

7. Christ the King and Christians in the Kingdom of God

The last lesson showed Christ making the obedient believers in the church of Christ the temple of God. There these Christians are the chosen people, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation (kingdom). In 1 Peter 2:9-10, Peter wrote:

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

That lesson concluded that Christians are now the people of God in his holy nation. All speculations about a future kingdom are private interpretations and false teachings, demeaning God and his word and rejecting the Christ—King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

From the very beginning of the New Testament, John the Baptist and Jesus himself prophesied the imminent establishment of the church of Christ, whose members are citizens in the Kingdom of God. God raised Christ to sit at his right hand, and 50 days later, on the Pentecost after that resurrection, God added to the church daily such as were saved (Acts 2:47). This lesson explores the New Testament prophecies of the kingdom to come and the scriptures that fulfill these prophecies on the day of Pentecost after Christ's resurrection.

Jesus and John Prophesied That the Kingdom Was Near

The New Testament opens with John the Baptist, the promised forerunner, preaching and prophesying that the kingdom of heaven was near. Matthew records one occasion of this prophecy in Matt 3:1-3:

3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the desert,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"

John prophesied that the kingdom of heaven was near, and Matthew teaches that this is the prophecy of Isaiah, calling for a forerunner to the Messiah.

In Matt 4:15-17, Jesus himself began teaching that the kingdom of heaven was near, and Matthew said that that fulfilled Isa 9:1-2:

15 "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the way to the sea, along the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles—
16 the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned."

17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

These events marked the advent of the Christ coming to establish his kingdom. In Matt 11:9-14, Jesus taught that the work beginning with John was preparatory to the kingdom of heaven

and that it was forcefully advanced and forceful men would lay hold on it:

9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written:

"I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.'

. . . 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. 14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.

A parallel, to what was happening in the kingdom of heaven that Jesus and John pronounced as *near*, is the United States during its struggle to establish its own nation. Forceful men were forcefully advancing the nation when they signed the Declaration of Independence and went to war against the British. Indeed, these men were laying hold of the United States of America, which they did not establish until later when the several states ratified the *Constitution*.

Jesus and John preached that the kingdom was near and forcefully advanced it, and forceful men lay hold of it. The point is that Jesus and John were all about establishing the kingdom of heaven. That is what they came for, and that is what they did.

Jesus Prophesied the Church and Kingdom in the Lives of the Apostles

In addition to Jesus and John forcefully advancing a kingdom that they said was near, Jesus taught that the kingdom would come in the lives of the apostles and in the lives of some of the people living at the time that he preached.

When Peter Was to Use the Keys of the Kingdom

In Matt 16:18, the Lord told Peter: '18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.'" The gates of Hades would not overcome the church that he would build. Immediately afterward, in Matt 16:19-20, Jesus uses the word, *kingdom*, in a way synonymous to the word, *church*: "19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Therefore, the church, the kingdom would be in the time of the life of Peter to whom Christ gave the keys of the kingdom.

When They Were to Participate with Christ in the Lord's Supper

In Matt 26:26-29, Jesus authorized the Lord's Supper as a permanent institution in the church, the kingdom. The Lord's words are familiar to all:

26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

Retrospectively, a clear image of this statement emerges in the early church, the kingdom. First, the very new converts continued in the doctrine of breaking bread in Acts 2 when Peter used the keys of the kingdom for the first time. Acts 2:42-43 recounts: "42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to

prayer.” This is the supper of the Lord, in which he eats and drinks again in his kingdom; for Paul writes in 1 Cor 10:16-17:

16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

No one can dispute that Paul is talking about the Lord’s Supper for in 1 Cor 10:21, he specifically calls it the Lord’s table: “21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.”

The Lord said that he would drink it anew with the disciples, and now Paul speaks of a participation in the body and blood of Christ at the Lord’s Table. Since this is the case, the kingdom, in which he said he would do this, is in existence.

