

Jesus Explains the Kingdom of God

Throughout the ministry of Jesus there was a misconception about who He is and about His rule and reign as Messiah and the King of kings. Even though the Pharisees were men of the Old Testament scriptures and even though Jesus fulfilled these scriptures as no mere human could, because of their hearts of stone, they had eyes that did not see and ears that did not hear. Therefore, most Pharisees believed God's Kingdom to be a future event and a future earthly establishment. Here in our text for this morning from Luke chapter 17, verses 20 and 21, Jesus explains that the Kingdom of God is already established. It is future in the sense of its full consummation upon his second coming, but it is a current reality, it began with the ministry of Jesus and continues to our day and will be fully established when the reign of Christ visibly covers the entire planet as seen in Psalm 22. Earlier verses in Psalm 22 speak of Jesus' crucifixion, then beginning in verse 27 the psalm speaks of Jesus as future King of nations. ²⁷ "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. ²⁸ For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations." For King David this was the future kingdom of the Messiah. However, these two verses in Luke chapter 17 cover the current kingdom, which Christ established when His ministry began some 2000 years ago.

The way in which we can move past some of these misconceptions is to understand the question that Jesus is asked. The Pharisees asked, "when the kingdom of God would come"? The word "kingdom" comes from the Greek word "*basileia*" (*bass-sil-la-ia*), which means not kingdom of specific territory or country per se but Kingship or we might say the title of the person who has the right or sovereign rule or

reign over the people. Even though the Pharisees were looking for a physical kingdom their question was close to the real truth as their question was concerning a king more than a kingdom.

It is not wrong when one thinks of God's Kingdom to think of those who submit their lives to Jesus' rule and reign, which is unseen inwardly as the condition of their hearts and souls and is outwardly seen in how believers live their lives, by what they value and in their lives lived out in the community of Jesus Christ – His church.

As we unpack these two verses in Luke 17, the key thought, I would like you to lock onto is; *Wherever God is truly recognized and Jesus is believed to be God the Son and King, it is there one finds the kingdom of God.*

Before we begin let me pray.

Kingdom Of God – Not Earthly

The kingdom of God is not an earthly kingdom. Reading Luke chapter 17, verses 20-21, “Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, ‘The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed,²¹ nor will they say, “Look, here it is!” or “There!” for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.’ ”

Throughout the ministry of our Lord on earth, over and over again He made claims of royalty. He often said, of Himself, He is the Son of God. Throughout the New Testament, He called Himself; Messiah, Christ, King, Lord, Master, Logos, Son of God, Lamb of God, Light of the World and more – how many ways did Jesus need to say it for people to understand who He is? The Bible and history show that many, if not most, were confused by these claims. They heard Jesus call Himself King or Messiah and yet there was no visible kingdom to go along with these claims. Either,

Jesus was crazy or the people were missing something. Here, a Pharisee asks Jesus a question that many, including some of His close followers were asking among themselves but were too afraid to ask out loud and in person, that is “[when the kingdom of God would come](#)”? You see, for the most part, the people had failed to perceive the realization of God’s redemptive movement right in front of their eyes. They had failed to realize that, *Wherever God is truly recognized and Jesus is believed to be God the Son and King, it is there one finds the kingdom of God.* The Old Testament spoke of Jesus’s reign as King, one example is found in Daniel Chapter 4, verse 3, “[How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation.](#)” Later in verse 34 we see when Nebuchadnezzar’s mind is restored he sees the truth, “[At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation.](#)” For those of the world trying to understand Jesus, from Luke’s passage we understand they had two misconceptions. First, they were looking to the future and secondly, they thought it was a physical kingdom.

The Pharisees and their many followers were looking forward to the arrival of an earthly visible kingdom. A kingdom in which the Israel would occupy a very prominent place and be the most powerful kingdom in the world. So, they could hardly wait, because God would smite the Romans like He had done with other foreign invaders. Once again, Israel would be established as the political head of the world and they would all enjoy prominent positions as God’s earthly representatives, so naturally they asked Jesus, “[when the kingdom of God would come](#)”?

So, what we observe is because of their lack of love for Jesus as the Christ, they possessed an eternal deadly misunderstanding. They loved the thought of an established visible kingdom where Israel was once again favored, one in which they

would be exalted; this kingdom is what they loved more than they loved the true eternal King. They wanted a prominent place, to be self-exalting more than they loved Jesus. History proves that when these expectations of a visible kingdom did not pan out, the people in their rage, killed the King of glory. He claimed authority as the Son of God and yet they did not see “the kingdom of God” because their minds were focused on the worldly. These Pharisees and others did not have ears to hear or eyes to see what God plainly was doing in their midst, so they did not believe.

