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Are You Seeking the Kingdom of God?



By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #285 ~

It’s easy, and wrong, to spend too much time, energy, and money on earthly kingdoms, on governments, rulers, and elections. As Christians, it’s imperative that we don’t get caught up in these worldly matters. What’s most important is knowing that we are members of the kingdom of God, and that our primary purpose is to work with Jesus Christ in building His kingdom. Matt. 6:33, 28:19-20

In His teaching, Jesus did not focus on the kingdoms of man, but on the kingdom of God. At the outset of His ministry, Jesus told us, *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel”* (Mk. 1:15). A person needs to repent of his sins and believe in the gospel, that Jesus died to pay for his sins and then was raised from the dead. And it’s only by a spiritual birth, only by the Spirit, that he can enter this kingdom. Jesus made it very clear, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* John 3:3,

So too, Paul focused not on the kingdoms of man, on who ruled the country, but on the kingdom of God. He told the Ephesian elders that his purpose was *"to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God"* (Acts 20:24), and said, *"I went about preaching the kingdom"* (Acts 20:25). Paul was preaching the kingdom of God, and proclaiming to these pastors that it was by believing the gospel that a person becomes a member of this kingdom. The same thing was stated by Paul in the last verse of Acts – he *"was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ."* Acts 28:31

As for you and me, we too should be focused on the gospel, for it's only by believing this good news that a person becomes a member of the church and, in a larger sense, a member of the kingdom of God. Aren't you amazed and thrilled by this truth? What's more important, what's better than this? It is truly a miracle that God *"rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."* Col. 1:13-14

Ever since Pentecost, Jesus Christ has been personally working in the lives of believers, and collectively building a kingdom (Eph. 2:19-22) that is spiritual in nature, what is called the church. *"The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit"* (Rom. 14:17). And what Christ is doing in the church, in God's kingdom, is not a matter of mere words, but is a spiritually powerful and eternal work. *"The kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power"* (1 Cor. 4:20). More than you realize, the devil was defeated, lives are being dramatically transformed, and God is being glorified.

Building the church, this spiritual, Word-directed, Spirit-powered

kingdom, is Christ's primary work at this time in history (Matt. 16:18). And a Christian's primary purpose is helping Him build His kingdom. So don't be focused only on your family, or be exclusively building your business, or spending all this emotion and energy trying to elect some politician. Be *"preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ"* (Acts 8:12). Be *"workers for the kingdom of God."* Col. 4:11

We learn more about this spiritual kingdom in several parables given to us in Matt. 13. The Jewish people were expecting Christ to set up His kingdom on earth, and so He needed to explain some important details about the church, this interim kingdom that spiritually exists in the hearts of believers. Here are some of the lessons He taught His disciples, and is now teaching us:

1. *"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure in a field"* (Matt. 13:44). Christ wants us to realize the supreme and glorious value of God's kingdom, and therefore the need to sacrifice our lives and work with Him and fellow believers in building it.

2. *"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed... but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants... so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches"* (Matt. 13:31-32). The church started small but has kept growing throughout the centuries, and is now large and very prominent in the world. Consequently, it is a wonderful blessing, primarily in spiritual ways, but also in social, cultural, legal, scientific, and economic ways.

3. *"... so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks and those who commit lawlessness and will throw them into the furnace of fire... then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"* (Matt. 13:40-43). At the end of this age, at Christ's coming, the wicked and the righteous will suddenly be separated, and the

wicked will be judged, and the righteous will be blessed. And our work as Christians is to sow the seed, God's word, in hopes that God grants mercy to the unsaved. Matt. 13:18-23, John 4:34-38

