

"The Kingdom of God"

Did the Lord's kingdom become a reality in the first century? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're looking at the kingdom of God and when the Lord set it up.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. When we have a spiritual question, the best way to answer it is to look closely into the Scriptures to find out what God said about the matter. We don't want to rely on guesses or opinions for the most important spiritual questions of life. We want to know what God has said in the inspired Scriptures. We know the Scriptures come from God and are true. So thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and want to be a part of your life each week.

The word kingdom generally refers to the reign of Christ. The fact is the Lord Jesus from the time of His resurrection has reigned everywhere over all people. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Colossians 1:16 to 17 says, "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."

Paul explained in Ephesians 1:20 to 21 that God raised Jesus "from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

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We'll now worship in song. We'll read from Acts 2:30 to 36, and we'll explore how we are wonderfully given the kingdom of God.

Our reading today comes from Acts chapter 2 verses 30 to 36. And here Peter on the day of Pentecost announces that Jesus is killed.

And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT ONE OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.'" Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified."

The word of Christ is the Messiah, the king of Israel. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that we serve the king of Israel. That we can have a messiah who is a savior, who loves us and

that we can be close to Him. And be one of the citizen of the kingdom of heaven. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

The Old Testament prophesies of a kingdom that will be set up by the Lord Jesus. Isaiah 2 verses 2 to 3 says, "It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

Isaiah gets more specific in Isaiah 9:6 to 7. "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this."

When Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about a great statue, Daniel revealed that God would set up an eternal kingdom. He predicted that it would happen in the days of the Romans, the fourth great kingdom. Daniel 2:44 says, "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever."

Luke 1 verses 30 to 33 reveals how the angel Gabriel said to Mary, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Now eighty-four inspired preachers in the first century proclaimed that the "kingdom of heaven is at hand." That is it's near in time. First, John the baptizer said in Matthew 3 and verse 2, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Second, Matthew 4:17 says that the Lord Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Third, in Matthew 10 and verse 7 Jesus sent forth the twelve apostles and instructed them to preach "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." And fourth, Luke 10 says the Lord appointed seventy others to go into every city and place and proclaim, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." The phrase "at hand" in reference to an event means the time is close or it's "about time" that this was to happen. Now according to Jesus and the others it was about time for the kingdom to be established. This was to happen in the first century, not the twenty-first.

Occasionally the Scriptures speak about inheriting the kingdom of God. Those who continue to live in sin cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Now this inheritance is in heaven. 1 Peter 1 verses 3 to 4 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you." Now we enter heaven itself at the end of time when Jesus returns and on Judgment Day. Yes, the ages to come are in the future! But the suggestion that God's kingdom is not on earth today simply denies clear passages of Scripture.

Some suggest that Jesus failed to set up His earthly kingdom in the first century and established the church to fill in the gap, but this denies the Old Testament prophets and the prophecy of the 84 preachers and how they were not fulfilled. It denies what Jesus said about the kingdom being "at

hand.” It denies that some alive then entered the kingdom. And it makes Jesus a false prophet and a failure. Now that’s just not true. The church is not a physical nation like Israel that’s true; it’s a spiritual kingdom that can be found in the whole world. The Scriptures speak of how the church itself is God’s kingdom.

The Lord Jesus said in Mark 9 verse 1, “Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.” Well when Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper in Matthew 26:26 to 29, He told the apostles, “But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.” You see the church of the Lord, however, they started partaking of the Lord’s Supper from the day of Pentecost, when the apostles were empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak in tongues. And it is clear from Acts 20 and verse 7 and 1 Corinthians 11:17 to 32 that the early church was eating unleavened bread and drinking fruit of the vine, communing with the Lord in His kingdom, each Lord’s Day. That is the first day of the week.

When the day of Pentecost came, Peter said about David in Acts 2:30 to 31, “Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.” And He concludes in verses 34 to 36, that “For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “‘The Lord said to my Lord, “‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus (and then He pointed his finger at the people and said) whom you crucified.” Jesus has been on David’s throne over the kingdom of God since He ascended to heaven. Friends, the church is also the kingdom of God. And Jesus reigns over all people in both heaven and earth!

Well, how do we know that? The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 to 19 “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell (or hades rather) shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Now if Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom to Peter, the kingdom had to be opened in the first century, not at some future time.

Paul told the church at Colossae in Colossians 1:13 to 14 that God “has delivered 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.” If the kingdom did not yet exist how could God have transferred the Colossians into it?

The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 12 and verse 28, “Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.” They were to treat God with reverence and awe because they were already part of the new covenant kingdom of God.

