

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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One night, in first half of the sixth century B.C., during the second year of his reign, king Nebuchadnezzar had a perplexing dream, which none of the king's magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, or astrologers could explain or even understand.

Daniel and his companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah — who were captives of the king — prayed and God revealed to Daniel the dream's secret meaning, with regard to the kings and kingdoms that were to follow Nebuchadnezzar. God's revelation, which Daniel reported to the king, ended thus:

**Daniel 2:44, 47** *"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." ..... <sup>47</sup>The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret." [NKJV]*

The new kingdom, which had been expected for many centuries, was "set up" by Jesus, as He attested by His overpowering of demons:

**Matthew 12:28** *"If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you." [HCSB]*

That is the kingdom, "which shall never be destroyed": it is everlasting, it is with us today and it is not like any other kingdom. Furthermore, the kingdom of God did not exist before that time:

**Luke 16:16** *"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." [KJV]*

The preaching of the kingdom was to continue, as Jesus instructed the seventy He sent ahead of Himself:

**Luke 10:9** *"cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'" [NRSV]*

The kingdom has come near, but entering into it is not automatic; rather it is our responsibility to enter in — and not all people will enter:

**Matthew 7:21** *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." [ESV]*

First of all, although His kingdom has come into this world in which we live, it is not a kingdom (or an organization) of this world:

**John 18:36** *Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world." [NLT]*

It is, in fact, a very special kingdom: on the one hand, we are to enter into the kingdom — as a result of being aborn, as new creatures:

**John 3:5** *Jesus answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." [KJV]*

And we can do so in only one way — by being as a little child:

**Mark 10:15** *"Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." [KJV]*

On the other hand, the kingdom is within us, inside of us:

**Luke 17:20–21** *And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: <sup>21</sup>Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." [KJV]*

As a new creation in Christ, I am in the kingdom and the kingdom is in me: how can such be? Is there any logic about it?

This is but an example of the famous, truthful teaching by the Apostle Paul:

**1 Corinthians 3:19** *For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," [ESV]*

That's why I have to become "as a little child" — trusting the Father to the uttermost — although not endowed nor practiced in logic or in "the wisdom of this world."

There is no logic: rather there is spiritual truth.

The kingdom is none other than the special relationship we are to have with the Living God: the special relationship, which is created by the reconciliation accomplished by the sacrifice of the Cross on Calvary.

**Romans 5:10–11** For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. <sup>11</sup>And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. [KJV]

The nature of the reconciliation is that

**Romans 6:6–7, 10–11** We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup>For whoever has died is freed from sin. .... <sup>10</sup>The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. <sup>11</sup>So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. [NRSV]

And the reconciliation gives us eternal life, which is the knowledge of God and His Son.

**John 17:3** "And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." [NRSV]

His spirit is in me through the Cross of Christ and I have entered into the kingdom when I was born into it, as a new creation:

**Galatians 6:14** But as for me, I will never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The world has been crucified to me through the cross, and I to the world. [HCSB]

As a little child, whose "old self was crucified," who therefore is "freed from sin" and who is in the kingdom of God, I am to purpose to be like the servant "who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (**Matthew 7:21**)

a servant to whom the Lord may say:

**Matthew 25:21b, c** ..... "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." [KJV]

Service in the Kingdom is so pivotal that, when James and John wanted positions of great regard in the Kingdom, Jesus taught them thus:

**Mark 10:42b–44** ..... "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. <sup>43</sup>But so shall it not

be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: <sup>44</sup>And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all." [KJV]

Then the Apostle Paul helps us to discipline ourselves away from sin:

**Romans 8:12–14** Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. <sup>13</sup>For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. <sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. [NLT]

To reinforce the teaching, he asks, in particular:

**1 Corinthians 6:9–10** Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, <sup>10</sup>thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers — none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. [NRSV]

Then, so that we may be prepared for the times when the kingdom of God faces the malevolent enmity of the world, it is important to remember that Paul, after being stoned to near death, in the city of Lystra, for having restored to health a man who was crippled from birth, returned — together with Barnabas — to Lystra and to Iconium and Antioch where they continued their ministry,

**Acts 14:22** strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "It is through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God." [MOUNCE]

Finally: in the spirit there is no time, for the Lamb is

**Revelation 13:8c** ..... slain from the foundation of the world. [KJV]

and with it the triumph of the kingdom is ever true and everlasting:

**Revelation 12:10** And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. [KJV]