

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

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Introduction:

- A. Possibly start with “canned” answers to questions that come up and scriptures that are sometimes applied out of context – Seek first the kingdom (seek first the church), where two or three are gathered (numbers don’t matter), 5 acts of worship, 5 steps to salvation, 3 works of the church
- B. For me personally this has been a very confusing Bible topic. Most of the confusion is because I have heard preachers throughout the years saying, “The kingdom is the church and the church is the kingdom,” however, that doesn’t fit with the majority of the passages.

GAINING A MORE COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

- A. First of all, it helps to start back in the Old Testament by looking at some of the prophecies concerning the kingdom of the Lord that was to come:
 1. David prophesied of the coming kingdom and the reign of the Lord’s anointed (**Psalm 2:1-2, 6-9**)
 2. During the time of the captivity Nebuchadnezzar had a great dream concerning the coming of a great kingdom formed without hands which was interpreted for him by Daniel: (**Daniel 2:34-35; 2:44-45**)
 3. Isaiah spoke of the coming of Christ and the nature of His reign on the throne of David (**Isaiah 9:6-7**)
 4. Later on Isaiah spoke of the scope of his kingdom as one that encompasses all the earth (**Isaiah 11:1-9**)
- B. Things we learn about the kingdom of Christ from the actual teachings of Jesus concerning it:
 1. Following the 400 year famine of hearing the words of the Lord, the gospel accounts open up with great declarations that this much anticipated kingdom was near: (**Luke 1:32-33; Matt 3:2 & 4:17; Mark 9:1**)
 - a. When Gabriel appeared to Mary He informed her that her Son would be the One of prophecy... That He would sit on David’s throne and His reign would last forever.
 - b. Both John and Jesus testified that the kingdom of Heaven was “near” or “at hand”
 - c. Jesus even emphasized that some who were alive at that time would not taste of death until they saw the kingdom coming with power. 2000 year old people or the kingdom has come!
 2. “Parable Of the Wheat & Tares” shows the scope of the kingdom that was to come (**Matt 13:24-30, 36-43**)
 - a. Let’s notice the components of this parable and what they represent: The field is the world, the wheat is the sons of the kingdom, and the weeds are the sons of the evil one.
 - b. Through this parable Jesus shows what it is going to be like on the day of judgment – The tares will be separated from the wheat. But for now, the wheat & tares are coexisting in the kingdom.
 - c. Some say, “This is the church... and there are saved and lost people in the church” – But that doesn’t work. Technically, there are no wicked people in the Lord’s church... only the saved
 - d. If the field is the world, Jesus is sowing the seed there, and there are good & evil people in it, then the kingdom is broader than the church. This shows Jesus is king of both the good & the evil!
 3. Notice what else Jesus says about it – He speaks of the kingdom as being “within you” (**Luke 17:20-21**)
 - a. If you make the kingdom be the church here, it just does not make sense. While we may be “within” the church, the church is not “within” us. So kingdom & church are not synonyms.
 - b. In those days kingdoms came and went with great pomp and show, through military conquest, & were very physical... Christ’s kingdom wouldn’t work that way... It’s not something you “see”
 - c. If what Jesus is referring to is His rule and dominion then it makes sense – How is His reign manifest? Through men and women accepting His reign and rule in their lives

- d. What else does the Bible say is in us? Paul writes about “Christ in you the hope of glory” (**Col 1:27**)
- 4. It would be good to stop here and see that the term kingdom is sometimes used to refer to other things...
 - a. The terms “Kingdom,” “kingdom of God,” “Kingdom of Christ,” and “Kingdom of Heaven” seem to be used almost interchangeably, however sometimes they hold various meanings
 - b. Sometimes it can only refer to Heaven itself, sometimes it refers to the body of saved people, sometimes it has reference to the reign of Christ, & occasionally it points to the church

