

THE KINGDOM OF GOD:
A PENTECOSTAL INTERPRETATION

The KINGDOM
and the POWER



DENZIL R. MILLER

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INTRODUCTION

T*he kingdom of God.* It's a subject often mentioned, yet little understood in the church today. We often pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). But do we really understand what we are praying? We sing about "kingdom authority," but do we really know what that authority is? I once heard a preacher proclaim, "We are not church people, we are kingdom people!" Many in the congregation, including myself, stood to their feet and shouted, "Amen!" But what does it mean when we say that we are kingdom people? Thinking back, I don't believe either the preacher or the congregation understood what he was talking about.

This lack of understanding concerning the kingdom of God is somewhat understandable, since it is a neglected subject in most Bible schools and seminaries. When I was in Bible college, the subject of the Kingdom was hardly ever mentioned. When it was mentioned, it was almost always in reference to the coming millennial kingdom of Christ. Today, the silence on the subject remains. I know of hardly any schools that teach a course on the subject. That is why I have written this book, to address this need in the church.

Although the kingdom of God is an oft-neglected subject, it is one of the most prominent topics in the Bible. It is found in

Introduction

every book in the Bible—although it is not specifically called the kingdom of God in every book. It is the overarching theme of the Old Testament, where God is declared to be the “King.” It was the central theme of the preaching and teaching of Jesus, and a cardinal theme of the New Testament church. The kingdom of God should also be a central theme in our teaching and preaching today.

A correct understanding of the kingdom of God can profoundly affect both our lives and our ministries. When we understand that the kingdom of God is a present reality in the world today, and when we understand that kingdom power can be actively at work in our ministries, a tremendous confidence comes into our hearts. We are encouraged to preach with power and pray for people with renewed boldness. And when we understand that the King is coming again to set up His eternal Kingdom in the earth, we are inspired to work to see that the nations hear the message of His salvation.

As you study the lessons in this book, open your heart to the Lord. Submit yourself to Him as your Lord and King, and commit yourself anew to His mission in the earth. Join your heart with the heart of Jesus, in declaring to the nations, “The time has come ... The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:14-15).

– CHAPTER 1 –

THE MEANING OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The message of the kingdom of God has been called the “master thought” of Jesus. It was the central theme of His preaching and teaching. Until recent years, however, it has been an almost forgotten theme in evangelical and Pentecostal studies.

In the gospels the word “church” occurs only three times in two verses (Matt. 16:18; 18:17). The word *kingdom*, however, occurs 127 times in 119 verses. Note these facts concerning the kingdom of God:

- It is the subject of most of Jesus’ parables.
- It is a major theme of the book of Acts, which begins and ends with an emphasis on the kingdom of God (1:3, 6; 28:23, 31).
- It is referred to seventeen times in the NT epistles.¹

¹I.e., Rom 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20; 6:9-10; 15:50; Gal. 5:21; Eph 5:5; Col 1:12-13; 4:11; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 4:1, 18; Heb. 1:8; 12:28; James 2:5; 2 Pet. 1:11.

As we shall discover in this study, the kingdom of God is a prominent theme in Scripture, in both the Old and New Testaments.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD DEFINED

When the Bible speaks of the kingdom of God, it is not talking about a geographical region such as the United Kingdom or the Kingdom of Swaziland. It cannot be identified with any country anywhere in the world today, or at any other time in history. The kingdom of God is, rather, the rule or reign of God. It is God's sovereign rule over His creation. As we shall see more clearly as we move through this study, the kingdom of God can be viewed in three ways: (1) as the rule or reign of God, (2) as a present kingdom already at work in the world, and into which people are now entering, and (3) as a future kingdom into which the righteous will enter at the end of the age.

The Hebrew word translated *kingdom* in the Old Testament is *malkûth*; the word used in the Greek New Testament is *basileia*. Both mean the same thing: a rule, realm, reign, or kingship.

The two main names for the Kingdom² found in the New Testament are *kingdom of God* and *kingdom of heaven*. In the gospels these two names are used interchangeably as seen in Matthew 19:23-24: "Then Jesus said to His disciples,

² Throughout this book, when referring directly to the kingdom of God, and not using the modifying phrases "of God" or "of heaven" I will capitalize the word "Kingdom."

The Meaning of the Kingdom of God

‘Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the *kingdom of heaven*. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the *kingdom of God*’ (italics added). The two terms are simply different ways of saying the same thing. The phrase *kingdom of heaven* is used only in Matthew (33 times). This is possibly because Matthew was writing to Jews, who thought it disrespectful to use God’s name too often. In parallel passages one gospel writer will use *kingdom of God* while another uses *kingdom of heaven* (See Figure 1.1 below). Other New Testament terms used for the kingdom of God are as follows:

- “my Father’s kingdom” (Matt. 26:29)
- “kingdom of the Son of Man” (Matt. 13:41)
- “my kingdom” [spoken by Jesus] (Luke 22:30).
- “kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph. 5:5)
- “kingdom of light” (Col. 1:12)
- “kingdom of the Son he loves” (Col. 1:13)
- “His kingdom” (1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Tim. 4:1)
- “His heavenly kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:18)
- “the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:11)
- “kingdom of our Lord and His Christ” (Rev. 11:15).

The Meaning of the Kingdom of God

– Figure 1.1 – Gospel Passages Showing the Parallel Use of “Kingdom of Heaven” and “Kingdom of God”	
Matthew	Mark and Luke
<p>Matt. 4:17: From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."</p>	<p>Mark 1:14-15: "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"</p>
<p>Matt. 5:3: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.</p>	<p>Luke 6:20: Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.</p>
<p>Matt. 11:11: I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.</p>	<p>Luke 7:28: I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.</p>
<p>Matt. 13:11: He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you ...</p>	<p>Luke 8:9-10: He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you ...</p>
<p>Matt. 13:31-33: He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, ..." He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."</p>	<p>Luke 13:18-21: Then Jesus asked, "What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed,..." Again he asked, "What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."</p>

The Meaning of the Kingdom of God

Matthew	Mark and Luke
Matt. 19:14: Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. "	Mark 10:13-16: He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these (cf. Luke 18:16-17).
Matt. 19:23-24: Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. "	Mark 10:23-25: Jesus ... said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! " ... It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. " (cf. Luke 18:23-25)

Figure 1.1

THE DURATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

What is the duration of the kingdom of God? That is, when did it begin and when will it end? In answering this question it is helpful to look at the Kingdom in two ways: the kingdom of God in eternity and the kingdom of God in history.

The Kingdom of God in Eternity

The kingdom of God is everlasting! It endures from eternity past into eternity future. Daniel described the kingdom of God as "a kingdom that will never be destroyed" (Dan. 2:44). He also said that "the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever" (7:18). David prayed to God, "Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and

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your dominion endures through all generations (Ps. 145:13). The angel told Mary about her son, Jesus, that “the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1:32-33). The eternal duration of the kingdom of God is illustrated in Figure 1.2 below.



Figure 1.2

The Kingdom of God in History

Although the kingdom of God is eternal, it has appeared in time, that is, in history. According to renewal theologian J. Rodman Williams, the kingdom of God manifests itself in history in three ways: in preparation, in establishment, and in completion.³ The kingdom of God is seen in *preparation* in the Old Testament, where God is portrayed as King of Israel and as King over all creation. There, the Kingdom prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah. We will look at this aspect of God’s

³J. Rodman Williams, “The Kingdom of God” in *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective, Three Volumes in One*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 289-295.

The Meaning of the Kingdom of God

kingdom in Chapter 5. Next, the Kingdom is seen in *establishment* in the ministry of Christ. Jesus began His ministry by declaring that the kingdom of God was at hand (Mark 1:15). Christ now establishes His kingdom reign in the lives of those who will repent and believe the gospel. For them, He is, indeed, Lord and King! Finally, the kingdom of God will come in *completion* at the second coming of Christ, when Jesus sets up His eternal kingdom on earth. At that time, “the kingdoms of this world [will] become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Rev. 11:15, NKJV). The kingdom of God in history is illustrated in Figure 1.3 below.

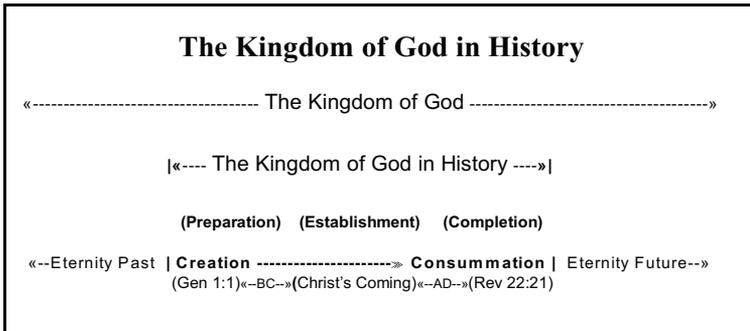


Figure 1.3

TWO TENSES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In the New Testament the kingdom of God is shown in two tenses: present and future. We can say that it is a kingdom that has come and is coming. It is now—but not yet. Let’s look at these two aspects of the kingdom of God:

The Kingdom of God Has Come

Mark 1:14-15 says, “After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’”

The kingdom of God came in the person of Jesus Christ. Speaking of Jesus, John said, “Our hands have touched ... the Word of life” (1 John 1:1). On another occasion Jesus told some Pharisees, “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21), or as the NASB better translates, “the kingdom of God is in your midst.” The kingdom of God was in their midst because Jesus was in their midst. On one occasion, after He had driven a demon out of a man, Jesus said, “But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:28). We will discuss this present aspect of the kingdom of God in more detail in Chapter 3.

The Kingdom of God is Coming

Not only does the New Testament teach that the kingdom of God has already come in the person of Jesus, it also teaches that the kingdom of God is coming in the future. The Kingdom will come in fulness at the second coming of Christ. At the Last Supper Jesus spoke to His disciples of this future expression of the Kingdom: “I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God” (Mark 14:25, cf. Matt. 26:28-29). In the future kingdom Jesus will reign for all eternity. We will also discuss this aspect of the Kingdom in greater detail in Chapter 3.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE CHURCH

The question arises: What is the relationship between the kingdom of God and the church? The church and the kingdom of God are not the same, as some have taught. The church is, however, the primary expression of the kingdom of God in the present age. Someone has said, the Kingdom creates the church—the church bears witness to the Kingdom. The church is the instrument and agent of the Kingdom.

The kingdom of God is greater and more enduring than the church. The kingdom of God stretches from eternity to eternity. It has as its subjects all the saints of all the ages, including angels. The church, however, lasts only from Christ's first until His second coming. It has as its members those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, while it is possible for one to be a subject of the Kingdom and not be a member of the church, it is not possible for one to be a member of the church and not be a subject of the Kingdom. The church and the Kingdom are compared in Figure 1.4 below.

The church's mission is to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom to all nations before the second coming of Christ, the King (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10). This proclamation is to be done in kingdom power. That power is available to all believers through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:1-8).

The Church and the Kingdom Compared		
	Duration	Subjects
The Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• From eternity to eternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All saints of all ages including angels
The Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• From Christ's first until His second coming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Those redeemed by Christ and regenerated by the Spirit

Figure 1.4

In this chapter we have defined the kingdom of God as the rule or reign of God. It is one of the most important subjects in Scripture, and was the main theme of Jesus' teaching and preaching. It is also a key theme of the Bible. The Kingdom is both present and future. In these last days the church is the agent of the Kingdom, and has been commissioned to preach the gospel of the Kingdom in all the world before Christ comes again. In the next chapter we will look at how the doctrine of the kingdom of God has been viewed in the history of the church.

Discussion Questions

1. How many times have you taught or preached on the kingdom of God in the last year? Why or why not?
2. Why is it important that believers have an accurate understanding of what the kingdom of God is and what it is not?

The Meaning of the Kingdom of God

3. How do the various New Testament terms for the kingdom of God help us to better understand its true nature and purpose?
4. How does one's understanding of the two tenses of the Kingdom help keep believers focused on fulfilling God's will in their lives?

(Note: Content Review Questions for this chapter
may be found on page 147.)

– CHAPTER 2 –

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THOUGHT ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In the last chapter we defined and discussed some of the various aspects of the kingdom of God. In this chapter we will look back in time. We will see how the doctrine has been understood in different periods of church history. In doing this we will discover how one's view of the kingdom of God can greatly affect how he or she understands and does missionary work.

PENTECOST TO REFORMATION

The Early Post-Apostolic Church

During post-apostolic times (A.D. 100-300) the church underwent great persecution. As a result, it adopted what one author has called a “persecution mentality.” It developed a tendency to withdraw from worldly affairs, and began to look at the kingdom of God as only in the future. These persecuted believers looked forward to the day when Christ would return. At that time He would deliver them from their trials and set up His

reign on earth. The post-apostolic church further saw the kingdom of God as a spiritual kingdom that dwelt in the hearts of believers.

The Church after Constantine

In A.D. 313 the Roman Emperor Constantine declared that Christianity was the official religion of the Roman empire. As a result, the church acquired a privileged status in society. As time went by, it began to see itself as being the same thing as the kingdom of God. Church leaders began to use the phrase “one God, one Logos, one Emperor, one Empire.” As the state church, it became the servant of the empire, although, at times, it even ruled over the empire. During this era the church began to think of the kingdom of God as the same as the earthly reign of the caesar or the pope.

The Medieval Church

The medieval church existed during the Middle Ages, extending from the end of the Roman Empire (A.D. 400) until the beginning of the Protestant Reformation (A.D. 1517). During this era the church largely followed the teachings of Augustine in his book, *The City of God*. Augustine taught that the kingdom of God was the visible church of his day. This view of the Kingdom led to the merging of church and state. The results were tragic. Joining with the state, the church attempted to create a “pure” Holy Roman Empire by force. The Crusades became the church’s way of doing missions. During the Crusades the church did many evil things in trying to rescue the Holy Land from the

Muslims. Christian missions still suffers the ill effects of the Crusades.

REFORMATION TO PRESENT

The Reformation Church

The Reformation took place during the sixteenth century. At that time many people left the Roman Catholic Church and formed the Protestant churches. The leaders of this movement were called “reformers.” Contrary to the teaching of the Catholic Church, these reformers identified the kingdom of God with the invisible church. They taught that the Kingdom was primarily a religious concept. Like the post-apostolic fathers, they taught that the kingdom of God is in the hearts of believers.

One reformer, John Calvin, went further in his thinking. He taught a christocratic (meaning the government or rule of Christ) theology of the kingdom of God. In Geneva, Switzerland, he started a community where the church had control over all the affairs of people. Life in this community was based on the values of the kingdom of God as Calvin saw them.

The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were times of debate concerning the meaning of the kingdom of God. The debate, however, had little to do with the life and mission of the church. Some teachers, such as Albrecht Ritschl (1822-89) and his followers, were influenced by Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution. These teachers, therefore, held an evolutionary view of the Kingdom. They said that the kingdom of God was at work

in the evolutionary progress of human history. They believed that history was progressing toward higher levels of civilization and moral society. The idea of Christ's second coming was lost. This was the view of most liberal Protestants in the late nineteenth century. It became a part of the religious ideology of humanism, the teaching that man can solve his own problems by human reason, apart from the help of God.

The Twentieth Century

At the beginning of the twentieth century certain theologians rejected the evolutionary teaching about the kingdom of God. Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer developed what is known as a "thoroughgoing eschatology" of the kingdom of God. They said that the kingdom of God had not yet come; it was only in the future. They said that it is wrong to say that the kingdom of God came in the ministry of Jesus. He, rather, expected an entirely future apocalyptic coming of the Kingdom. According to these teachers, Jesus believed that this would occur during His own lifetime. They further denied that Jesus and His message came from God.

Charles H. Dodd taught a different doctrine concerning the kingdom of God. He called his teaching "realized eschatology." He said that the kingdom of God is already present. It came with the appearance and ministry of Jesus. Dodd taught that Jesus' teachings about a coming kingdom are not to be taken literally. They are, rather, to be taken only as symbols for the kingdom of God that was already present. In this view there is no room for the second coming of Christ.

Historical Overview of Thought on the Kingdom of God

Evangelical theologians recognize that there is some truth in each of these teachings about the kingdom of God. They, nevertheless, ultimately reject both, since each is one-sided and ignores an important part of Jesus' teaching on the subject. Studies by evangelical scholars, such as Herman Ridderbos and George E. Ladd, show that Jesus spoke of both a present and a future coming of the Kingdom. According to Ladd,

For Jesus the Kingdom of God was the dynamic rule of God which had invaded history in his own person and mission to bring men in the present age the blessings of the messianic age, and which would manifest itself yet again at the end of the age to bring this same messianic salvation to its consummation.¹

This is the view of the kingdom of God taught in this book. It is the view held by most contemporary Pentecostal scholars. Pentecostals, however, emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in the kingdom of God more than non-Pentecostals, as is later explained in this book.

PENTECOSTAL THOUGHT ON
THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Early Pentecostal Thought

Early Pentecostals had little to say about the kingdom of God. This is because much of their eschatology was influenced

¹ George Eldon Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964).

Historical Overview of Thought on the Kingdom of God

by dispensational writers.² Pentecostal teachers such as Ralph Riggs, Frank Boyd, Finis J. Dake, and John G. Hall taught that salvation history consisted of seven distinct dispensations: Innocence, Human Government, Law, Grace, Tribulation, Kingdom, and Eternity. In this way of thinking the kingdom of God was thought of as being mainly in the future. It was mostly related to the millennial reign of Christ. The present reality of the Kingdom was barely noticed.

In time, however, Pentecostal scholars began to see that many of the teachings of dispensationalism were opposed to the Pentecostal teachings of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, and modern-day miracles. For instance, dispensationalists teach that the Jews rejected Jesus' offer of the kingdom of God; therefore, the promise of David's restored kingdom has been put off until the Millennium. The fulfillment of Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit (2:28-29) has also been delayed until the second coming of Christ. Therefore, according to dispensationalist teaching, Pentecost was only a temporary blessing of power to the early church. Dispensationalists say that the power of Pentecost is not available to the church today. Pentecostals strongly reject this view.

Other Assemblies of God theologians, such as Ernest S. Williams and Stanley Horton, closely identified the kingdom of

² Dispensationalism is the teaching that God deals with mankind different ways during different eras of sacred history, called dispensations. Among other things they teach that God no longer works miracles today as He did in New Testament times.

God with the church. They said that the church is “spiritual Israel” and the Spirit is active in the church today.

Contemporary Pentecostal Thought

In recent years evangelicals and Pentecostals have shown more interest in the kingdom of God. Some Pentecostal scholars have studied how the teaching of the kingdom of God affects missions. In 1966 Pentecostal missiologist Melvin L. Hodges wrote about the importance of the Kingdom in a New Testament theology of missions. He wrote that the church is the

present manifestation of the kingdom of God in the earth, or at least, the agency that prepares the way for the future manifestation of the Kingdom. Its mission therefore is the extension of the church throughout the world... It is the Holy Spirit that [sic] gives life to the church and imparts gifts and ministries as well as power for their performance.³

For many Pentecostals this was a new way of thinking about the kingdom of God.

Other Pentecostal theologians saw the vital connection between “signs and wonders” and the advancement of the kingdom of God. For instance, in 1987 Assemblies of God missionary and educator Ruth A. Breusch wrote a series of ten articles for the *Mountain Movers* magazine, entitled “The

³ Cited by Gary B. McGee in *This Gospel Shall Be Preached*, vol. 2 (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1989).

Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory.”⁴ Writing from a Pentecostal point of view, she talked about the kingdom of God and its relationship to the mission of the church. She said that, in this age, God has chosen the church as His means of advancing His Kingdom throughout the earth. The Spirit is present in the Kingdom to empower the church for the task of world harvest. More recently, Peter Kuzmic and others have written convincingly of the role of the Spirit’s power in advancing the kingdom of God in the world.⁵

Pentecostal theologian Paul A. Pomerville wrote that the biblical theme of the kingdom of God provides a theological underpinning for Pentecostal theology. According to Pomerville, the kingdom of God represents the dynamic reign of God in the world. It is God’s supernatural breaking into history in the person of Jesus Christ.⁶ Pomerville further equated the kingdom of God with “the activity of God.”⁷ He said that Pentecostal theology answers the question, “How is the kingdom of God advanced?” The answer is that the kingdom of God is advanced

⁴ Ruth Breusch, *Mountain Movers*, Mar-Dec. 1987.

