



*Thy Kingdom
Come*

Dale Rumble

THY KINGDOM COME

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Introduction

The Bible is God's story of how He will reign over the earth and fill it with His glory. God created the invisible world, and is King over this domain, which He calls the Kingdom of Heaven. He also created the visible world, speaking it into existence by the words of His mouth. Because He created it, God is also King over the earth (Psalm 47).

However, God has purposed that man will manage the earth and its resources for Him. For that reason, man was created in His likeness and given authority to govern the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). When Adam sinned, he violated and lost his God-given authority to rule.

The story of salvation is God's plan to redeem man from his lost state, and to equip him through the Holy Spirit to again manage the earth under His lordship (Hebrews 2:5-8; Psalm 115:16). This is accomplished through the death, burial and resurrection of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything is to be summed up in Him, in an administration that will be suitable for the fulness of the times (Ephesians 1:10). All enemies will be brought under His feet, so that the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Revelation 11:15-18; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26). The kingdom of God will then include all of the physical world as well as the kingdom of heaven.

Israel and the Kingdom

God's plan to bring His kingdom on earth began with a person and a people. The kingdom must first be seen in a nation before it will change the world. God chose Abraham and entered into covenant with him and his descendants, Israel, to begin building His kingdom.

Although Israel was taught to obey God, she did not submit to Him as King. She asked God for an earthly king to rule over her, as other nations did (Psalm 103:119; 145:10-13; 1 Samuel 8:4-8). God gave them an earthly king, one who did not honor Him.

In time, God sent Israel their true King, His Son, the promised seed of Abraham. The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world as a divine preface to the kingdom of God. He was not elected or appointed king; He was born King! Even some wise men recognized that He was born King of the Jews (Matthew 2:2). However, He is more than that; He was born to be King of His Father's kingdom.

When He grew up and began His ministry, He taught and demonstrated the kingdom of God, not as a religion, but as a spiritual relationship with His Father (Luke 4:43). His words and deeds clearly distinguished kingdom truths from relig-

ious traditions taught by the priests. He emphasized that His Father's kingdom existed wherever His will is exclusively done.

When Israel rejected the Lord Jesus as their King, they also, as a people, rejected the kingdom He was offering to them.

Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing the fruit of it. (Matthew 21:43)

Through Israel's rejection, entrance into God's kingdom has been extended to any person, Jew or Gentile, who sincerely accepts Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord. God's kingdom on earth has no national boundaries for it will include the entire earth in time. However, it must first be manifest in a person and in a people. The Lord Jesus is that Person, the people are His body, the church, and *the church age is the time of transition in which the kingdom of God will come to earth.*

The Church and the Kingdom

The church is made up of all persons who have been born from above by the Spirit of God. One cannot see or enter the kingdom of God apart from the new birth (John 3:3, 5). God chooses the citizens of His kingdom by spiritual rebirth; they are His sons!!

The body of Christ is the spiritual organism in which born again believers mature, build relationships, learn the will of God, fulfill their call in God, and so, learn to rule on earth with Christ. Much of their preparation is learning to embrace truths of God's kingdom; the most important one is that the King, Himself, through the Holy Spirit lives in the heart of each of His children. The following are seven other supporting truths:

1. Kingdom Authority

The most important reality of Jesus' authority as King is when individual believers are subject to the lordship of Christ, and local churches are subject to His headship.

Until Christ returns, He expects His people to be subject to those whom He has delegated authority in society and given spiritual authority in the church.

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority or to governors . . . ; Servants be submissive to your masters (1 Peter 2:14, 15, 18)

Obey your leaders and submit to them for they keep watch over your souls (Hebrews 13:17)

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. (Colossians 3:18)

God has given His children authority over the powers of darkness in the world (Luke 9:1).

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:19)

2. Kingdom Order

Divine order, an expression of kingdom life, exists wherever the will of God is done. Disorder exists whenever jealousy and selfish ambition rebels against the authority and will of God (James 3:16). Submission, humility and obedience are essential kingdom virtues.

Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:4)

Blessed are the meek (humble), for they shall inherit the earth. (Matthew 5:5)

And be subject to one another in the fear of God. (Ephesians 5:21)

3. Kingdom Power

The kingdom of God is not based on verbal concepts or organization. It is based upon the power of the Holy Spirit, and it cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:28).

For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power (1 Corinthians 4:20)

The promise to every believer is:

. . . you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses . . . (Acts 1:8)

Kingdom power is expressed in the church by the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit.

4. Kingdom Righteousness

For the kingdom of God is not eating or drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17)

Righteousness in God's kingdom is not defined by laws that govern conduct such as what can be eaten or drunk, what days must be observed, etc. It is based on the character or glory of God Himself. We are to be conformed into His likeness. The Lord described His glory to Moses in terms of the following seven virtues: compassion, graciousness, slowness to anger, fullness of mercy, fulness of truth, willingness to forgive sin and one who ministers justice (Exodus 33:18-19; 34:6-7). God's glory will fill the earth when His kingdom is fully established here (Psalm 72:19). The glory of God is the only valid basis of unity between members of the body of Christ as they proclaim the kingdom message.

The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are One; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me . . . (John 17:22-23)

The kingdom is always visible when the righteousness of God governs the lives of His people (Matthew 6:33).

