

JESUS WAS KINGDOM CENTERED

The Kingdom of God finds its roots in the Old Testament. The prophets declared the Kingdom as a day in which men and women would live together in peace, social problems would be solved and evil would pass away.

The prophet Isaiah foretold of a coming Messiah, the prince of God's kingdom:

4 The Lord will mediate between nations and will settle international disputes. They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer fight against nation, nor train for war anymore. 6 In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion, and a little child will lead them all. 7 The cow will graze near the bear. The cub and the calf will lie down together.

The lion will eat hay like a cow. 8 The baby will play safely near the hole of a cobra. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes without harm. 9 Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the Lord. 10 In that day the heir to David's throne will be a banner of salvation to all the world. The nations will rally to him, and the land where he lives will be a glorious place (Isaiah 2:4; 11:6-10 NLT).

In the New Testament and central in Jesus teaching was the concept of the Kingdom of God. The authors of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) filled their books with teachings about the Kingdom. As was common they often summarized the material in their books at the beginning as Mark illustrates in his gospel. [14] *Later on, after John was*

arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News. [15] "The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!" (Mark 1:14-15 NLT). Mark's short summary demonstrates the idea of what Jesus is going to say and what he is going to do.

Matthew's gospel summarized in a similar way the ministry of Jesus as it centered on the Kingdom. *"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people"* (Matthew 4:23).

Jesus also summarized his message of the Kingdom when he commissioned his twelve disciples. *And when he had called unto him*

his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, 'Go preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely you have received, freely give' (Matthew 10:1, 5, 7-8). The gospel of the Kingdom is the only gospel that he instructed his disciples to preach.

When Luke recorded the sending out of seventy disciples, Jesus used similar language: *1 After this, the Lord chose seventy others and sent them out in pairs ahead of him into every town and place where he planned to go. 2 He said to them, "There are a great many people to harvest, but there are only a few workers. So pray to God, who owns the*

harvest, that he will send more workers to help gather his harvest. 3 Go now, but listen! I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. 8 If you go into a town and the people welcome you, eat what they give you. 9 Heal the sick who live there, and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.' 10 But if you go into a town, and the people don't welcome you, then go into the streets and say, 11 'Even the dirt from your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. But remember that the kingdom of God is near.' 12 I tell you, on the Judgment Day it will be better for the people of Sodom than for the people of that town (Luke 10:1-3, 8-12).

The term kingdom was often on the lips of Jesus and the idea of the Kingdom was central to his message. His words were designed to prepare people's hearts to enter God's Kingdom. Jesus said, *Unless a person is born*

from above, it's not possible to see what I'm pointing to — to God's kingdom (John 3:3). When asked what that meant Jesus replied, You are an important teacher in Israel, and you don't understand these things? (John 3:10). Nicodemus, the teacher, should have known that the Scriptures insist that to enter God's Kingdom men must have a new heart and spirit, for the prophet Ezekiel proclaimed, 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

Jesus works authenticated that the Kingdom was present in Him. 28 *"But if it's by God's power that I am sending the evil spirits packing, then God's kingdom is here for sure"* (Matthew 12:28, The Message Bible).

Jesus prayers modeled for his disciples the desire of his heart, which was that the Kingdom would come to earth. *May your Kingdom come; may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven* (Matthew 6:10, GNT).

His death, resurrection, and ascension made us the instruments of His Kingdom message. *But when the Holy Spirit comes to you, you will receive power. You will be my witnesses — in Jerusalem, in all of Judea, in Samaria, and in every part of the world* (Acts 1:8, NCV). *The Good News about God's kingdom will be*

preached in all the world, to every nation. Then the end will come (Matthew 24:14, NCV).

His Second Coming promises the consummation of the Kingdom for his children. *[31] When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: [32] And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: [33] And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. [34] Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: [41] Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: [46] And these shall go*

away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal (Matthew 25:31-34; 41, 46).

