

KINGDOM OF GOD

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I. Definition (Kingdom of God/Heaven is used 96 xs, 58 of those are in Matthew and Luke)

A. The kingdom is when God actually rules just like he does in heaven (Mt 6:10; Lk 11:2), particularly through the Messiah (Mk 15:43; Lk 1:33; 23:51; Acts 1:6; Heb 1:8 [as perceived by righteous Jews of Jesus' day]), though Jesus clarifies that this is not an earthly kingdom (Jn 18:36).

B. It was the basic message of early Preaching. John the Baptist (Mt 3:2; Mk 1:15); Jesus (Mt 4:17; Lk 4:43; 8:1; Acts 1:3), often accompanied by healings (Mt 4:23; 9:35; Lk 9:11), and the Apostles (Lk 9:2), also often accompanied by healings (Mt 10:7). As well as all those that preach Jesus' message (Mt 13:19, 52; 24:14; Lk 9:60; 10:9; 16:16; Acts 8:12); especially Paul (Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

C. It is like:

1. A field sown in good seed that an enemy sabotages with similar looking weeds (Mt 13:24, 38, 41). Or a dragnet that catches all kinds of fish, some good, some bad (Mt 13:47). It has fakers in it that need to be ferret out at the judgment.
2. A mustard seed that starts very small and winds up huge (Mt 13:31; Mk 4:30; Lk 13:18); or leaven that permeates a huge batter of dough (Mt 13:33; Lk 13:20). It grows night and day imperceptibly, like seeds in the garden (Mk 4:26). It starts out small and ends up big.
3. A treasure hidden in a field (Mt 13:44) or a pearl of great value (Mt 13:45). It is worth giving up everything else to gain.
4. A landowner who hires workers throughout the day but pays them the same (Mt 20:1ff.). It is also like a king who throws a wedding banquet for his son and invites all kinds of people to attend. God's grace will be dispensed (unequally) according to his choice and our response to the invitation.

D. It has suffered violence from the hands of forceful men trying to take hold of it (Mt. 11:12).¹It is in opposition to the kingdom of Satan (Mt 12:25-28; Mk 3:24; Lk 11:18-20; Eph 2:2; Rev 16:10). Pharisees shut out sincere people from kingdom (Mt 23:13).

E. It is a present reality (Mt 16:28; Mk 9:1; Lk 9:27; 10:11; 17:20-21), manifested in Jesus' Messianic ministry (Mk 11:10; Lk 19:11 [as Jesus' society interpreted it]), that will have eschatological fulfillment (Mt 8:11-12; 13:43; Lk 14:15; 21:31²; 22:16, 18;

30; 23:42; 1 Cor 15:24; Heb 12:28; Rev 11:15; 12:10³), at Jesus' return (Mt 25:1, 34; 26:29; Mk 14:25; 2 Tim 4:1). Ultimately, it will become equivalent to "heaven" (Mk 9:47; 2 Tim 4:18; 2 Pet 1:11), but now embodied in church (Col 4:11; Rev 1:6; 5:10)

- F. Not about earthly things (“eating and drinking”) but about spiritual things (“righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”), (Rom 14:17). Not about “talk but of power” (1 Cor 4:20). Flesh and blood can’t inherit (1 Cor 15:50).

II. “Membership” in the Kingdom:

A. Who gets in:

1. The poor (in Spirit) & the Persecuted (Mt 5:3, 10; Lk 6:20; James 2:5).
2. These “least” people are greater than John the Baptist, the greatest man ever born of a woman (Mt 11:11; Lk 7:28). Little children are the greatest in the kingdom (Mt 18:1-4; 19:14; Mk 10:14-15; Lk 18:16-17).
3. Repentant sinners will have access before religious leaders who do not accept Jesus (Mt 21:31; Mk 12:34).
4. On the other hand, the rich will have a difficult time entering (Mt 19:23-24; Mk 10:23-25; Lk 18:24-25). And the wicked and sexually immoral will not inherit the kingdom (1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5).

B. Many outsiders will enter but insiders will be excluded (Mt 8:11-12; Lk 13:28-29).

C. Peter has the keys to it (Mt 16:19). All the Apostles were given the secrets of the kingdom, but others excluded from it (Mt 13:11; Mk 4:11; Lk 8:10)

III. It demands of its citizens:

A. Righteousness based on obedience to the law of God (Mt 5:19-20). Many will say “Lord, Lord” but only the obedient will be saved (Mt 7:21). The fruit we are especially to “produce” is the acceptance of Jesus (Mt 21:43). God particularly requires filial forgiveness (Mt 18:23).

B. To be our #1 priority above secular concerns (Mt 6:33; Lk 12:31-32), even above our family commitments (Lk 9:60-62; 18:29). Some have even become eunuchs in order to better serve God in his kingdom (Mt 19:12). This will require enduring many hardships (Acts 14:22; 2 Thes 1:5; Rev 1:9).

C. One must humble themselves like a little child (Mt 18:3-4; Mk 10:15; Lk 18:17) and be born again (Jn 3:3-5)

D. Although God is pleased to give us the kingdom (Lk 12:32), and essentially he is the one who calls us and qualifies us for the kingdom through Jesus (Col 1:12-14; 1 Thess 2:12; Rev 1:6; 5:10). Moreover, he will compensate us extravagantly for pursuing it above all other things (Lk 18:29)

¹ The meaning of this verse is the subject of much debate. Some take it as a positive statement about the strong progress of the kingdom. This author understands it to be a negative statement about the aggressive assault against the kingdom by violent and insolent men.

² The author understands this to be a prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem, rather than the end of the world. However, (a) it is still eschatological vocabulary, (b) Jesus does not differentiate clearly between 70 C.E. and the Parousia, and (c) the destruction of Jerusalem is paradigmatic for the kind of things that will happen at the end of the world. Thus this becomes an appropriate picture for “End Times” events.

³ This refers to the work of Jesus on the cross, not the end of time. Yet like Lk 21:31 it is still phrased in eschatological language.