

## WHAT JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT THE KINGDOM - THE KING AND THE FUTURE

Taken and adapted from 'The Red Bits – A Study Guide' by Michael Button)

### A. THE KING

The 54 references to *The Kingdom of God* in the recorded words of Jesus leave no room for doubt that GOD is the King. However, Jesus tells us a little about how the business of ruling operates between Him (the Son) and God the Father.

**1. The Father is King** (read Matt 26:29). This is also clear from the Lord's Prayer, which is addressed to *Our Father* and asks *Thy Kingdom come*. The King is no impersonal ruler who is remote from His subjects but a Father Whose subjects are His children whom He loves. As the Bible commentator A.M. Hunter puts it, 'This in-breaking rule of God is a *fatherly rule*' (italics mine).<sup>1</sup>

**2. The Son rules on behalf of the Father** (read Luke 22:29). Jesus sometimes refers to *My Kingdom* (Luke 22:30; John 18:26). This is because the Kingdom was bestowed on Him by His Father.

**3. The Son will hand back the Kingdom to the Father.** Jesus does not mention this handing over of the Kingdom when all has been accomplished but Paul writes about it in 1 Corinthians (read I Cor 15:24).

Activity 1: Which of the following is correct?

- (a) Jesus is King.
- (b) God is King.
- (c) There is no King.
- (d) Both (a) and (b) are correct.

### B. THE FUTURE OF THE KINGDOM

We have seen that, fundamentally, the Kingdom is God's rule in action. However it is apparent from our knowledge and daily experience that God's rule is lacking in our world. Not everyone does God's will, not all the sick are healed and not all demons are cast out. Is this because God has lost control? Surely not!

We have also seen that the Kingdom is equated with Eternal Life. Yet believers still physically die. Is Eternal Life not a reality? No, it is very real!

The reason we do not see the Kingdom fully in action is that there is more to come. God has not yet applied His full rule. During the Second World War a decisive<sup>1</sup> turning point occurred on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944, when the Allied forces invaded

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<sup>1</sup> A.M. Hunter, *Introducing the New Testament*, page 31b.

Normandy. The day was marked with the name 'D- Day.' However, there followed another eleven months of heavy fighting until the German forces surrendered and the allies could claim victory. This was on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945, which was given the name 'VE-Day,' for 'Victory in Europe Day.' Today, the Kingdom is in the period between 'D-Day' and 'VE-Day.' The decisive victory was won by Jesus on the Cross, but there are a lot of battles still to take place before Jesus' rule is fully established. Jesus taught that the Kingdom has yet to be consummated, i.e. brought to completion or perfection. This is the eschatological<sup>2</sup> aspect of the Kingdom – its prophesied future. The Kingdom has come with the arrival of God's Son, but the fullness of the Kingdom has still to come.

1. **The Present situation will not last forever.** For a while the Kingdom of God coexists with the kingdoms of this world which have largely given their allegiance to Satan. However, the day will come when the two will be irrevocably separated.

Activity 1: Read the following parables and answer the questions that follow:

Matt 13:24-30 The Wheat and the Tares.

Matt 13:47-50 The Dragnet.

(a) When did Jesus say the separation will take place?

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(b) What do you think the field represents in verse 24?

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(c) Who or what is the enemy in verse 25?

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(d) What do these parables teach us about the Kingdom of God now?

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(e) What do these parables teach us about the Kingdom of God in the future?

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2. **The Kingdom will come in its fullness with the coming of Christ.**

The Kingdom came into the world with the first coming of Christ. It will come in its fullness at His second coming. However, there will be no opportunity to enter the Kingdom at His second coming. Those who wish to be in His Kingdom when He comes must enter **now**; they must invest their talents **now** (read Matt 25:14-27).

Activity 2: Read the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins in Matt 25:1-13 and answer the questions that follow:

(a) Which virgins represent the ones who are in the Kingdom now?

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(b) Who is the bridegroom who is coming?

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- (c) When will those represented by the foolish virgins be able to enter the Kingdom?
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### 3. **The King will become Judge**

The parables that tell of separation also tell of judgment, with reward and punishment.

Activity 3: Read the parable of the Sheep and Goats in Matt 25:31-46 and answer the following questions:

- (a) When will the separation take place?
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- (b) On what evidence was the judgment made?
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- (c) Which group do you think were members of the Kingdom?
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### 4. **The Kingdom come in power**

There remains one other teaching of Jesus about the future of the Kingdom that has caused some puzzlement to its readers, including many Bible scholars – that of the Kingdom coming in power within the lifetime of some of Jesus' contemporaries (*read* Mark 9:1). Clearly Jesus cannot be referring to the consummation of the Kingdom, because that has still not occurred and all those who heard Jesus say it are no longer alive.

Three explanations have been given:

- (i) Jesus is referring to believers and to spiritual death. However, the word 'until' suggests that witnesses of the Kingdom coming in power will eventually die, whereas believers will not have to face spiritual death.
- (ii) Jesus is referring to His resurrection. This was indeed a mighty act of power which demonstrated the powerful intervention of the King over the natural world and over the power of Satan to destroy men's lives. However, this is not the sort of expression one might normally use for an event that was to take place in a few days' time.
- (iii) Jesus was looking forward to the powerful expansion of the Kingdom under the work of the Holy Spirit, as seen in the Acts of the Apostles. In this case, Jesus might be thinking not of a one-off event (though the Day of Pentecost could be described in the terms Jesus used) but of the ongoing powerful expansion of the Kingdom from Pentecost onwards.

The most likely explanation seems to be (iii) – the powerful expansion of the Kingdom with the coming of the Holy Spirit (*read* Acts 4:33). Whatever your personal understanding of this passage, I am sure you will agree that the Kingdom is indeed powerful to establish God's rule in the lives of many and through them to affect the world.

## C. CONCLUSION TO TEACHING ON THE KINGDOM

The *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*<sup>2</sup> sums up the teaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom as follows:

Jesus took (the Old Testament concept of the Kingdom) and transformed it from a narrow-minded nationalistic hope to a universal, spiritual order in which all humankind could find the fulfilment of its ultimate desire for righteousness, peace, happiness, freedom from sin and guilt, and a restored relationship with God.

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<sup>2</sup> The doctrine of the end times.

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<sup>2</sup> C.C. Caragounis in the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*<sup>2</sup>, pages 429-430