

Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

Series: "The Kingdom of God"



Teaching Sermon: "The Hope of the Kingdom of God Part One, The Kingdom is Not Yet"
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Again, today, we will be sharing from the work of George Eldon Ladd. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B Eerdmans Pub Co, 1991. And George Eldon Ladd. *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1959, along with other resources referenced herein.

The OT and Judaism looked forward to a single day—the Day of the Lord—when God would act to establish His reign on the earth.

__This Age_____// __Age to Come_____

With the coming of Jesus, the time line changes. The time between the resurrection and the *parousia* [paa roo see' uh] is a time of the overlapping of the two ages. Believers live "between the times." The old age goes on, but the powers of the new age have erupted into the old age and invaded the old age in the person of Jesus Christ.

God's will is done in heaven; His Kingdom brings it to earth. In the Age to Come, heaven descends to earth and lifts historical existence to a new level of redeemed life (Revelation 21.2, 3). Those who "attain to that age" cannot die any more. They are sons of the resurrection. (Luke 20.35, 36) The will of God is to conquer evil and to bring His people finally into the blessed immortality of the eternal life of the Age to Come. Life as we know it will be different. The family will be those who have done the will of God, hearing and doing what Jesus says. Believing in Jesus. Believing Jesus.

In the OT God was acting in kingly power, but in some real sense God's Kingdom came into history in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, in Jesus, His person and mission.

The faith of believers expresses its hope in terms of the KOG. This biblical hope is not like the dreams of Greek poets or those of philosophers who hope and dream of some utopia. This hope is rooted in the OT and grounded in the confidence that there is one eternal, living God who has revealed Himself to humans and who has a purpose for the human race which He has chosen to accomplish through the fulfillment of His Covenant promises. The hope of the KOG is an essential element in the revealed will and the redemptive work of the living God.

The OT prophets spoke of a day when people would live together in peace, a day when God would "judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." (Is 2:4) Evil will be eliminated. Predatory behavior, even among animals, will be eliminated. E.g. Is 11:6. Peace, safety, and security gave hope for a happy future.

Jesus comes along and tells people to “repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Mt 4:17) With His coming, the KOG had come upon them. (Mt 12:28). People had to enter the KOG by being born again. (John 3) Jesus’ parables illustrated to His disciples the truth about the KOG (Mt 13:11). At the heart of the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray, stands “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Mt 6:10) Just before His death, Jesus assured His disciples that He would yet share with them the happiness and fellowship of the Kingdom (Luke 22:22-30). He promised that He would appear again on the earth in glory to bring the blessedness of the Kingdom to those for whom it was prepared (Mt 25:31, 34).

The KOG is a present spiritual reality (Romans 14:17). The KOG is righteousness and peace and joy, attributes of the fruit of the Spirit which God bestows now upon those who yield their lives to the rule of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, the KOG is an inheritance which God will bestow upon His people when Christ comes in glory. (Mt 25:34). The KOG is now; and yet it is coming. It is already, and not yet.

The KOG is a realm into which the followers of Jesus Christ have entered. (Colossians 1:13). The redeemed are already in the Kingdom of Christ, which is the same as the KOG (Ephesians 5:5; Rev. 11:15). Those who receive Jesus’ message and mission are those who now enter into the KOG (Luke 16:16).

At the same time the KOG is a future realm which we must enter when Christ returns. 2 Peter 1:11; Mt 8:11. This future coming of the Kingdom will be attended with great glory. Mt 13:41, 43. Yet Jesus told the Pharisees that the KOG is in the midst of you (Luke 17:20, 21), as we have previously seen. So, first the Kingdom comes in grace; then the Kingdom comes in power and great glory.

The KOG is like a tiny seed which becomes a great tree; it is like leaven which will one day have permeated the entire bowl of dough (Luke 13). And yet, Jesus said to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world.” (John 18:36)

The Kingdom is a present reality and yet it is a future blessing. It is an inner spiritual redemptive blessing which can be experienced only by way of the new birth, and yet it will have to do with the government of the nations of the world (Rev 11:15). The Kingdom is a realm into which people enter now and yet it is a realm into which they will enter tomorrow. It is a gift of God which will be bestowed by God in the future and yet it must be received in the present.

What is a “kingdom”? “The rank, quality, state, or attributes of a king; royal authority; dominion; monarchy; kingship.” Webster’s dictionary. The primary meaning of both the Hebrew word “*Malkuth*” in the OT and “*basileia*” in Greek is the rank, authority, and sovereignty exercised by a king. It may indeed be a realm over which a sovereign exercises his authority; and it may be the people who belong to that realm and over whom authority is exercised; but **first of all, a kingdom is the authority to rule, the sovereignty of the king.** (George Eldon Ladd)

God’s kingdom is His universal rule, His sovereignty over all the earth. God’s Kingdom is His power. (Ps 103:19, Ps 145:11, 13) The realm of God’s rule is the heaven and earth. Heaven and earth may pass away, but God’s rule is everlasting. (Daniel 2:37) Power, might, and glory, all expressions of authority, are synonyms for kingdom. These terms identify the Kingdom as the “rule” which God has given to the king. Thus Daniel 5:26. God numbered the days of Belshazzar’s kingdom and brought it to the end. The land was not destroyed; the people were not brought to an end. The people were transferred to another ruler, Darius the Mede.

