

Insights Into The Kingdom of God

In the synoptic Gospels, the Kingdom of God is the presence or reign of God. It is a centerpiece of Jesus' message. Jesus speaks of it no fewer than eighty-six times. Jesus' first preaching announced that the rule and reign of God had arrived in Him (Mark 1:15). In John, Jesus tells Nicodemus that no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5), and he tells Pilate that his kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). According to Vatican II, the Church "receives the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God, and is, on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom. While it slowly grows to maturity, the Church longs for the completed kingdom and,... desires to be united in glory with its king" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [*Lumen Gentium*], 5). (A Basic Catholic Dictionary, pgs. 67-68).

The **Catechism of the Catholic Church** teaches:

- The Kingdom of God is the Rule or Reign of God. (CCC 2816)
- Repentance (a change of heart) and Conversion (a turning to God) is a requirement to accept this rule. (CCC 1431-1432)
- Confession (of sins) and water Baptism accompanied this change of heart and turning to God. (CCC 1455; 1279)
- To accept God's Kingdom (rule) one must reject Satan's kingdom (rule). (CCC 550)
- The rule and reign of God requires that we follow the Savior. Jesus' invitation was "Follow Me!" (fall in behind Me, I will take the lead). (CCC 2029)
- The Church is the people who have accepted His Rule. (CCC 553)
- The messianic Kingdom, present in the person of Jesus, the Messiah; remains

in our midst in the Eucharist. (CCC 2816)

- The Kingdom of God will be definitively established through the redemption accomplished through Christ's cross. (CCC 517; 549 -550; 615; 679)
- Though already present in his Church, Christ's reign is nevertheless yet to be fulfilled "with power and great glory" by the king's return to earth. (CCC 671)

The Kingdom of God in Scripture

Jesus said that the law and the prophets were taught until the time of John the Baptist. Since that time the Kingdom of God is proclaimed.

"The Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets were in effect up to the time of John the Baptist; since then the Good News about the Kingdom of God is being told, and everyone forces their way in."
(Luke 16:16) ^{GNB}

Jesus said that the gospel of the Kingdom would be preached in all the world, to all nations, before the end comes.

And this Good News about the Kingdom will be preached through all the world for a witness to all mankind; and then the end will come. (Matt. 24:14)
GNB

The Apostle Paul states that the Gospel of the Kingdom is to be preached and it is used interchangeably with the term the Gospel of Grace.

24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I know that all you among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom will see my face no more. (Acts 20:24-25)^{RSV}

The proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom was the only gospel preached by Jesus and the twelve.

14 After John had been put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee and preached the Good News from God. 15 "The right time has come," he said, "and the Kingdom of God is near! Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News!" (Mk. 1:14-15)^{GNB}

1 Jesus called the twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases. 2 Then he sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick, (Lk. 9:1-2)^{GNB}

Within this message is the presentation and appeal to each individual to repent and to receive Jesus Christ as their King (Lord). To receive Jesus Christ the King and His salvation is the only way to be restored to God.

Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us. (Acts 4:12) ^{GNB}

The potential of His Kingdom ruling with us is now possible through the power of His Spirit living within us.

So that it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. This life that I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me. (Gal. 2:20) ^{GNB}

The transference of individuals from Satan's authority to Jesus Christ's authority is described as movement from one kingdom unto another. The possibility of reinstatement to God's rulership is only possible through the forgiveness of our sins and the full redemption that is offered by the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

He rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us safe into the kingdom of his dear Son, 14

by whom we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven. (Col. 1:13-14)^{GNB}

This present world system, also called this present evil age, is under the sway of the wicked one.

We know that we belong to God even though the whole world is under the rule of the Evil One. (1 Jn. 5:19)^{GNB}

The announcement of the Kingdom of God was the announcement of God's King, Jesus Christ overthrowing Satan's rule and works of darkness.