C. Following the resurrection of Christ, what we see is this promised kingdom coming in power:

1. Just before the ascension of Christ, He spoke of the all encompassing scope of His authority (**Matt 28:18**)
 - a. How much authority does He say He has? It’s ALL authority. Something major had happened to give Jesus ALL authority. What could that have been? His death & His resurrection!
 - b. Notice the definition of kingdom: “Is primarily an abstract noun, denoting sovereignty, royal power, dominion,...then by metonymy, a concrete noun, denoting the territory or people over whom a king rules” (Vines). Most of the time the term kingdom is abstract in nature.
 - c. We typically think of kingdom as a specific territory or a group of people, but the word first refers to the actual rule, dominion, and authority that is possessed. Thus, the kingdom has come!
2. Now we travel ahead to the day of Pentecost and see the kingdom emphasized again (**Acts 2:29-32, 36**)
 - a. Often when we read Acts 2 we ask, “What was established on the day of Pentecost?” and the answer that is given is “The Church.” While there may be some sense in which we see the church emerging, what is pictured in Acts 2 is shows something bigger than the church!
 - b. Peter makes the observation that David must not have been talking about himself sitting on the throne because he died and is still dead, but Christ died & has been raised from that dead!
 - c. According to this passage, when was that descent of David supposed to take the throne? It is clear it was to happen at His resurrection. The kingdom was established before Pentecost!
 - d. Remember, at His ascension Jesus declared He had ALL authority. Acts 2 recognizes that authority and declares Jesus as both Lord & Christ. So, the kingdom had come when Jesus was raised!
 - e. So what was established on Acts 2, if anything was established? (**Acts 2:37-38, 41, 47**)
 - 1) This is the first recorded time the gospel of the kingdom had been preached since Jesus was raised... It was the first preaching of it since Jesus had been given all authority
 - 2) Here are people hearing the gospel of Christ, recognizing Him as Lord and Christ (His authority and His redemptive work) and submitting themselves to His reign
 - 3) What we see in Acts 2 is the reign & rule of Christ being established in the hearts of men!
3. Consider briefly some passages which show the relationship of the saved and the lost within the kingdom of Christ (**Col 1:13-14; Heb 12:28; Eph 2:19-22; Rev. 1:6; Phil 3:20-21**)
 - a. **Illustration:** Show picture of a circle within a circle. It’s like there is a kingdom within a kingdom.
 - b. The organization of the Roman empire might help us see this – There were a huge amount of people that made up the Roman empire; however, it was a very special thing to be a Roman citizen. Many were only subjects. Paul was a citizen by birth, some bought it (**Acts 22:25-29**)
 - c. The saved are fellow citizens in the kingdom of Christ; however, those who are lost, while in the kingdom, are strangers and aliens. All are subject to Christ but all haven’t submitted to Him!
 - d. Those who are saved enjoy all the rights and privileges of citizenship, while those who are lost are enjoying no benefits of being in the kingdom. (*Like those within the borders of this country*)
4. **1 Corinthians 15:24-28**

D. Now, how does this view of the kingdom of Christ impact us? What is the application?

1. While both the lost and the saved are within the scope of the kingdom of Christ, only those who are saved enjoy the full rights and privileges of citizenship:
 - a. Those who are lost are still under the authority of Christ, but they don't enjoy the full rights, privileges, and benefits of citizenship in Christ's kingdom – They are just aliens & strangers.
 - b. What are the benefits of citizenship? Fellowship with God, forgiveness of sins, heirs with Christ, answered prayer, hope, Heaven, a spiritual family, freedom from guilt, meaning in life
 - c. Understanding the position as well as the future of the citizens verses the subjects, we ought to feel an even deeper desire to teach & encourage those who are not citizens to accept the rule of Christ in their hearts and in their lives and become citizens of the kingdom!
2. Regardless of whether a person desires to be under the law of Christ or not, since all are under the rule of Christ, all people are responsible to His laws: **(2 Cor 5:9-10; Philippians 2)**
 - a. Some people actually believe that if a person is not a Christian, then they are not subject to the laws of Christ, but all are responsible to His laws since all are under His sovereign reign
 - b. If non-Christians are not subject to the laws of Christ then we are doing them a HUGE disservice by teaching them. We don't bring people to Christ to make them accountable to Him, we bring people to Christ because they are accountable to Him and will be judged by His laws!
 - c. One place we see this applied is the marriage and divorce question – People ask, "What if a person divorces & remarries for the wrong reason before becoming a Christian?"
3. As citizens of the kingdom of Christ, the rule of Christ in our hearts changes everything **(Col 3:1-4, 15-17)**
 - a. Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords; but the question is whether or not we have made Him the King of King & Lord of Lords in our lives. Do we accept His kingship on a daily basis?
 - b. Remember what Jesus and John preached because the kingdom was coming? REPENTANCE! We know we cannot become a citizen without repentance, but that is to be a continual practice!
 - c. So often there's one part, sometimes more, of our lives that we haven't quite submitted to the rule of Christ, something we are still holding back. Paul shows in Col. 3 that Jesus' reign is to encompass all parts of our lives – Whether our thoughts, actions, speech, relationships, etc.

Conclusion: Acts 2:30-38