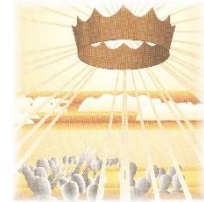


The Kingdom of God

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For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13.

Being in the Kingdom of God simply means that you live with God as your King. It means Jesus is your Lord!

This means you will:

- ☛ **BE what God wants you to be**
- ☛ **DO what God wants you to do**

Colossians Chapter 1 shows that there are two kingdoms in the world today:

The Kingdom of God	The kingdom of darkness
God is in control Jesus is Lord ↓ faith, hope, love and fruitful Christian living so that we <i>'please God in every way'</i>	Anything or anyone other than God is in control ↓ alienation from God, evil behaviour and confusion in society

The question is *Which kingdom is winning?*

If we listen to the news it seems as if the kingdom of darkness is winning. The world seems to be running flat-out towards destruction. Yet in the midst of all this darkness God chooses to save us and bring us into His Kingdom: the Kingdom of God.

We may be part of the Kingdom of God but that doesn't necessarily mean we are experiencing all that God's kingdom offers. Many Christians know they are not living the kind of life that God would like them to have. They find it difficult to resolve what they know in theory with what they experience in practice. Their Christianity doesn't seem to be working in their relationships, in what they see in churches, in society, and most worrying of all - in their own lives.

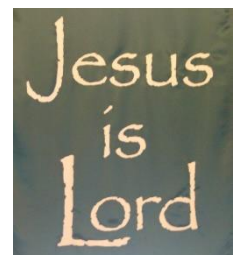
There are many reactions to this:

- some tack their Christianity on to everyday life like a club or a hobby
- some get ground down by the darkness and may end up cynical, critical and judgmental
- some get confused, especially about what is going on in churches
- some give up on God, or on trying to live a Christian life
- some retreat to the past, or to the future
- many get isolated in the tiny "church" component of society (which is pretty irrelevant to the rest of the population)

But, there is another alternative: living in the Kingdom of God!

The book of Colossians shows how this can happen in our lives and in our communities.

... so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves. Colossians 1:10-13



You can live God's way in a confused world.

You can be what God wants you to be and do what God wants you to do...

And this is reinforced all through the New Testament.

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him. 2 Corinthians 2:14

I can do everything through Him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. Romans 8:37

So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. John 8:36

And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19

I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10

For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose. Philippians 2:13

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:2

These are great scriptures! They show that we can live victoriously in Christ and can also help push back the darkness and make a real impact on the world around us.

Not too many Christians live like this! For most of us these scriptures are great in theory but not much like what happens in practice. But, when we live under the Lordship of Christ, He has first place in everything. We begin to be what God wants us to be and do what God wants us to do. That's when the Christian life is how it is supposed to be! That's when these scriptures become real!



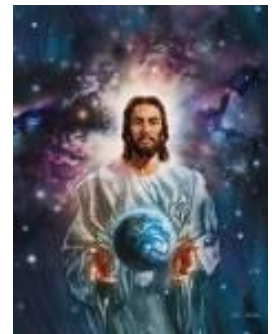
It must start within you, though.

.... nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you. Luke 17:21.

As God deals with you, He will change you from within until you become complete; whole; mature: perfect in Christ. *We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.* Colossians 1:28.

That's what living in the Kingdom of God is all about!

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. Daniel 7:13,14



The Kingdom of God is the major message in the New Testament

John the Baptist heralded it

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." Matthew 3:2.

Jesus ushered it in

"The time has come," He said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" Mark 1:15

"I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." Luke 4:43

The disciples were sent to proclaim it (and so are we!)

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, 2

Matthew uses the term 'kingdom of heaven' where the other gospels use the term 'kingdom of God'. This is because Matthew followed the Jewish custom of not saying or writing the name 'God' (based on the commandment "You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain"). Even today, Jewish writings replace 'God' with or Adonai 'Lord'; or HaShem 'the Name', or use 'G_d'. This means the terms 'kingdom of God' and 'kingdom of Heaven' are interchangeable, God is king everywhere: in Heaven and on earth.

Jesus' teaching focused on the Kingdom of God.

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:33

Parables of the Kingdom in Matthew 13

Jesus often taught in parables (stories built around well-known activities).

v 10- 17 Jesus explained that these parables could only be understood by those:

- who were given understanding by God
- who were open to God
- who would listen and understand
- who had soft, teachable hearts.

He said that those who were like this would hear and understand the truths He was teaching and that *whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.* v12. This shows how important it is to have our hearts right as we hear from God and seek His truth!

The parable of the sower v 3-9 and 18-23

When you hear the 'message of the Kingdom' a number of things can happen depending on the state of your heart:

- the evil one can snatch it away
- the word can be received with joy but if it doesn't have any root it will be lost when trouble or persecution come along
- it can be choked out by the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of riches.



All of these mean that you are not fruitful and miss out on living in the Kingdom of God.