You can have an area over which to rule, but it means little without authority, the right to rule. We need kingship, authority, kingly power. Jesus said we must “receive the KOG as a little child.” We must receive God’s rule and submit ourselves in perfect trust to God’s rule here and now. We must “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.” (Mt 6:33) We must seek God’s sway, His rule, His reign in our lives. When we pray for God’s kingdom to come, we are praying for God to reign, to manifest His kingly sovereignty, authority, and power, to put to flight every enemy of righteousness, every enemy of His divine rule, that God alone may be King over all the world.

A king needs a sphere of authority, a place of jurisdiction. The KOG is now and we must enter it now; but it is also future. That Age has come now and yet will be more fully realized with Jesus’ return.

Age to Come _____
Age now _____

Nevertheless, **we can taste of the powers of the Age to Come now.** Why? Because Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, the Incarnation. This is the kingdom coming in grace. Jesus comes again in power and great glory in the *Parousia* or Second Advent.

Popular Christian teaching talks of earth now and heaven when we die. We live our bodily life here on earth, but the future salvation will be consummated in heaven. Then there is the notion that our present life is lived “in time” while the future order will be “beyond time” in eternity.

Many theologians consider the biblical view as involving a linear concept. “Eternity” as it belongs to redemptive history is simply unending time, the ages into the ages. *Kosmos* refers to something which is in proper order or harmony, something which enjoys proper arrangement, like cosmetics...aids to helping arrange faces, to put them in order. *Kosmos* is the world as the sum and total of everything constituting an orderly universe. *Aion* has no connotation of an order or a structure but designates a period of time, an age. The NT speaks of This Age and The Age to Come. The entire sweep of man’s existence is set forth in terms of this age and the age which is to come. The word used in Ephesians 1:21, for example, is *aion*, not *kosmos*.

<https://biblehub.com/interlinear/ephesians/1-21.htm>

The word in Mark 10:29, 30 is *aion*. This verse does not speak of two orders of society but of two periods of time. In the first half of the verse, the word “time” is *kairos*. In the second half, it is *aion*. The verse is speaking of **two periods of time**.

Jesus was saying, **Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for the sake of Me and because of the Gospel, if not shall take a hundredfold now, in this time [*Kairos*, G2540]—houses, and brothers, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the age [*aion*, G165] which is coming, life eternal.** Mark 10:29, 30 <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/mark/10-30.htm>

These two periods of time are separated by the “Second Coming” of Christ and the resurrection from the dead. This Age is expected to come to its close with the *Parousia* and it will be followed by The Age to Come. Another event dividing the two ages is the resurrection from the dead. Luke 20:34-36. In This Age people marry and raise children to propagate the race; but in The Age to Come, those who enter that Age will do so by way of resurrection. They will no longer be subject to death but will be immortal, “sons of the resurrection.” The “Second Coming” of Christ and the resurrection from the dead terminate This Age and inaugurate The Age to Come in consummation.

This age is dominated by evil, wickedness, and rebellion against the will and rule of God. Galatians 1:4; Christ gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from the present evil age. In this age, a person needs deliverance, a deliverance which can be accomplished only by the death of Christ as sacrifice and payment for the penalty of sin and propitiation for the wrath of God.

Ephesians 2:1, 2 - We were walking around dead in trespasses and sin following the age of this world, following the way, the times of the present order of society which is evil. We were following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit now at work in the sons of disobedience. Satan influences this age by inducing people to walk in a way displeasing to God, rebelling against the rule of God, God's kingdom.

As believers, if and whenever we are walking according to This Age, we live according to the lusts of our flesh. Galatians 5:19-21. When we were walking according to This Age, we lived according to the lusts of our flesh and were by nature children of wrath. God's wrath, the holy judgment of a righteous God, rests upon This Age, upon its sinfulness and rebellion. God's wrath falls upon those who are conformed to this present evil age in its rebellion against God's rule, God's Kingdom.

Worry and anxiety, the cares of this present order of society choke the Word and it proves unfruitful (Mt. 13:22). The character of This Age chokes the working of the Word of God. The spirit of the Age is hostile to the Gospel. The Gospel may seem to lodge in someone, yet the response may be superficial; no fruit. The cares of this present order of society presses and chokes and a person is not willing to pay the price of following Christ, of putting God's rule, God's kingdom, first. So there is conflict between This Age and the Gospel of the Kingdom.