The Kingdom of God can be viewed in many ways. Here are some examples:

The Kingdom of God is an earthly place where there is righteousness, peace, and joy. These are the benefits for those who live yielded lives to the Rule and Reign of Christ. The Kingdom is a present reality (Romans 14:17).

The Kingdom is viewed as a place of future blessing that occurs at the Second Coming for the people of God. The followers of Jesus enter the Kingdom when He returns. The coming Kingdom will bring an end to the old order of humanity and begin a new existence in a heavenly order. Thus the Kingdom is future

and supernatural. 24 And then the end will come. At that time Christ will destroy all rulers, authorities, and powers, and he will hand over the kingdom to God the Father. 25 Christ must rule until he puts all enemies under his control. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed will be death. 50 I tell you this, brothers and sisters: Flesh and blood cannot have a part in the kingdom of God. Something that will ruin cannot have a part in something that never ruins. 51 But look! I tell you this secret: We will not all sleep in death, but we will all be changed. 53 This body that can be destroyed must clothe itself with something that can never be destroyed. And this body that dies must clothe itself with something that can never die. 54 So this body that can be destroyed will clothe itself with that which can never be destroyed, and this body that dies will

clothe itself with that which can never die (1 Corinthians 15:24-26, 50-51, 53-54, NCV). Hebrews 6:5 tells us that even though we are in this present evil age (where death reigns) that we through the miracle working of God can taste the powers of the age to come.

St. Augustine believed that the Kingdom and the Church were the same thing. Current language talks about bringing people into the Kingdom. Although the Church is part of the Kingdom the Old Testament Saints are included in the Kingdom as we see from such scriptures as Luke 13:28-29. *28 You will cry and grind your teeth with pain when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in God's kingdom, but you yourselves thrown outside. 29 People will come from the east, west, north, and south and will sit down at the table in the kingdom of God* (NCV).

The Kingdom of God is also likened to the governments and nations of the world. *And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever* (Revelation 11:15, KJV).

The Kingdom of God is a realm into which one must enter now and a realm into which one must enter tomorrow. The Kingdom is a gift of God which must be received in the present so that one may enter it in the future (Colossians 1:13-14; Matthew 25:34, 46).

What is the Kingdom? Kingdom is normally understood as a realm over which a king rules. A modern day example of this idea was the United Kingdom which was made up of many nations: Great Britain, Scotland, Ireland,

Wales, etc. People live in the Kingdom (a place) and are subjects of the King or Queen who exercises his or her authority over his or her subjects. Another way to view the idea of Kingdom is found in its dictionary definition: “The reign or rule a king has over his subjects.” This definition is closer to the primary meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words than the concept of realm or place.

Dr. James Kallas suggests that Jesus never explained the Kingdom because the people to whom he was speaking knew what it meant or thought they knew what it meant. The Old Testament presents the Kingdom in the context of Jewish messianic expectation. They believed that God would deliver them, which was their hope for the future. Israel reached its apex during the rule of King David and King Solomon. From that point forward Israel began

to descend. At the death of Solomon the Kingdom divided into two Kingdoms with their own kings and governments. This division set in place a longing among the Jews for God to restore to them their past blessings. Israel's hope was that God would send a king like David. Israel wanted a nationalistic kingdom to return. The prophets of the Old Testament began using a phrase "the Day of the Lord," which was a two-sided belief system including restoration, spiritual renewal and judgment. Israel believed that the "Day of the Lord" was a time when Israel would be fully restored. The nations would be judged (Matt. 25:31-32). In the pages of the New Testament it reveals that God would again restore the Kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6). The Jews thought that the Kingdom of God was limited to a world populated by the Jews. The Kingdom was a dream of Jewish nationalism.