⁵ In writing this chapter, the author has relied heavily on Peter Kuzmic’s article “Kingdom of God” in the *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee, and Patrick H. Alexander, 1988, 521-526. Also see Don Williams, *Signs Wonders and the Kingdom of God* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, Servant Publications, 1989), 105-108.

⁶ Paul A. Pomerville, *The Third Force in Missions* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985), 134-135.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 134.

in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit.⁸

One recent development among some Pentecostals and charismatics is the “kingdom now” theology. This theology is a departure from the premillennial end-time teachings of most Pentecostals. Kingdom now theology focuses on the church christianizing society, that is, making society ever more Christian. It rejects the teaching of the rapture of the church. The teaching has generated controversy in Pentecostal circles.

In their early years Pentecostals often overlooked biblical teaching on the kingdom of God. Today, however, there are many references to the kingdom of God in Pentecostal and charismatic writings. Pentecostal perspectives on the kingdom of God will be discussed in Chapter 11.

Figure 2.1
Summary of Teaching on the Kingdom of God

Church Era or Group	Teachings on the Kingdom of God	Contributing Causes of the Teaching	Effects of the Teaching on Missions
Early Post-Apostolic Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Kingdom is in the future.• It is also inward and spiritual.	Persecution resulting in a “persecution mentality.”	Withdrew from the world. Looked for future deliverance.

⁸ Ibid., 147-148.

Historical Overview of Thought on the Kingdom of God

Church Era or Group	Teachings on the Kingdom of God	Contributing Causes of the Teaching	Effects of the Teaching on Missions
The Church after Constantine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The church and the Kingdom are the same. 	Christianity was declared the official religion of the Roman Empire.	Thought of the kingdom of God as the earthly reign of the pope or the caesar.
The Medieval Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state/church and the Kingdom are the same. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Followed Augustine's <i>City of God</i>. • Joined church and state. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tragic results. • Attempted to create a "pure" Holy Roman Empire. • The Crusades.
The Reformation Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Kingdom is the invisible church. • It is an inward spiritual reality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partly as a reaction against the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little interest in evangelizing the nations.
The Church in the 18th and 19th Centuries (Albert Ritschl)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Kingdom is evolving in the progress of society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence by Darwin's theory of evolution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not look for Christ's coming. • Believed the church was to work for the betterment of society.
20th Century (Weiss and Schweitzer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taught a "thoroughgoing eschatology," i.e., the Kingdom is only future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reaction against the evolutionary view. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The doctrines had little effect on the church or society.
20th Century (Dodd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taught a "realized eschatology," i.e., the Kingdom is only present. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects of higher criticism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The doctrines had little effect on the church or society.

Historical Overview of Thought on the Kingdom of God

Church Era or Group	Teachings on the Kingdom of God	Contributing Causes of the Teaching	Effects of the Teaching on Missions
Early Pentecostals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely overlooked the kingdom of God as present. • Strong emphasis on the coming kingdom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influenced by their study of dispensationalists writers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preached much about the second coming of Christ. • Believed the world must be reached with the gospel.
Contemporary Pentecostals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Kingdom is present and future. • In the present, the Kingdom comes in the power of the Holy Spirit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writings of Hodges, Breusch, Ladd, Pomerville, Kuzmic and others. • A Pentecostal adaption of the evangelical view. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on the power of the Spirit to advance the kingdom of God in the earth. • Belief in power ministry. • Inspired to preach the gospel of the Kingdom to all nations. • Confidence in confronting the powers of Satan.
Kingdom Now Theology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The kingdom of God is present now. • The church must gain dominion over the world before Jesus comes again. • Postmillennialist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teachings of Earl Paulk and others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political and social action becomes as important as evangelism and missions.

In this chapter we have discovered that throughout history the church has held different views concerning the kingdom of God. What lessons can we learn from this new understanding? We learn that how one views the kingdom of God greatly influences how he or she views the mission of the church. If one

Historical Overview of Thought on the Kingdom of God

sees the kingdom of God as only future, as did the post-apostolic church, he tends to withdraw from society and hope for the coming of Christ to deliver him from the world. If one sees the state church as the kingdom of God, as did the medieval church, he tends to believe that it is the role of the state to christianize society. As a result, he can become passive in his personal participation in the mission of God. If one sees the kingdom of God as only present, as did some nineteenth century theologians, he works only for the betterment of society and doesn't worry about preparing people spiritually for the coming of Christ. If one, however, sees the kingdom of God as both present and future, and if he believes that the Kingdom is present in the power of the Spirit, he is encouraged to go to the nations in the Spirit's power, preaching that people must prepare themselves for Christ's soon coming when He will judge the nations and set up His eternal kingdom in the earth.

Discussion Questions

1. How has the church's neglect of teaching on the kingdom of God affected its work and mission?
2. Why is it important that one has a truly biblical understanding of the kingdom of God?
3. What would you happen to our missionary work if we were to adopt a "kingdom now" view of the kingdom of God? Give reasons for your answers.

(Note: Content Review Questions for this chapter may be found on page 147.)

– CHAPTER 3 –

THE KINGDOM OF GOD A PRESENT REALITY

We have described the kingdom of God as a kingdom that has come and is coming. It has both a present and a future aspect. We will now look at these ideas in more depth. In the next chapter we will look at the future aspect of the kingdom of God. But first, in this chapter, we will investigate the kingdom of God as a present reality. In doing this we will look at three facts about the Kingdom as a present reality: (1) The Kingdom came in the person of Jesus Christ, (2) the Kingdom comes in the power of the Holy Spirit, and (3) the Kingdom is coming today.

THE KINGDOM CAME IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus' Announcement of the Present Kingdom

John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of Jesus. He said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matt. 3:2-3). He meant that Jesus would soon begin His kingdom ministry. When did Jesus begin His ministry, He repeated the announcement of John: "Repent," he declared, "for the kingdom

of heaven is near” (Matt. 4:17). The word translated “near” in the NIV can also be translated “at hand,” as in the NKJV. Jesus was saying that God’s kingdom was near enough to reach out and touch. By touching Jesus, one could touch the kingdom of God! On another occasion Jesus told the Pharisees, “The kingdom of God is in your midst” (Luke 17:21, NASB). Because Jesus was in their midst, the kingdom of God was also in their midst.

John the Baptist once became discouraged. He sent his followers to ask Jesus if He was really the Messiah. Jesus told them, “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it” (Matt. 11:12, cf. Luke 16:16). Jesus wanted them to know that the kingdom of God had already come, and that it was on the move. As Jesus went about His ministry, He was advancing the kingdom of God.

Jesus’ “Nazareth Manifesto”

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus went into a synagogue in Nazareth of Galilee. There He presented His “Nazareth Manifesto” (Luke 4:18-19). A manifesto is a public declaration of one’s goals and plans. Jesus said,

The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD. (NKJV)

Jesus was quoting from the messianic prophecy of Isaiah 61:1-2. By doing this He was claiming to be the Messiah. He was

also claiming the Messiah's authority. He said that He would fulfill His ministry in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me," He declared, "because he has anointed me to preach the gospel ..." (Luke 4:18). Jesus' anointing, however, was not like the anointing of earthly rulers. Their's was with mere oil; His was with the Spirit of the Lord. Christ's sixfold agenda of ministry included the following:

- He would preach the gospel to the poor.
- He would heal the brokenhearted.
- He would proclaim liberty to the captives.
- He would proclaim recovery of sight to the blind.
- He would free the oppressed.
- He would proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

How did Jesus go about fulfilling this agenda for ministry? He aimed primarily at people's spiritual needs. He realized that people were spiritually poor and blind (Matt 5:3; 11:5; 15:14; 23:16-19; 26:11; Luke 6:39; John 9:39-41). They were held in spiritual captivity and oppression (Luke 11:21-22; 13:16; John 8:34). He set them free by preaching the gospel to them, and ministering to them in the power of the Spirit (Matt. 12:28; Mark 1:14, 25; Luke 6:17-19; Acts 10:38).

While Jesus focused primarily on people's spiritual needs, He did not neglect their physical and emotional needs. He healed their emotional brokenness and their physical blindness (Matt. 15:30; Luke 6:21; 7:21). He also showed great concern for the physically poor (Mark 14:5; Luke 12:33; 14:13). Jesus' kingdom ministry, however, was not political. He did not lead a revolution

or a political movement, even though He could have if He had wanted to (Matt. 26:53; John 6:15; 18:36).

In His Nazareth Manifesto Jesus also revealed the time of His kingdom ministry. He said, “*Today* this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (v. 21, italics added). Christ’s kingdom ministry was in the present. The “year of the Lord’s favor” had arrived (v. 19). It was a time of Jubilee, a time when people would be released from bondage and debt, and thus a time of great rejoicing for the people (cf. Lev. 25:8-55). The Messianic Age had come!

THE KINGDOM COMES IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus’ Ministry was Done in the Power of the Spirit

As noted above, Jesus began His kingdom ministry by announcing that the Spirit’s anointing was upon Him (Luke 4:18-19). In this announcement Jesus revealed that the source of His kingdom power was the Spirit of God.

Jesus’ entire ministry was done in the power of the Spirit. He did not begin to minister until He was first empowered by the Spirit (Luke 3:21-23). Luke states that immediately after His baptism “Jesus ... began his ministry” (Luke 3:23, NKJV). Listen to what Luke says about how Jesus performed His ministry in the Spirit’s power:

- *He was anointed by the Spirit:* “When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit

descended on him in bodily form like a dove ... Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry” (3:21-22).

- *He was full of the Spirit and led by the Spirit:* “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert ...” (4:1).
- *He began ministering in the power of the Spirit:* “Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit ...” (4:14).
- *He publicly announced His Spirit-anointed ministry:* “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me ...” (4:16-19).
- *He taught with the Spirit’s authority:* “They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority ...” (4:32).
- *He healed the sick by the Spirit:* “And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick” (5:17); “And the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all” (6:18-19).
- *He drove out demons by the Spirit’s power:* “But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.” (11:20). The “finger of God” is the Spirit of God (Matt. 12:28).

Peter summarizes Jesus’ ministry in Acts 10:38, where he points out that Jesus’ entire kingdom ministry was done under the Spirit’s anointing. He noted “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.”

THE KINGDOM MINISTRY OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Jesus performed His kingdom ministry in the Spirit's power. He also ensured that the ministry of the church was done in the same way. As Jesus was about to ascend into heaven, His departing words to His disciples were about the power of the Spirit and the kingdom of God:

In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ²until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions *through the Holy Spirit* to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and *spoke about the kingdom of God*. ⁴On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized with water, *but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit*."

⁶So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

⁷He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses* in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:3-8, emphasis added).

Note how in the passage above Jesus gave orders to the apostles "through the Holy Spirit" (v. 2). He also "spoke about the kingdom of God" (v. 3). What were the kingdom issues Jesus

spoke about? He spoke of the importance of being baptized in the Holy Spirit and of being His witnesses to the ends of the earth (vv. 4-8). When the disciples asked about the coming Kingdom, Jesus called their attention back to the present work of the Kingdom. Their work was to preach the gospel to all nations in the power of the Holy Spirit before He returns (vv. 7-8, 11).

At Pentecost Jesus transferred His kingdom power to the church. He once prophesied that the kingdom of God would soon come in power (Mark 9: 1). He also promised His followers power to do the same works He had done (John 14:12, 16). Later, He commanded them to not begin their kingdom ministry until they had first been “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:3-5). He then poured out His Spirit on them on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 33). As a result, they were empowered for kingdom ministry.

The story of Philip’s ministry in Samaria is one example of such kingdom ministry: He was full of the Spirit (Acts 6:5), he preached a message of the kingdom of God (8:12), and he ministered in the power of the Spirit with signs following (vv. 6-8). Because of these things, many people came to know Christ as Savior (vv. 8, 12). Another example of kingdom ministry is the missionary ministry of Paul (cf. Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

THE KINGDOM IS COMING TODAY

Imitators of Christ

In everything we do we are to be *imitators of Christ* (1 John 5:17). This includes the way we conduct our ministries. We are

to adopt Jesus' agenda for kingdom ministry, and we are to imitate His methods. His methods included two important activities: Spirit-anointed proclamation and Spirit-empowered demonstration. Don Williams writes,

If we adopt Jesus' agenda for ministry, we will pray down the anointing power of God, and with his Spirit upon us evangelize the poor, bring release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, liberate the oppressed, and announce to the world, this is the "favorable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).¹

Our Kingdom Prayer

Jesus taught us to pray a "kingdom prayer." This prayer is sometimes called the Lord's Prayer. In this prayer Jesus taught us to pray "Your kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10). What does it mean to pray that God's kingdom will come? When we pray "Thy kingdom come" we are asking God for at least four things:

- For people to be born again (John 3:3-8).
- For people to be filled with the Spirit (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:3-8).
- For people to be healed and delivered by the power of God (Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20).
- For Jesus to come again (Luke 22:18; Rev. 12:10; 22:20).

¹ Don Williams, *Signs, Wonders, and the Kingdom of God: A Biblical Guide for the Reluctant Skeptic* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, 1989), 139.

Tasting the Powers of the Age to Come

Jesus and the apostles talked about “this age” and “the age to come.”² The writer of Hebrews speaks of those who had “tasted of the powers of the age to come” (6:5). In this verse he ties the two ages together. He says that in this age we can experience the powers of the coming age. George Eldon Ladd comments, “The Age to Come is still future, but we may taste the powers of that Age. Something has happened by virtue of that which belongs to the future has become present. The powers of the Age to Come have penetrated This Age.”³ This truth is illustrated in Figure 3.1 below.

What is this power of the age to come? It is the power of God manifested through the Holy Spirit. Today we taste the powers of the age to come when we are saved, filled with the Spirit, healed, or otherwise touched by the Spirit of God.

Also illustrated in Figure 3.1 are the various “comings” of the kingdom of God to earth. Note how the kingdom of heaven has broken into this age in different ways and at different times. The small arrows at the top left illustrate the many times when God’s presence and power has been manifested throughout history. The three big arrows pointing downward illustrate three major breakthroughs of the Kingdom: the Incarnation, Pentecost, and the Second Coming of Christ, which is yet to come. The arrow pointing from the right to the left illustrates how the

² We will talk more about this subject in Chapter 4.

³ George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Popular Expositions on the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), 41.

powers of the age to come are often experienced in this present age.

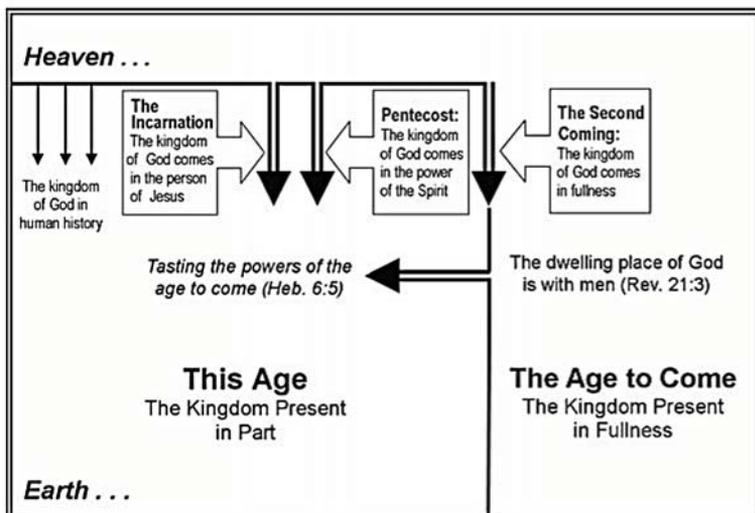


Figure 3.1

and the Second Coming of Christ, which is yet to come. The arrow pointing from the right to the left illustrates how the powers of the age to come are often experienced in this present age.

We must remember, however, that in this age we are only “tasting” of the powers of the coming age. The kingdom of God is *really* here, but it not *fully* here. Don Williams wrote,

The reason why this truth is so gripping is that it illumines so much of our present experience. It explains both our sense of triumph in Christ and the continuing spiritual warfare which we fight on many fronts. It explains the reality that we have died with Christ and, at the same time,

that the flesh still wars against the spirit. It explains why people are dramatically healed today by the power of God and also continue to get sick and die. It explains why we have strength through weakness and life through death.⁴

In this chapter we have discussed the present aspect of the Kingdom. Jesus announced that the kingdom of God had come. It had come because He, the King, had come! The kingdom of God also comes when the power of God is manifested today through people being saved, delivered, healed, and baptized in the Holy Spirit. We can help advance the kingdom of God by imitating the ministry of Jesus. We should minister in the Spirit's power just as He did.

Although the Kingdom has come in reality, it has not come in all of its fullness. That will only happen when Jesus comes again and sets up His Kingdom on earth. We will discuss this future aspect of the kingdom of God in the next chapter.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe how Jesus went about fulfilling His "Nazareth Manifesto" (Luke 4:18-19). What things did He do? What things did he not do? Why is it important that we understand these truths?
2. How did (and does) the ministry of Jesus relate to the kingdom of God?

⁴ Ibid., 108.

The Kingdom of God: A Present Reality

3. When did Jesus transfer His kingdom power to His church? How did He do it? Does He still do it today? What should our response be?
4. How does our new understanding of our “Kingdom Prayer (i.e., the Lord’s Prayer), as found in this chapter, help us to pray more effectively “Your kingdom come”?

(Note: Content Review Questions for this chapter
may be found on page 148.)

– CHAPTER 4 –

THE KINGDOM OF GOD A FUTURE PROSPECT

In the last chapter we discussed the present manifestation of the kingdom of God. In this chapter we will discuss its future manifestation. We also discussed two scriptural ages: “This Age” and the “Age to Come” (Matt. 12:32; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; 1 Cor. 2:6-8; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 1:21; Heb. 6:5). These two ages are compared in Figure 4.1.

The Two Ages Compared	
“This Age”	“The Age to Come”
Began with creation.	Will begin with Christ’s second coming.
Will continue until Christ’s second coming.	Will continue forever.
The assault on Satan’s kingdom began with Christ’s first coming.	The assault on Satan’s kingdom will be consummated.
Is characterized by strife and evil (Ga 4:1).	Will be characterized by righteousness, peace, and joy.

Figure 4.1

From the table note that This Age began with creation and will continue until the second coming of Christ. The Age to Come will begin at Christ's second coming and will continue forever. During This Age Jesus has already invaded the kingdom of Satan in the power of the Spirit. There remains, however, a future completion of the Kingdom in the Last Days. Then Satan will be defeated and there will then be a complete victory over all evil. This final destruction of Satan's kingdom will occur at the beginning of the Age to Come.

It is helpful to know that the two ages correspond to the two manifestations of the Kingdom. This fact is illustrated in Figure 3.2.

Two Ages—Two Manifestations of the Kingdom	
This Age	The present manifestation of the Kingdom
The Age to Come	The future manifestation of the Kingdom

Figure 4.2

We now turn to the topic of this chapter—the kingdom of God as it will be manifested in the future. Here we will discuss three issues concerning the future coming of the Kingdom: (1) the nature of Jesus' coming to set up His future Kingdom, (2) the character of the future Kingdom that Christ will establish, and (3) the time of Christ's coming to establish His future Kingdom.

THE NATURE OF JESUS' COMING TO SET UP HIS FUTURE KINGDOM

Two things can be said about Jesus' coming to establish His future kingdom:

His Coming Will Be Apocalyptic

Jesus' second coming to establish His everlasting Kingdom will be apocalyptic. By this we mean that it will be accompanied by great cataclysmic events, including signs in the heaven and on earth. For instance, His coming will be sudden and unexpected. Jesus said, "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24:27, NKJV). You can read about His glorious coming in Revelation 19:11-21. It will be in mighty conquering power. He will come with the armies of heaven and lead them as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (v. 16).

No one knows the time when Jesus will come (Matt. 24:36). We must, therefore, be ready at all times (Matt. 24:44, Luke 12:33-48). We must also be about the Master's business of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom to the nations (Matt. 24:14).

