

Kingdom of God 101

If Jesus were to return and give an assessment on how Christianity is today as compared to the 1st century, what kind of things would he say? Would he be impressed with the way that we carried on his command to confess to all nations his words and teachings as commanded in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19)? How enthused would our Lord be to find that **his** faith and teachings have dwindled into over 12,000 denominations that all believe to have the truth spelled out in the Scriptures? Clearly we can come to the conclusion that the vast majority of believers would not meet the standards of a disciple of Christ as he would have intended them to be.

Hebrews 5:9 says that Jesus became to all those who obey him the source of eternal salvation. John 15:12 has Jesus saying, "you are my friends if you do what I command you." And again, in Matt 7:21-22 we see that not everyone who claims to be a Christian will enter the Kingdom, but only those who do the will of the Father will enter. The New Testament puts a heavy emphasis on obeying our Lord Jesus. The simple fact that you call him "Lord" means that you are making him your superior and you plan to follow him.

With the obedience in mind, let's look at some of the most overlooked commands by Jesus, our Lord. The very 1st command Jesus made was in Mark 1:14-15, where he commanded everyone to "repent and believe in the gospel of the Kingdom of God." In a climactic end to the Sermon on the Mount, he commands us again to "Seek first the Kingdom of God" in Matt. 6:33. After his triumphant resurrection, he commanded us to go into the entire world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15).

Clearly, the only gospel that the disciples knew at that time was the gospel of the Kingdom of God. It was the sole purpose of Jesus' ministry (Luke 4:43). He preached it throughout Galilee (Matt. 4:23, 9:35, 24:14) and sent his disciples out to preach it as well (Matt 10:7, Luke 9:2, Acts 8:12). Paul also preached this very same gospel throughout his many journeys (Acts 19:8, 20:24-25, 28:23, 28:30-31).

One would have a hard time denying the vast importance that the Kingdom of God holds with an honest reading of the Scriptures. The fact that the gospel is labeled "the Kingdom of God" should open the eyes of many believers. I now wish to explain what exactly the Kingdom of God is.

The return of Jesus will result in the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon the earth (Dan. 7:13-14, 18, 27, Rev. 11:15-18). When Christ rules as King of kings, the hopes of humanity will be realized. Christ has the right to rule this planet as King of kings because He is the Son of God. He has the right to sit on David's throne and to rule over Israel because He is the Son of David (2 Sam. 7:12-14).

The nation of Israel was God's kingdom on earth during the Old Testament era. As His chosen people, Israel constituted a special sphere of God's rulership. "Now then, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:5, 6). Israel became a nation under the leadership of Moses. Israel was a theocracy. God ruled as King over the nation through judges. During the days of Samuel, the last of the judges, Israel rejected the theocracy and demanded an earthly king to rule over them. (1 Sam. 8:5-22.) Saul was selected by Israel to be king. (1 Sam. 10; 11:15; 12:1.) Because of Saul's disobedience, God rejected Saul as king (1 Sam. 13:13, 14) and chose David as His king (1 Sam. 16:1-13; Acts 13:17-22).

1. God's Covenant with David. God, who cannot lie, promised David an eternal seed, an eternal throne, and an eternal kingdom. His seed would rule over the kingdom of Israel forever. This kingly covenant was confirmed and repeated to Solomon, David's son. (1 Chron. 22:8-10; 2 Chron. 7:17, 18.)

2 Samuel 7:12-16	His throne established for ever
1 Chronicles 17:7-14	Establish his throne for ever
Psalms 89:3, 4, 27-37	David's seed and throne
Psalms 132:11, 12	David's children sit on throne
Jeremiah 33:15-26	Covenant with David forever
Jeremiah 23:5, 6	Unto David a righteous Branch
Isaiah 11:1-12	Stem of Jesse, a Branch

2. Kingdom Temporarily Suspended. For many centuries, the dynasty of David reigned in Jerusalem over Israel. Most of the rulers who sat on David's throne, however, were wicked. They followed the surrounding nations in disobeying God and worshipped idols. As punishment for disobedience, God permitted Babylon to carry Israel into captivity. The kingdom was temporarily suspended; David's throne was unoccupied.

"And you, profane and wicked prince of Israel, the day has come for your punishment."

This is what the Lord God says:
*Remove the turban, and take off the crown.
 Things will not remain as they are;
 exalt the lowly and bring down the exalted.*

*A ruin, a ruin,
 I will make it a ruin!
 Yet this will not happen
 until He comes;
 I have given the judgment to Him." (Ezek. 21:25-27).*

The kingdom was suspended. The throne was overturned until one should come whose right it is to occupy that throne.