Kingdom Of God - Not Seen By The World

The kingdom of God is not seen by the world. Returning to Luke chapter 17, verses 20 and 21, Jesus answers the Pharisees saying, “The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed,²¹ nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’” The kingdom of God is not seen with the human eye. The kingdom will not be ushered in by observable signs and wonders. They thought the new kingdom of God would be greater than the seven wonders of the ancient world; Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt (2700-2500 BC), Hanging Gardens of Babylon (600 BC), Statue of Zeus at Olympia (550 BC), Temple of Artemis at Ephesus (550 BC), Mausoleum at Halicarnassus (*hal-uh-kahr-nas-uh s*) in SE Turkey (353 BC), Colossus of Rhodes over 100’ tall (280 BC) and the Lighthouse of Alexandria (270 BC). The kingdom was not a man-made wonder, for if it had been, Jesus explains people could say, “Look, here it is!” or “There” it is!

Jesus’ response to the Pharisees is, “No, it is not going to be that way and you are not going to be able to observe it. Until My second coming there would be no capitol of God’s Kingdom. The kingdom that God is bringing, is not going to be observed that way because that is not that kind of kingdom.” We can take note elsewhere in the gospels that Jesus tells the Pharisees; you do not get it; you are always looking for signs. Jesus tells them many times the kingdom is not as they are

thinking. In Matthew chapter 16, verses 3 and 4 Jesus says to them, “You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.⁴ An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign...” This remains true today.

The Jews were always looking for signs. They were always trying to coax Jesus into giving them more signs and wonders. I can hear them saying, “*Jesus if You just do one more amazing miraculous healing then we will believe.*” We see this same attitude today – it was always one more sign – they were never satisfied. Today for those always looking for miraculous signs – are they not just like the Pharisees? Because they belong to the prince of the world, when Jesus did heal, they said He healed through the power of Satan. Because the Pharisees were under the power of Satan it did not matter what Jesus did; they would oppose him. As we read in Matthew chapter 12 beginning in verse 22, “Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw.²³ And all the people were amazed, and said, ‘Can this be the Son of David?’²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, ‘It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.’²⁵ Knowing their thoughts, *Jesus* said to them, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.²⁶ And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?²⁷ And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.²⁸ But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.’” (v. 22-28) Jesus taught as One having authority of God and yet, they said He had a demon. There was, however, a miraculous sign and they were missing it. The King, the only Son of God, stood right in front of them and they missed it! My thought concerning the naysayers and the Pharisees is; How could you miss that Jesus was the sign? That is really what Jesus was telling them – “*Here I am, the Son of God*

and here in Me is God's Kingdom.” The message remains the same for the world today.

In verse 20 Jesus says, **“The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed.”** The word here, **“observed”** is a word that means under scientific scrutiny or to observe as a scientist would evidence. The Kingdom of God is not something that will be coming through certain verifiable data or testing procedures. It is not something measured or counted or cataloged. It cannot be tested or seen with human eyes. The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom. The part of the Kingdom that could be seen was the King Himself, Jesus. Everything about Jesus was truth and being God, He is the kingdom.

To help us understand what the nature of God's Kingdom is, let us briefly examine Apostle John's account of Jesus before Pilate. Pilate did not necessarily want to have Jesus crucified. He was however, interested in the possibility of Jesus being a threat to the reign of Caesar and also his reign as governor. So, Pilate in John chapter 18, verse 33, **“entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’”** I want us to pay particular attention to Jesus' response beginning in verse 36, **“Jesus answered Pilate, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.;** *(Twice Jesus tells Pilate his kingdom is not of this world)*³⁷ **Then Pilate said to him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.’”** (v. 36-37) Jesus says, he is a King of kings, listen to his voice for it is the truth of God. He makes it clear His Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom, saying, **“My kingdom is not of this world.”** Jesus' kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. In a number of places in the New Testament it is clear people expected the kingdom to arrive dramatically and visibly. Reading from

Luke chapter 19, verse 11, “As they heard these things ..., because *Jesus* was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.” The kingdom was present, visibly in the person of Jesus and by changed lives who now worshipped God through Christ and not in a man-made temple.

Kingdom Of God - Now

The people did not understand the kingdom of God was now. The reason Jesus gives for not looking for signs to show that the Kingdom of God is coming is because it has already come...it is in the midst of you, it is now, it is believing in Jesus. This is why Jesus said in verse 21, “**behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.**” What did Jesus mean by this phrase?

It is the fact that the Kingdom is among the people, for Jesus was among the people. Jesus preached that the Kingdom was here. Not just in these two verses, but elsewhere. In Luke chapter 4, verse 43, Jesus preached at the synagogue, “**I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.**” Again in chapter 8 of Luke it begins shortly after Jesus forgave the sins of the woman who came to the Pharisees house and washed his feet with her hair and tears, “**he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God.**” (v. 1) The kingdom of God was attested to by Jesus authority to do supernatural miracles and cast out demons, but the kingdom was centered on Jesus, not signs. In Luke chapter 11, verse 20, Jesus said, “**it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.**” So, we observe the Bible is clear on the fact that the Kingdom of God began with the first coming of King Jesus and the Kingdom of God continues to this very day and will continue forever, being brought to its full glory at the second coming. People of all ages from all over the world are experiencing the miracle of being born again and

having God the Holy Spirit indwell them. As Paul so clearly stated in the opening of his first letter to the Corinthians, “*God has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,* ¹⁴ *in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*” (1:13-14) This is true today of believers, but for unbelievers - they are always wanting another miracle, they introduce things not of the Bible; idol worship, prophecies inconsistent with the Word of God, revelations from Saints and Mary. My question is how are these people not the same lost souls as the Pharisees? The Kingdom of God is not of this world, we have no power of our own, it is not about us, (even though we are each precious to God), the kingdom is all about the glory of God.

