

Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

Series: "The Kingdom of God"



Teaching Sermon: "The Kingdom of God: In History or Beyond History?"

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The Kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus Christ. Mark 1:14, 15. Matthew 4:23. Luke 4:21

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all. Matthew 4:23.

The words "kingdom of God" do not occur in the OT, but the idea is found throughout the prophets with a two-fold emphasis. (1) God is spoken of as the King, both of Israel (e.g. Exo 15:18; Num. 23:21; Deut. 33:5, Is 43:15) and of all the earth (2 Kings 19:15, Is 6:5, Jer 46:18, Ps 29:10; 99:1-4). (2) God is now King, but the Bible references a day when He shall become King and rule over His people. (Is 24:23, 33:22, 52:7, Zeph. 3:15, Zech. 14:9ff). So while God is King, He must manifest His kingship in the world of people and nations.

In Isaiah 9 and 11 the Kingdom is to arise out of history and there will be a descendant of David ruling in an earthly setting. After the return from exile, the Jews lost hope of a Kingdom in history and started looking for an apocalyptic inbreaking of God in the Person of a heavenly son of Man with a completely transcendental Kingdom "beyond history." There is considerable diversity in the description of the KOG in the OT, but the KOG always involves an inbreaking of God into history when God's redemptive purpose is fully realized. The Kingdom is always an earthly hope, although an earth redeemed from the curse of evil.

The OT hope is always ethical. It lets the light of the future shine on the present. Israel will be confronted by history in the here and now. In the OT people despaired of history, feeling that it was given over to evil powers. God's people could only expect suffering and affliction in this age until God would act to establish His Kingdom in the Age to Come. Zealots arose who were not content to wait for God to bring His Kingdom but were determined to hasten its coming with the sword.

Psalms 145:11-13; Ps 103:19. The KOG means God's rule or sovereignty. The KOG is both future and present. It is the eschatological era of salvation and yet God is now King. **God is now the King, but He must also become King.** That is the crux of the matter.

They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, And talk of Your power, To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, And the glorious majesty of His kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all ^[1]generations. Psalm 145:11-13.

In the NT we have the KOG but also the kingdom of the heavens, a phrase that occurs only in Matthew, where it is used 34 times. Everywhere else in the NT the phrase KOG is used. The "Kingdom of the heavens" is a Semitic idiom, where "heavens" is a substitute for the divine name. (Luke 15:18). Both phrases, KOG and the kingdom of the heavens, are seldom used in

Jewish literature before the days of Jesus. When Jesus comes, He introduces in His teaching a large number of new phrases about the *basileia*, of kingdom, that have no parallels in the literature of the world into which Jesus came.

In the NT God's Kingdom comes, or appears, and will bring this age to its end and inaugurate the Age to Come. (Mt 6:10, Luke 19:11) The word *basileia* can designate both the manifestation or coming of God's kingly rule and the eschatological realm in which God's rule is enjoyed. So, inheriting eternal life and entering the KOG are synonymous with entering into the Age to Come. The coming of the KOG will mean the final and total destruction of the devil and his angels (Mt 25:41). It will mean the formation of a redeemed society unmixed with evil (Mt. 13:36-43). It will mean perfected fellowship with God at the messianic feast (Luke 13:28, 29).

But when Jesus comes preaching the KOG, He does not limit the Kingdom to one nation, the nation of Israel. He universalizes the Kingdom. This was hard for people, even His own family. In the OT and in Judaism, the Kingdom was always pictured in terms of national Israel. The Gentiles might be conquered or converted, but the Kingdom is always Israel's. By Jesus' day the establishing of God's Kingdom was believed to mean the sovereignty of Israel over all other political and national enemies.

John the Baptist rejected this Jewish particularism and looked upon the most religious of the Jews as being in need of repentance to enter the coming Kingdom. According to Jesus, if someone wanted to see or enter the KOG, they had to be "born again." They had to respond to His own Person and message and believe. Jesus affirmed that Israel, the natural "sons of the Kingdom" will be rejected from the Kingdom and their place taken by others (Matthew 8:12). The true "sons of the kingdom" are those who respond to Jesus and accept His word (Mt. 13:38). The true family of Jesus are those who do the will of the Father; and what is that will? It is to believe on the Son, Jesus Christ. One must receive the present proclamation of the KOG with a childlike attitude of complete dependence to enter into the coming Kingdom (Mark 10:15).

Jesus saw His ministry as a fulfillment of the OT promise in history, short of the apocalyptic consummation. Luke 4:21, Matthew 11:2-6 cf Isaiah 35:5, 6. Jesus' mission is repeatedly understood as the fulfillment of the OT promises. Matthew 12:28. The KOG has come before Jesus is casting out demons by the Spirit of God. Jesus spoke with authority. He used commands. He delivered people from satanic bondage. The KOG is present.

But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. Matthew 12:28, 29.

