

The Kingdom

1) Introduction to the Kingdom.

- A) The Kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus' ministry. When He began to preach, He told the Jews, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17). He proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom throughout Galilee (Mark 1:14; cf. Matt 4:23; 9:35), and He did so with a sense of purpose and urgency (Luke 4:43; 8:1). He also sent His disciples out to preach the coming of the Kingdom (Luke 9:59–60; 10:1, 9–11).
- B) After His death and resurrection, Jesus continued to teach His disciples about the Kingdom until His ascension to Heaven (Acts 1:3). They in turn carried the message of the Kingdom throughout the Roman Empire (Acts 8:12). We see this especially in the missionary journeys of Paul.
- (1) Paul's custom was to go into the Jewish churches (synagogues) and persuade them concerning the Kingdom of God (Acts 17:1–3; 19:8).
 - (2) He wrote to his new converts about the Kingdom (1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5).
 - (3) He preached the Kingdom of God to the inquiring Jews in Rome and those who visited him while he was under house arrest (Acts 28:23, 30–31).
- C) Although we discussed the Kingdom briefly in the lesson on salvation, I want to specifically welcome you to the Kingdom of God! When you placed your faith in Christ, you were delivered from the power of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of God (Col 1:13). You are now a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven!

2) What is the Kingdom of God?

- A) A kingdom is a nation that is ruled by a king. Those living in a kingdom are called "subjects." This word signifies that they are under the authority of the king. They owe him their loyalty and obedience. They are also called "citizens" which means that they have a right to live in the kingdom because they were born there or were naturalized into the kingdom. The king is responsible for making the laws and for taking care of those under His rule. The laws of a kingdom form the foundation of its culture. A culture is a set of shared beliefs and practices that uniquely identify the group of people who follow them.
- B) The Kingdom of God has all the elements mentioned above. The king is Jesus Christ (Heb 1:8), and the subjects are those who have been saved. As Christians, we owe Jesus our loyalty and obedience. We are citizens of the Kingdom of God because we have been born again (John 3:3). Jesus has a law for His Kingdom: the law of love (see 1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2; 5:14; James 2:8–12; Rom 13:8–10; Matt 22:37–40). This law—loving God and loving others—forms the foundation of the Kingdom's culture. Indeed, the Bible tells us that the love we have for each other uniquely identifies us as citizens of the Kingdom of God (John 13:35; 1 John 3:10). Other expressions of this law of love include servanthood (Mark 9:35), self-denial (Matt 16:24) and evangelism (Matt 28:19–20).

- C) God has always wanted to have a kingdom of people who live in a loving relationship with Him and one another (Matt 25:34; Isa 2:2–5; Micah 4:1–4). In the beginning, God created mankind and established the first earthly kingdom by giving Adam dominion over the entire created order (Gen 1:27–28). Adam sinned and forfeited his authority to Satan (John 12:31; Acts 26:18; Col 1:13). As a result, every person born into this world is enslaved by Satan and under God’s wrath (Eph 2:1–3). God’s purpose in sending Jesus was to end Satan’s dominion over the world (John 12:31; Col 2:15), provide a way for people to be redeemed from Satan’s enslavement (Heb 2:14–15) and restore His Kingdom to its original state (Rev 5:9–10; 11:15).

3) Is the Kingdom of God a physical or spiritual kingdom?

- A) The Kingdom of God is both a physical *and* a spiritual kingdom. This duality has often been a source of confusion. It’s why Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God as being present, yet future; revealed, yet a mystery; among us, yet not of this world; like a small seed, yet pervading everything.
- (1) A Spiritual Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is manifested on earth today in the lives of Christians like you. As a spiritual kingdom, its focus is on righteousness (measuring up to the standard of God’s word), peace (well-being in one’s relationships), and joy (the satisfaction of having what is good from God’s perspective) (Rom 14:17).
 - (2) A Physical Kingdom. The Kingdom of God will one day exist on earth in a physical sense. In Daniel 2:44 we are told: “And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever.”
 - (a) The Kingdom of God on earth will reach around the globe. It will have a capital city, Jerusalem, and Jesus Christ will rule and reign there. The law of love will be the law of the earth, and everyone will be required to worship God (Zech 14).
- B) Jesus’ disciples remained confused about the spiritual aspect of the Kingdom until Jesus’ ascension. Just before He left, they asked Him if He was now going to fulfill their expectations and restore Israel’s political independence (Acts 1:6). They still failed to grasp the true scope of the Kingdom. They failed to realize that Jesus’ Kingdom was within the hearts of men, and that He was teaching a new lifestyle with new values, attitudes, relationships—in short, a new culture: the Kingdom Culture.¹

4) What are the practical implications of being a citizen of the Kingdom of God?

- A) Realizing that you are a citizen of the Kingdom of God helps you understand:
- (1) Spiritual Warfare. During World War II many catch phrases were used to remind people of the conflict being fought overseas. One of these phrases was, “Don’t

¹ Jim Peterson, *Living Proof: Sharing the Gospel Naturally* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1989), p. 89.

you know there's a war on?" The same truth needs to be understood by you as a disciple of Jesus. The Kingdom of God is at war with the kingdom of darkness (Satan's kingdom). Satan is opposed to God and resists every citizen of the Kingdom. As a disciple, you can expect to be tempted and tested as Satan tries to defeat you.

- (2) Earthly Life. When you were saved, God could have immediately taken you to Heaven. Why did He leave you here on earth? God's purpose in leaving His servants on earth is to conform them to the image of His Son (Rom 8:28-29), to have them make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:18-20), and for them to do good works which will be rewarded in the future, physical Kingdom (Eph 2:10; Rev 2:25-27).
 - (a) In Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus told a parable about a master who was preparing to go on a long journey. He called his servants, gave each of them some money (some more and some less) and then departed. When he returned some time later, he called his servants to account for their use of the money he had given them. All but one of the servants had invested the money and doubled the original amount. The master said to each of these servants, "Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." The point of the story is that God expects you to use your talents and opportunities here so that you will be prepared for ministry and authority in His future, earthly kingdom.
 - (b) The kingdom is the framework for understanding that you work for Christ in whatever you are doing right now, and Christ Himself will reward you in the future for how well you perform your current task. In other words, the kingdom gives meaning to all the time you spend working at your job, in your home, and raising your kids. It's all for God's Kingdom (Col 3:23-25).
- (3) Suffering. When you suffer, you can take satisfaction in knowing that you are destined for leadership in Christ's Kingdom. Paul told Timothy: "If we endure, we will also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12). Paul told the Thessalonians: "Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering" (2 Thess 1:4-5). Suffering takes on new meaning when you understand that it's all for Christ's coming Kingdom.
- (4) Evangelism. Winning others for Christ is part of expanding the Kingdom of God and taking back the hearts and minds of the world from Satan's captivity. As a disciple, you should be seeking to spread the Kingdom of God wherever you go.