3. Jesus, the Seed of David. Jesus is that one whose right it is to sit upon David's throne, ruling Israel for eternity. Jesus is the Son of David and the Son of God. Jesus will fulfill the eternal covenant God made with David. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder.... Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever" (Isa. 9:6, 7). "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32, 33). God promised that King David's throne would be established forever (2 Sam. 7:16). "You are my Son, today I have begotten you. Ask of me and I will give you the nations as your inheritance" (Psa. 2:6-7). Thus, Jesus has to rule on the restored throne of David in Jerusalem, for God promised it. He is clearly **not** fulfilling these crucial prophecies at this time.

Jesus was born to be King (John 18:36, 37). The title "Christ" means "anointed king". The wise men asked, "Where is he that is born King, of the Jews (Matt. 2:2)" During His earthly ministry, Jesus was "going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the Kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1). He revealed His kingly authority in His message (or word) of the Kingdom of God and miracles. His miracles of healing and resurrection were prophetic foretastes of future conditions when He reigns as King. He offered Himself to Israel as King, but Israel rejected Him. (John 1:11; Matt. 23:37-39). Pilate said unto the Jews, "Behold your King! But they cried out "away with him, away with him, crucify him." Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:14, 15). This is a testimony to a sad, sad world.

Shortly before His ascension, the disciples questioned the risen Christ, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). The kingdom was not to be restored at that time. It would not be restored until the Church Age was completed at Christ's return. Today, Christ is sitting at the Father's right hand (Psa. 110:1). Jesus said, "To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21). Jesus will sit on His own throne, the throne of David, when He comes again. "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" (Matt. 25:31). We, as Christians will reign with him on the earth (Rev. 5:10), a promise given to believers from the beginning of his ministry (Matt. 5:5).

4. The Premillennial Return of Christ. The Bible teaches that Christ's coming will precede the Millennium, that he will come personally before the Millennium and establish His Kingdom upon earth (Rev 20). As King of kings, he will sit upon his own throne of glory and rule the earth with Jerusalem (also called Zion) as his capital city.

The Bible teaches that the resurrection of Christians will occur when Jesus returns. During the Millennium, resurrected saints will reign with Christ upon earth. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:6). "And they sung a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals there of: for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every kind, and tongue, and people, and nation; and has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign upon the earth" (Rev. 5:9, 10). The first text, Revelation 20:6, depicts the *duration*, and the second text, Revelation 5:9, 10, explains the *location* of the believers' future reign with Christ. Christians will reign with Christ one thousand years upon earth. Since the resurrection of Christians will occur when Jesus comes, our Lord's coming must precede the Millennium.

Christ's Kingdom will not be established until he returns. Jesus taught the parable of the nobleman to the disciples "because they thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear" (Luke 19:11). Jesus pictured himself as the nobleman who goes into "a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (Luke 19:12). Jesus ascended to heaven to receive His Kingdom from His Father. (Luke 1:32, 33; Dan. 7:13, 14.) Christ's Kingdom will be inaugurated when He returns. (Luke 19:15.) Christ is not sitting upon the restored throne of David. Jesus will sit upon His own throne of glory when He returns. "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" (Matt. 25:31). Christ's Kingdom is linked with His appearing. (2 Tim. 4:1.)

The coming of Christ will result in the smiting of the nations, which will pave the way for the establishment of His Kingdom. (Dan. 2:34, 35, 44, 45; Rev. 19:11-21; Psa. 2:8, 9.) The smiting of the nations does not refer to a gradual conversion of humanity through the gospel today, but it refers to the future judgment of Christ when He comes. Earthly rulers will be compelled to yield their authority to Christ. His Kingdom will replace all earthly kingdoms (Dan 2:44, 7:27, Rev 11:15-18).

Christ's Kingdom on earth and the Millennium are yet future. Blessings associated with the Kingdom are not realities today. During Christ's future Kingdom, nations will live in peace (Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3); men will walk in righteousness; animals will be harmless (Isa. 11:6-9; 65:25) ; there will be no more sickness (Isa. 33: 24; 35:5, 6) ; and the fertility of the earth will be restored. (Isa. 35:1, 2, 6, 7; 41:18, 19; 55:12, 13; Amos 9:13, 14.) These blessings are not realities today because Christ's Kingdom has **not yet been established**.

Some have asked "**What is the importance of knowing the Gospel of the Kingdom? Can't I just accept Jesus into my heart? Why does it matter where I will be after death....as long as I am with Jesus?**" I'd like to let Scripture reveal the answer, not my own opinions, just to keep it biblical.

"Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will not enter it at all!" (Luke 18:17)

Jesus will come dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (2 Thes 1:8)

If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine according to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing. (1 Tim. 6:3-4)

5. In Conclusion. As disciples of Jesus, we should remember Jesus' commandments:

"Repent and believe the Gospel of the Kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14-15)

"Seek 1st the Kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33)

Also remember that salvation come to those who obey Jesus (Heb. 5:9).

God bless.

-Dustin

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