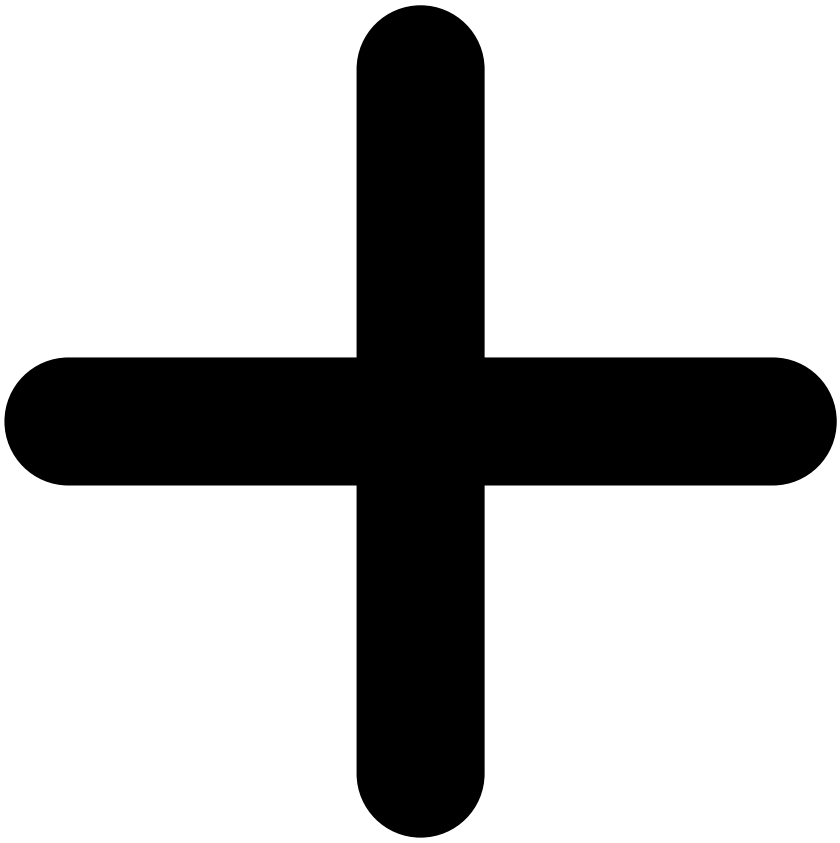
What else can be said about the kingdom of God?
4. Jesus Christ has absolute authority over the church, this invisible kingdom. He is the head of the church, working through the Holy Spirit, who indwells, teaches, and empowers every believer.
5. Being a member of the kingdom of God means you are not to be running your own life, but Christ Himself is to be reigning in you. He is your Lord and King.
6. Don't be deceived by the lure of worldly kingdoms. Be sober, intent, and determined on building God's kingdom. "*Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness."* Matt. 6:33

7. Be encouraged and hopeful, for whether by death or rapture, you will be taken to God's heavenly kingdom. *"The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom."* 2 Tim. 4:18
8. You must pray, *"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is heaven"* (Matt. 6:9-10). Pray for Christ to come soon, set up His earthly kingdom, and begin carrying out His Father's will.
9. That we live in the end-times means it won't be long before this phase of God's kingdom building will be concluded, and then Christ will return to rapture the church, judge the world, save a remnant of Jews, and establish His glorious kingdom on earth.

10. Always remember the big picture. God is sovereign, and He has always been building and ruling over His kingdom on earth (Ps. 145:11-13). Now we live in the church age, and the spiritual kingdom of God is being built by Christ. In the age to come Christ will spiritually and physically reign over this earth, establishing a kingdom that lasts for 1000 years (Pss. 47, 67, 72; Rev. 20). Then there's the eternal kingdom – *"Then comes the end when He* (Christ) *hands over the kingdom to*

God the Father… When all things are subjected to Him (God the Father)*, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all."* 1 Cor. 15:24-28

I can't tell you how much it saddens me that so many Christians are embroiled in the politics of the day. Don't they see what's most important? Here are three more posts on the kingdom of God and the church: *"Kingdom Instructions for the Church"*, *"The Gospel of the Kingdom of God"*, and *"The Present Church Age and the Future Kingdom Age."*



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