5. The Gospel of the Kingdom

The only mission that God has given to the church is to proclaim and live the gospel of His kingdom; a gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ preached in the tongue of every nation.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations (Matthew 28:18)

This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end shall come. (Matthew 24:14)

The gospel of the kingdom is more than a persuasive argument of words; it is a message that exalts the Lord Jesus from believers whose lives demonstrate the righteousness and power of God. These believers are not a religious organization with an agenda; they are a spiritual organism whose submission to the headship of Christ is a testimony of the kingdom that they proclaim.

6. Kingdom Prayer

Prayer is an essential dynamic of kingdom life, especially in seeking the will of God. Jesus taught His disciples that their prayers, which address all of their varied needs, should begin and close with a reference to God's kingdom (Matthew 6:9-13).

. . . our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

*. . . for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.
Amen*

This counsel serves to prevent believers from over focusing on their personal needs above the needs of the kingdom. When we put God's concerns first in our prayers, our needs will be quickly met. (This principle is also true in financial stewardship, where our first obligation is to give the tithe to God.)

7. Kingdom Growth

. . . the kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened. (Matthew 13:33)

Like leaven in flour, the kingdom of heaven grows by person to person evangelism.

. . . the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree (Matthew 13:31-32)

The mustard *seed* represents the beginning of God's kingdom on earth, when Christ submitted to His Father's will by giving up His life on the cross. The mustard *tree* represents the truth that God's kingdom will one day fill the earth.

Possessing the Kingdom

The prophet Daniel prophesied of the day when God's kingdom would fill the earth (Daniel 4:44-45). This will take place when the Lord Jesus returns in glory (Daniel 7:13-14). At this time, the saints of God will possess their inheritance in His kingdom.

*But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come And the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; **His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.** (Daniel 7:18, 22, 27)*

The words of Daniel also reveal that the kingdom of God will be established after a time of great persecution and tribulation because of the man of lawlessness (Daniel 7:19-26). Paul, the apostle, confirms Daniel's prophecy, teaching that the church must go through much tribulation to enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

Tribulation is a consequence of God's spiritual warfare through the church against all forces in rebellion against His will. This rebellion began in heaven when Lucifer sought to exalt himself above the sphere in which God had placed him. Thus, the warfare is spiritual in nature.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)

An essential phase of the end-time warfare will be the ejection of Satan and his angels from their place in the atmospheric heaven. He will no longer be prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). The spirit of lawlessness that has restrained believers through accusation, condemnation, depression, etc., over the centuries, will be cast down to earth (Daniel 12:1; Revelation 12:7-9). The heavens will then be open over the church and there will be great signs and wonders.

Being cast down to earth, Satan will manifest himself in the man of sin. This will bring a climax of persecution and martyrdom (Revelation 12:11-12; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-5). But the church will overcome. Indeed, it will be a time of spiritual restoration (Acts 3:20-21). God's people will seek His face in repentance, and tribulation will unite believers. The fire of persecution and suffering will pu-

rify and bring glory to the church (Romans 8:7-18; 2 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Peter 5:12-13; 1 Peter 5:8-10).

Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand. (Daniel 12:10)

The Lord has made everything for its (His) purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil. (Proverbs 16:4)

God is going to shake everything that can be shaken in both heaven and earth, so that only what He has built will remain (Hebrews 12:25-29). This will include the removal of tares from His kingdom, as well as anything that His people have built in His name out of their own strength and imagination (Matthew 13:36-43). The ministry of angels will become common. This period of time will see a great final harvest of souls as God's glory rises upon the church (Isaiah 60:1-7). Many shall come to faith in Christ from Islamic nations; and Israel shall be saved. There will also be an anointing upon the youth as the Lord raises up His mighty army (Psalm 110:1-3).

The one climactic event that brings the kingdom of God to earth is the return of Christ to gather His church to Himself. Tribulation is then ended and judgment begins!

But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. (Matthew 24:29-31)

We become heirs of the kingdom once we are born again, but we cannot inherit our place in the kingdom while we are still in our flesh (Matthew 25:31-34). Resurrection is the answer.

Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. (1 Corinthians 15:50)

The Lord's return will bring about God's final judgment against rebellion. It is also the time when He will give rewards to His people; rewards that include authority for some to reign with Him (Revelation 5:9-10; 20:4; 22:42).

. . . for if we died with Him, we will also live with Him. If we endure, we will also reign with Him . . . (2 Timothy 2:11-12)

Creation eagerly awaits this placing of God's sons to reign with Christ.

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. (Romans 8:19)

Conclusions

There are two important conclusions from our study on the kingdom of God.

1. When believers discuss the end-times, it generally becomes a debate of various scenarios concerning the millennium. Such contention is not profitable, since when Christ returns we will all know His mind on what lies ahead. This should not be our emphasis today.

2. However, it is vitally important to understand the events that will lead to His return. This is what we are to prepare our hearts for. The church that will be ready for her Lord's return will have been built on the truths of His kingdom. She will have prepared herself for the tribulation and persecution that will surely come from demonic enemies such as Islamic terrorism. She will overcome Satan and the man of lawlessness through the blood of the Lamb and the word of her testimony (Revelation 7:14; 12:11). Though many will fall away from the faith, the greatest revival and harvest of souls ever seen will crown the church. A restored, resurrected church will possess the kingdom!



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