But when the word is received and understood it brings fruit in your life. (Everyone is different: for some this is 30, some 60, some 100-fold). The key thing is that God is King and you are living in His Kingdom. He is at work in and through your life, and you are bringing forth His fruit!

The parable of the weeds v 24-30 and v 36-43

This world contains a mixture of people who are living in the Kingdom of God (the good seed) and people who don't have Him as Lord (the weeds i.e. the people of the evil one).



At the harvest (when we die or when Jesus comes again) anything that is not of Jesus will be burnt up. *They will weed out of His Kingdom everything that causes sin and all those who do evil.* v41 The only things that will remain will be kingdom things: aspects where Jesus is Lord. Make sure that more and more of your life is under the kingdom! Anything else is of no eternal value.

The parables of the mustard seed and the yeast v 31-35

The Kingdom of God is pervasive. When Jesus is Lord it spreads out and grows to affect all aspects of your life (if you let Him be King!). The more you let Him be your King the more effective your life will be.



The parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl v44,45

The Kingdom of God is so wonderful that it is worth giving up everything you have to find it!

The parable of the net v47-52

At the end of the age there will be a clear separation of those in the Kingdom (who will continue on into the eternal Kingdom of God) and those who are not (who will suffer eternal damnation).

Therefore everyone who is instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old. v52

Make sure you listen to Jesus' words about the kingdom, so you are part of the Kingdom of God!

So, what is the Kingdom of God?

a. At the personal level

The Kingdom of God is concerned with you as an individual and as part of the Body of Christ. It means that you live in relationship with God and that He is King of every area in your life:

It means being what God wants you to be and doing what God wants you to do.

The Kingdom of God is much more than God saving you (that's only the beginning). Once you are saved God then seeks to bring you into a full and intimate relationship with Himself, now and for eternity. In this relationship you bring God pleasure and fulfil His will. You live fully under His Kingship. He is your Lord and your God.

Jesus is Lord

in your choices	in your attitudes to God, people and situations
in your family	in your internal life
in your fellowship	in your serving
in your work	in how you interact with people
in your behaviours	in your use of money, time and resources
in your heart	in your circumstances
in your thinking	in your death and resurrection to new life

So the Kingdom of God is not a thing or a place. It is more a condition of relationship in which God is King of everything.



At the personal level the Kingdom of God is:

- **within you**

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:20, 21

- **God's will for your life**

Your kingdom come, Your will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:10

- **the most important thing in life**

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. Matthew 13:44-46

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:33

- **a condition of intimate fellowship with God**

At salvation we enter into **relationship** with God and become part of His Kingdom. We belong to Him; we are His children, and we have eternal life.

In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. John 3:3-5.

After we are saved we gradually develop an intimate **fellowship** with God so that we are not just part of His Kingdom; we live day by day under His kingship, giving Him pleasure. (Which, of course is why God created people in the first place).

God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful. 1 Corinthians 1:9

...and for your pleasure they were and are created. Revelation 4:11

- **what gives meaning and purpose in life**

In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession - to the praise of his glory. Ephesians 1:11-14

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:8-10

- **a condition in which you are living in righteousness, peace and joy**

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Romans 14:17. In the Kingdom of God your Christian life is not focused on religious rituals but on the Lord. The wonderful outcome of this is that you experience righteousness, peace and joy.

If at any stage you lose righteousness, peace or joy it is an indication that some aspect of your life is not under the kingship of the Lord. You need to repent and come back under His kingship. *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,* Acts 3:19. When you repent back comes the righteousness, peace and joy! How wonderful, and O the relief!

It's always best to face up to your sin and repent quickly, because the longer you hold on to sin the more you will suffer from its consequences. *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* 1 John 1:9. For many Christians this is a very hard lesson to learn!

1 Corinthians 6:9-20 and Galatians 5:16-25 are important passages in this context. They describe Christians who have been saved but who engage in unrighteous acts.

Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9,10.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:16-25

These passages are not saying that people lose their salvation and won't go to Heaven because they have sinned. (If so, there wouldn't be much hope for any of us!). It is urging Christians to face up to their sin, repent, and continually live in a righteous relationship with the Lord – i.e. live in the Kingdom of God that they are already part of.

It is truly wonderful to live day by day in a relationship with Jesus where no sin mars the relationship. This is one of the greatest blessings of living in the Kingdom of God. Righteousness, peace and joy. What a blessed state!

- **being led by the Holy Spirit**

The Kingdom of God is all about doing what God wants you to do: fulfilling the calling that He has for your life and thus bringing about His purposes in the world. Sometimes it is hard to know what God wants you to do, but fortunately God has provided a way by which you can hear His voice, and to do God's will: the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is given to help you; equip you; empower you; work through you; make you bold; encourage youAnd He does it from within.



He lives in you and will work through you so you can show compassion, serve others, share the gospel, heal, deliver, work miracles, lead people to Christ In other words, do the will of God.