John in Revelation 1:4 to 6 was writing “to the seven churches of Asia: (and he said) from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Now Jesus, and notice that He’s already the ruler of the kings of the earth. His blood not only freed the Christians from sin, He also made them a kingdom, priests to His God and Father. Now Peter wrote to the Christians in his day in 1 Peter 2 verse 9, “But you are a chosen race, (and then he said) a royal priesthood, (royal means kingly priesthood) a

holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

That John believed he was in the kingdom during his life in the kingdom of God is undeniable. He wrote in Revelation chapter 1 and verse 9, “I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.” Now John who was a fellow partaker of the persecution in the first century. And this is the same John who says that he is in the kingdom.

Paul told the elders of the church of Ephesus in Acts 20 and verse 28, that Jesus purchase “the church of God” with His own blood.” Scripture explains more about the blood. Revelation 5:9 to 10 explains the Lord Jesus “purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.” Again, the kingdom is a present reality, not a future hope. The song speaks of the making of the kingdom as a past event. That’s what they were singing about in Revelation 5 when Jesus shed His blood. If indeed Christians are also priests (1 Pet. 2 and verse 9), then the kingdom on earth has been a reality since the first century!

If the kingdom of heaven was not to be a reality until the 21st century, why did John speak of it as a present reality? Of course, the church is the kingdom (Colossians 1 verse 13). Hugo McCord observed that one cannot spend the same dollar twice. And the blood of Jesus which purchased the church (Acts 20:28) also purchased the kingdom (Revelation 5 verses 9 and 10). Now this fulfills the prophecy of John the Baptist, Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy that the kingdom of heaven was “at hand” or has “come near.” That is in the first century.

John 3:3 to 5 says that: Jesus answered and said to Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” This is clearly a reference to being baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2 and verse 38).

Our new birth happens when we respond to the preaching of the truth. 1 Peter 1:22 to 23 says, “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.” The seed that causes our new birth into the kingdom, is the gospel itself. 1 Corinthians 1:21 says that, “God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” When we obey the truth of the gospel message by being born of water and the Spirit, we enter the kingdom of God.

Do you want to be a citizen of the kingdom of God? Become a member of the Lord’s church. When the Lord frees you from sin by His blood, He adds you to His kingdom. The kingdom that will last forever. When we’re baptized into Christ, we’re freed from sin we’re added to the church. And when we’re born of water and the Spirit, we enter the kingdom.

Let’s pray together. Father we’re thankful that You have set up kingdom so many years ago and that we can be a part of that kingdom in this life so that we can inter into the kingdom of heaven in the days to come. And Father we’re thankful for Your love. Help us to always obey Your will. To love You and to serve You in Jesus name we pray, Amen.

The Lord Jesus declared in the parable of the Sower, which deals with the kingdom of God in Luke 8 verse 11, that, “The seed is the word of God.” The only way you can be born again into the kingdom of

God is for the word of God to be planted in your heart. The divine seed, the word of God, germinates in the hearts of sinners to produce Christians, members of the Lord's church. The church or kingdom of God exists wherever souls are born. And they're born again by obeying that word of God. The gospel can only bear fruit after its kind. What God's imperishable seed produced in the first century, you know what, it'll produce now. I'm glad the word is imperishable because it means you and I can be born again and enter the kingdom.

To be born again, believe the gospel. Place your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ who died for your sins, was buried, and was raised from the dead. Now if you believe, you will please God (Hebrews 11 verse 6). Because you believe and love God, turn from your sins in repentance to a life that follows the Lord Jesus. Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Be baptized into Christ, so that you can enter His kingdom and be born again to walk in newness of life, freed from sin (Romans 6 verses 3 to 7). And when we repent and are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, we receive the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2 verse 38); and our sins are washed away (Acts 22 verse 16).

Perhaps you have fallen away from the church and from the Lord. Why not come back home to the Lord and His kingdom, the church. Confess your sins, repent, and ask God to forgive you.

We pray that today's study about the kingdom of God has helped you see God's desire for you. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. Now you can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." Be sure to like the programs that you watch; now this helps spread the program. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. there as many as 50 different studies within that whole set of courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money when you get a hold of us. We're here to help you to draw close to God.

We do ask that you please start or continue, go back, to worshipping at church. Everyone needs a church family. And you are much poorer without them. I realize some of you for health reasons can't attend worship and you want to so badly; I'm speaking to you I'm speaking to those who can attend and haven't been going. There's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. And as always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.