

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

I. WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

- A. The **OLD TESTAMENT** concept of the Kingdom of God begins to become visible in the writings of the prophets. The catch phrase is "the day of the Lord." Often times the Kingdom concept is introduced by the phrase "in that day." What day? The "day of the Lord." All through the prophets the "day of the Lord" is presented as a time of **JUDGMENT** and **HOPE**: judgment for the wicked, hope for the righteous of God--Isaiah 2:2-4, 10-12
- B. When Jesus arrives on the scene in the **NEW TESTAMENT** he is preaching, "Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." Jesus came proclaiming "the day of the Lord." Judgment and hope are bound up in his message of repentance (Mark 1:15, 6:12-13; Luke 13:3).
- C. The Greek word for Kingdom is "baselia." It is not a reference to a geographical kingdom but is a word which means "to rule" or "to reign."
- D. Jesus **TOLD** us and **SHOWED** us what the Kingdom of God is like. In Jesus Christ, the dynamic rule of God has broken into history

II. TWO AGES IN ONE

- A. Understanding the New Testament and the Kingdom of God requires us to observe that we are dealing with **TWO AGES**: this Present **EVIL AGE** (Galatians 1:4) and the **AGE TO COME** (Matthew 13:36-43; Ephesians 1:20-21; Hebrews 6:4-5).

TWO AGES

PRESENT AGE

Evil (Galatians 1:4)

Under Satan's rule (2 Corinthians 4:4; John 12:31)

Governed by human wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:6-8)

Broken, sick, and dying (Luke 4:18)

AGE TO COME

Righteous (Revelation 21:22-27)

Under Jesus' rule (Ephesians 2:19-21)

Governed by God's wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:27-30)

Whole, healthy, and eternal (Revelation 21:1-5)

- B. The New Testament is heavily saturated with this dualistic framework. Two ages, two kingdoms are placed in contrast.

III. THE TENSION IN WHICH WE LIVE

Jesus told us that the Kingdom of God has come (Matthew 12:28). Yet, as we look around at our world it is obvious that many things are contrary to the will (the rule) of God. There is sin, disease, suffering, and death. In one sense, the Kingdom of God is **PRESENT** (it has invaded this present evil age), yet in another sense, the Kingdom of God is still **FUTURE** (it has not come in its fullness).

IV. THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM

- A. In Exodus 19:1-6, God calls the nation of Israel into a covenant with himself. If they are obedient to that covenant they will become for him a "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6). Israel rejected God's prophets and ultimately his Son (Mark 12:1-12).
- B. Jesus proclaims that he is the "true vine" (John 15:1) and his believers are the branches. The nation of Israel, referred to as the vine in the Old Testament, has become a "wild vine" (Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21).
- C. The New Testament writers declare that believers in Christ, the church, are now grafted in as a new Israel and are sharers of the titles and covenant promises of the Old Testament (Revelation 1:5-6, 5:9-10, 20:6; 1 Peter 2:6-10). In Galatians 6:15-16, Paul says there is a new creation in Jesus Christ where neither circumcision (Jewish nation) nor uncircumcision (Gentile nations) mean anything. The one who inherits the covenant titles and promises is not the one who has the blood of Abraham coursing through his veins, but the one who has the faith of Abraham coursing through his heart (Romans 2:28-29, 3:30). God is still gracious toward the Jews "for the sake of the fathers." (See Romans 11:25-28)
- D. It is important to understand the relationship between the church and the Kingdom. The church is NOT the Kingdom. **Then what is the church's relationship to the Kingdom?**
 - 1. The church is a **WITNESS** to the Kingdom (Acts 1:8).
 - 2. The church holds the **KEYS** to the Kingdom (Matthew 16:19).
 - 3. The church is the primary **RESIDENCE** of God's Kingdom (rule) on earth (Revelation 5:9-10).
 - 4. The church is an **INSTRUMENT** of the Kingdom (Colossians 4:11)

Every local church is to be an outpost of the Kingdom of God. We are soldiers who have been stationed on the front lines of battle (Ephesians

6:12). Over and over again the Scriptures use military metaphors to describe the church. We are the ARMY OF LIGHT invading the kingdom of darkness, just as Jesus did. We are the ARMY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS invading the kingdom of wickedness, just as Jesus did. We are the ARMY OF LIBERTY invading the kingdom of bondage and slavery.

- E. We live between two ages which are in conflict, between two kingdoms at war. It is imperative that we learn to wage war. We must learn to wear the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:13-20), learn the weapons of our warfare (2 Corinthians 10:3-5), learn to operate in Kingdom power (1 Corinthians 4:20) and commit to live lives worthy of the Kingdom of God (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

V. THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

- A. One reason the church is so weak and impotent today is that we have proclaimed a faulty gospel. This faulty gospel has produced weak and faulty believers. We have turned the good news into the gospel of the church. The church never had a gospel! It is the gospel, the **GOOD NEWS**, of the **KINGDOM**! (See Matthew 4:23, 24:14; Acts 8:12, 28:30-31.) Too many Christians think God has called us to straighten out the world. God didn't call us to straighten out the world; **he called us to ANNOUNCE to the world that LIGHT has come into the darkness.** Those who follow the light will be led to God's **NEW WORLD**. This world has been judged.

"And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hated the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds would be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God" (John 3:19-21).

- B. The church as an instrument of the Kingdom is sent to **PROCLAIM** and **DEMONSTRATE** that the Kingdom of God has invaded this present evil age and that there is a way up and a way out. The gospel is not simply a matter of **BELIEVING** the truth about God. The devils believe the truth but it is not good news (James 2:19). The gospel is a matter of **CHOOSING** who will **GOVERN** your life
- C. First we give the authority of our lives over to Him and then He gives the authority of His life over to us (Luke 9:1-2; John 20: 21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20). Only as we begin to live with Kingdom authority and power as "ambassadors for Christ" will we be what God has called us to be. The

authority we have is authority to bind and loose (Matthew 16:19); to forgive sins (John 20:23); to heal the sick and cast out demons (Matthew 10:1); etc. All these things are **DEMONSTRATIONS** that the Kingdom of God has come. When the kingdom of Satan is invaded by the Kingdom of God, the power of God collides with his enemies and his victory is revealed through salvation, healing, deliverance, and liberty. The Kingdom of God must be more than **WORDS**; it must also be **WORKS** (1 Corinthians 4:20, 2:4-5). That was the two-fold pattern of Jesus' ministry: words and works, proclamation and demonstration. It must also be ours.

- D.** For too long the church has preached an intellectualized message with no power and no demonstration of the Spirit. Thus, our faith has come to rest on human wisdom and not on God's power. (See 1 Corinthians 2:1-5) The gospel we live and preach must be based on the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is a kingdom where there is no death, no sickness, no crying, no mourning, no pain (Revelation 21:4). **Our God reigns; that is GOOD NEWS!**