

Articles and Sermons :: The Kingdom of God - Jack Hayford

**The Kingdom of God - Jack Hayford - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2018/5/21 8:08**

The whole of Jesus' teaching ministry centers in these words: "The kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). His constant message, "preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God," defines the heartbeat of His passion for human deliverance as He came, the Savior-Lamb, to rescue humankind from sin's destructive loss and to redeem mankind "to make possible a restoration to his original estate in the divine order" (Matt. 4:23; Luke 19:10; I John 3:8). The dynamic of Christian life and ministry is found in understanding the Kingdom of God, which is "not in eating and drinking" (that is, in rituals or performance), but rather is "in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17).

The Kingdom of God is the essence of the Church's message and life. We are called to the Kingdom's life and power in the present, while still anticipating its final fullness and consummation in the future. This brief study is intended for practical application and offered in the hope that it will inspire the reader to seek deeper insight and a full-orbed perspective on the Kingdom of God.\*

### The Kingdom Within You

"The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-21)

Foundational to New Testament truth is that the Kingdom of God is the spiritual reality and dynamic available to each person who receives Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. To receive Him "the King" is to receive His kingly rule, not only in your life and over your affairs, but through your life and by your service and love. "The kingdom of God is within you," Jesus said. The significance of this is that it signals a restoration—a wonderful potential for each believer—reinstating something of the "rulership" (dominion) originally intended for humankind (see Gen. 2:26, 28). It is what the Apostle Paul is describing as our "reigning in life through Christ Jesus" (Rom. 5:17, 21).

This is only possible as we "abide in Christ" (John 15); depending upon God's power and grace, as we "walk in the Spirit" and continually live in His fullness (Rom. 8; Eph. 5:16-18). Of course, the entry point to such "restored dominion" is grounded in the Cross, where Jesus broke the curse that not only separated us from God, but which also deprived us of God's high intention for His beloved creature, man. But now, Jesus' death and resurrection have provided the primary instruments acquiring the possibility of a renewable humankind.

When ordinary people like you and I receive forgiveness of sins and are born again, open access to "see" and "enter" the Kingdom of God is established within (John 3:3, 5)—a miracle of divine grace, given alone through faith in Christ and secured through His Cross. The Bible never suggests either (1) that there exists in man a divine spark, which may be fanned to flame by noble human efforts, or (2) that godlikeness is somehow resident in man's potential, as though human beings are or may become "gods." To the contrary, man is lost in darkness and alienated from God (Eph. 4:18; 2:12); however, the "good news" of the Gospel is this: A full reconciliation (return to the Father) and restoration (return to partnership with Him) are now possible. We not only "step into the Kingdom," but also the Holy Spirit enables incarnation of "The Kingdom" in us.

### Character and the Kingdom

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-7:27), Jesus outlines the primary attributes of people who receive the rule of the Kingdom He brings. Nine direct references to "the kingdom" are in this sermon, calling for: humility (5:3), willingness to suffer persecution (5:10), earnest attention to God's commandments (5:19), refusal to substitute false piety for genuinely right behavior (5:20), a life of prayer (6:10, 13), prioritizing spiritual over material values (6:33), and above all, acknowledging Christ's lordship by obeying the revealed will of God (7:21).

Clearly, the authority Christ hopes to delegate to His own is intended to be exercised by disciples willing to accept renewal in soul and behavior, as well as rebirth through forgiveness of sin. To these, obviously, the call to "Kingdom" living and ministry includes the expectation that Holy Spirit-begotten fruit and gifts will develop in the believer. The same Spirit that distributes gifts of power for Kingdom service also works in us to beget kingly qualities of life, love, and a holy character (John 15:1-17; Gal. 5:22-23).

## Receiving Kingdom Power

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

As Jesus presented post-Resurrection teaching “pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3-8), His disciples asked if now “with the Cross behind” the ultimate messianic Kingdom would come. “It is not yours to know the future,” He says, “but it is yours to receive the Spirit’s power!”

With those words, He makes three points: (1) The Holy Spirit is the Person and the power by which assistance and ability are given for serving, for sharing the life and power of God’s Kingdom with others. (2) The Holy Spirit’s power must be “received”; it is not an automatic experience. As surely as the Holy Spirit indwells each believer (Rom. 8:9), so surely will He fill and overflow (John 7:37-39) each who receives the Holy Spirit in childlike faith. (3) When the Holy Spirit fills you, you will know it. Jesus said it and the disciples found it true (Acts 1:5; 2:1-4).

Have you received the Holy Spirit? (19:1-6). You may, for the promise is as fully yours today as at any time in the past (2:38-39).

## Suffering, Tribulation, and the Kingdom

And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:21-22)

Paul not only taught the joy and peace of the Kingdom of God (Rom. 14:7), its power (1 Cor. 14:20), and its present authority to cause the believer to triumph over evil (2 Tim. 4:8; Rom. 16:20). He also taught that “Kingdom people” experience trial, suffering, and not always an “instant victory” (2 Thess. 1:5). Triumph and victory may characterize the attitude of each citizen of the Kingdom of God, and Holy Spirit-empowered authority is given to be applied to realize results. Yet, God did not promise life without struggle. The “dominion” being recovered through the presence of the King within us and ministered by the Holy Spirit’s power through us is never taught by the apostles as preempting all suffering.

This text reminds us that victory only comes through battle, and triumph only follows trial. Only a weak view of the truth of the Kingdom of God pretends otherwise. Another weak view surrenders to negative circumstances on the proposition that we are predestined to problems and therefore should merely tolerate them. The Bible teaches that suffering, trial, and all order of human difficulty are unavoidable; but God’s Word also teaches they may all be overcome. The presence of the King and the power of His Kingdom in our lives make us neither invulnerable nor immune to life’s struggles. But they do bring the promise of victory: provision in need, strength for the day, and healing, comfort, and saving help.

## A Kingdom of Priests

“And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Ex. 19:6)

In Exodus 19:5-7, the Lord indicates His objective for His delivered people. His purpose for their destiny requires their understanding His essential priority for them: worship—His redemptive goal and Kingdom reinstatement. As they learn to worship as a nation of priests, they will discover His foundational means for their possessing their future victories (as on es whose domain, or “kingdom,” He has promised). Their restored rule, from sharing to “kingdom” possession, extends from their walk before God in worship. Israel’s deliverance from Egypt is not only a triumphant testimony; it is God’s timeless type, showing His plans and methods for the Church’s deliverance and intended conquest (1 Cor. 10:11).