **go and proclaim the kingdom of God**.*

*Luke 16:16 → The Law and the Prophets were until John. Since that time **the kingdom of God is proclaimed**, and everyone is pressing into it.*

*Acts 8:12 → But when they believed Philip preaching the gospel (good news), the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*

*Acts 20:25 → And now, behold, I know that you all will see my face no more, among whom I went proclaiming the kingdom of God.*

*Acts 28:23 → And they having appointed him a day, many came to him in his lodging; to whom he expounded, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them the things concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses and out of the Prophets, from morning until evening.*

*Acts 28:31 → proclaiming the kingdom of God, and teaching those things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, with all freedom, and without hindrance.*

As you see, it was not just another way to refer to the church or the gospel. It was the content of the message itself!

## BASIC ELEMENTS OF A KINGDOM

So, what is a real kingdom like? I ask this because even though we still have some kings and queens in our days, they have been deprived from their original authority through the republican and democratic mentality. They fulfill their office but do not reign, they are not sovereign, they do not govern. The only king to be known to exercise authority in these days is the king of Saudi Arabia.

A sovereign king has no opposition, no resistance. He is not obliged to call for elections, referendums, polls, listen or submit to advisors, congress or parliament. His will is the law. But a king cannot be a king by himself. There is a vital element to sustain a king's reign: subjects. These subjects can be part of his kingdom by birth, inheritance, request, invitation, or force. They have rights and duties, and they work in unity under the king's direction. For a subject the will of his/her king is something to consider before they make any important choice, and their lives are directly affected by the king's choices. And there is also a third element, which is just as important for a king to sustain his power: a king reigns over his subjects in a specific territory. So, these are the three elements necessary for any functional kingdom: a king, subjects, and territory.

The Kingdom of God has these elements, and out of them derive many different aspects. The Kingdom of God has a culture, coming out of the laws and character of the King and the challenges that His subjects must face and sort out. It also has a battle to recover territory that has been taken over by rebels. In this battle there are many roles as well. There are subjects that are fighting on the front lines, destroying the enemy and rescuing people that repent of their rebellion and want to join the good King. There are those who train the newly added citizens, others who heal the wounded, others who raise, educate, and train the children into adulthood, and many other functions that would be too long to describe now.

The sovereign King is leading the battle, and has set the example of how to fight the enemy and overcome his attacks. He came to earth as one of us, born out of a woman, gave His life for us to open the way for the rebels to join His Kingdom without being punished. He left back to Heaven, and gave us His Word and His Spirit that keeps us in contact with Him and gives us His authority to continue to battle under His direction till He comes back. Thus, it is very important that we understand the spiritual reality of His Kingdom and the ongoing battle in order to comprehend our role here on earth as church, originally called *ekklesia* in the Bible.

*Ekklesia* was a Greek word literally meaning the *called-out ones*, referring to an assembly called by the rulers of a city to deal with estate-related matters. Then the entirety of the citizens of a determined region would gather to deal with issues that demanded choices and action. The Lord used this word to describe us, his followers, as citizens of His Kingdom, making choices and working together under His direction. He gave us also an important ritual to practice every time we come together in remembrance of His sacrifice for us, that gave us citizenship and inheritance in His Kingdom.

## THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM

God has a plan to recover His territory, that includes both love and judgement, mercy and punishment. In His righteousness, He is obliged to punish sin and condemn the rebels. In His mercy, He is ready to forgive those who repent and forget their trespasses. The predicament here was that it would be unfair to not punish their

offenses, so in His infinite wisdom He orchestrated a marvelous plan. The plan was to send a Messiah, an anointed one, who would pay for the sins of humanity by getting unrighteously but voluntarily punished in their place. Then, through His perfect holiness and power, escape hell, retake His bodily life, be raised above all power and principality, and come back to reconquer earth for His Father.

As part of this plan, there is an important factor of time:

*2 Peter 3:9 → The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness, but is long-suffering toward us, not purposing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

Between the payment for our sins and opening the way back to the Father, and His return in glory, there is a long period of time given by Him for all the lost to turn back to God.

*Romans 11:25 → For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*

So, there is a plan, an agenda, a deadline, set by God for all the chosen ones to come into His Kingdom. Then will the Lord Jesus come to earth to establish His Kingdom and destroy His enemies by force, exercising judgement and establishing a Kingdom where justice will reign.

*Revelations 19:11-21 → And I saw Heaven opened. And behold, a white horse! And He sitting on him was called Faithful and True. And in righteousness He judges and makes war. And His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head many crowns. And He had a name written, one that no one knew except Himself. And He had been clothed in a garment dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in Heaven followed Him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, so that with it He should strike the nations. And He will shepherd them with a rod of iron. And He treads the winepress of the wine of the anger and of the wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His garment, and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw one angel standing in the sun. And he cried with a great voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, Come and gather together to the supper of the great God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of commanders, and the flesh of strong ones, and the flesh of horses, and those sitting on them, and the flesh of all, both free and slave, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth and their armies, being gathered to make war against Him who sat on the horse, and against His army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet doing signs before it, (by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast), and those who had worshiped his image. The two were thrown alive into the Lake of Fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were slain by the sword of Him who sat on the horse, it proceeding out of His mouth. And all the birds were filled from their flesh.*

In short, the plan of the Lord has two phases: first, the coming of the King himself among the fallen humanity, calling them to turn back to God, proclaiming the good news about the coming of the Kingdom, and giving His perfect life for them. That was the beginning of the Kingdom of God on earth, the betrothal of His bride, the church. Second, the establishment of His Kingdom on earth with might and power, destroying His enemies and reigning over the earth physically present with us, having the 12 apostles governing over Israel and His church over the rest of the nations. That would be the marriage of the Lamb, the official reunion of the church as bride of Christ with Him as her Husband.

Through this we see that the Kingdom of God has these two stages. It is already here, but it is also to come. It has begun, but it has not yet been established.

*Lucas 17:20-21 → And being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered and said, The kingdom of God does not come with observation. 2 Nor shall they say, Lo here! or, behold, there! For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.*

It is the end season of the first stage that we seem to be in at the present time. Since the times of the Lord Jesus on earth, we go around proclaiming the good news of the return of the King, telling people to come back to Him before His great day, when He will come with force, judgement, righteousness and justice. Then we can say as the Lord said: “Repent! The Kingdom of God is at hand!”

Understanding this is vital for all the dynamics of our work as disciples and disciple-makers. The coming chapters will expand on the practical side of this for the mission we have as church in our days.