2 Corinthians 4:3, 4 – The god of this age blinds the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. Satan is the “god of this age.” Satan has been permitted limited authority and power during This Age. Believers once lived according to the prince of the power of the air. Satan is an instrument of God's judicial righteousness. The evil, the hatred, the deception, the strife, the conflict, the sin, the misery, and the pain, suffering and dying which characterize This Age come from Satan. However, man as a free moral agent is answerable both before the judgment of God and other people. God is the First Cause; Man is the responsible agent. God is not the author of sin, but He has permitted it in the scheme of things. Satan's power is a limited. God has no serious competitors.

The root of evil is this: blindness, darkness, and unbelief. Ethical and moral evil are secondary to spiritual evil. Romans 1:18. Wickedness grows out of the root of ungodliness. Sin is primarily a spiritual matter and secondarily ethical. Man's primary responsibility is toward God. The root of sin is found in man's refusal to acknowledge in grateful dependence the gifts, goodness, and grace of God (Romans 1:21).

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Romans 1:18-21.

Darkness is the assertion of independence rather than God dependence. Thus sin is rebellion against the Creator, what R. C. Sproul calls “cosmic treason.” Man in rebellion wants to kill the Creator and take His place. The flesh is at war with the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. (See Galatians 5:17-25; Romans 6:19; James 4:1; 1 Peter 2:11.)

So someone can be cultured, apparently ethical, religious, brilliant, and appear wonderful for all extensive purposes and be in demonic darkness, blinded. In other words, for example, a person could be like Ivory Soap, 99 and 44:100% pure but he/she still falls short of the Infinite holiness of the Living God, Creator/Redeemer. It takes another infinite to cancel out the infinite heinousness of sin. This is why Jesus Christ, the Infinite God-Man, is the only Mediator between God and Man, and He has satisfied fully the demands of an Infinitely holy and just God.

Satan’s basic desire is to keep people from Christ. He is a hunter of men’s souls to kill them, to do everything that opposes life. He is not so concerned to corrupt morals or make people atheists or to produce enemies of religion, which can in itself be an enemy of the true light. Satan just wants people to die without Christ and to live their lives in rebellion against their Creator. **The character of This Age is darkness.**

This Age is in rebellion against God’s rule. The Age to Come opposes This Age. The present age is called this present evil age; so the KOG belongs to The Age to Come. Both as the present manifestation of God’s reign and the realm of completed redemptive blessing, the KOG belongs to The Age to Come.

Entrance into eternal life in the KOG is impossible to attain by all human resources. It is impossible to have one’s affections turned from possessions or anything else in order to follow Jesus and be prepared to enter the future Kingdom of Heaven, or KOG. But people who follow Jesus in this time will experience great blessings, though accompanied by persecutions; but in the Age to Come they will receive eternal life (Mark 10:30). The Age to Come, the KOG, and Salvation, are promised for those who in This Age become disciples (followers, learners) of Christ. And to do that, one must be born again. (John 3)

In 1 Cor. 15:50 Paul says that flesh and blood cannot inherit the KOG. Paul speaks about the resurrection. This means that our bodies must undergo a transformation so that they no longer consist of flesh and blood but are incorruptible, glorious, powerful, spiritual bodies. We enter the KOG in transformed resurrection bodies suitable for living eternally. The KOG will come in full after the resurrection.

The KOG will be introduced by the Day of Judgment. The sons of the Kingdom and the sons of the Evil One live side by side like wheat and tares growing together. There will be a harvest at the end of the age where there will be a separation of judgment. The righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Mt 13:39-43). Judgment terminates This Age and brings the sons of the Kingdom into their full enjoyment of the Kingdom blessings. Judgment will be at the close of this age. Angels come out and separate the evil from the righteous. (Mt 13:49, 50). In The Age to Come God’s rule will have destroyed Satan, destined for eternal /fire punishment, and righteousness will displace all evil. Matthew 25:41, 46.

This Age and The Age to Come are not on the same level.

THE AGE TO COME

Parousia/

THIS AGE _____/

Within this overall pattern, there may be stages. So some say there are two stages in the resurrection of the dead and two stages in the defeat of Satan. What we do know is that death and the grave are not destroyed until the final judgment.

In our lifetimes we must remember that the KOG will never be fully realized apart from the personal, glorious, victorious Coming of Christ. Christ brings the KOG. People do not build the KOG. Jesus does. We suffer as believers because we no longer belong to This Age; we belong to The Age to Come. If we are friends of the world we are enemies of God. If we are friends of God we are enemies to the world. Choose your friends wisely!

With the Incarnation and the Cross and the Resurrection and the Ascension into Glory of Jesus Christ, the Age to Come has broken into This present evil Age. So next time, God willing, we will look at “The Kingdom is Already.”

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. Ephesians 1:15-21 NKJV

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