His Coming Will Be with Judgement and Reward

When Jesus comes again, He will come with both judgement and reward: He will judge those who rejected Him, and reward those who believed in and obeyed Him. A final separation will take place. Jesus said, "At that time I will tell the harvesters: 'First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be

burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn” (Matt. 13:30). The wicked will thus be judged. They will “go away into eternal punishment” (Matt. 25:46), and will be consigned into “eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (v. 41). The righteous, however, will enter into the joy of their Lord (vv. 21-23).

For the righteous there will be a glorious “messianic banquet,”¹ and a great “rewards ceremony”² given in their honor. Jesus said that the righteous will “go away ... to eternal life” (Matt. 25:34). They will inherit the Kingdom “prepared for [them] since the creation of the world” (v. 24). They will then “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43). Further, in the coming Kingdom the righteous will share Christ’s fellowship and His authority to rule (Matt. 26:29; Luke 22:29-30).

THE CHARACTER OF FUTURE KINGDOM THAT CHRIST WILL ESTABLISH

The Kingdom that is coming will be in two phases. It will begin with a thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, called the Millennial Kingdom. It will then continue with the eternal reign of God and Christ in the new heaven and the new earth. This phase of the kingdom of God is sometimes called the Eternal

¹ I.e., the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Matt. 8:11; 22:1-2; 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 14:15-24; 22:28-30).

² I.e., the Judgment of Believers (Matt. 25:19-23; Luke 19:16-19; Rom. 14:10; 1Cor. 3:10-15; 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Kingdom. Let's look first at the character of the Millennial Kingdom, and then at the character of the Eternal Kingdom.

The Millennial Kingdom

Four things can be said about the Millennial Kingdom:

1. *Christ will reign.* In the Millennial Kingdom the Son of Man will sit on His "glorious throne" (Matt. 19:28; cf. 25:31; Rev. 3:21; 11:17), the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdoms of God and Christ (Rev. 11:15), and He will reign over the nations for a thousand years. At that time Christ will rule the nations with an "iron scepter" (Ps. 2:8-9; Rev. 2:27; 19:15). This means that He will rule with unchallenged authority. Believers will reign with Him (Luke 19:17, 19; 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12, Rev. 5:10; 20:4-6). His reign will be a time of universal peace and righteousness (Ps. 72:7; Isa. 2:4; 11:4-5; Jer. 23:5-6, cf. Heb 7:2). During that time Satan will be bound and will no longer deceive the nations (Rev. 20:1-3).

2. *Israel will be restored.* Before the thousand-year reign of Christ, Israel will be regathered to Palestine from throughout the earth (Isa. 11:10-12; Jer. 16:14-15; 30:10; Ezek. 36:24; 37:1-14). As a nation, Israel will repent, receive Christ as her Messiah, and be converted (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:24-29; Zech. 12:10-11; Rom. 11:15, 25-27).

3. *It will be a time of universal peace and blessing.* During the millennial reign of Christ the world will be transformed, nature will be delivered from the curse of sin (Rom. 8:19-22), rain will be plentiful, and the soil will be fertile (Isa. 35:1-2, 6-7; Ezek. 34:26-27). Sickness will decrease dramatically and physical healing will be granted to many. Human life will be

prolonged (Isa. 35:5-6; 65:20). It will be a time of security and great prosperity (Mic. 4:2-5). War will cease, and joy and happiness will prevail (Isa. 2:4; 51:11). The knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth (11:9).

4. It will conclude (and the Eternal Kingdom will begin) with three great acts:

- Satan's kingdom will be totally vanquished. At the end of the Millennial Kingdom Satan will lead a final rebellion against God, at which time he will be crushed and totally defeated (Rev. 20:7-10). At that time the wicked will be judged and condemned (vv. 11-15).
- Christ will then hand over the Kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor 15:24). Having put all enemies under His feet (vv. 24-25), He will reign with God for eternity (vv. 27-28; Rev. 22:5). At that moment the end will come.
- Death will be finally and completely conquered (1 Cor. 15:26).

The Eternal Kingdom

The character of the Eternal Kingdom is described in Revelation 21:1-22:5. This phase of the Kingdom will begin with a New Heaven and a New Earth (vv.1-3). In this New Heaven and New Earth God will live with men and "they will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (v. 3). It will be a place of eternal joy and "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things

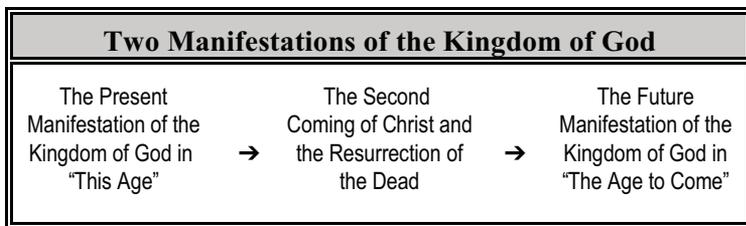
[will] have passed away” (v. 4). All things will be made new, and the saints of all the ages will inherit eternal life (vv. 6-7).

There will also be a New Jerusalem which will come down from God out of heaven (v. 10). It will be a place of great beauty and splendor, and will be an eternal home for the saints of all ages (vv. 11-21, 24, 27; cf. John 14:1-3). The Father and the Son will be its temple, and the glory of God and the Lamb will be its light (vv. 11, 22-24; 22:5). Nothing that “defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie” will be allowed into the city (v. 27).

Besides a New Heaven, a New Earth, and a New Jerusalem, there will be a crystal clear River of Life which will flow from the throne of God through the city (Rev. 22:1-2). The nations will be healed, and there will be no more curse in the earth. Christ will rule from the city, and the saints will reign with Him forever and ever in His Eternal Kingdom.

THE TIME OF CHRIST’S COMING TO ESTABLISH HIS FUTURE KINGDOM

When will this future kingdom be? It will come only after the present work of the Kingdom is finished. First, the gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in all the world as a witness to every people group (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10). Once this happens, the Kingdom in its present state can then become the Kingdom in its future state. This Age will give way to The Age to Come. These two aspects of the kingdom of God will be separated by two dramatic events: the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. These events are illustrated in Figure 4.3 below:



As mentioned above, Christ's coming will follow the preaching of the gospel to all nations. Twice the disciples asked Jesus about the time of His coming Kingdom:

- In Matthew 24:3 they asked, "What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?"
- Later, in Acts 1:6, they asked, "Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

On both occasions Jesus answered by telling them that they must first preach the gospel to the ends of the earth:

- To the first question He answered, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14).
- To the second He answered, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority, but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in Judea and in Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:7-8).

The coming of Christ and the end of the age will follow the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom in the power of the Spirit to the ends of the earth. These two “ends” will happen at the same time.

Peter said that we can “hasten the coming day of the Lord” (2 Pet. 3:12). How can we do this? By obeying “the commandment given by our Lord and Savior” (v. 2). To what command is Peter referring? He is likely referring to Christ’s command to preach the gospel to all nations and people (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). Today we call this command the Great Commission. Remembering this, Peter writes that “the Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (v. 9). We can hasten the Lord’s coming by preaching the gospel to all nations (Matt. 24:14).

The kingdom of God has two tenses, a present tense and a future tense. It is a kingdom that has come, and yet it is still coming. In this chapter we looked at the future tense of the Kingdom when Jesus will come again. When He comes He will set up His kingdom in all the earth. It will begin with a thousand-year reign on earth. This is called the Millennial Kingdom. After that, it will become an Eternal Kingdom and will last forever. In the next chapter we will begin a biblical survey of the kingdom of God by looking at what the Old Testament teaches about the subject.

Discussion Questions

1. How does a proper understanding of the future aspect of the Kingdom motivate us in ministry?
2. How does the preaching of the gospel relate to Christ's coming to set up His kingdom on earth? How should this truth motivate us?
3. According to 2 Peter 3:2, 9-12 (ref. Matt. 24:14), how can we help to hasten the coming of the Lord?

(Note: Content Review Questions for this chapter
may be found on page 149.)

– CHAPTER 5 –

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Thus far in our study we have defined and illustrated the idea of the kingdom of God. Most of our scriptural support has come from the New Testament. In this chapter we will look at what the Old Testament has to say on the subject.

The phrase “kingdom of God” does not appear in the Old Testament. However, the phrase the “kingdom of the Lord” (Heb: *malkûth Yahweh*) does appear, but only once (1 Chron. 28:5). The Old Testament, nevertheless, speaks often of God’s dominion and rule. David wrote, “For dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations” (Ps. 22:28, cf. 103:19). He further stated that God is “exalted as head over all” (1 Chron. 29:11). According to the psalmist, His kingdom is “an everlasting kingdom,” marked by “mighty acts” and “glorious splendor” (145:11-13).

The Old Testament was a time of preparation for the coming of the Kingdom in the person of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. As such, it was a time of anticipation and hope. In this chapter we will look more closely at the concept of the kingdom of God in the Old Testament. In doing this we will divide our

discussion into four topics: (1) the Old Testament concept of God as King, (2) messianic expectation of the coming King, (3) the Theocratic Covenants and the kingdom of God, and (4) intertestamental views of the Kingdom.

THE OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF GOD AS KING

The Creator King

In the Old Testament God is seen as the Sovereign Creator of heaven and earth. And, because He is the Creator, He has the right to rule over His creation. God's crowning act of creation was the creation of mankind. He created man and woman in His own image (Gen. 1:26-27). All people and nations are thus called upon to humbly worship God as their Sovereign Creator-King (Ps. 86:9; 96:9).

God as King in the Psalms

Throughout the Old Testament God is presented as King. This fact is especially evident in the Psalms and in the prophetic books. In the Psalms God is called the "King" twenty-one times.¹ For instance, He is called

- "King forever and ever" (10:16)
- "the King of glory" (24:7-10)

¹ I.e., Ps. 2:6; 5:2; 10:16; 24:7-10; 29:10; 44:4; 47:2, 6-7; 48:2; 62:11; 68:24; 84:3; 95:3; 96:6; 99:4; 145:1; 149:2 (NIV).

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- “the great King over all the earth” (47:2, 7)
- “the King above all gods” (95:3).

In addition, God is eight times said to reign over His creation.² For instance, David wrote, “The LORD reigns forever; he has established his throne for judgment. He will judge the world in righteousness; he will govern the peoples with justice” (Ps. 9:7-8). In the “Enthronement Psalms” God is often presented as King. Psalm 47 says, “For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise. God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne” (vv. 7-8). The phrase “the LORD reigns” literally means “Yahweh has become King.”

God as King in the Prophets

The Old Testament prophets saw Jehovah as King over all.³ Jeremiah calls Him the “King of the nations” (10:7) and “the eternal King” (10:10). Isaiah declared, “My eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty” (6:5). In one place he quotes Jehovah as saying, “I am the LORD, your Holy One, Israel's Creator, your King” (43:15). Zechariah called Him “the King the LORD Almighty” (14:16).

² I.e., Ps. 9:7 47: 8; 68:16; 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1; 146:10 (NIV).

³ I.e., Isa. 6:5; 43:15; 44:6; Jer. 10:7, 10; 46:18; 48:15; 51:57; Dan. 4:37; Zeph. 3:15; Zech. 14:16-17 (NIV).

MESSIANIC EXPECTATION OF THE COMING KING

Not only did the prophets see Jehovah as King, they looked forward to the coming of the Messiah King. For instance, Isaiah prophesied,

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. (9:6-7)

This passage reveals four truths about the coming Messiah:

1. His name will be exalted.
2. He will sit on the throne of David.
3. He will rule with justice and righteousness.
4. His government will be without end.

Jeremiah also prophesied concerning the coming Messiah King:

“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the

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name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness” (23:5-6).

This passage adds these five facts about the Messiah:

1. He will be a “righteous Branch.”
2. He will be a King.
3. He will reign wisely and do what is just and right.
4. He will bring salvation and safety to Judah.
5. His name will be called “the LORD our Righteousness.”

Daniel also spoke vividly of the Messiah’s future reign. On one occasion Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had a dream. In his dream he saw a great statue with a head of gold, arms and chest of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, and feet of iron mixed with clay. Then, in his dream, he saw a rock that was “cut out, but not by human hands.” The rock struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay. As a result, the great statue was broken into thousands of pieces and carried away by the wind. The rock then grew into a great mountain that filled the whole earth (Dan. 2:31-35).

God revealed to Daniel the meaning of the king’s dream. The different parts of the statue represented different kingdoms that were to appear in human history. They will all come to nothing. The final kingdom, however, will be eternal and universal. The stone that destroyed the other kingdoms and grew into a kingdom that filled the earth is a kingdom that God will establish. It is the kingdom of the Messiah, and it will endure

forever (v. 44). Today we know that Jesus is the Messiah who will sit on the throne of David and will rule the nations as King of kings and Lord of lords.

THE THEOCRATIC COVENANTS AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

One way God establishes His kingdom on the earth is by making and fulfilling covenants. In the Old Testament God made four important theocratic covenants with His people. Theocratic covenants have to do with the government or kingdom of God. Each covenant also contributes to the fulfilling of God's mission, or the *missio Dei*. These four theocratic covenants are as follows:

- The Abrahamic Covenant
- The Mosaic Covenant
- The Davidic Covenant
- The New Covenant

Let's look briefly at these four theocratic covenants and see how God advanced His kingdom through each one:

The Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic Covenant is found in Genesis 12:1-3. It reads,

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will

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show you. ²I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

The Abrahamic Covenant is the first of the theocratic covenants. In this covenant, God promised to bless Abram (Abraham) in seven ways:

1. He would make Abraham into a great nation.
2. He would bless him.
3. He would make his name great.
4. Abraham would be a blessing to others.
5. God would bless those who bless Abraham.
6. God would curse those who cursed Abraham.
7. Through Abraham all peoples on earth would be blessed.⁴

Of these seven promises the last is the most important. It is the purpose and result of the previous six. It says that through Abraham “all peoples on earth will be blessed.” In another passage we discover that the blessing of all peoples (or nations) will come through a promised “seed” (Gen. 22:18).

The idea of a redemptive seed is an important concept in Scripture. God first mentioned the promised seed when He

⁴ More details concerning the Abrahamic Covenant are added in Genesis 13:14-17; 15:1-8, 18-21; 17:1-8; 18-19; 18:18; 22:17-18.

cursed the serpent after the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Gen. 3:15, NKJV). Later, as part of the Abrahamic Covenant, God spoke to Abraham, saying, “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 22:18, NKJV). Paul identified that Seed as Christ (Gal. 3:16-19). Jesus is the Seed who will crush the head of Satan, and He is the Seed of Abraham who will bless all nations of the earth.

Someone has called Genesis 12:3 the “purpose statement” of the Bible. It declares God’s plan for all mankind. God wants all nations to know Him and be blessed. The rest of the Bible is the fulfillment of that plan. God accomplishes His plan through His kingdom. As His kingdom advances, His plan is fulfilled. It is through His kingdom that God establishes His redemptive reign among all nations.

The Abrahamic Covenant is an unconditional covenant. This is shown by God’s repeated “I will,” which occurs six times in Genesis 12:2-3. Since the covenant is unconditional, its provisions will be accomplished no matter what man does. Its fulfillment depends solely on the faithfulness of God. The Abrahamic Covenant is the basis of the other three theocratic covenants which follow. See Figure 5.1 (pp. 62-63) for a comparison for the four theocratic covenants.

The Mosaic Covenant

The Mosaic Covenant is found in Exodus 19:5-8. It is a covenant that God made with the nation of Israel. It reads,

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“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak. The people all responded together, “We will do everything the LORD has said.” So Moses brought their answer back to the LORD.

God made this covenant with Israel to help fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant. Israel would be God’s “treasured possession”—but not for themselves alone. God had promised Abraham that through his seed “all peoples on earth will be blessed.” For this reason, God called Israel to be a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (v. 6).

The function of priests is to stand between God and the people. Priests take the burdens and needs of the people and present them to God. They also declare God’s message to the people. As a “kingdom of priests” Israel was to represent God to the nations. Israel’s duty was to proclaim the wonders of God to the Gentile nations and to take the needs of the nations to God through intercessory prayer. We, the church, are also a kingdom of priests (1 Pet. 2:9). It is our duty as the New Israel to take the gospel to all nations (Matt. 28:18-20).

As a “holy nation” Israel was to be a testimony to all nations of the nature and character of God. It would thus be a “light to the Gentiles” (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). The Law of God, which stood at the center of the Mosaic Covenant, called Israel to holiness. It governed the personal, religious, and social lives of

God's people. It was given so that the people would know how to conduct their lives until "the seed" (Christ) came (Gal. 3:17-19).

The Mosaic Covenant is sometimes called the Sinaitic Covenant, since God made this covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:3). Unlike the covenant that God made with Abraham, this covenant was conditional. We see this in God's "if/ then" statement to Israel: "If you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession" (Exod. 19:5). Israel's part of the covenant was to obey God and do His will. God's part was to respond by blessing Israel and making them His "treasured possession" out of all nations (v. 5). In the end, however, Israel failed in its responsibility to be a light to the nations.

The Davidic Covenant

The Davidic Covenant is another of the important theocratic covenants in the Old Testament. It is found in 2 Samuel 7:4-16. In the passage the prophet Nathan spoke prophetically to King David:

"The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring ["seed," NKJV] to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son... Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever" (vv. 11-16)

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Here, God covenanted with David. As with the Mosaic Covenant, the purpose of this covenant was to further fulfill the covenant made with Abraham—to bless all nations through his seed (cf. 7:19). In the Davidic Covenant God made a three-part promise to David, including,

1. a land forever (v. 10)
2. an unending dynasty (vv. 11, 16)
3. an everlasting kingdom (vv. 13, 16; cf. Ps. 89:3-4, 29-37).

The fulfillment of each part of the promise had as its goal the blessing of the nations. The land provided a permanent base for missionary operation. The unending dynasty will ultimately lead to the reign of Jesus, the seed of David, the Savior of the world (Luke 1:32). And the everlasting kingdom will be the Kingdom that Jesus Himself will establish and rule over throughout eternity (v. 33).

In the very first verse of the New Testament Jesus is called “the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1). As the son of David, Jesus’ kingdom will last forever (2 Sam. 7:10-16). As the son of Abraham, it will be universal (Gen. 12:3). It will include individuals from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation on the earth (cf. Rev. 5:9; 7:9). Like the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant is unconditional. Notice how in verses 9-15 God says “I will” eight times!

The New Covenant

The fourth theocratic covenant is the New Covenant. It is found in Jeremiah 31:31-34, which reads,

“The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord: “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

In this passage God declared, “I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel” (v. 31). This covenant would be different from the Old Covenant (i.e., the Mosaic Covenant). The Old Covenant was written on tablets of stone, but the New Covenant would be written on the hearts of God’s people (Jer. 31:33; cf. 2 Cor. 2:33). It had four provisions:

1. *People will be regenerated:* God will put His “law in their minds and write it on their hearts” (v. 33).
2. *The knowledge of the Lord will be widespread:* “No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all

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know me, from the least of them to the greatest” (v. 34).

3. *People will receive full pardon for their sins:* “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (v. 34).
4. *The Holy Spirit will minister personally to people:* This is implied in the statements that they will be regenerated and taught personally by God (v. 34, cf. Ezek. 36:25-27; 2 Cor. 3:1).