Whoever continues to sin belongs to the Devil, because the Devil has sinned from the very beginning. The Son of God appeared for this very reason, to destroy what the Devil had done. (1 Jn. 3:8)^{GNB}

Jesus' rule is the offer of life and deliverance from the works of the flesh and Satan's rule.

16 Surely you know that when you surrender yourselves as slaves to obey someone, you are in fact the slaves of the master you obey — either of sin, which results in death, or of obedience, which results in being put right with God. 17 But thanks be to God! For though at one time you were slaves to sin, you have obeyed with all your heart the truths found in the teaching you received. 18 You were set

free from sin and became the slaves of righteousness. 19 (I use everyday language because of the weakness of your natural selves.) At one time you surrendered yourselves entirely as slaves to impurity and wickedness for wicked purposes. In the same way you must now surrender yourselves entirely as slaves of righteousness for holy purposes. (Rom. 6:16-19) ^{GNB}

Jesus' ultimate victory over sin, demonic forces, and Satan's right to rule men, was accomplished at the cross. It was Jesus' death and resurrection that is the sole foundation of a full reinstatement of relationship with God and rulership under Him.

13 And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him. (Col. 2:13-15) ^{RSV}

The sermon on the mount outlines some of the foundational characteristics of individuals who are willing to receive his rule and the Kingdom He brings (Matt. 5-7). Nine times in this teaching the "kingdom" is mentioned. Christ's rule calls for humility, willingness to

suffer for righteousness sake, the teaching and practicing of God's commands, the willingness to forgive others, the seeking first of eternal values over temporal things, and submission to Christ's Lordship in deeds, not in just words.

20 Thus you will know them by their fruits.

21 "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 7:20-21)
RSV

Because the Apostle Paul's ministry was primarily to the Gentiles, Paul substituted the word "King" with its Gentile equivalent "Lord" in speaking of Christ's Kingdom. In the Roman Gentile world "King" was not used but "Lord" was. "Lord" carried the idea of Deity, as well as one having maximum authority, the boss. Unbelievers confessed Caesar as Lord, while Christians took their stand for Jesus as their Lord. This caused great persecution for many Christians under Roman rule.

If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death, you will be saved. (Rom. 10:9) ^{GNB}

Although God's Kingdom is now in spiritual form, manifesting its power through His

Church, there will be a future coming of the Kingdom of God at the end of this age. This present age dominated by Satan (under his rule) will be overthrown by God's Messiah reversing the evils of Satan. Good will triumph, new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells will usher in His everlasting Kingdom.

But we wait for what God has promised: new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will be at home. (2 Pet. 3:13) ^{GNB}

47 "Also, the Kingdom of heaven is like this. Some fishermen throw their net out in the lake and catch all kinds of fish. 48 When the net is full, they pull it to shore and sit down to divide the fish: the good ones go into the buckets, the worthless ones are thrown away. 49 It will be like this at the end of the age: the angels will go out and gather up the evil people from among the good 50 and will throw them into the fiery furnace, where they will cry and gnash their teeth. (Matt. 13:47-50) ^{GNB}

Vine's Greek Dictionary states that the Greek word for "Kingdom" is *basileia* and denotes "the territory or people over whom a King rules ... the Kingdom of God is the sphere of God's rule ... but since the earth is the scene of universal rebellion against God, the Kingdom of God is the sphere in which, at any given time, His rule is acknowledge ...

Henceforth God calls upon men everywhere, without distinction of race or nationality, to submit voluntarily to His rule”.

Study Questions

Questions may have more than one answer.

1. **Read Matthew 6:24; Acts 26:18; 1 Thessalonians 1:9.** The purpose of redemption (Christ’s death for us) was to buy us out from under the jurisdiction of Satan, that we might serve under the jurisdiction and authority of: a. Caesar. b. our local government. c. God.

2. **Read Romans 6:17-18, 22.** The gospel of the Kingdom brings people under servitude to: a. God & righteousness. b. Satan & sin. c. the flesh & it’s desires.