What was present was not the eschaton, but the kingly power of God attacking the dominion of Satan, and delivering people from the power of evil. Jesus has invaded the kingdom of Satan and has "bound" the strong man. Mt. 12:29. In these two verses we have the essential theology of the KOG. Instead of waiting until the end of the age to reveal His kingly power and destroy satanic evil, Jesus declares that God has acted in His kingly power to curb the power of Satan. In other words, God's Kingdom in Jesus' teaching has a twofold manifestation: at the end of the age to destroy Satan, and in Jesus' mission to bind Satan. Before Satan's final destruction, people may be delivered from Satan's power. (Ladd, p 66)

In binding, Satan's power is curbed. However, Satan continues to be active: he snatches away the word of the Kingdom when it does not find real acceptance among people (Mt. 13:19); he was able to speak through Peter (Mark 8:33); he entered into Judas (Luke 22:3); and he wanted to take over Peter (Luke 22:31). Satan is not powerless, but his power has been broken.

Some explain it like military action in a war. The decisive battle in a war may be won and the tide is turned before gaining final victory. Jesus has dealt the death blow to Satan and the final outcome and triumph of God's Kingdom is certain.

Most say Jesus' binding of Satan occurred in the wilderness. Others say that the casting out of demons constituted the "binding" as Satan was spoiled. With each act of exorcism Jesus saw a defeat of Satan.

Jesus gave this power to His disciples when He commissioned them to travel throughout Galilee preaching the KOG (Luke 10:9). They got all excited about this. Jesus said that He saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. The context suggests that Jesus saw in the successful mission of the 70 an evidence of the defeat of Satan. A decisive victory has been won. Satan has been bound; he has fallen from his place of power; but his final destruction awaits the end of the age.

So, the enemies of God's Kingdom are not hostile nations but spiritual powers of evil. The victory of God's Kingdom is a victory in the spiritual world that will manifest in the physical world. The victory won in the spiritual realm will be evidenced in the sphere of history.

It is this that sets the Christian gospel apart from Judaism. Those of Jesus' day conceived of the age as under the power of evil while God had retreated from the scene of human history. Only in the Day of Judgment would Israel be delivered and her tormentors punished. There was despair because it was thought that in history God was aloof and unmoved by the sufferings of His people.

In Jesus' Person, in Jesus Himself, God invaded human history and triumphed over evil. He bound Satan and broke the power of evil as He preached and taught and healed and cast out demons. He defeated Satan when He died on the cross and when He rose again from the dead. He is defeating Satan now as He sits at the right hand of the Father in glory. He is coming again to bring the consummation of the KOG.

Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. Colossians 2:15.

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Hebrews 2:14, 15.

The KOG came in an unexpected form. It was not accompanied by the signs and outward display the Pharisees and Zealots and others of the day expected. When, where? The KOG was in their midst. Luke 17:20, 21. *Entos hymon*. The KOG is to be received in the inner man, in the spirit of a person. Jesus would not have said to the Pharisees that the KOG was within them. He opposed the Pharisees. He was saying that the KOG was in their midst in Himself, in Jesus' Person. If you have Jesus in your heart, you have the Kingdom of God. If He is ruling your spirit, soul, and body, you are in the KOG and you have the power to overcome Satan and evil in your life. Your choices and behavior will demonstrate whether or not Jesus is ruling your life. Don't be deceived, Paul will say, certain categories of people will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor ^[a]homosexuals, nor ^[b]sodomites,¹⁰ nor

thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were ^[c]sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

We can't say we are saved and elect and then continue in the things of darkness and evil, in immorality. We may struggle against the forces of darkness in our lives, but we must know that we can have victory in Jesus. Jesus has had the victory; we are not victims. He was the sacrificial Lamb without sin, the victim, who offered up Himself as the sacrifice for sin, not His sin, but our sin. That offering of Himself was accepted by the Father. Jesus is the Beloved; we are in Christ, the Beloved of the Father. The resurrection of Christ proved that the offering of Himself was accepted, that divine justice had been satisfied, legally and judicially. There is forgiveness of sin legally and judicially for those who ask, who repent of their sin and entrust their hearts, their souls, their being, to Jesus. Body, mind, soul, spirit, and life.

Truth is a rare commodity today. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The Word of God is Truth. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. The Living God is the true God, the one, true God.

And this is eternal life, that they might know You, the One, true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. John 17:3.

The war has been won; the death blow has already been dealt. Satan and those of his kingdom await that final Day. Jesus has triumphed. Satan lost his *kratos*, dominion/governing power/authority. The Kingdom is already and not yet. But know for sure, the prophetic word will be fulfilled and the truth of the Word will prevail. The power of sin has been broken. The payment for sin has been paid. Every true believer can walk in the power of the resurrection now. So walk in it now, knowing that the Day of glory will come in power, bringing full consummation of the covenant.

Jesus said, “The time is fulfilled, and the KOG is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:14, 15) To see this kingdom, you will need to be born again. To enter this kingdom, you will need to be born again. John 3. To repent, you will need God to change your heart first. To believe you must belong. You must be one who is a born-out-of-God one. This takes the Holy Spirit. If He plants in you the seed of life, He is planting in your heart the Life of Jesus. That Life will sprout and grow and live into the ages of the ages, eternal life. It is only in Christ. Do you want it?

Bibliography:

(Ladd, George Eldon. *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1959)

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Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: Matthew 25:34 KJV

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