When the disciples met it was on the first day of the week, and they broke bread as Jesus had foretold. Acts 20:7 teaches: “7 On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.” The very purpose of coming together was to participate with the Lord by breaking bread at the Lord’s Table. The Lord must be present in his kingdom at his time where he said he would drink the fruit of the vine anew.

Paul placed the Lord’s Supper in the church, the kingdom, in 1 Cor 11:18-26. In verse 18, he names the meeting place as in the church: “18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church. . . .” Paul gives the purpose of their coming together as a church in verse 20: “20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat. . . . Paul tells exactly what they were doing, which is just what the Lord said that he would do with them in his Father’s kingdom, item for item and step by step. Matt 26:27-29 agrees with 1 Cor 11:23-26:

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Before Some of Those to Whom Christ Spoke Were to Die

Jesus came teaching his disciples to pray for the kingdom to come. The urgency of that prayer accentuated the eminence of the kingdom. In some versions, the kingdom receives mention with other undiminishing divine characteristics—power and glory. In Matt 6:10-13, Jesus taught the disciples:

10 your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
11 Give us today our daily bread.
12 Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13 And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.'

6:13: some late manuscripts insert, “For yours is the **kingdom** and the power

and the glory forever. Amen." [Emphasis added]

The Lord gave certainty to the time of the coming of his kingdom in Mark 9:1: "9 And he said to them, 'I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.'" The kingdom would come in the time of his listeners and it would come with power. He repeatedly taught this principle right up to his ascension.

When Power Would Come from upon High

Luke begins his narrative in *Acts of the Apostles* by describing how Jesus, after his resurrection, appeared for forty days speaking about the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3 states: "3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God." In Acts 1:6, the apostles inquired about the kingdom: "6 So when they met together, they asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'" In Acts 1:7-8, He tells the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the power to come up on them:

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

In Acts 2:1-4, the power came with certain and unmistakable force to those who had heard the Lord foretell that they would be living when the kingdom would come with power:

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Peter pinpointed this time on the day of Pentecost as the time of the coming of the kingdom with power. He was certain when he said in Acts 2:16-18, "16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel." Peter then quotes Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-19), describing the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2:17-18:

17 "In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.
18 Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

That Joel is prophesying about the coming of the kingdom is beyond dispute; for in Joel 2:32, Joel says that this day is the day of salvation and the day of deliverance, from Zion and in Jerusalem:

32 And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved;
for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
there will be deliverance,

as the Lord has said,
among the survivors
whom the Lord calls.

To quote Joel, it is just *as the Lord has said*. Peter understood that this was the kingdom come, and he preached that it was the kingdom come in Acts 2:30-34:

30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his **descendants on his throne**. 31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the **resurrection of the Christ**, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33 **Exalted to the right hand of God**, he has received from the Father the **promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear**. [Emphasis added.]

From Acts 2 onward in the New Testament, the scriptures speak of the kingdom as being in existence.

From Acts 2 Onward, the Kingdom Exists

Those apostles and prophets speaking and writing after Acts 2 preached the good news of the kingdom of God. Philip carried this message to the Samaritans in Acts 8:12: '12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.'

In this regard, Col 1:12-14 teaches:

. . .giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

This passage teaches that the Father brought us into the kingdom of the son now at the same time that we are redeemed and forgiven. If we are not now in the kingdom, we are not now redeemed and not now forgiven. If we are not in the kingdom now, we are not qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

In Heb 12:28-29, we are receiving this kingdom now while we are still worshipping:

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."

In this same context, Heb 12:22-23, pulls together all the descriptive terms used to refer to the kingdom:

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

In Rev 1:5-6, when Jesus freed us from our sins, he made us to be a kingdom and priests:

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father — to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

In Col 1:12, the saints are translated into the kingdom of the son. That kingdom is an eternal kingdom, and 1 Cor 15:21-26 tells the sequence of events that follow its establishment:

21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also

through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

After Christ overcomes all his enemies—death being the last enemy—he will hand over the kingdom to God. There is no room in this sequence for an earthly kingdom to come sometime in the future. When he comes, he will raise those who belong to him and then comes the end.