In the New Testament we learn that Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:6, 12:15); it is an eternal covenant (Heb. 13:20); and it was established when Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead (1 Cor. 11:25-26). It remains in force today. The New Covenant accomplishes what the Old Covenant could not. It gives to people new hearts and the ability to obey the commandments of God. It also opened the way for all people of all nations to be in covenant relationship with God through Christ. A summary of the theocratic covenants is presented in Figure 5.1 below:

INTERTESTAMENTAL VIEWS OF THE KINGDOM

During the Intertestamental Period (the period between the Old and New Testaments) the Jews clung to the Old Testament promises concerning the coming Messiah. They believed that Messiah would come and deliver them from Gentile domination. They looked for Him to come in great

Figure 5.1
The Theocratic Covenants and Missio Dei

	Location	Type of Covenant	Promises related to the <i>Missio Dei</i>	Related Texts
Abrahamic Covenant	Gen. 12:1-3 (13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:4-16; 22:15-18)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unconditional • Universal in scope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All peoples on earth blessed through the seed of Abraham. 	Matt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16-19
Mosaic Covenant	Exod 19:5-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Israel was called to be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation." • They would thus be a witness to the Gentile nations. 	Isa. 42:6; 49:6; Rom. 15:16; 1Pet. 2:9, 12
Davidic Covenant	2 Sam. 7:4-16 (1Chr. 17:1-15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unconditional • Eternal in duration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God will establish David's throne forever. It will be an "everlasting kingdom." • This kingdom will be ruled by David's offspring (seed, i.e., Christ). 	Ps. 2:6-8; 72:8; 89:3-4, 29-37; Isa. 9:6-7; Matt. 1:1; Luke 1:32-33; Rev. 5:9; 7:9

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	Location	Type of Covenant	Promises related to the <i>Missio Dei</i>	Related Texts
New Covenant	Jer. 31:31-34 (33:1-1-9; Eze. 36:24-38)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unconditional • Universal in scope. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replaces the Old Covenant (i.e. the Mosaic Covenant). • God's law will be written on people's hearts. • All will know God. He will receive "honor before all nations on earth" (Jer. 33:9). 	Eze. 36:24-38; 1Cor. 11:25-26; Heb. 8:1-13; 9:15; 12:24

Figure 5.1

power, overthrow the Gentiles, set up His kingdom, and restore justice to God's chosen people. They believed that the Messiah would be a Davidic King, that is, He would set on the throne of David.

Jesus came during a time of great messianic expectation (Luke 2:25, 38). The Jews looked longingly for the promised Messiah. They thought that His coming would herald the coming of the kingdom of God (23:51). This helps to explain why the people were so ready to hear the message of John the Baptist (Mark 1:4-5). Jesus, however, failed to meet their expectations for the Messiah, although at times they thought He might. For instance, after feeding the five thousand, the people tried to make

him their king by force (John 6:14-15). Even His disciples shared these false hopes (Luke 24:21, Acts 1:6).

During the intertestamental period there were different views concerning the coming of the Messiah. The Pharisees believed that the Messiah would come if all Jews would obey the law perfectly for one day. The Zealots thought the Messiah would come only if all Jews would join in an armed rebellion against Rome.

The way Jesus came disappointed them both. Rather than come as the conquering king, Jesus came as the suffering servant. The Jews had largely ignored this part of messianic prophecy. They were disappointed when He came in humility, poverty, and meekness. This was totally different from their hopes and expectations.

The Jews were the natural “sons of the kingdom” (Matt. 8:11-12, NKJV). When Jesus came, He offered the Kingdom to them, but they rejected it (Luke 19:41-44; Matt. 27:20-26). The kingdom of God was thus taken from the Jews and given to “a nation bearing the fruits of it” (Matt. 21:43), that is, the church (2 Pet. 2:9), made up of both believing Jews and Gentiles. The church, the new Israel (i.e., the new seed of Abraham [Rom. 4:13-18]), therefore, inherited from Israel its special mission to take the message of God to the nations (Matt. 24:14; 28:18-20).

The kingdom of God is a major theme in the Old Testament. Although the term itself is not used, the idea fills its pages. God is seen as the Sovereign Ruler over all of creation. He is also seen as the King of Israel. He advances His Kingdom in the earth

by making and fulfilling covenants with His chosen people. In four important theocratic covenants God demonstrated that His mission will be fulfilled through a seed and a kingdom. The seed is Jesus, who was the promised Messiah-King. He is the seed of Abraham and will establish and rule over the restored Davidic kingdom which will be both universal and eternal. It is the responsibility of the church, the New Israel, to proclaim the message of that Kingdom to all nations before the second coming of Christ. In the next chapter we will examine the kingdom of God in the ministry and teaching of Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss how the Old Testament presents the message of the kingdom of God?
2. According to the Old Testament prophets, what is the relationship of the Messiah and the kingdom of God?
3. How do each of the Theocratic Covenants relate to the *missio Dei*?
 - The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:18)
 - The Mosaic Covenant (Exod. 19:5-8)
 - The Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:11-16)
 - The New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34)
4. Why did the Jews of Jesus' day fail to understand the purpose and meaning of His coming? How can a misunderstanding of the purpose and meaning of the kingdom of God effect our ministries today?

(Note: Content Review Questions for this chapter may be found on page 150.)

– CHAPTER 6 –

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

The kingdom of God was the central theme of Jesus’ ministry. As was mentioned in Chapter 5, the first verse of the New Testament calls Jesus “the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1). By referring to Jesus in this way, Matthew was reminding his readers that the life and ministry of Jesus was a fulfillment of the Abrahamic and the Davidic covenants.

You will remember that the Abrahamic Covenant promised the blessing of all nations (Gen. 12:3), and the Davidic Covenant promised an eternal kingdom (2 Sam. 7:14-16). Jesus will fulfill both covenants. He is the promised Seed who will bless all nations, and He is the One who will sit on the eternal throne of David. According to John V. York, “Understanding this is a key to reading the Gospels as disclosures of the mission of God.”¹ In reading the gospels, it helps to understand that these two concepts are the key themes gospel writers are addressing.

¹ John V. York, *Missions in the Age of the Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2000), 66.

In this chapter we will look more closely at the kingdom of God in the ministry and teaching of Jesus. In doing this we will examine three key topics: (1) Jesus' announcement of the kingdom of God, (2) Jesus' teaching concerning the kingdom of God, and (3) Jesus' ministry as a demonstration of kingdom power.

JESUS' ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

John the Baptist announced that the kingdom of God was near (Matt. 3:2). He called on the people to "prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him" (Mark 1:3). He also said that the one coming after him would "baptize [people] with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (v. 11; cf. John 1:32-33).

Jesus' announcement of His own ministry echoed that of John's. He declared, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15, NKJV). The time had arrived for the fulfillment of the Jewish messianic prophecies. Jesus' announcement summed up His teaching concerning the kingdom of God. It contained two emphases:

1. *God has acted in history*: "The kingdom of God is at hand." God invaded human history in the person of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Spirit.
2. *Man must respond to what God has done*: "Repent and believe the gospel." Every demonstration of the Kingdom demands a response. Man's required response

to the gospel is twofold: he must “repent” and “believe the gospel.” Repentance is directed toward God, and faith is directed toward Christ, the subject of the gospel (Acts 20:20-21).

JESUS’ TEACHING CONCERNING THE KINGDOM

Jesus had much to say about the kingdom of God. He taught about the purpose of the Kingdom and about the “mysteries of the Kingdom.” He often taught about the kingdom of God in parables. He further taught about the Kingdom as being an “upside-down” kingdom and about a “great reversal” that will occur in the future. Let’s look at these five areas of Jesus’ teaching concerning the Kingdom:

The Purpose of the Kingdom

Jesus taught that the purpose of the kingdom of God is to fulfill the mission of God. He summed up God’s plan to fulfill that goal in Matthew 24:14: “And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” According to this verse, God’s plan for achieving His mission is threefold:

1. It involves preaching the gospel in kingdom power.
2. It involves preaching the gospel in every part of the world (Gk: *oikoumene*, the inhabitable earth) (cf. Acts 1:8).

3. It involves preaching the gospel to every nation (Gk.: *ethne*, ethnic grouping) (cf. Rev. 5:9; 7:9).

In Matthew 24:14 Jesus told us where history is headed. He also told us what must happen before the end of the age comes and God sets up His eternal kingdom. The gospel must first be “preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations” (cf. Mark 13:10). Then—and only then—will the end of the age come. Then, “the kingdom(s) of the world [will] become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” (Rev. 11:15). Jesus will then “hand over the kingdom to God the Father” (1 Cor. 15: 24), and, together, “they will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 22:3, 5).

Someone has asked, “Why does God allow the kingdom of Satan to continue? Why doesn’t He simply destroy Satan’s kingdom and be done with it?” It is because God’s goal is not just to defeat the kingdom of Satan. He could easily do that. God’s goal is to get people out of the kingdom of Satan, lest they be destroyed with it. The purpose of His Kingdom is to accomplish that aim.

The Mystery of the Kingdom

Jesus spoke of the “mystery” (or “mysteries,” Matt. 13:11) of the kingdom of God. He said to His disciples, “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God ...” (Mark 4:11, NKJV). In the New Testament a “mystery” is a part of God’s eternal plan that was once hidden but has now been revealed (ref. Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:3; 9-11; Col. 1:26). The mysteries of the Kingdom are those truths about the kingdom of God that were not revealed to the Hebrew prophets, but have

now been revealed through Christ and the apostles. According to George Eldon Ladd, “This is the mystery of the Kingdom: Before the day of harvest, before the end of the age, God has entered into history in the person of Christ to work among men, to bring to them the life and blessings of His kingdom.”² He notes further that the Kingdom “comes to men today as disciples of Jesus still take the Gospel of the Kingdom into all the world.”³

Parables of the Kingdom

One way that Jesus taught about the kingdom of God was through parables. He often began His parables with the phrase, “The kingdom of heaven is like...” Parables that begin in this way (and the ones grouped with them) are sometimes called the “Parables of the Kingdom.” Most of these kingdom parables are found in Matthew 13 and Mark 4. Jesus told these parables to teach about the mission and character of His Kingdom (Matt. 13:10-11). The Kingdom Parables are listed in Figure 6.1 below.

A major theme of the Kingdom Parables is harvest. In Figure 6.1 the first, second, third, fourth, tenth, and eleventh parables deal with harvest, indicated by the symbol (H). Three other important parables containing a harvest theme are

² George Eldon Ladd, “The Gospel of the Kingdom” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, rev. ed., eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), A-69–A-70.

³ Ibid.

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- The Eleventh Hour Harvesters (Matt. 20:1-16)
- The Tenants (Matt. 21:33-43; Mark 12:1-12)
- The Unfruitful Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9).

Jesus' Kingdom Parables			
Parable	Matthew	Mark	Luke
1. The Sower ^(H)	13:3-9, 18-23	4:2-9, 13-20	8:5-8; 11-15
2. The Weeds ^(H)	13:24-30, 36-43		
3. The Mustard Seed ^(H)	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19
4. The Yeast ^(H)	13:33		13:20-21
5. The Hidden Treasure	13:44		
6. The Pearl	13:45-46		
7. The Net	13:47-51		
8. The New Treasures and Old	13:52		
9. The Lamp on a Stand		4:21-25	
10. The Growing Seed ^(H)		4:26-29	
11. The Mustard Seed ^(H)		4:30-32	

^(H)Indicates parables with a harvest theme

Figure 6.1

In the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23; Mark 4:2-9, 13-20) the farmer sows the seed, which is the word of God. The seed falls on different types of soil, resulting in different types of harvests. According to York, “This parable is central to Jesus’ teaching and hence to understanding the kingdom of God. It is placed at the beginning of three major parables in all three Synoptic Gospels. In Mark 4:13 Jesus asks: ‘Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any

parable?”⁴ York concludes: “Harvest is central to the teaching of Jesus and the kingdom of God.”⁵ Why is harvest a key theme of Jesus’ kingdom parables? Because harvest is the key concern of the *missio Dei*. The kingdom of God exists to carry out that mission. We will discuss this issue in more detail in Chapter 10.

The harvest theme is found in other teachings of Jesus. One day while He was on a preaching mission, Jesus told His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matt. 9:37-38). On another occasion, He gave seventy-two disciples the same instructions (Luke 10:1-2). On yet another occasion, at the well in Sychar, He won a Samaritan woman to Himself. He then said to His disciples, “Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest” (John 4:35). Harvest is an overarching theme in all of Jesus’ kingdom teaching, including His parables.

The Upside-Down Kingdom

Donald B. Kraybill has described the kingdom of God as an “upside-down kingdom.”⁶ This means that the rules and principles governing the kingdom of God are often just the opposite of the rules and principles governing the world. For

⁴ York, 67.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Donald B. Kraybill, *The Upside-Down Kingdom*, rev. ed. (Scotdale, PA: Herald Press 1990, 2003).

example, Jesus' disciples were once arguing about which one was the greatest among them. Hearing their argument, Jesus said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all" (Mark 9:35). Figure 6.1 illustrates this upside-down principle of leadership. It shows the difference between how the world views leadership and how Jesus views leadership in the kingdom of God.

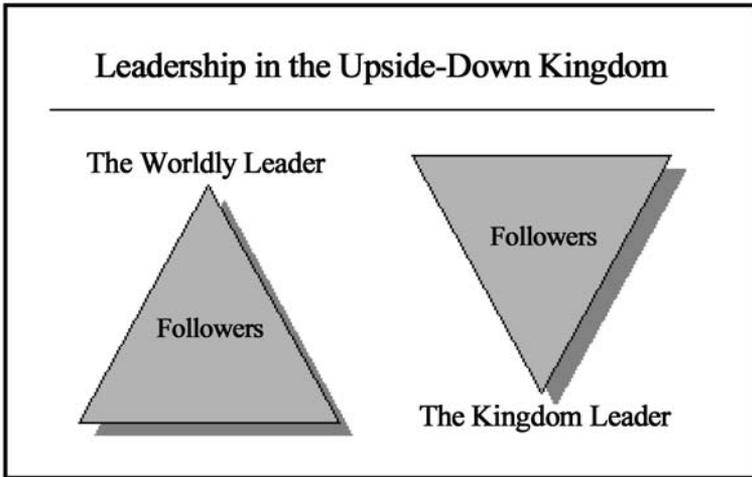


Figure 6.1

In the world's system, the leader is expected to be the one on top. He controls others, and receives most of the benefits. In the kingdom of God the leader is the one who is on the bottom. He or she serves and blesses others. This seems illogical—upside-down!—yet is it still true. A truth such as this is called a paradox. Jesus' teachings about the Kingdom contain other paradoxes, such as,

The Kingdom of God in the Ministry of Jesus

- To get one must give (Acts 20:35; Luke 6:38).
- To live one must die (John 12:24).
- To become great one must humble himself (Matt. 18:4; 23:8-12).
- To be first one must become last (Mark 9:35)
- If you love your life you will lose it, but if you hate your life and you will gain it (John 12:25).

Many of Jesus' teachings are in direct contradiction to the wisdom of the world. Here are some examples from His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-8, cf. Luke 6:20-49):

- "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3).
- "Blessed are those who mourn" (5:4).
- "Blessed are the meek" (5:5).
- "Blessed are those who are persecuted" (5:10).
- "Blessed are you when people insult you" (5:11).
- "Blessed are you when ... people falsely say all kinds of evil against you" (5:11).
- "Do not resist an evil person" (5:39).
- "If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (5:39).
- "If someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well" (5:40).
- "If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two" (5:41).
- "Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you" (5:42).

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- “Love your enemies” (5:43).
- “Pray for those who persecute you” (5:43).

The nature of all worldly kingdoms is to exploit their subjects and the kingdoms around them. They seek to use them for the benefit of their leaders and their prominent citizens. The nature of the kingdom of God, however, is to bless its subjects and ultimately to bless all nations of the earth.

The Great Reversal

Jesus also taught about what has been called the “great reversal.” It is a time in the future when things will be reversed and wrong will be made right. Then the proud and mighty will be put down and the humble of heart will be exalted. Jesus said,

The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. (Matt. 13:41-43)

Many who have been called great in this world will be small in the kingdom of God. And those who were small in this world’s eyes will become great in the Kingdom.

JESUS' MINISTRY: A DEMONSTRATION OF KINGDOM POWER

Jesus taught about the kingdom of God, not only with His words, but also with His works. His works were a demonstration of the power of the Kingdom. Jesus once told the Jews, "Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father" (John 10:37-39). Jesus' life and His miraculous works were indeed living sermons about the kingdom of God.

Through the miracles He did, Jesus taught at least three important lessons about the kingdom of God: (1) the Kingdom is present, (2) the Kingdom is powerful, and (3) the Kingdom is compassionate, that is, it is concerned with the problems and needs of suffering people. The same three lessons are taught today as miracles are manifested in kingdom ministry.

In His teaching and preaching Jesus taught much about the kingdom of God. He taught of a kingdom that is different from the kingdoms of the world. Its nature is to bless rather than to exploit. Its purpose is to fulfill the mission of God and to preach the gospel to all peoples and nations. The kingdom of God was the central theme of Jesus' ministry. He taught about it in parables, and through His miracles He demonstrated the Kingdom's presence, its power, and its compassion. Like Jesus, we too must proclaim the kingdom of God with our words and

our works. In the next chapter we will discuss the kingdom of God in the ministry and preaching of the apostles.

Discussion Questions

1. How did Jesus relate His ministry to the kingdom of God? How then should we relate ours?
2. What, according to Jesus' words in Matthew 24:14, is the purpose of the kingdom of God? What should our purpose be? Why?
3. Harvest is a primary theme of Jesus' Kingdom Parables? Why do you think He emphasized harvest so much?
4. How should the concept of the "Upside-down Kingdom" affect the way we conduct our ministries today?
5. Why is it important that our ministries, as was the ministry of Jesus, be demonstrations of the power of the Kingdom?

(Note: Content Review Questions for this chapter may be found on page 152.)

– CHAPTER 7 –

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN
APOSTOLIC
PROCLAMATION AND TEACHING

In the last chapter we looked at the kingdom of God in the Synoptic Gospels. In this chapter we will look at the Kingdom in the Gospel of John, the Acts of the Apostles, the New Testament epistles, and Revelation. In these writings there are fewer mentions of the kingdom of God than in the Synoptics. Some liberal theologians have, therefore, concluded that the apostles changed the message of the kingdom of God into a religion about Jesus. Is it true? Did the early church set aside Jesus' message of the Kingdom and replace it with another message? As we will discover in this chapter, this is not the case, for the message of the Kingdom still fills these books.

There is, however, a subtle change of wording that takes place in some of the apostles' writings, as we will see in this chapter. If we are to understand the place of the kingdom of God in the New Testament church, we must understand this change. In this chapter we will examine the kingdom of God in apostolic

proclamation and teaching. In doing this we make and defend two statements: (1) The apostles proclaimed the kingdom of God, and (2) The apostles sometimes used different terminology concerning the Kingdom.

THE APOSTLES PROCLAIMED THE KINGDOM OF GOD

As with Jesus, the message of the kingdom of God was a key theme of the apostles' preaching and teaching. This fact is demonstrated in four ways: (1) in the apostles' preaching in the book of Acts, (2) in Paul's teaching in his epistles, (3) in the teaching of the other apostles in their epistles, and (4) in the teaching of John in the book of Revelation.

The Kingdom of God in the Book of Acts

The kingdom of God is a key theme in the book of Acts, where it is mentioned eight times (1:3, 6; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31), and Jesus is portrayed as the King three times (2:30; 5:13, 31). In fact, the kingdom of God is mentioned twice in the first six verses of the book. There, Jesus "appeared to them [His disciples] over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God" (v. 3). Then, in verse 6 the disciples ask Jesus a question about the Kingdom: "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He answered them that the God would restore the Kingdom in His own time. Acts thus begins with a clear emphasis on the kingdom of God.

Not only does the book of Acts begin with an emphasis on the kingdom of God, it ends with the same emphasis. In the

closing verses of Acts Luke writes, “For two whole years Paul... preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ” (28:30-31, cf. v. 23). So, like a picture frame, the kingdom of God frames the entire book.

Look again at Acts 1:3, where Luke states that during the forty days between Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, He spoke “of things concerning the kingdom of God.” What were these important kingdom themes about which Jesus spoke? During those forty days Jesus taught on three key kingdom themes:

- He taught about Himself as the fulfillment of the Old Testament scriptures (Luke 24:25-27, 44-48).
- He taught about the church’s responsibility to take the gospel to all nations (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).
- He taught about the need to be empowered by the Spirit to accomplish the missionary task (Matt. 28:20; Mark 16:17-18; Luke 24:49; John 20:22; Acts 1:3-8).

These kingdom themes are repeated again and again throughout the book of Acts. Other mentions of the kingdom of God in Acts include the following:

- *Philip’s preaching in the city of Samaria*: “But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (8:12).
- *Paul’s and Barnabas’ preaching in Galatia*: “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom

of God,' they said" (14:22).

- *Paul declaring Jesus to be king in Thessalonica:* The Jews accused Paul and the Christians, saying, "They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus" (17:7).
- *Paul's teaching in Ephesus:* "Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God" (19:8).
- *Paul's testimony to the Ephesian elders:* "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again" (20:25).
- *Paul's message in Rome:* "From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus... Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ" (28:23, 31).