You may feel weak, helpless, ill-equipped and nervous but remember: *the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.* 1 John 4:4.

The Holy Spirit is more willing to help than you are to do the things you are called to do! He loves to help!

Even though you may feel inadequate, when you start to share Jesus with others you'll find it exciting, challenging and fulfilling. The Holy Spirit will be working in and through you! Amazing things will start to happen. You will be involved in the work of the Kingdom.

In John Chapters 14-17 Jesus explained how the Holy Spirit will:

- be with you and live in you 14:15-17
- show you what you need to know 14:26, 16:13
- glorify Jesus 15:26, 16:14
- convict people about sin, righteousness and judgement 16:7-11
- guide you into the truth 16:13
- give you what you need 16:23, 24



The Holy Spirit gives you the power you need to do whatever it is that God wants you to do.

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 1:8

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Galatians 5:16-18

- **Laying down your life in serving the Lord and in serving others**

Jesus was totally focused on being *about my Father's business*. Luke 2:49. He is our greatest example of what living in the Kingdom of God is like. Jesus' time was spent teaching about the Kingdom of God, equipping others to live in the Kingdom of God, and serving those around Him. Jesus practiced what He preached!

The values that Jesus demonstrated (Kingdom values) were very different to what most people valued at the time, or what most people value today. Values like humility (rather than pride); servanthood (rather than power); love (rather than hate); justice especially for the poor (rather than exploitation); relationship (rather than religion); compassion (rather than revenge)

These values are so different to prevailing cultural values that the Kingdom of God is sometimes called "an upside down Kingdom".

Here are some examples:

"Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. John 3:5,6

"Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me will find it". Matthew 16:24,25

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Love your neighbour as yourself. Mark 12:30, 31

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. 1 Peter 5:6

Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. Matthew 20:26-28

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” Luke 6:38

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, or they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets before you. Matthew 5:3-12

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth ... but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. For where your treasure is there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:21

So in everything, do unto others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. Matthew 7:12

So the last will be first, and the first will be last. Matthew 20:16

*“Doing what God wants you to do” means that you too will be continually “about your Father’s business” – that you will continually lay down your life in service of others. Much of Jesus’ teaching showed that this is not necessarily an easy way to live, but it is surely the best way because it always receives God’s acclamation *Well done good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master. Matthew 25:23.**

Living under the Kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ is our goal; our purpose; our reason for living. It is how we fulfil God’s purpose in creating us.

b. The Kingdom of God in eternity

- The Kingdom of God is the ultimate fulfillment of God’s purpose in creating the universe.

The Bible in its entirety shows that:

- God created the heavens and the earth.
- God placed people on the earth so He could enjoy fellowship within His creation. He would be our God and we would be His people.
- God gave us a free will so that we could freely choose to love and serve Him. Sadly, through the fall sin entered the world and people became alienated from our holy God.
- God initiated a way of redemption so that fellowship could be restored with His sinful people and chose the nation of Israel to bring this about. He gave laws that should be obeyed so the Israelites could live in relationship with a holy God and a system of sacrifices which could bring forgiveness whenever they disobeyed God’s laws. The Israelites were to then share this with the rest of the world.
- The Israelites couldn’t keep God’s laws and the sacrifices were imperfect, needing to be offered repeatedly. Also, the Israelites created a religion around the laws and sacrifices which took them further away from the fellowship with God that He desired.
- God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ to be the final and perfect way by which God could have fellowship with His created people. Jesus was Israel’s Messiah or Christ. He took upon Himself the sins of all people and was sacrificed on our behalf on the cross. After three days Jesus rose from the dead proving that He was indeed God. Because sacrifice for sin has been made, all those who believe in Jesus are declared righteous in God’s sight and can have a relationship with God. They become part of God’s family and enjoy fellowship with Him. Rather than setting up a religion Jesus showed us how to fulfill God’s calling on our lives by loving and serving others. To help us do this Jesus sent the Holy Spirit who lives in us and empowers us to do whatever God wants us to do. Jesus called this relationship between God and His family “the Kingdom of God”.
- One day Jesus will return and will initiate a new order in which God will have full and open fellowship with His family of Christians for eternity. There will be no hindrances to this fellowship and the Kingdom of God will last for eternity – just as God planned in the first place.

- **The Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom.**

The Book of Revelation gives us a glimpse into the eternal nature of the Kingdom of God, and also the fate of the kingdom of darkness (describe in Revelation as 'Babylon').

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign for ever and ever." Revelation 11:15.

God's dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. Revelation 21:3.

Heaven will be wonderful!!! We will live in relationship with Jesus forever, and He will finally be acknowledged as *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*. Revelation 19:16.

King Jesus will reign in His everlasting Kingdom and God will have the kind of relationship with His people that He has always desired:

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever!"

In the meantime. Let's do all we can to live in the Kingdom of God; proclaim the kingdom God and extend the Kingdom of God.

Let's all determine to:

Be what God wants us to be and do what God wants us to do.

For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever an ever. Amen.