Some today try to teach that the Kingdom of God is an eschatological occurrence, in other words, something that will happen when Christ comes again. This is dangerous theology and unbiblical theology. It goes against everything Jesus taught about the Kingdom and the reign of God. Remember, the key thought for this passage: *Wherever God is truly recognized and Jesus is believed to be God the Son and King, it is there one finds the kingdom of God.*

Another reason we know the kingdom of God is not of the world is because it is not dependent nor thwarted by anything political. As history has so clearly shown no governmental power can ultimately hinder God’s kingdom. Joyce and I have seen and experienced the persecution of governments and other religions against God’s kingdom and believers, and yet, the church has continued to expand. Let me give a couple of examples.

World Christianity

When Jesus died, there were a handful of believers on this planet, literally just a few dozen to at most a few hundred people, who embraced Jesus as King, Priest, Prophet, Lord and Savior. Today, almost one in five people on this planet of nearly 7

billion call themselves “Christian” and it is estimated of those there are approximately 135 to 145 million belonging to the true remnant church; believing in the Word of God and Jesus as their Lord and Savior. These numbers do not include all the saints who have lived and died. Now the kingdom has expanded not because of the support of some governmental power because if you look around the world today, Christians exist in every kind of relationship to the state and every country with every form of government. It has happened because the kingdom of God is going forth and that kingdom of God is not tied to a particular political or cultural or societal or civic expression.

African Christianity

Africa is another example, it is a continent that is embroiled by all manner of challenges and problems, but the church was established and by the year 1900, there were about 8 million Christians in Africa. Today, there are 400 million who identify as Christians. Christianity is exploding in Africa to the point that the average age of Christians is 29. Now there is every political environment and government under the sun in Africa. There are dictators who are oppressing their people, there are a few free republics, Muslims attacking and killing Christians and there is everything in between, but the kingdom of God is going forth. People are coming to faith in Christ. People are living under the rule of God, acknowledging Him as their King. Jesus said as recorded in John chapter 8, verse 12, **“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”** As a community of believers in Jesus as Lord we are a light in a dark world and we are following Paul’s clear instruction found in his 2nd letter to the Corinthians chapter 4, beginning in verse 2, **“We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.”** ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the

unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” (v. 2-4) Despite what any political structure, false religion or man-made institutions do we will stay true to God, His Word and His Son by the power of God the Holy Spirit and God’s kingdom will expand and move forward.

Kingdom of God – Visible Now

How is the kingdom of visible? Because God’s Kingdom is not dependent on governments, regardless what political climate we find ourselves in; we must be living for God’s glory and be light in a dark world. The Kingdom is here, it is now. It is in our midst, because the Holy Spirit resides in every believer. Therefore, we must be living as Kingdom citizens now. We are not waiting for Christ’s return to live as Christians but we are doing so now in anticipation of His return. We are not waiting for a democrat or a republican to hold office to bring life to the kingdom, we are not waiting for conditions to be favorable or unfavorable, tolerant or intolerant of Christians, but we live and submit to the reign of Christ here and now. We are not like the Pharisees who wanted to know what the signs were, so when they started seeing them then they could step it up a notch. No, we are to live for God and the glory of our King now. As the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians, chapter 10, “**So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**” (v. 31) This is the mandate for a believer’s life. This is how the kingdom is visible. Remember the key thought I wanted us to lock onto in this message; *Wherever God is truly recognized and Jesus is believed to be God the Son and King, it is there one finds the Kingdom of God.* This is realized when believer’s “do all to the glory of God.”

Things have not changed since Christ came to launch the kingdom of God two thousand years ago; the vast majority of people are deceived and live in the fallen world under the influence of the evil one. It is not about signs, or idols or saints or angels or Mary or TV evangelists who think they are special – it is simple and

straight forward; we are called to live the kingdom of God now and all we do is to bring Him glory. The kingdom is visible in the lives of believers and in Christ's Church.

We must never fear, no matter what this world does in regard to governments for or against Christianity, God is building His church and as we read in Matthew chapter 16, this is God's Word and truth, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. As Jesus said to his disciples in Matthew chapter 16 beginning in verse 15, **“But who do you say that I am?”** ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, **‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’** ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, **‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ 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.’**” (v. 15-19) God is growing His Church and His Kingdom; the question is will we be part of this great event? Will we live in such a way that **“whatever you do, we do all to the glory of God?”** My prayer for you and me is by the power and grace of God we will. Amen!