Jesus Foretold a Spiritual Kingdom

Those who call for a material, earthly kingdom, fail to understand that Christ was certain in his teaching that his kingdom would be spiritual and not physical. Luke 17:20-21 describes the spiritual nature of his kingdom to the Pharisees:

20 Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, 21 nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."

John 18:36 states clearly that Christ's kingdom is not of this world: "36 Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.'"

The Sure Test of Certainty

This lesson has focused on the prophecies of the New Testament and their fulfillment in Acts 2. The overriding theme comes from Peter's words in 2 Peter 1:19-21:

19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

These prophecies, when fulfilled, become the sure test of certainty concerning the coming of the kingdom of the day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. On this day of Pentecost the kingdom of Christ, King of kings and Lord of Lords

Went out from Zion,
 Went out from Jerusalem,
 Came during the time of the Roman kings,
 Came with the apostles speaking in tongues,
 Came with power from on High,
 Came with the Holy Spirit of God,
 Came during the time of those living while Christ was on earth,
 Came through Christ the son of David,
 Came when God raised Christ to sit on the throne of David at God's right hand.

Any doctrine that teaches the kingdom is yet to come or that Christ failed to sit on David's throne is false, and those who teach that doctrine are false teachers.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. 1 Peter 2:9-10: What are the different names that designate the people of God?
2. Acts 2:47: Who were added to the church? How often did this happen?
3. Matt 3:1-3: What did John preach? Which prophecy does this fulfill? What was near at the time John preached?
4. Matt 4:15-17: What prophecy does this fulfill? What did Jesus preach? What did he say about the kingdom of heaven?
5. Matt 11:9-14: What was happening to the kingdom of heaven during the time of John? What men were advancing the kingdom of heaven? To whom did Jesus compare John?
6. Matt 16:18: What would not overcome the church? Who was going to build the church?
7. Matt 16:19-20: What keys did Christ give Peter? What two words here refer to the same group of people?
8. Matt 26:27-29: When did Jesus say that he would drink the fruit of the vine again?
9. Acts 2:42-43: What were the first disciples doing in their worship? Which one of these had to do with the Lord's Supper?
10. 1 Cor 10:16-17: When we partake of the Lord's Supper, with what are we participating?
11. 1 Cor 10:21: On whose table does one find the cup of the Lord?
12. Acts 20:7: On what day do we take the Lord's Supper? What is the primary reason that we come together?
13. 1 Cor 11:18-26: What are we when we partake of the Lord's Supper? What are the common elements of the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor 11:23-26 and in Matt 26:27-29?
14. Matt 6:10-13: What are we to include in our prayers about the kingdom?
15. Mark 9:1: In whose lifetime would the kingdom come? With what will the kingdom come?
16. Acts 1:3: What did Jesus speak of in the forty days after his resurrection?
17. Acts 1:6: About what did the disciples ask?
18. Acts 1:7: Where did the Lord tell the disciples to go? For what were they to wait?
19. Acts 2:1-4: What came from heaven? With what were they filled? What could they do?
20. Acts 2:16-18: What did Peter say this was?
21. Joel 2:32: Who did Joel say would be saved? From where would deliverance come? Who did Joel say had said all this? Who will call the survivors?
22. Acts 2:30-34: Who did God say would sit on his throne? What was God speaking of? Where is Jesus Christ now? Who poured out what they were seeing and hearing?
23. Acts 8:12: What did Phillip preach? What did they do when they heard it?
24. Col 1:12-14: What inheritance do Christians receive? Into what are Christians brought?
25. Heb 12:28-29: What kind of kingdom are Christians receiving?
26. Heb 12:22-24: What words describe the kingdom here?
27. Rev 1:5-6: What did Christ make us to be?
28. 1 Cor 15:21-26: What will happen when the end comes?
29. Luke 17:20-21: Where is the kingdom of God?
30. John 18:36: Of what is Jesus' kingdom not? From where is Jesus kingdom?