3. **Read Colossians 1:13-14.** The gospel of the Kingdom emphasizes both the authority of God and the graciousness of God to forgive and accept us. True or False

4. **Read Acts 17:7.** When the Kingdom is proclaimed: a. a new religion is proclaimed. b. Jesus as a king is proclaimed. c. a TV minister is proclaimed.

5. **Read Acts 14:21-22.** The Apostle Paul and Barnabas made it clear that: a. anyone signing up for the Kingdom of God will find life easy. b. we must continue in the Christian faith. c. we should take it easy because it doesn't matter what we do.

6. **Read Matthew 3:1-2, 6.** John the Baptist message of the Kingdom of God involved: a. repentance. b. baptism. c. the confession of sins and the need of forgiveness.

7. **Read Acts 26:18-20.** Repentance means: a. Having a change of heart toward God. b. Turning from spiritual darkness to the light. c. Turning from Satan's authority to God's authority. d. Turning to God and proving you have turned by the good works that you do.

8. **Read Romans 14:9 & 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.** Christ's death, and resurrection was the foundation that secured God's right to have absolute authority over those who have turned to God. True or False

9. **Read Acts 3:19; Acts 26:18; Acts 22:16; Rom. 10:13.**

Which of these statements are true in your life? a. your spiritual eyes have been opened to the truth. b. you have repented and turned from darkness to light. c. you have turned from the power and authority of Satan to the power and authority of God. d. you have called upon God from your heart, received baptism and forgiveness of your sins. e. none of these things.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

Good News Bible with Deuterocanonicals/ Apocrypha. Today's English Version. Imprimatur – John Francis Whealon, Archbishop of Hartford. American Bible Society, 1976.

Revised Standard Version (RSV). Copyright 1952.

A to Z, A Basic Catholic Dictionary. Daniel L. Lowery, CSsR. Liguori Press, Liguori, Missouri.

CATECHISM of the CATHOLIC CHURCH

(Second Edition, Revised in accordance with the official Latin text promulgated by Pope John Paul II).

Questions & Answer Key

- 1. Read Matthew 6:24; Acts 26:18; 1 Thessalonians 1:9.** The purpose of redemption (Christ's death for us) was to buy us out from under the jurisdiction of Satan, that we might serve under the jurisdiction and authority of: a. Caesar. b. our local government. c. God.
- 2. Read Romans 6:17-18, 22.** The gospel of the Kingdom brings people under servitude to: a. God & righteousness. b. Satan & sin. c. the flesh & it's desires.
- 3. Read Colossians 1:13-14.** The gospel of the Kingdom emphasizes both the authority of God and the graciousness of God to forgive and accept us. True or False
- 4. Read Acts 17:7.** When the Kingdom is proclaimed: a. a new religion is proclaimed. b. Jesus as a king is proclaimed. c. a TV minister is proclaimed.
- 5. Read Acts 14:21-22.** The Apostle Paul and Barnabas made it clear that: a. anyone signing up for the Kingdom of God will find life easy. b. we must continue in the

Christian faith. c. we should take it easy because it doesn't matter what we do.

6. **Read Matthew 3:1-2, 6.** John the Baptist message of the Kingdom of God involved:
a. repentance. b. baptism. c. the confession of sins and the need of forgiveness.

7. **Read Acts 26:18-20.** Repentance means: a. Having a change of heart toward God. b. Turning from spiritual darkness to the light. c. Turning from Satan's authority to God's authority. d. Turning to God and proving you have turned by the good works that you do.

8. **Read Romans 14:9 & 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.** Christ's death, and resurrection was the foundation that secured God's right to have absolute authority over those who have turned to God. True or False

9. **Read Acts 3:19; Acts 26:18; Acts 22:16; Rom. 10:13.**

Which of these statements are true in your life? a. your spiritual eyes have been opened to the truth. b. you have repented and turned from darkness to light. c. you

have turned from the power and authority of Satan to the power and authority of God.
d. you have called upon God from your heart, received baptism and forgiveness of your sins. e. none of these things.

For more Catholic Bible studies and **free downloads** to your computer, go to:

Biblestudiesforcatholics.com