The Kingdom of God in the Epistles of Paul

Paul also had much to say about the kingdom of God in his epistles. In *Romans* he taught that Jesus was "born of the seed of David" (1:3), and that the "kingdom of God is ... joy in the Holy Spirit" (14:17).

In *1 Corinthians* Paul wrote that "the kingdom of God is not in word but in power" (4:20). He further taught that "the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God" (6:9-10). He promised the believers in Corinth that someday Christ will "deliver the kingdom of God to the Father" (15:24), and that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (15:50).

In *Galatians* Paul taught that those who walk in the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God (5:21). In *Ephesians* he wrote that Christ was raised up “far above all principality and power and might and dominion” and that He has become “head over all things” to the church (1:21-22). He also taught that the disobedient will have no “inheritance in the kingdom of God” (5:5).

He wrote the believers in *Thessalonica* telling them that we are to “walk worthy” of God who calls us into His own kingdom (1 Thess. 2:12, NKJV), and that we are to seek to be “counted worthy of the kingdom of God” (2 Thess. 1:5). In *1 Timothy* he calls God “the King eternal” (2:17), and Jesus “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords” (6:15). He also calls Jesus the “seed of David” (2:8). In *2 Timothy* he says that Jesus “will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom” (4:1). Finally, He spoke of the Lord and “His heavenly kingdom” (4:17).

So, as one can readily see, to accuse Paul of abandoning the message of the kingdom of God is a foolish statement. The kingdom of God was at the heart of all of his preaching and teaching.

The Kingdom of God in the Other Epistles

Other New Testament writers spoke of the kingdom of God. The writer of *Hebrews*, for instance, wrote about Christ’s throne and Kingdom (1:8). He said that all things have been put under subjection to Him (2:8), and that the saints will someday receive “a kingdom which cannot be shaken” (12:28). *James* said that we are “heirs of the kingdom” (2:5). *Peter* wrote that Christ is at the

right hand of God where “angels and authorities and power” have been made subject to Him (1 Pet. 3:22). He also wrote of “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:11). Finally, *Jude* wrote of God’s dominion: “To God our Savior ... be ... dominion and power, both now and forever” (v. 25).

The Kingdom in the Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation also has much to say about the kingdom of God. Several times in the book Jesus is pictured sitting on a royal throne (1:4; 5:13; 12:5; 14:3). God is also seen sitting on a throne in heaven (7:9-11). In Revelation Jesus holds the “key of David” (3:7) and is called the “ruler over the kings of the earth” (1:5). Further, John says that Jesus has made His followers “a kingdom and priests” and they shall reign under Him (1:6; 5:10).

When the seventh angel of Revelation sounds his trumpet, a loud voice in heaven cries out, “The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever!” (11:15). John further wrote that Christ will someday “rule all nations with a rod of iron” (12:5).

After the red dragon is defeated in heaven, another loud voice cries out, “The kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come” (12:10). At one point in the narrative the victorious saints sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, calling Jesus the “King of the saints” and saying that “all nations shall come and worship before [Him]” (15:4). Twice Jesus is called “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (17:14; 19:16). Finally, the saints will live and reign with Christ a thousand years in His

Kingdom (20:4, 6).

What shall we conclude from our study thus far in this chapter? We conclude that the theme of the kingdom of God is an important teaching, not just in the Synoptic Gospels, but throughout the New Testament. We also conclude that the idea of the kingdom of God is the same in Acts, in the epistles, and in Revelation as it is in the Gospels.

DIFFERENT TERMINOLOGY

John, Luke, and Paul taught much about the kingdom of God. There is, however, an interesting fact about their teaching on the subject. A close examination of their writings reveals how a subtle change in kingdom terminology takes place: the apostles begin to use different (yet synonymous) terms in place of the phrase “kingdom of God.”

Synonymous Terms Used by Jesus

Jesus signaled the change in the story of the Rich Young Ruler. Read the following passage carefully noting how the terms in **bold type** are used interchangeably:

Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to **get eternal life?**” “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to **enter life**, obey the commandments” ... When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to **enter the kingdom of heaven.**”

Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to **enter the kingdom of God.**” When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can **be saved?**” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Peter answered him, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?” Jesus said to them, ... “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will **inherit eternal life.** But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first” (Matt. 19:16-30, emphasis added).

The relationship between these highlighted terms is diagrammed in Figure 7.1 below. The synonymous use in these terms signals a change in terminology concerning the kingdom of God.

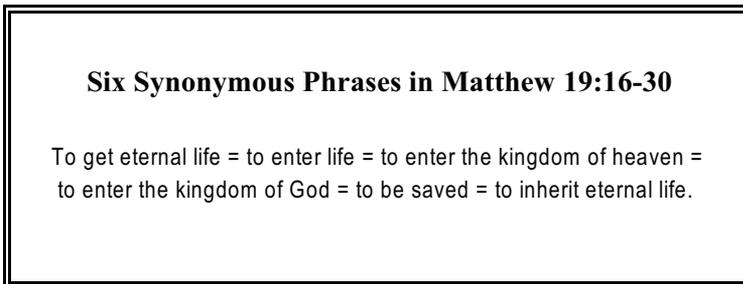


Figure 7.1

Synonymous Terms in the Apostolic Kerygma

In Acts the term “the gospel” or the single word “Jesus” is sometimes used to mean “the kingdom of God.” The meaning

and message, however, are the same. Peter Kuzmic wrote,

The person of Jesus and his accomplished work of redemption rightfully replaced the kingdom in Christian proclamation. The proclaimer of the kingdom became the proclaimed One. This is not a betrayal but an expression of faithfulness to the original message of Jesus in whom the kingdom was present.¹

Kuzmic then quotes Lesslie Newbigin: “The *news* is that ‘the kingdom of God’ is no longer merely a theological phrase. There is now a name and a human face... The apostle would have denied the central message of Jesus if he had not made that shift of language from ‘kingdom’ to ‘Jesus.’”²

Both Philip and Paul are examples of this truth. Luke writes that “Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there” (Acts 8:5). He then enlarges by saying that Philip “preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ”(v. 12). Comparing these two verses, we discover that to “proclaim the Christ” and to preach “the good news of the kingdom of God” are the same. Both are declaring “the name of Jesus Christ” (v. 12).

¹ Peter Kuzmic, “Kingdom of God” in the *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee, and Patrick H. Alexander (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, 1988), 524-526. Note: Many of the teachings in this chapter are adapted from this article.

² Lesslie Newbigin, *Sign of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980).

Another example is found in the ministry of Paul in Acts. At the conclusion of the book, Luke writes that Paul “explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus” (Acts 28:23). He then says that Paul was “preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 31). Again, as with Philip, we can see how “preaching the kingdom of God” is the same as teaching and preaching about Jesus Christ. We therefore conclude: When, in the book of Acts, Luke says that the Christians preached Christ or preached the gospel, we can know that they were at the same time proclaiming the message of the kingdom of God.

John’s Adaptation of Terms

In his gospel John often substituted the phrases “life” or “eternal life” for “kingdom of God.” This can be seen by looking closely at Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus in John 3. There, He says to Nicodemus, “I tell you the truth, no one can see [or ‘enter,’ v. 5] the kingdom of God unless he is born again” (v. 3). Then, in verses 15-16, He describes the same experience with different words: “Everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” Finally, in verse 17, Jesus calls the same experience being saved: “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (NKJV). These relationships are illustrated in Figure 7.2 below.

Synonymous Phrases in the Gospel of John			
vv. 3-5	Be born again	→(in order to)→	enter the Kingdom
•vv. 15-16	Believe	→(in order to)→	have eternal life
•v. 17	(Believe/be born again)	→(in order to)→	be saved

Figure 7.2

From Figure 7.2 note how in verses 3-5 being born again results in one entering the kingdom of God. Then in verses 15 and 16 believing results in eternal life. These parallel statements are describing the same experience. Finally, notice how both believing and being born again results in one's being saved, another parallel expression.

What can we conclude from this exercise? We conclude that being born again is synonymous with believing in Christ, and that entering the kingdom of God is synonymous with having eternal life. And both are synonymous with being saved. Although John uses the phrase kingdom of God only four times in his gospel (3:3, 5; 18:16), he uses the synonymous terms "life" and "eternal life" thirty-three and sixteen times respectively. And when John speaks of (eternal) life, he is, in effect, speaking of entering into and living in the kingdom of God. Therefore, contrary to the claims of some, John has much to say about the Kingdom.

Paul’s Adaptation of Terms: “Jesus is Lord!”

In his epistles Paul replaces the word “King”—often used in the Old Testament and the Gospels to describe God and Christ—with the word “Lord.” Early in its history, “Jesus is Lord!” became the anthem of the New Testament church (Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11). Thus, in Paul’s writings “the “Lordship of Christ” became synonymous with the “Kingship of Jesus.”

Why did Paul make such a change? Possibly because he was the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 15:15-16). He thus “contextualized” the message of the Kingdom to his Gentile audience. He used dynamic equivalent terms, that is, language more familiar to those living under Roman rule. Throughout the Roman empire the caesars claimed to be Lord instead of King. Thus “Christ is King” became “Jesus is Lord,” although the meaning remained the same.

The kingdom of God was a central theme of apostolic preaching and teaching. Although the terminology sometimes changed, the message remained the same. To believe in Christ and receive eternal life meant to enter the kingdom of God. To proclaim that “Jesus is Lord” meant to proclaim Him as King. The message of the kingdom was not lost by the early church as some have claimed. It was simply repackaged for its new Gentile audience.

In the next chapter we will be looking at how those who have submitted to the King and entered His Kingdom, should conduct their lives.

Discussion Questions

1. If Jesus and the apostles defined their ministries in terms of the kingdom of God, how should we define ours? Give reasons for your answers. How would this change the way we do ministry?
2. How does an understanding of the synonymous use of “kingdom terms” in the ministry of Jesus and the writing and the apostles help us to understand our kingdom work today?
3. Why did Paul change the saying “Christ is King” to “Jesus is Lord?” in his epistles? What possible implications flow from this practice for contextualized ministry today?

(Note: Content Review Questions for this chapter
may be found on page 152.)

– CHAPTER 8 –

LIFE

IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Every kingdom has laws and principles which govern its society. The kingdom of God is no different. In this chapter we will look at some of those laws and principles. In doing this we will discuss how one is to live life in the kingdom of God. We will address three aspects of kingdom life: (1) entering the kingdom of God, (2) the quality of life in the Kingdom, (3) the responsibilities of life in the Kingdom.

ENTERING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

On several occasions Jesus talked about what one must do to enter the kingdom of God. At times He was obviously referring to entering the Kingdom in its present form (Mark 1:14; John 3:5). At other times He was clearly talking about entering the Kingdom when it comes in the future (Mark 9:47). Sometimes, however, it is unclear which aspect of the Kingdom Jesus was talking about. Let's look at what He taught about entering both the present Kingdom and the Kingdom to come.

Entering the Present Kingdom

Jesus talked about certain attitudes and actions necessary for one to enter the kingdom of God:

Attitudes. Two attitudes Jesus specifically mentioned were humility of heart and trust in God. Concerning humility of heart, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3; cf. Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17). One must, therefore, humble himself and become like a child to enter the Kingdom.

Concerning trust in God, Jesus said to His disciples, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:24-25). It is hard for the rich to enter the Kingdom because they often trust in their riches to get what they want. It is, therefore, difficult for them to trust in God. Yet, when Jesus’ disciples asked Him, “Who then can be saved?” He answered, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God” (v. 27; ref. Matt. 19:23-26; Luke 18:24-25).

Actions. What specific actions must one take to enter the Kingdom? Jesus said that one must be born again (John 3:3-5). He said, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again . . . no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:3-5). To be born again one must do two things: he must repent of his sins, and he must put his faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

These two elements—repentance and faith—are seen in the preaching of Jesus and Paul. Jesus began His ministry by saying, “The time has come . . . The kingdom of God is near. *Repent* and

believe the good news!” (Mark 1:14-15, italics added). Paul told the Ephesian elders, “I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in *repentance* and have *faith* in our Lord Jesus” (Acts 20:21, italics added, cf. Heb. 6:1).

Reader, have you truly entered into the kingdom of God? If not, you should repent of your sins now. Admit that you are a sinner, ask God to forgive you, and turn from your sins. You must also put your faith in Christ, invite Him into your life, and receive Him as Lord and Savior. Jesus promised, “Whoever believes in [Me] shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Entering the Coming Kingdom

To enter the coming Kingdom one must first have entered the present Kingdom through faith. Entering the coming kingdom, however, also requires that one continue in faith. It is not enough to simply enter the present Kingdom, and then do nothing else. One must continue in faith if he or she is to enter the Kingdom which is to come. Jesus said, “He who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matt. 10:22). Paul said, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22). Peter wrote,

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:10-11).

Continuing in the faith involves several things. It involves faithfully doing the will of God (Matt. 7:21-23, note the phrase “in that day”). It also involves casting off everything that hinders (Mark 9:45-47; Heb. 12:1), and living a life of true righteousness (Matt. 5:20). Finally, continuing in the faith involves remaining faithful during trials and tribulations (Acts 14:22).

THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE KINGDOM

Let’s now look at the quality of life in the Kingdom.

A Superior Quality of Life

The Bible describes life in the Kingdom as one of blessing—both in this life and in the life to come. Jesus said, “No one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life” (Luke 18:29-30). Those who have entered the Kingdom can confidently expect “strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.”¹

Kingdom Life Described

The Bible describes the kingdom of God in various ways. We can learn about the quality of life in the kingdom of God by examining these various biblical descriptions. There are at least seven:

¹ “Great is Thy Faithfulness,” T. O. Chisholm and William M. Runyan (Hope Publishing Co., 1923).

Life in the Kingdom of God

1. *A kingdom of life.* Jesus described the kingdom of God as a kingdom of life. To enter the Kingdom is to find eternal life (cf. John 3:5; 16-17). Eternal life speaks of more than just the duration of life, it also speaks of a higher quality of life. Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). Life in the Kingdom is a life lived in all of its fullness!

2. *A kingdom of light.* The kingdom of God is also a kingdom of light. Those who follow Christ have been called “out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet. 2:9). Jesus is “the light of the world” (8:12) and “the true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world “ (1:9; cf. 12:46). He promised, “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). The children of the kingdom are called the “children of light” (Luke 16:8; Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5). As a result, they “share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light” (Col. 1:12). Light speaks of truth, understanding, and knowledge (Luke 11:35; John 3:20-21; 8:12; 2 Pet. 1:19). Life in the Kingdom is thus a life of true knowledge and understanding!

3. *A kingdom of peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.* Paul wrote, “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). Nine times in the Beatitudes Jesus describes life in the Kingdom as “blessed” (Matt. 5:3-6). He then tells His followers to “rejoice and be glad,” even in the midst of persecution (v. 12). Jesus promised to give His disciples peace greater than the world can give (John 14:27), a peace which “transcends all understanding” (Phil. 4:7). Life in the Kingdom

is a life of joy and peace, a joy and peace that comes from the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:21; Acts 13:52; Rom. 8:6; 14:17; 15:13; Gal. 5:22; 1Thess. 1:6).

4. *A kingdom of righteousness.* The kingdom of God is not only a matter of peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, it is matter of “righteousness ... in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). Righteousness can be defined in two ways: First, it is an *internal state*, one of being in right relationship with God. Secondly, it involves *external action*, that is, right living. Righteousness is living one’s life according to the standards of God’s kingdom. Jesus told His disciples, “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5: 20).

Life in the Kingdom demands a high standard of righteousness. We must be holy as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16). As mentioned above, the righteousness of the kingdom of God is not merely an outward righteousness, like that of the Pharisees (Matt. 5:20), it is an inward purity of life that comes from having a renewed heart (2 Cor. 5:17). The law said that we are not to murder (Exod. 20:13); Jesus says that we are not to get angry with our brother (Matt. 5:21-22). The law said we are to not commit adultery (Exod. 20:14); Jesus says we are not to lust after a woman (Matt. 5:27-32). The law said that we are not to break our oaths, but Jesus says we are to live lives of such integrity that oaths are unnecessary (Matt. 5:33-37).

Our righteousness, however, is not our own, it is the righteousness of Christ, attained through faith in Him and imparted to us by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 4:3-6; 14:17). Life in the Kingdom is thus a life of true inward purity.

5. *A kingdom of love and compassion.* Paul spoke of “the kingdom of the Son of his love” (Col. 1:13, NKJV). The kingdom of God is not like the kingdoms of the world. The kingdoms of the world are built on self ambition, greed, and pride. The kingdom of God is built on love and compassion. Jesus, the King, demonstrated such love and compassion for people (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:23; 20:34; Mark 1:41; 6:34; 8:2; Luke 7:13). He then taught that we, too, must have compassion for others (Luke 10:30-37; 1 John 3:16-17).

6. *A kingdom of generosity.* Because the kingdom of God is a kingdom of compassion, it is also a kingdom of generosity. The word “give” is found 199 times in the New Testament (120 in the gospels). When Jesus sent out the disciples, He instructed them, “As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:6-7). Life in the Kingdom involves generously sharing the blessings of the King with others.

7. *A kingdom of spiritual power.* Paul wrote that “the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power” (1 Cor. 4:20). Before Jesus returned to heaven, “He appeared to [His disciples] over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). What kingdom truths did Jesus speak about during those forty days? We find out in the next five verses:

Once, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be

baptized with the Holy Spirit.” So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:4-8)

Jesus taught His disciples that one can personally experience the power of the kingdom of God when he or she is baptized in the Holy Spirit. It is power enough to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth!

A Glimpse of Life in the Kingdom

What does this kingdom life look like when it is put into practice? Luke gives us a glimpse of kingdom life in the New Testament church soon after the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost:

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47).

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This passage points out some of the activities and characteristics of kingdom life in the post-Pentecost church. These activities include the following:

- *Teaching, fellowship, and prayer.* “They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (v. 42).
- *Wonders, miraculous signs, and awe.* “Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles” (v. 43).
- *Unity and generosity.* “All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need” (vv. 44-45).
- *Joy, praise, and favor.* “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people” (vv. 46-47).
- *Numerical growth.* And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (v. 47).

We can expect the same quality of spiritual life when we are filled with the Spirit and when we live according to the principles of the kingdom of God.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF LIFE IN THE KINGDOM

Blessing Brings Responsibility

Living in the kingdom of God is not only about being blessed; it also has its responsibilities. Three of those responsibilities are as follows:

1. To seek first the kingdom of God. Those who live in the Kingdom have the responsibility of giving the kingdom of God priority in their lives. Jesus said, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt. 6:33).

2. To act on the teachings of the King. Our responsibility is not only to hear the words of Jesus, we must also act on what He says. Jesus said, “Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man ... but everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man ...” (Matt. 7:24-26). Wisdom is not in hearing the words of the King, but in putting them into practice.

3. To do the will of the Father. Those living for the kingdom of God do not seek their own will but the will of God. Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). It is not enough to simply go to church and sing “He is Lord!” with the rest of the worshipers. The person living for the Kingdom must do the will of his Lord.

Two Categories of Responsibility in the Kingdom

Jesus said: “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of God has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it” (Matt. 11:12). From this verse we can divide our kingdom responsibilities into two categories: (1) those involved in laying hold of the Kingdom and (2) and those involved in advancing the Kingdom, as follows:

Laying hold of the Kingdom. Jesus said that forceful people are “laying hold” of the kingdom of God. This phrase speaks of one’s personal experience in the Kingdom. Kingdom blessings are not passively received; they must be aggressively pursued. Each believer is individually responsible for appropriating the blessings of the Kingdom for himself or herself. Jesus taught that we must *seek* the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33). The Greek word here translated *seek* (Gk. *zeteo*) was again used by Jesus when He said, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). Just as ardently as Jesus sought the lost, we are to seek His Kingdom.

The main asset by which we lay hold of the kingdom of God is faith. Jesus said, “Have faith in God “ (Mark 11:22). He then taught about the power of faith:

I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, “Go, throw yourself into the sea,” and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. (v. 23)

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Faith is the currency of the Kingdom. It is the means by which we appropriate its many blessings.