During the Intertestamental Period (404 B.C. – 6 B.C.) , hope had not diminished, it only assumed a new language and a modified meaning. The hope was now of a heavenly Kingdom which would end this Present Evil Age (Galatians 1:4). A new world would break into the present world and bring the rule of God. This present evil age dominated by Satan (under his rule) would be overthrown by God's Messiah reversing the evils of Satan. Good would triumph, a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness will dwell and usher in His everlasting Kingdom (2 Peter 3:12-14).

Sources Cited

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(KJV) The King James Version. First published in 1611.

(NLT) New Living Translation. Copyright 1966 by Tyndale Charitable Trust. All rights reserved.

The Message Bible. By Eugene H. Peterson. Copyright 1993-96, 2000-2002. NavPress Publishing Group. P.O. Box 35001, Colorado Springs, CO 80935.

(GNT) Good New Translation. Copyright by the American Bible Society. 1966, 1971.

(NCV) Copyright 1987-88, 1991 by Word Publishing, Nashville, Tennessee 37214.

Study Questions

1. At the end of this age the Kingdom of God will come into full manifestation. True or False.

Answer: Matthew 13:36-43. 36 When Jesus had left the crowd and gone indoors, his disciples came to him and said, "Tell us what the parable about the weeds in the field means." **37** Jesus answered, "The man who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man; **38** the field is the world; the good seed is the people who belong to the Kingdom; the weeds are the people who belong to the Evil One; **39** and the enemy who sowed the weeds is the Devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvest workers are angels. **40** Just as the weeds are gathered up and burned in the fire, so the same thing will happen at the end of the age:

41 the Son of Man will send out his angels to gather up out of his Kingdom all those who cause people to sin and all others who do evil things, **42** and they will throw them into the fiery furnace, where they will cry and gnash their teeth. **43** Then God's people will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom. Listen, then, if you have ears! **(GNT)**

2. At the end of this age the mixture of good and evil, righteous and unrighteous, believers and unbelievers will be separated. True or False.

Answer: Matthew 13:47-51. 47 "Also, God's kingdom is like a net that was put into the lake. The net caught many different kinds of fish. **48** It was full, so the fishermen pulled it to the shore. They sat down and put all the good fish in baskets. Then they threw away the bad fish.

49 It will be the same at the end of time. The angels will come and separate the evil people from the godly people. **50** They will throw the evil people into the place of fire. There the people will cry and grind their teeth with pain." **51** Then Jesus asked his followers, "Do you understand all these things?" They said, "Yes, we understand." **(ERV)**

3. In order to be in God's Kingdom you must have a spiritual re-birth. True or False.

Answer: John 3:3. 3 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, unless one is born again, he cannot be in God's kingdom." **(NCV)**

Titus 3:5 5 He saved us. It was not because of any good deeds that we ourselves had done, but because of his own mercy that he

saved us, through the Holy Spirit, who gives us new birth and new life by washing us. **(GNT)**

4. The reason that some religious people do not enter the Kingdom is that they have: a. not paid tithes to the church. b. not had a change of heart that moved them into a new direction (also called repentance). They continued in iniquity and lawlessness.

Answer: Matthew 7:20-23. 20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits. **21** "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. **22** "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' **23** "And then I will declare to them, 'I

never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.' **(NASV)**

5. Who is your Lord, King and Master?

Answer: Luke 6:46. 46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? **(KJV)**

Acts 3:19 19 So turn away from your sins. Turn to God. Then your sins will be wiped away. **(NirV)**

6. If you do not want to obey Christ the King, you may not know Him. He wants to save you by His grace. True or False.

Answer: Romans 5:1 5 By entering through faith into what God has always wanted to do for us — set us right with him, make us fit for

him — we have it all together with God because of our Master Jesus. **(The Message Bible)**

Luke 18:13-14. 13 "The tax collector, standing at a distance, would not even look up to heaven. But he beat on his chest because he was so sad. He said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' 14 I tell you, when this man went home, he was right with God, but the Pharisee was not. **(NCV)**

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**DKM
10065 Sun Ridge Circle
Rogers, AR 72756 U.S.A.**

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