The New Testament has much to say about other personal responsibilities in laying hold of the kingdom of God. These responsibilities include the following:

- We must be willing to “sell all” to attain the Kingdom (Matt. 13:44-45).
- We must “worship God acceptably with reverence and awe” (Heb. 12:28).
- We must “be all the more eager to make [our] calling and election sure” (2 Pet. 1:10-11).
- We must be willing to forgive others as the King has forgiven us (Matt. 6:12; 14).
- We must live a life of righteousness and holiness (Matt. 5:20; Ga. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5).
- We must not look back (Luke 9:62).
- We must seek to be counted worthy of the kingdom of God (2 Thess. 1:5).
- We must remain constantly prepared for the King’s appearing (Matt. 25:1-13).
- We must be prepared to endure persecution and hardship (Matt. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:18).

Forcefully advancing the Kingdom. Jesus also spoke of our responsibility in extending the Kingdom to others. He said that “from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing” (Matt. 11:12). As servants of the King, we must aggressively advance His

kingdom. Five times during the forty days between His crucifixion and His ascension, Jesus commanded His church to take the gospel to all nations (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:49; John 20:22; Acts 1:8). This is the primary way we advance the Kingdom in the earth, by preaching the good news to everyone! We will discuss this issue more in Chapter 10.

In forcefully advancing the Kingdom we must, in the power of the Spirit, preach the gospel “in the whole world as a testimony to all nations” (Matt. 24:14). To do this we must pray to the Lord of the harvest “to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matt. 9:38). The church must then fully cooperate with God in sending missionaries to the nations (Mark 16:15; Acts 13:3; Rom. 10:15).

Beyond these things our responsibility in forcefully advancing the Kingdom includes the following:

- Like salt and light, we must influence the world around us (Matt. 5:13-16).
- We must pray for the manifestation of God’s kingdom on earth (Matt. 6:10).
- We must faithfully do the business of the King as we wait for His return (Luke 19:11-15).
- We must do spiritual warfare against the kingdom of Satan (Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20; 2 Cor. 10:3-6; Eph. 6:12).
- We must boldly demonstrate the power of the Kingdom through miracles, signs, and wonders (Mark 16:15-18; Luke 9:1-2; 10:11; 10:9-11; 16:17-20).

- We must live a life of love and compassion toward those in need, especially to those of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).
-

Someday all of those who have served Christ will reign with Him in the coming Kingdom. Until then we are to faithfully live as His servants in the Kingdom that has already come. This life involves both blessings and responsibilities. Our primary responsibility is to be witnesses of the King. We are to preach the gospel to all nations before He comes again. In the next chapter we will talk about the role of the Holy Spirit in the kingdom of God.

Discussion Questions

1. Compare and contrast the New Testament teachings concerning entering into the present Kingdom with entering into the coming Kingdom. How will each concept effect our teaching?
2. Review the seven qualities and responsibilities of life in the Kingdom, and discuss how our understanding of each of these seven qualities will affect our lives and ministries.
3. Discuss how Jesus' teaching concerning entering the kingdom of God in Matthew 11:12 should influence how we teach and preach concerning the Kingdom.

(Note: Content Review Questions for this chapter may be found on page 154.)

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Throughout the Bible the kingdom of God is described as a kingdom of power. King David prayed, “Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power... Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom” (1 Chron. 29:11-12; cf. Ps. 145:11). Paul wrote, “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power”(1 Cor. 4:20). Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God; He also came demonstrating the Kingdom’s power. He revealed that the source of His kingdom power was the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:28; Luke 4:18-19).

In this chapter we will examine the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the kingdom of God. In doing this we will address three significant kingdom issues: (1) the Holy Spirit in the kingdom ministry of Jesus, (2) the kingdom of God and Pentecost, (3) the Holy Spirit and the kingdom ministry of the church.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE KINGDOM MINISTRY OF JESUS

Jesus' Two Kingdom Goals

Jesus came to earth with two great kingdom goals. These two goals are disclosed in John the Baptist's announcement of His ministry:

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, *the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*" ... Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is *he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.*" (John 1:29, 32-33, emphasis added)

According to this passage, Jesus' ministry would involve two great redemptive acts: First, as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," He would lay down His life as a sacrifice for all mankind. Next, as the One who would "baptizes with the Holy Spirit," He would empower His church to take that same message of redemption to the nations. Not only would Jesus pay the price for the world's redemption, He would give His followers the power they needed to carry that message to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Jesus' Ministry in the Spirit

Because He was anointed by the Spirit, Jesus performed His kingdom ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist testified concerning Him, "For he whom God has sent

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speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him ...” (John 3:34-35, KJV). Jesus thus began His ministry with a pronouncement:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19)

In this pronouncement Jesus outlined the content and character of His earthly ministry. He would proclaim the good news in the Spirit’s power. This proclamation would result in people being healed, delivered, and set free from their bondages.

The power of the Kingdom was present in Jesus’ ministry through the Holy Spirit who anointed Him. This anointing came upon Him immediately after He was baptized in water (Luke 3:22). Peter noted “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him” (Acts 10:38).

It was through the power of the Spirit that Jesus defeated Satan. Soon after His baptism Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness. Jesus, however, was “full of the Spirit,” and was “led by the Spirit” (Luke 4:1). As a result, He was able to defeat the devil. After this, He “returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit” (v. 14). Jesus told how He defeated the demonic powers. He said, “If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:28; cf. Luke 11:20).

Jesus even faced the agonies of Calvary by the power of the Spirit. Hebrews 9:14 says that “through the eternal Spirit [Jesus] offered himself unblemished to God.” It was the Holy Spirit who gave Him the strength He needed to face the agony of the cross! In the same way the Holy Spirit gave Stephen the power and courage to face martyrdom (Acts 7:54-59).

It was also the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. Paul spoke of “the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead” (Rom. 8:11). By His death and resurrection Jesus ushered in a New Covenant and a New Age (Heb. 9:15; 12:24). He thus set up “a kingdom which cannot be shaken” (12:28), and made the way for us to taste the powers of the age to come (6:5).

Jesus’ Final Command to His Disciples

Jesus not only performed His own ministry in the power of the Spirit, He commanded His disciples to do the same. They were to wait to be empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4). He promised them that they too would be clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49). This would happen when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). They would thus inherit Jesus’ kingdom ministry, and be empowered to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:3, 8). The disciples received this kingdom power on the Day of Pentecost:

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of

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them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:1-4)

We, too, can receive that same power by asking God for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:9-13). He will empower us just as He empowered those first disciples.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND PENTECOST

The Day of Pentecost was an important day in the history of the Kingdom. It was the day when God empowered His church to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Let's take a closer look at the relationship between the kingdom of God and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.

The Kingdom Coming in Power

Jesus clearly tied the kingdom of God to Pentecost. In Mark 9:1 He told His disciples, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power." This was a prophecy concerning the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:8). Just before He ascended into heaven, Jesus again linked the kingdom of God to the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost: "He appeared to [His disciples] over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).¹ What kingdom topics did Jesus discuss? He discussed global mission and the necessity of

¹ In the KJV this sentence ends with a colon [:], indicating that the translators felt that the statements which followed were a continuation and explanation of this one.

being empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish that mission. Listen to His words:

Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. . . But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:4-5, 8)

Pentecost represents the *already* aspect of the coming of the Kingdom with power. On that same occasion, you will remember, the disciples asked about the *not yet* aspect of the Kingdom. They asked, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (v. 6). Jesus did not answer their question, but pointed them back to the *already* business of the Kingdom, that is, witness to the nations in Pentecostal power (vv. 7-8). The baptism in the Holy Spirit is thus a crucial matter in the work of the Kingdom.

The Transfer of Kingdom Power

At Pentecost Jesus transferred His kingdom power to His disciples. The Spirit who had anointed and empowered His kingdom ministry would anoint and empower theirs. Bible scholars note that this transfer of power is part of a recurring “transfer motif” that occurred in sacred history.² In Scripture a

² Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 1984), 20-22.

motif is a type of event that is repeated again and again, and thus forms a recurring pattern. Such patterns give us insights into how God works with His people today. The transfer motif is seen in the pattern of how the Holy Spirit, who rested on a great spiritual leader, is then given (or transferred) to his followers.

We can see this motif in the Old Testament. For example, God transferred the Spirit who was upon Moses to the seventy elders (Num. 11:10-30). He also transferred Moses' charismatic authority to Joshua (27:16-20; 34:9). In another place, God transferred the Spirit who was upon Elijah to Elisha (2 Kings 2:9-15).

Much the same thing happened at Pentecost. There, Jesus transferred His kingdom power to His disciples. Peter Kuzmic said, "The Pentecostal narrative is the story of the transfer of the charismatic Spirit from Jesus to the disciples... Having become the exclusive bearer of the Holy Spirit at His baptism, Jesus becomes the giver of the Spirit at Pentecost."³ This transfer of kingdom power had a twofold effect on the disciples:

- *Public witness.* The disciples immediately began to proclaim the gospel with great power and results (Acts 2:14ff, 41, 47).
- *Powerful demonstrations.* Their preaching was accompanied by demonstrations of supernatural power (v. 43).

³ Peter Kuzmic, "Kingdom of God" in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee, and Patrick H. Alexander (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, 1988, 525).

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Peter announced that the power of the Spirit was available to all who would repent and follow Christ. He said that Joel's prophecy that God would pour out His Spirit on "all people" (2:17) was being fulfilled. He further declared that the gift of the Spirit was for "all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call" (v. 39). Kuzmic comments:

The power of the kingdom was no longer to be limited to Jesus and the apostolic circle. The Pentecostal promise of God—"I will pour out my Spirit on all people"—was fulfilled. This means that in and through the church the Spirit is to continue and to universalize the kingdom ministry of Jesus himself.⁴

At Pentecost the church experienced the "powers of the coming age" (Heb. 6:5). We too can experience that same power when we open our lives to the Spirit of God.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE KINGDOM
MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

A New Kingdom Community

At Pentecost, Christ, the Anointed One, instituted a new Spirit-anointed community whose purpose was to carry out the mission of the kingdom of God. The church became the visible Spirit-empowered representative of God's kingdom on earth.

⁴ Ibid., 524.

Characteristics of the New Kingdom Community

What are some characteristics of Christ's new kingdom community? In Acts chapters 1 and 2 the new Spirit-anointed community is depicted in six ways:

1. *A Kingdom Community.* The empowering of the church on the Day of Pentecost occurred in the context of "things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). The church is the present representative of God's Kingdom on earth. It was established to declare the good news of the Kingdom to all nations before Christ returns (Matt. 24:14). In doing this, it would be required to demonstrate the power of the kingdom of God (Mark 3:13-15; 16:15-20).

Through the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5; 2:4), believers are empowered to do kingdom ministry. Roger Stronstad comments: "Through the exercise of this power the disciples became partners with Jesus in manifesting the kingdom of God—liberating captives from the bondage to the spirit world and restoring many others to health."⁵

2. *An Eschatological Community.* Eschatology is the study of the last days. When we say that the church is an eschatological community we mean that it is a last days community. At Pentecost, Peter quoted the prophet Joel. By the Spirit's inspiration, Peter changed Joel's word "afterward" (cf. 2:28) to "last days" (Acts 2:17). Why did he do this? He was announcing that the outpouring of the Spirit was an end-time, or eschatological, event.

⁵ Stronstad, 51.

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The last days began with Christ's first coming and will continue until His second coming. They are a time when salvation is being offered to all people (Acts 2:21). Both the outpouring of the Spirit and the expectation of Christ's soon coming were great motivating factors for the New Testament church. These truths should also motivate the church today.

3. *A Pneumatic Community.* By being filled with the Spirit the church became a pneumatic community. Pneumatic means having to do with the Holy Spirit. A distinguishing characteristic of the church is that it is a community of people upon whom God's Spirit rests. Pentecost was the first outpouring of the Spirit on the church (Acts 2:1-4). That same Spirit can be poured out on any church until Christ comes again (2:20, 39). As a Spirit-anointed and empowered community, the church is called to

- be baptized in the Holy Spirit (Mark 9:1; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8; Eph. 5:18).
- preach the gospel with power (Acts 2:14-39; 4:33; 6:10).
- receive guidance and direction from the Spirit of God (Acts 8:29; 10:19; 13:2; 16:6-10).
- demonstrate the presence of the Kingdom through "mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God" (Rom. 15:19; Acts 4:32).
- reap a great harvest of souls (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4 5:14).
- lead others into the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39; 8:17-18; 9:17-18; 10:44-46; 19:1-6).
- take the gospel to all nations (Acts 1:8).

4. *A Prophetic Community.* The church is also a prophetic community. A prophetic community is a group of people who are filled with the Spirit and declare the message of God by the Spirit's power and inspiration. At Pentecost, Peter declared that the church would be such a community:

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. *Your sons and daughters will prophesy*, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and *they will prophesy* (Acts 2:17-18, italics added).

On the Day of Pentecost, the Old Testament hope that all of God's people would be prophets became a reality:

- *Moses wished for it:* "I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!" (Num. 11:29).
- *Joel predicted it:* "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy..." (Joel 2:28-29).
- *Peter announced it:* "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy" (Acts 2:16-18).

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In this same passage Peter identified speaking in tongues as prophetic speech. The phrase “this is that” (KJV) refers to the speaking in tongues of the newly Spirit-baptized disciples (Acts 2:4; 7-11). Peter thus identified speaking in tongues as prophetic speech. Spirit-inspired tongues thus became a distinguishing sign of God’s new prophetic community (10:44-46; 19:6).

5. *A Charismatic Community.* Because the church is a Spirit-anointed community, it should also be a charismatic—or Spirit-gifted—community. The disciples’ reception of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost resulted in a great outburst of charismatic activity. This included signs, wonders, healings, and Spirit-baptisms (Acts 2:43; 3:1-9; 4:31). The charismatic nature of the church is seen throughout the New Testament.

6. *A Missionary Community.* Jesus commissioned the church to be a missionary community. He stated that the primary purpose of the Pentecostal outpouring would be empowerment for missionary witness to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). The missionary nature of Pentecost can also be seen by the following:

The occasion of the Spirit’s outpouring: The Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1). Pentecost was a harvest festival, celebrating the first fruits of the grain harvest in Palestine (cf. Exod. 23:16). The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost marked the beginning of the worldwide harvest of souls through the Spirit-empowered kingdom ministry of the church.

The sign of the Spirit’s reception: At Pentecost, “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:4). What

The Holy Spirit and the Kingdom of God

were the tongues in which these disciples were speaking? They were speaking in the tongues of the surrounding Gentile nations (vv. 8-11). This sign reminds us that the purpose of Spirit-baptism is empowerment to proclaim Christ to all nations (1:8). Today, each time a Spirit-filled believer prays in tongues, he or she is reminded of the primary purpose of the gift of the Spirit—the evangelization of the nations.

The result the church's empowering: Having been filled with the Spirit, the disciples immediately began their missionary work of preaching the gospel (Acts 2:14ff). Before the day had ended, three thousand people were saved, representing at least fifteen Gentile nations (vv. 8-11 41).

From the beginning, the church was a Spirit-empowered missionary community. It should continue as the same until Jesus comes again.

The Holy Spirit plays a prominent role in the work of the kingdom of God. It is He who anoints, empowers, equips, inspires, and sustains the church in its kingdom mission of taking the gospel to all nations. In the next chapter will look in more depth at the relationship between the kingdom of God to the task of global mission.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss Jesus' two kingdom goals stated by John the Baptist in John 1:29-33. How should this insight impact our understanding of the kingdom importance of the baptism in the Holy Spirit in relation to redemption?
2. If Jesus ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit, how should we? If Jesus' last command to His disciples was that they be empowered by the Holy Spirit, how should this fact impact our lives and preaching today?
3. Compare your church with the new kingdom community created by the empowering of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:41-47). How does your church fall short? What must we do to remedy this unacceptable situation?

(Note: Content Review Questions for this chapter
may be found on page 155.)

– CHAPTER 10 –

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND GLOBAL MISSION

God, by virtue of creation, is sovereign ruler of the universe. His will is for all people of all nations to know and serve Him. In previous chapters we stated that the purpose of the kingdom of God is to fulfill the mission of God, that is, to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom to all nations before Jesus comes again. In this chapter we will discuss in more detail the relationship between the Kingdom and global missions. In doing this, it will be necessary for us to revisit some of the issues we have already discussed. We will address three issues: (1) the global mission of the Kingdom, (2) the gospel of the Kingdom and the Great Commission, (3) proclaiming the gospel to the nations.

THE GLOBAL MISSION OF THE KINGDOM

Let's review what the Bible says about the mission of God.

The *Missio Dei*

As previously mentioned, the mission of God is sometimes called the *missio Dei*, which is simply the Latin phrase meaning mission of God. According to John V. York the *missio Dei* is “God’s plan to bless the nations through the gospel of Jesus Christ.”¹ Stated another way, God’s mission is to call unto Himself a people for His name out of “every tribe and tongue and people and nation” on earth (Rev. 5:9; 7:9). This plan will be accomplished through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross and the preaching of the gospel to all nations in Pentecostal power (Matt. 24:14; Luke 24:46-49 [NKJV]; Acts 1:8).

The Theme of the Bible

There has been much debate concerning what is the theme of the Bible. Some say that the Bible has no theme at all. Others say that the theme of the Bible is “redemption” or “the kingdom of God.” According to York, the theme of the Bible is “the advance of the Kingdom of God through the preaching of the gospel.”² He states,

¹ John V. York, *Missions in the Age of the Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2000), 20.

² Ibid.

God has planned for [the] testimony about Jesus Christ be given to the entire inhabited earth (Gen. 12:3; Matt. 24:14; 28:18-20)... I believe that the advance of the Kingdom through the preaching of the gospel (rather than the “kingdom” in some abstract sense) is best seen as the theme [of the Bible]. The Bible tells the story of an advancing Kingdom, the mission of the triune God: providing redemption, finding the lost, and then using them to mediate kingdom blessings to those yet lost.³

As discussed in Chapter 5, the Bible’s first clear statement of God’s mission is found in His promise to Abraham: “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:3). The fulfilling of this promise becomes the theme of the entire Bible. God later told Abraham, “Through your offspring [seed] all nations on earth will be blessed” (Gen. 22:18). That “Seed,” as we have already learned, is Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world (Gal. 3:16).

The Purpose of the Church

The kingdom of God exists to fulfill the mission of God. In this age the church is the agent of God and instrument of the Kingdom in the earth. The church, therefore, exists for the same purpose as the Kingdom—to fulfill the *missio Dei*. York stated,

God will bless all nations through Jesus Christ, the long promised seed and heir to the throne of David. His kingdom will include those from every nation, tribe, language, and people, and it will last forever. The church in all ages has

³ Ibid., 20-21.

been mandated to announce the good news of Christ's kingdom to the whole world.⁴

The church fulfills the mission of God by doing "missions." Missions is all that the church does to take the gospel to the lost in all the world in the power of the Spirit.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

Jesus has commanded His church to proclaim the gospel to all nations. This command is called the Great Commission. The Great Commission is found five times in the New Testament, once in each gospel and once in Acts (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:49; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8). It is also implied in Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24:14.

The Sign of His Coming

Jesus' disciples once asked Him, "What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:3). Jesus answered their question by first listing the conditions that would characterize the entire age: false messiahs, wars, rumors or wars, international conflicts, famines, earthquakes, persecution, apostasy, false prophets, wickedness, and spiritual callousness. He then said, "And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt 24:14). He thus identified the definitive sign of

⁴ Ibid., 215.

His coming—the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom throughout the world as a witness to every nation.

Certainly, we must study prophecy, and we must be aware of the signs of the times. However, it is not enough that we simply study end-time prophecy, and then do nothing about it. We must be about preaching the gospel to all people everywhere before Jesus comes again.

In Matthew 24:14 the word translated *world* (Gk: *oikoumene*) means the inhabitable earth. The word translated *nation* (Gk. *ethne*) means tribe, ethnic group, or people group. Jesus was, therefore, saying that the gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in all the inhabited earth as a witness to every tribe and people group before His coming and the end of the age. This is the clear task of the church.

It is useful to compare Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24:14 with His statement of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. Such a comparison reveals three striking similarities, as is illustrated in Figure 10.1 below. Note the following about the figure:

- Both verses speak of the primary task of the church—proclaiming the message of Christ to the lost.
- Both speak of the scope of the task—reaching “all nations” with the gospel.
- Both speak of the duration of the task—we are to continue until “the end of the age.”

Matthew 24:14 and Matthew 28:19-20 Compared		
	Matthew 24:14	Matthew 28:19-20
The primary task of the Church	And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached...	Therefore go and make disciples ...
The scope of the task	... in the whole world as a testimony to all nations	... of all nations ...
A description of the task		... baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey every-thing I have commanded you.
The duration of the task	... and then the end will come.	And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Figure 10.1

The Gospel of the Kingdom Defined

In Matthew 24:14 Jesus spoke of the “gospel of the Kingdom.” But what does this phrase mean? There are two evangelical views concerning its meaning. The first is the dispensationalist view held by C. I. Scofield, editor of the *Scofield Study Bible*, and others. Scofield taught that the gospel of the Kingdom is the good news that God is going to set up the Davidic kingdom on the earth, and that Christ will rule over this kingdom for one thousand years. This gospel was first preached by John, Jesus, and the apostles, but was rejected by the Jews, and will not be preached again until the great tribulation period. The gospel of the Kingdom is, therefore, somehow different

from the gospel we preach today, which, according to the dispensationalist view, is “the gospel of the grace of God.”⁵

Another definition of the gospel of the Kingdom is given by George Eldon Ladd. This is the view held by many evangelical scholars today. Ladd writes, “The Gospel of the Kingdom is the Gospel which was proclaimed by the apostles in the early Church.”⁶ According to Ladd, the gospel of the Kingdom is

the announcement of what God has done and will do. It is His victory over His enemies. It is the good news that Christ is coming again to destroy forever His enemies. It is a gospel of hope. It is also the Good News of what God has already done. He has already broken the power of death, defeated Satan, and overthrown the rule of sin. The gospel is one of promise but also of experience, and the promise is grounded in experience. What Christ has done guarantees what he will do. This is the gospel which we must take to the world.⁷

Tom Marshall, a Pentecostal, expresses the dynamic character of the Kingdom in his definition. He writes, “The Gospel of the Kingdom is the Gospel of salvation with the addition of the powers of the age to come. Jesus went through the cities and villages ‘teaching in their synagogues, preaching

⁵ C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), notes on Matt. 24, 1033, and Rev. 14, 1343.

⁶ George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), 125.

⁷ *Ibid.* 130.

the good news of the Kingdom and healing every disease and sickness (Matt. 9:35).”⁸

In the New Testament the gospel is called by various names (Figure 10:2); however, we must remember that there is only one gospel. It is the same gospel preached by Jesus and the apostles. It is described by Paul as the message of salvation through Jesus. At its center is the message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-6). We are to preach no other gospel (Gal. 1:6-11).

What, then, are we to think about the many different names for the gospel? They simply describe different aspects of the same message. In the New Testament the term “gospel of the Kingdom” is used interchangeably with “the gospel” (Mark 1:14-15). They are the same. The term “gospel of the Kingdom,” however, reminds us that Jesus is the King who has come to set up His everlasting Kingdom among men.

What conclusion can we draw concerning the gospel of the Kingdom? The gospel of the Kingdom is the same gospel that Jesus and the apostles preached couched in the context of the following kingdom realities:

- It is the message about Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords.
- The heart of the message is the death burial and resurrection of Christ.

⁸ *Healing From the Inside Out: Understanding God's Touch for Spirit Soul and Body* (Lynnwood, WA: Emerald Books, 1991), 51.

Names of the Gospel in the New Testament

1. The gospel (Mark 11:15; Luke 4:18, and many other places)
2. The gospel of God (Rom. 1:1; 2 Cor. 11:4, 7; 1 Thess. 2:2, 8, 9; 1 Pet. 4:17).
3. The glorious gospel of the blessed God (1 Tim. 1:11)
4. The gospel of His Son (Rom. 1:9)
5. The gospel of Christ/Christ's gospel (Rom. 1:15,16; 15:19, 29; 1 Cor. 9:12; 2 Cor. 2:12; 3:12; 9:13; Gal. 1:7; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 3:2)
6. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:8)
7. The gospel of the glory of Christ/the glorious gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4)
8. The gospel about Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1; Rom. 15:19)
9. The gospel of your salvation (Eph. 1:13)
10. The gospel of God's grace (Acts 20:24)
11. The gospel of peace (Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15)
12. The truth (Gal. 3:1, cf. v. 8)
13. The mystery/the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4-6, cf. 6:19; Col. 1:26; 4:3)
14. The mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16)
15. The message (2 Tim. 4:17)
16. The testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:2)
17. The unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8)
18. The word (Eph. 1:14, cf. vv. 14-18; Heb. 4:2)
19. The word of God (Rom. 10:17, KJV; 1 Thess. 2:13, cf. vv. 2, 4, 8, 9; Rev. 1:2)
20. The word of the Lord (2 Thess. 3:1)
21. The word of faith (Rom. 10:8)
22. The word of Christ (Rom. 10:17)
23. The word of life (Eph. 2:16)
24. The word of the truth of the gospel (Col. 1:5)
25. Christ (Phil. 1:15; cf. vv. 14-18)
26. The gospel of your salvation (Eph. 1:13)
27. My gospel (Paul) (Rom. 2:16; 16:25; 2 Tim. 2:8)
28. Our gospel (2 Cor. 4:3; 1 Thess. 1:5; 2 Thess. 2:14)
29. The everlasting gospel (Rev. 4:16).
30. The gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mark 1:14)

Figure 10.2

- It must be preached in the power of the Holy Spirit with signs following.

- It is a direct challenge to the kingdom of Satan.
- It is to be preached to all nations.

PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL TO THE NATIONS

Jesus said that the gospel of the Kingdom will be preached to all nations before the end of the age. Let's look more closely at the proclamation of the gospel in all the world.

Must Be Proclaimed

The gospel is meant to be proclaimed. Certainly, we must study about the gospel, as we are doing in this book, but we must not stop there. The purpose of the gospel is proclamation. Someone has said that “the first word in *Gospel* is ‘Go.’” It's true! Jesus said “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15).

The gospel was the first word on the lips of the evangelists and apostles in Acts. Luke says that “Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there” (Acts 8:5). After Peter and John had ministered to the believers in Samaria they “returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages” (Acts 8:25). In Ephesus “Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8).

In his epistles Paul said that he was “eager to preach the gospel” (Rom. 1:15), and that it was his “ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known” (Rom. 15:20). He felt that preaching the gospel was a sacred trust given to him by God (Gal. 2:7). In one place he said, “Woe to me if I do not preach

the gospel!” (1 Cor. 9:16, NASB). It was his desire to preach the gospel to “the regions beyond” (2 Co 10:16), that is, the places where it had not yet been preached.

Jesus has commanded us, His church, to proclaim the gospel to all nations. When He was training the Twelve, He sent them out to preach the gospel (Luke 9:1). “So,” Luke says, “they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere” (v. 6; cf. Matt. 10:5-8). Later, Jesus also sent out the Seventy-two to proclaim the gospel. He told them to “Go!” for “the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few” (Luke 10:2-3). We too have been commissioned by Christ to proclaim the gospel to all who will hear (Mark 16:15).

Must Be Demonstrated

The gospel of the Kingdom is not only to be proclaimed, its power is to be demonstrated with signs following. Jesus set the pattern by combining preaching with a demonstration of kingdom power: “Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people” (Matt. 4:23; cf. 9:35). He instructed His disciples to follow the same pattern: “When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:1).

Later, when He sent out the Seventy-two, He instructed them: “Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’” (Luke 10:9). This was the pattern they were to follow in their ministries—proclamation must be

accompanied by demonstration (Mark 3:13-15; 16:15-20). It was the pattern that was followed by the early church (Acts 8:5-6; 19:8-13; Rom. 15: 18-20; 1Cor 2:4), and it is the pattern for proclaiming the Kingdom until Jesus comes again.

Further, Jesus and the apostles taught that the kingdom of God comes in power. In fact, that is the only way the Kingdom can come. Any advance of the kingdom of God will be resisted by the kingdom of Satan (John 10:10; Eph. 6:12). The powers of darkness, therefore, must be overcome in the power of the Spirit (Matt.12:28-29; Matt.16:18-19; Luke 11:20-22).

Paul taught that the Kingdom is a demonstration of God's power in action. He said, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter to talk but of power" (1 Cor. 4:20). Jesus said that the Kingdom advances by force: "From the time of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing." (Matt. 11:12). The kingdom of God advances through anointed preaching of the gospel, challenging and overcoming the powers of darkness, a demonstration of signs and wonders, intercessory prayer, and acts of aggressive faith.

Our source of kingdom power is the Holy Spirit. That power is received when one is baptized in the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8), and is released as one walks and ministers in faith and in the power of the Spirit. Without this divine enabling, one should not attempt to do the work of the Kingdom (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4).

Must Be Displayed

As we take Christ to the nations, not only must the gospel of the Kingdom be proclaimed, and its power manifested, the

superior life of the Kingdom must be displayed. This is how Jesus bore witness to the kingdom of God. His persuasive power came from three sources:

His anointed words. Jesus' words were different. The people testified, "No one ever spoke the way this man does" (John 7:46). His words were touched by the Spirit of God (John 6:63). They were "gracious" and spoken with authority (Matt. 7:29; Luke 4:22). As a result, the people gladly heard what He had to say.

His mighty works. The people were amazed as they observed His miraculous healing and deliverance ministry. As a result, news about Him spread quickly, and many people came to listen to His message about His Father's Kingdom (Matt. 4:23-25; 9:33; 13:54; Mark 1: 25-28; 2:12; 5:18-20; Luke 5:24-26; 9:42-43; 11:14-15).

His beautiful life. Jesus' pure life and love for others was well known (Mark 10:16-17; Luke 23:4; John 11:35-36). His beautiful life attracted people and opened their hearts to hear His message.

Like Jesus, our witness to the world must involve not only anointed preaching and a demonstration of God's power; it must also involve holy and compassionate living. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would cause us to "be witnesses unto" Him (Acts 1:8, KJV). *Being* a witness unto Christ involves more than just talking; it also involves living the kind of life Jesus lived—a life of purity and compassion. Such a life is manifested through the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Paul testified that he had won the Gentiles to Christ by his preaching, by the miracles God did through him, and "by the good way [he had] lived before them"

(Rom. 15:18-19, TLB). All three elements—anoined words, mighty works, and a beautiful life—are necessary as we seek to bear witness to the nations concerning Christ’s Kingdom.

The church of Jesus Christ exists to fulfill the mission of God. It has thus been commissioned by Christ to preach the gospel to all nations before He comes again. Jesus said that the gospel of the Kingdom would first be preached in all the world as a witness to every people, and then the end would come. As we go preaching the gospel, we must present it to the lost in three ways: through anoined proclamation, through powerful demonstrations, and through godly living.

In the next chapter we will look at some Pentecostal perspectives on the kingdom of God.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the kingdom of God relate to the global mission of the church?
2. What is the *missio Dei*? How is the kingdom of God related to the *missio Dei*?
3. Discuss the definitive sign of Christ’s coming according to Jesus in Matthew in Matthew 24:14?
4. Compare Tom Marshall’s Pentecostal view of the gospel of the Kingdom with the definition of dispensationalist C. I. Scofield. How will each view effect the way on conducts his our her ministry for the Lord?
5. The gospel is given many names in Scripture (see Figure 10:2). Does this mean that there are many gospels? What does it mean?

The Kingdom of God and Global Mission

6. Discuss the ways we must proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom to the lost? Which way, in your opinion, is the most neglected way in the church today?

(Note: Content Review Questions for this chapter
may be found on page 156.)

PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD

This chapter, as was the last, will be a summary chapter. In this book we have been examining the biblical teaching concerning the kingdom of God. We have discovered that different church communions hold different views, or have different emphases, concerning the doctrine. In this chapter we will summarize and examine some unique Pentecostal perspectives on the subject.

Pentecostals hold to an evangelical view concerning the Kingdom, as stated in Chapter 2. However, because of their more supernatural orientation toward life and ministry, Pentecostals have some unique insights into the subject. We will divide our discussion of these insights into two categories: (1) a Pentecostal approach to the kingdom of God, (2) the kingdom of God and Pentecostal ministry.

A PENTECOSTAL APPROACH TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The concept of the kingdom of God is very important in Pentecostal thinking. According to Pentecostal scholar, Peter Kuzmic, “The biblical motif of the kingdom of God provides the essential theological framework for understanding the contemporary Pentecostal-charismatic phenomenon.”¹ Let’s look briefly at certain aspects of that theological framework.

Interpreting Kingdom Passages

Pentecostals stress the fact that power is a predominant feature of God’s kingdom. Paul wrote, “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power” (1 Cor. 4:20). The Church Age—or the Age of the Spirit—is marked by two characteristics:

- *The proclamation of the gospel.* The church’s primary task is to proclaim the gospel to all nations before the soon coming of Christ (Matt. 24:14).
- *The dynamic work of the Spirit.* The church’s work is to be carried out in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

Both characteristics are hallmarks of the modern Pentecostal movement.

¹ Peter Kuzmic, “Kingdom of God” in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 526.

Pentecostals often see the activity of the Spirit in kingdom passages that others overlook. For instance, some evangelical commentators say little about the role of the Spirit in advancing the kingdom of God in the earth. Pentecostal missiologist Paul A. Pomerville challenged,

Even evangelical approaches to the Kingdom theme can neglect the role of the Holy Spirit for a number of reasons. George Eldon Ladd's otherwise excellent survey of the kingdom of God theme in *The Presence of the Future* (1974) is an illustration. He is unusually silent on the role of the Holy Spirit... In what appears to be an almost studied manner he avoids the mention of the third person of the Trinity.²

In the Pentecostal view, however, the presence of the Kingdom is characterized by the dynamic activity of God the Holy Spirit.

Life and Ministry in the Kingdom

Pentecostals are inspired by the doctrine of the kingdom of God. They take encouragement from both its present and future aspects. First, they believe that the kingdom of God is presently manifesting itself in kingdom power. They, therefore, expect to minister through the enablement of the Holy Spirit. Because of this, they are encouraged to boldly face seemingly "impossible" challenges in ministry.

Pentecostals are also encouraged by the future aspect of the Kingdom. They believe that the present-day outpouring of the Spirit in the world is a sign that the last days are drawing to an

²Ibid.

end and that the second coming of Christ is imminent. They further believe that the purpose of the current global outpouring of the Spirit is to empower the church to evangelize all nations before Christ's soon coming (Acts 1:8; Matt. 24:14).

From their beginnings Pentecostals have tied the outpouring of the Spirit to the second coming of Christ and world missions. Early Pentecostal leaders such as Charles Parham and William Seymour emphasized enablement for missions as the primary purpose of the twentieth-century Pentecostal outpouring. Church historian Gary B. McGee has noted that "by 1910, some 185 Pentecostal missionaries had been marshaled over a four-year period from the outset of the 1906-1909 Azusa street revival."² McGee stated further, from William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Mission "a new missiological paradigm would emerge for the twentieth century."³

Early Pentecostals often talked about the "latter rain." They preached that the twentieth-century outpouring of the Spirit was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy that God would pour out His Spirit on the world in two stages: first as a "former rain," and then as a "latter rain" (2:23). They contended that the former rain occurred on the Day of Pentecost and that the latter rain is today's worldwide outpouring of the Spirit. They often noted that the latter rain comes just before the final harvest, that is, just

² Gary B. McGee, "Missions, Overseas (North American)," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee. (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 612.

³ *Ibid.*

before the second coming of Christ. They also noted how Joel indicated that the latter rain outpouring would be in greater abundance than the former outpouring of the Spirit. These beliefs inspired early Pentecostals. They believed that Jesus was coming soon, and that God had given them power to preach the gospel to all nations before He came again.

Today we are the twenty-first century heirs of the Pentecostal mandate to reach all nations in the power of the Holy Spirit. If we are to fulfill our reason for being, we must once again come to terms with both the present and the future aspects of the kingdom of God. In the present, we must seek God for a fresh outpouring of His kingdom power. We must also cultivate a renewed expectation of the King's soon return.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND PENTECOSTAL MINISTRY

Because of their dynamic understanding of the kingdom of God, Pentecostals have developed a unique approach to ministry. Let's look briefly at three aspects of that approach:

Pentecostal Expectations in Ministry

Pentecostals view the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost as the definitive sign of the coming of the new age, the Age of the Spirit. They also view it as a dynamic reality in the life and ministry of the twenty-first century church. Pentecostals, therefore, expect the Kingdom to be continuously manifested until the end of the age. They thus expect supernatural help from the Spirit as they participate in kingdom ministry. This means

that they anticipate demonstrations of kingdom power. These demonstrations of the Kingdom include Spirit baptisms, prophetic utterances, anointed preaching, healings, deliverances, and miraculous interventions. A favorite verse of Pentecostals is “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

A Pentecostal Model for Ministry

Pentecostals further believe that supernatural manifestations are an integral part of gospel ministry. As discussed in Chapter 5, Jesus not only proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom, He demonstrated its power with signs following. The apostolic church imitated the ministry of Jesus. Today Pentecostals look to both Jesus and the early Christians as models for kingdom ministry. They believe that demonstrations of power are a necessary component of true kingdom ministry. As they imitate the ministries of Jesus and the apostles, Pentecostals are prepared to challenge the kingdom of Satan in the power of the Spirit. With great boldness they confront the powers of darkness and penetrate new areas with the gospel.

The Scope of Pentecostal Ministry

Pentecostals further believe that their kingdom mandate is to preach the gospel to all nations before the soon coming of Jesus Christ (Matt. 24:14). They believe that this mandate can only be accomplished through the enabling power of the Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). They further believe that this enabling is for all believers, and that it comes through a powerful experience subsequent to the new birth called the baptism in the Holy Spirit

(Acts 2:4). This belief has catapulted Pentecostals into all the earth preaching the full gospel of Jesus Christ. With more than one-half billion Pentecostal believers in the world today, Pentecostalism has become what is possibly the most successful missionary movement in the two thousand year history of the church.

Today Pentecostals face a challenge, whether or not to remain true to their original calling to take the gospel to the nations in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our prayer is that they will remain true to that high calling. I believe that a clear understanding of the kingdom of God, its mission, and its enabling power will aid them in this endeavor.

Discussion Questions

1. How can the Pentecostal's more supernatural orientation to life and ministry facilitate certain insights into the kingdom of God?
2. Discuss Paul Pomerville's challenge to non-Pentecostal authors in their treatment of the kingdom of God. Do you agree or disagree with him? Explain your answer.
3. How are Pentecostals inspired by the present and future aspects of the kingdom of God?
4. Describe the early Pentecostal's view of the "latter rain" prophecy of Joel 2:23.
5. How does the Pentecostal's dynamic view of the kingdom of God affect how they do ministry?

(Note: Content Review Questions for this chapter may be found on page 157.)

CONCLUSION

In this study we have closely examined the biblical teaching on the kingdom of God. We have discovered that the kingdom of God is God's sovereign rule over His creation. We have also discovered that how one views the Kingdom affects how he or she approaches ministry. A correct view of the kingdom of God is thus essential to effective ministry.

One must understand that the Kingdom is both a present reality and a future expectation. The kingdom of God has come in the person of Jesus and in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. It has not, however, come in its fulness. That will not happen until Jesus comes again and establishes His kingdom reign in the earth.

In the Old Testament God was viewed as both the King of Israel and the King of the nations. The Hebrew prophets predicted a day when God's eternal Kingdom would be set up in the earth. In that day, the Messiah, the son of David, would rule over all nations.

When Jesus came, He boldly announced that the kingdom of God had come. This is the present aspect of the Kingdom. Jesus also announced that the Kingdom would soon come in power. That happened on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy

Conclusion

Spirit was poured out on the church. Now the Kingdom manifests itself in demonstrations of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

The kingdom of God exists to carry out the mission of God. The church, as the present-day agent of the Kingdom, exists for the same reason. God's mission is to redeem and call unto Himself a people out of every nation, tribe, and tongue on earth. Therefore, Jesus has commanded the church to preach the gospel of the Kingdom to all nations before His soon return. When Christ comes He will set up the eternal kingdom of David, and He will reign forever and ever.

What a wonderful privilege we have as God's kingdom people. We have the privilege of cooperating with Him in fulfilling His mission in the earth. He has given us His Spirit to empower us to accomplish the task. As his "sent ones" we must pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." And we must work with the Spirit to see that prayer fulfilled.

– CONTENT REVIEW QUESTIONS –

Chapter 1: The Meaning of the Kingdom of God

1. In what three ways can the kingdom of God be viewed?
2. What are the Hebrew and Greek words for “kingdom?” What is their meaning?
3. What are the two main names for the kingdom of God in the New Testament?
4. Why do we say that the names are used interchangeably?
5. Where is the phrase “kingdom of heaven” found? Why does this biblical writer use this phrase?
6. What are some other names for the kingdom of God in the New Testament?
7. What do we mean when we say that the kingdom of God is everlasting?
8. When we say the kingdom of God has appeared in history, what time-frame are we talking about?
9. Explain what J. Rodman Williams means by saying the kingdom of God manifests itself in three ways.
10. What are the two tenses of the kingdom of God?
11. What did Jesus mean when He said “the kingdom of God is at hand?”
12. Explain how the kingdom of God is a present reality.
13. When will the kingdom of God come in the future?
14. What do we mean when we say that the kingdom of God is greater and more enduring than the church?
15. From Figure 1.4
 - What is the duration of the Kingdom?
 - What is the duration of the church?
 - Who are the subjects of the Kingdom?
 - Who are the subjects (members) of the church?
16. What is the church’s mission?
17. What power has the church been given to accomplish this mission?

Chapter 2: Historical Overview of Thought on the Kingdom

1. What caused the Early Post-Apostolic Church to develop a tendency to withdraw from worldly affairs?
2. How did this affect their view of the kingdom of God?
3. What did Constantine do, and how did it affect the church?

Content Review Questions

4. How did this influence the church's view of the kingdom of God?
5. What book greatly influenced the Medieval church? Who was the author? What did the book teach about the kingdom of God?
6. How did this view influence the relationship of the church with the state?
7. How did this view affect the church's idea of doing missions?
8. What was the Reformation?
9. What was the reformers' view of the kingdom of God?
10. How did John Calvin try to institute the kingdom of God into people's lives?
11. How were Albrecht Ritschl and his followers influenced in their teaching about the kingdom of God through the writings of Charles Darwin?
12. How did Ritschl's views concerning the kingdom of God relate the idea of the second coming of Christ?
13. What is humanism and how does it relate to Ritschl's teaching?
14. Describe Weiss and Schweitzer's "thoroughgoing eschatology" concerning the kingdom of God.
15. Describe Charles Dodd's "realized eschatology" concerning the kingdom of God.
16. How have evangelical theologians responded to these two teachings?
17. What did early Pentecostals think about the kingdom of God? What influenced their thinking?
18. What did Pentecostal scholars eventually realize about the teaching of dispensationalism?
19. How did Assemblies of God theologians, such as Williams and Horton see the kingdom of God?
20. What did Melvin L. Hodges teach about the church, the kingdom of God, and their relationship to missions?
21. What did Ruth A. Breusch write about the relationship between the church, the kingdom of God, and missions?
22. What did Paul A. Pomerville say about the relationship between the kingdom of God and Pentecostal theology?
23. How does Pomerville say that the kingdom of God is advanced in the world?
24. What is the "kingdom now" theology? How is it different from most Pentecostal theology concerning the kingdom of God?
25. How has Pentecostal teaching concerning the kingdom of God changed during recent years?

Chapter 3: The Kingdom of God: A Present Reality

1. How did John the Baptist and Jesus announce Jesus' ministry?

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2. What did Jesus say about the kingdom of God in Matthew 11:12?
3. Where in the Bible is Jesus' "Nazareth Manifesto" found?
4. By quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2, what was Jesus claiming about Himself?
5. What was Jesus' sixfold agenda for ministry as outlined in His Nazareth Manifesto?
6. How did Jesus go about fulfilling His sixfold agenda of ministry? What things did He do? What things did He not do?
7. What did Jesus' Nazareth Manifesto reveal about the time of His kingdom ministry?
8. What was the source of power for Jesus' kingdom ministry?
9. List seven ways Jesus performed His ministry in the power and anointing of the Spirit?
10. What were Jesus' parting words concerning the kingdom of God, according to Acts 1:1-8?
11. What were the two vital kingdom issues He talked about at this time?
12. When and how did Jesus transfer His anointing to His church?
13. Cite two examples of kingdom ministry in the book of Acts. Give details.
14. How are we to be imitators of Christ in doing ministry?
15. When we pray "Your kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10), what four things are asking God for?
16. How can we in this age taste of the powers of the age to come?
17. From Figure 4.1, what are some of the ways the kingdom of God has come in the past and how will it come in the future? How does it come today?
18. According to Don Williams, how does the fact that the kingdom of God has not fully come explain our present experience?

Chapter 4: The Kingdom of God: A Future Prospect

1. Based on Table 3.1
 - When did *this age* begin? When will the *age to come* begin?
 - How long will *this age* endure? How long will the *age to come* endure?
 - What began with Christ's first coming? When will it be consummated?
 - Characterize "this age." Characterize the "age to come."
2. Based on Table 4.2,
 - How does This Age relate to the kingdom of God?
 - How does The Age to Come relate to the kingdom of God?
3. What do we mean when we say that the coming of the Kingdom will be apocalyptic?

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4. According to Matthew 24:36, who knows when Jesus will return? What does this truth mean to us today?
5. What final separation will take place when Jesus comes again?
6. Describe two events that will take place for the righteous soon after Jesus comes.
7. What other blessing will the righteous receive?
9. Describe Christ's reign in the Millennial Kingdom.
10. What will happen to Israel before Christ sets up His thousand-year reign on earth?
11. Describe the transformation that will take place in the world during the Millennial Reign of Christ.
12. List three great acts of God that will conclude the Millennial Kingdom and begin the Eternal Kingdom.
13. Based on this section, what four things can be said about the Millennial Kingdom?
14. How does Revelation 21:1-22:5 describe the Eternal Kingdom?
15. Describe the New Jerusalem.
16. Describe the River of Life that will flow through the New Jerusalem.
17. What must happen before the future kingdom comes?
18. What two dramatic events will separate the present from the future manifestation of the Kingdom?
19. When Jesus' disciples asked Him about the time of His coming, how did He answer them?
20. What two "ends" will happen together at the end of the age?
21. How, according to Peter, can we "hasten the coming day of the Lord"?

Chapter 5: The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament

1. How does creation relate to God's sovereign rulership over the nations?
2. Where in the Old Testament is God especially presented as King?
3. List four of His kingly titles in the Psalms.
4. How did the Old Testament prophets describe the kingly role of God?
5. List nine things Isaiah 9:6-7 and Jeremiah 23:5-6 say about the coming Messiah?
6. Describe and explain Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. How does this dream relate to the kingdom of God?
7. Name one way God establishes His Kingdom on earth.
8. Name four important theocratic covenants in the Old Testament.
9. Where is the Abrahamic Covenant found in Scripture?
10. Of its seven promises, which one is the most important?
11. Where in the Bible is the first mention of a redemptive seed?
12. In which verse does God promise to bless all nations through a promised seed?

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13. With whom did Paul identify this seed?
14. Which verse in the Bible has been called the mission statement of the Bible? Why?
15. Why do we say that the Abrahamic Covenant is an unconditional covenant? What is the significance of it being unconditional?
16. Where in Scripture is the Mosaic Covenant found?
17. Why did God make this covenant with Israel?
18. What was the function of priests in the Old Testament?
19. What were Israel's duties as a kingdom of priests?
20. What was the purpose of Israel being a "holy nation?"
21. Why was the Law of God given to Israel?
22. Why is the Mosaic Covenant also called the Sinaitic Covenant?
23. Why do we say that the Mosaic Covenant was a conditional covenant?
24. What was Israel's responsibility concerning the Mosaic Covenant? What was God's?
25. How did Israel fail in keeping the Mosaic Covenant?
26. Where in Scripture is the Davidic Covenant found?
27. What was the purpose of this covenant? Who were the parties?
28. List the three parts of the promise that God made to David.
29. What was the missional purpose of each part of the promise. Explain your answers.
30. What is the significance of Jesus being called "the son of David, the son of Abraham" in Matthew 1:1?
31. Where is the fourth theocratic covenant, the New Covenant, found in Scripture?
32. How is this covenant different from the Old Covenant?
33. List the four provisions of the New Covenant.
34. Who is the mediator of the New Covenant?
35. When and how was the New Covenant established?
36. How does the New Covenant accomplish what the Old Covenant could not do?
37. Based on Figure 5.1, answer the following questions:
 - Which covenants were unconditional? Which were conditional?
 - How does each covenant relate to the *missio Dei*?
38. Describe how the Jews thought about the Messiah during the Intertestamental Period.
39. Why did Jesus fail to meet the Jews expectations for the Messiah?
40. What did the Pharisees believe concerning the coming of the Messiah?
41. What did the Zealots believe?
42. How did Jesus disappoint them both?
43. Why was the Kingdom taken away from the Jews?
44. To whom was it given?
45. What is the mission of the church today?

Content Review Questions

Chapter 6: The Kingdom of God in the Ministry of Jesus

1. How did both John the Baptist and Jesus announce the Kingdom?
2. What were the two emphases of Jesus' teaching concerning the kingdom of God?
3. What is the purpose of the kingdom of God?
4. What is God's mission?
5. Where in Scripture does Jesus sum up God's plan to fulfill His mission?
6. What are the three parts of God's fulfilling His mission according to Matthew 24:14?
7. Quote Matthew 24:14 from memory.
8. According to Matthew 24:14, what must happen before the end of the age comes?
9. Why does God not simply destroy the kingdom of Satan and be done with it?
10. What is a mystery in the New Testament?
11. What are the mysteries of the Kingdom?
12. Name one of the main ways Jesus taught about the kingdom of God.
13. Where in the gospels are a number of Kingdom Parables found?
14. Why did Jesus tell these parables?
15. Name a major theme of the Kingdom Parables.
16. From Figure 6.1 list six parables containing a harvest theme.
17. According to John York, which parable is central to understanding the kingdom of God? Where is it found in Scripture?
18. Why is harvest a key theme in Jesus' kingdom parables?
19. Cite three passages where the harvest theme is found in Jesus' teaching.
20. What do we mean when we say that the kingdom of God is an "upside-down kingdom"?
21. How is the kingdom leader different from the worldly leader?
22. List five paradoxes of the Kingdom?
23. List 13 of Jesus' teachings in His Sermon on the Mount that are in opposition to the wisdom of the world?
24. How is the nature of worldly kingdom different from the nature of the kingdom of God.
25. Describe the "great reversal" that is coming.
26. How did Jesus teach about the kingdom of God through His works?
27. List three important lessons Jesus taught about the kingdom of God through His works?

Chapter 7: The Kingdom of God in Apostolic Proclamation

1. How do some liberal theologians say that the apostles changed the message of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God?

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2. Is their claim true? Why or why not?
3. What change must one realize takes place in the writings of the apostles before he or she can understand the place of the Kingdom in the New Testament church?
4. List four ways it can be demonstrated that the message of the kingdom of God was central to the apostles' teaching and preaching.
5. How many times is the kingdom of God mentioned in the book of Acts? List these references.
6. How many times is the kingdom of God mentioned in the first six verses of Acts?
7. How does Acts end with an emphasis on the kingdom of God?
8. What can we conclude from these facts?
9. Name three kingdom themes about which Jesus spoke during the forty days between his resurrection and his ascension.
10. Cite six other mentions of the kingdom of God in Acts.
11. What does Paul say about the kingdom of God in Romans?
12. What does Paul say about the kingdom of God in 1 Corinthians?
13. What does Paul say about the kingdom of God in Galatians and Ephesians?
14. What does Paul say about the kingdom of God in 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, and 2 Timothy?
15. What does Paul say about the kingdom of God in Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, and Jude?
16. List ten things the book of Revelation teaches about the kingdom of God?
17. What conclusions can we draw from what we have learned thus far in this chapter?
18. What subtle change is made in teaching about the kingdom of God in the writings of Luke, Paul, and John?
19. List six synonymous terms used by Jesus in Matthew 19:16-30. What can we conclude from this exercise?
20. According to Peter Kuzmic, what change in kingdom terminology did the apostles make?
21. What conclusion can we make concerning the terminology of the Kingdom by comparing Acts 8:5 with 8:12?
22. What conclusion can we make concerning the terminology of the Kingdom by comparing Acts 28:23 with Acts 28:31?
23. What three synonymous phrases did John use in John 3:3-17?
24. What conclusions can we draw from this understanding?
25. What substitution did Paul make in his epistles for the Old Testament and Gospel word "King?"
26. What was the "anthem" of the New Testament church?
27. Why did Paul change the phrase "Jesus is King" to "Christ is Lord?"

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Chapter 8: Life in the Kingdom of God

1. What two attitudes did Jesus say were necessary for one to enter the kingdom of God?
2. In John 3:3-5 what did Jesus say one must do to enter the kingdom of God?
3. What two elements must be present for a person to be born again?
4. What must one do to enter the coming Kingdom?
5. What is involved in doing this?
6. How does the Bible describe life in the Kingdom?
7. How is the kingdom of God a “kingdom of life”?
8. What do we mean when we say that the kingdom of God is a kingdom of light?
9. What is the source of one’s joy and peace in the Kingdom?
10. Define righteousness.
11. Describe the high standard of righteousness that we are to live in the Kingdom.
12. How do the standards of Jesus concerning righteousness differ from the standard of the Law?
13. How is the righteousness of Christ imparted unto us?
14. How is the kingdom of God different from the kingdoms of the world?
15. Since the kingdom of God is a kingdom of compassion, it is also a kingdom of _____.
17. Where in the Bible is the kingdom of God seen as a kingdom of power?
18. Where does this kingdom power come from?
19. How is kingdom life illustrated in Acts 2:42-47? List five activities and characteristics of life in the Kingdom demonstrated in this passage.
20. List three responsibilities of living in the Kingdom.
21. In Luke 19:10 Jesus taught that the kingdom of God must be _____ pursued.
22. What is the means by which one appropriates the blessings of the Kingdom?
23. List eight other responsibilities of laying hold of the kingdom of God.
24. What is the primary way we advance the kingdom of God in the earth?
25. List five places in Scripture where Jesus commanded His church to preach take the gospel to all nations.
26. List three things we must do to advance the Kingdom in the whole world.
27. List six additional responsibilities we have in forcefully advancing the kingdom of God.

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Chapter 9: The Holy Spirit and the Kingdom of God

1. What were Jesus' two great kingdom goals?
2. How does John the Baptist describe those two goals in John 1:29-33?
3. Describe the content and character of Jesus' kingdom ministry?
4. How did Jesus announce His kingdom ministry in Luke 4:18-19?
5. How did John the Baptist testify concerning Jesus anointing in John 3:34-35?
6. How did Peter describe Jesus' ministry in Acts 10:38?
7. How did Jesus defeat Satan?
8. How did the Spirit aid Jesus in His work of redemption on the cross?
9. Explain how Jesus' disciples inherited His kingdom ministry.
10. How did they receive power to perform kingdom ministry? How may we today?
11. Cite two passages in which Jesus tied the kingdom of God to Pentecost. Explain your answer.
12. Explain how Pentecost relates to the "already" and "not yet" aspects of the kingdom of God.
13. What is meant by the concept of "transfer motif"?
14. Describe three instances in the Old Testament where the Spirit was transferred from a charismatic leader to his followers.
15. When and how did Jesus transfer His kingdom power to His disciples?
16. What were the two effects of this transfer on the disciples?
17. To whom is God's kingdom power available today? How did Peter announce this fact?
18. What powers did the church experience at Pentecost? How can we experience that same power today?
19. What kind of community did Christ launch at Pentecost? What was its purpose?
20. How is the church depicted as a kingdom community in Acts?
21. How can believers be empowered to do Kingdom ministry?
22. What do we mean when we say that the church is an eschatological community?
23. Describe the last days.
24. What do we mean when we say that the church is a pneumatic community?
25. List six responsibilities of the church as a pneumatic community.
26. What do we mean when we say that the church is a prophetic community?
27. Cite three Scripture passages indicating that God's people are to be a prophetic people.
28. What is the distinguishing sign of God's prophetic community? Explain your answer.

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29. What do we mean when we say that the church is a charismatic community?
30. What causes a church to become a charismatic community?
31. How is the Pentecostal outpouring related to the church missionary calling?
32. List six ways that Christ's Spirit-anointed community is depicted in Acts.
33. List three facts that demonstrate the missionary nature of Pentecost.

Chapter 10: The Kingdom of God and Global Mission

1. What is meant by the Latin term the *missio Dei*?
2. What is God's mission?
3. How is God's mission accomplished?
4. According to John York, what is the theme of the Bible?
5. What promise did God make to Abraham that reveals the theme of the Bible?
6. What is the purpose of the church?
7. How is the church related to the kingdom of God?
8. How does the church fulfill its mission in the earth?
9. Memorize the six Great Commission passages mentioned above.
10. What is the definitive sign of Christ's coming?
11. What is the main purpose we study end-time prophecy?
12. How does Matthew 24:14 define the mission of the church?
13. According to Figure 10:1
 - what is the primary task of the church?
 - what is the scope of the church's task?
 - what is the duration of the church's task?
14. Describe the dispensationalist view concerning the gospel of the Kingdom.
15. Describe the view concerning the gospel of the Kingdom held by most evangelical scholars today.
16. What is Tom Marshall's definition of the gospel of the Kingdom?
17. According to Figure 10.2, how many names are used to describe the gospel in the New Testament? How many gospels are there?
18. What unique truth does the term "gospel of the Kingdom" remind us about the gospel?
19. State five kingdom realities that form the context for preaching the gospel of the Kingdom.
20. What is our main responsibility concerning the gospel of the Kingdom?
21. What did Jesus do with the gospel of the Kingdom?
22. Describe how Philip, Peter, and Paul preached the gospel of the Kingdom?

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23. What is our responsibility today concerning the gospel of the Kingdom?
24. Describe how Jesus set the pattern for preaching the kingdom of God.
25. How did Jesus instruct His disciples concerning the pattern?
26. What should be our pattern today concerning preaching the kingdom of God?
27. What is the only way that the kingdom of God can come? Explain your answer.
28. From what experience do disciples receive kingdom power? How important is this experience?
29. State three sources of Jesus' persuasive power?
30. How must our witness to the world be like Jesus' witness to the world?
31. Explain how "being a witness unto Christ" involves more than just words.

Chapter 11: Pentecostal Perspectives on the Kingdom of God

1. List two characteristics of the Church Age or Age of the Spirit.
2. How do these two characteristics relate to the modern Pentecostal movement?
3. How have Pentecostal scholars criticized the non-Pentecostal understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in the advancing the kingdom of God?
4. How are Pentecostals encouraged by both the present and future aspects of the kingdom of God?
5. Describe the early Pentecostal teaching concerning the former and latter rain in Joel 2:23.
6. How has this teaching encouraged Pentecostals to take the gospel to the nations?
7. In what two ways must twenty-first century Pentecostals come to terms with the present and future aspects of the kingdom of God?
8. In what ways do Pentecostals expect the Kingdom to be manifested until the end of the age?
9. Describe a Pentecostal model of for ministry based on their understanding of the kingdom of God.
10. How does this model for ministry affect the way they confront the powers of darkness and penetrate new areas with the gospel?
11. According to Pentecostal belief, what is the necessary element in accomplishing the church's kingdom mandate?
12. How is this enabling power received? Who is it for?

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ADAPTED FROM THE INTRODUCTION

The kingdom of God. It's a subject that is often mentioned, yet little understood in the church today. We often pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). But do we really understand what we are praying? We sing about "kingdom authority," but do we really know what that authority is?

A correct understanding of the kingdom of God can profoundly affect both our lives and ministries. When we understand that the kingdom of God is a present reality in the world today, and when we understand that kingdom power can be actively at work in our ministries, a tremendous confidence comes into our hearts. We are encouraged to preach with power and pray for people with renewed confidence. And, when we understand that the King is coming again to set up His eternal Kingdom in the earth, we are inspired to work to see that the nations hear the message of His salvation.

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