

Fall 2022 Newsletter

Detroit Bible Students Ecclesia

P.O. Box 51, Southfield, MI 48037-0051
Biblenewsletter.org



THE KINGDOM OF GOD

**“Now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are built up;
yea, they tempt God, and escape.”**

Malachi 3:15 – American Standard Version

The Gospels tell us that Jesus went everywhere preaching the Kingdom. (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Luke 8:1) He taught his disciples to pray, **“Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven.”** (Matt. 6:10) He even said, and told his disciples to preach, **“the kingdom of God is at hand.”** (Mark 1:15)

But two thousand years have passed, and our world is as full of darkness and oppression as it ever was. Confusion and strife are everywhere. Since man took the path of disobedience, God has allowed the “basest of men” (Dan. 4:17) to rule over the nations, as illustrated by the collage of 20th Century despots. The proud and the schemers prosper. Were the teachings of Jesus and the words of his prayer nothing more than pretty sentiments? Is there truly a time in which righteousness will reign?

Many churches have apparently lost faith in the establishment of the Kingdom of God, and find it expedient to apply Jesus’ words, (Luke 17:21) **“the kingdom of God is within you,”** to good works and peaceful feelings in the hearts of Christians. Jesus, however, was addressing the Pharisees when he said this. Therefore, the question must be asked, was the “kingdom of God” in their hearts? The Scriptures leave us in no doubt concerning the Pharisees. The Gospels clearly assert that their hearts were full of malice, envy, and murder. (John 5:8; 7:1; 12:10)

Was the kingdom in the hearts of professed Christians during the Dark Ages who put other Christians on the rack or burned them at the stake because their way of serving God did not follow their

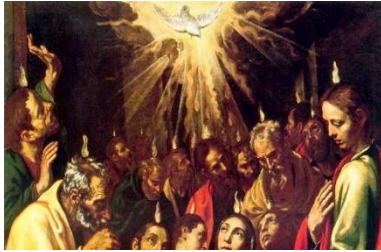
dictates? Was it in the hearts of those who made possession of the Bible punishable by death? Is it in the hearts of those today who hate others merely because of the color of their skin or their national origin? Is this what Jesus was teaching when he “went everywhere preaching the Kingdom” or was he really telling the Pharisees that he, the King of the Kingdom to come, had arrived and **“behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.”** [Greek, *entos*] (Luke 17:21, *New King James Version*)

The promise of God’s Kingdom is not only a New Testament concept but runs throughout the Old Testament prophecies as well. Isaiah looked forward to the Kingdom saying, “My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you. For **when your judgments are in the earth**, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.” (Isa.26:9) The Prophet Habakkuk wrote, “... **the earth shall be filled** with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.” (Hab. 2:14) and Haggai declared, “...I will shake all the nations; and the **desire of all nations shall come**; and I will fill this house [the earth] with glory, says Jehovah of Hosts.” (Haggai 2:7; Micah 4:1-8)

Because Jesus went everywhere preaching the kingdom, his disciples were naturally eager to know when it would come. They had been expecting him to take the reins of government at any moment, but instead he was crucified. All their hopes were seemingly dashed, (Luke 24:19-24) but wonder of wonders, Jesus had been raised from death and their hopes revived. The very last question the disciples asked Jesus just before he ascended was,

“Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6) Jesus told them, “**It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses...**” (vs. 7,8) They were still thinking in terms of the glory days of such great kings as, David and Solomon and were not yet able to comprehend that Jesus’ kingdom would far surpass all that had gone before.

However, from the very day that the Holy spirit came upon the disciples (Acts 2:1-4) the Apostles began to be Jesus’ witnesses as he had directed. (Matt 28:19,20) Peter was the first to speak out



regarding the kingdom to come. He said, “...what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that

times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive **until the time for restoring all the things** about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’ (Deut. 18:15,18,19) ...You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘**And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.**’ (Acts 3:11-26 *English Standard Version*)

The disciples’ question regarding when the Kingdom would be established continues to perplex followers of Jesus to this day. Confusion concerning the Kingdom persists among the various Christian sects. Roman Catholicism solved their dilemma by declaring that their canons and priestly arrangement was Christ’s Kingdom on earth. Others adopted the view that when Jesus spoke of the kingdom, it was really heaven that he meant to imply. Many churches consider that the spread of Christianity is what was meant by God’s will being done on earth. But when Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “**Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, even as it is done in heaven,**” was he in any confusion about whether God’s will is **absolute** in heaven?

Conditions rampant in the world today clearly demonstrate that God’s will is **not** being done on earth now nor has it at any time in the past. Looking about us, a kingdom of peace and righteousness seems no more than an elusive dream. Though men cry for “Peace, peace,” there is no peace. Wars, rebellions, gun violence, disease, drug and alcohol addiction, fear and despair as well as famines, earthquakes, and floods disrupt society causing many to cry out like the disciples on the Sea of Galilee, “Lord, save us, we perish!” (Matt. 8:25)

So, is the kingdom in heaven or on earth? **Both.** The Gospel call has been an invitation for all who are willing to follow Jesus, “even unto death.” (Rev. 2:10) These are variously spoken of in the Scriptures as “new creatures,” (2 Cor 5:17) “the bride of Christ,” (Rev. 19:7; 22:17) “a people for His name,” (Acts 15:14) “the church of God,” “saints,” (1 Cor. 1:2) and Abraham’s “seed,” which will bless all nations. (Gal 3:8,28) The reward promised these for their faithfulness is “glory, honor, immortality,” and a future life in heaven with the Lord. (Rom. 2:7; 1 Cor. 15:53,54; Phil 3:14; Heb. 3:1)

The Apostle Paul wrote about those seeking to follow Jesus, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ... Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ... So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 6:3-11) This is much more than being a good person and attending church regularly. In fact, the standard is so high that only a small slice of humanity will attain the prize of life with Christ in heaven. (Rev. 14:1) But, the Apostle John assures us that “God is love,” (1 John 4:8) and Paul wrote, “For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have **all** men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Tim. 2:3,4 Modern KJV) Jesus himself said, “**...all who are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth,**” to either everlasting life or judgment in the kingdom. (John 5:28,29)

“As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” (Ezek. 33:11) “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” (Isa. 55:7-11)

By limiting their focus to the New Testament and overlooking the Old Testament scriptures, most churches have missed God’s declared purpose for the rest of the human creation. God spoke through the prophets, and holy men of old from whom Jesus and the apostles quoted concerning God’s workings in their day and in the ages to follow. “...the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations through faith, preached the gospel before to Abraham, saying, In you shall **all** nations be blessed.” (Gal. 3:8,9,16,29) But of Abraham and the other holy men of old, the Apostle Paul wrote saying, “...these **all**, having obtained a **good report** through faith, did **not** receive the promise, for God had provided some better thing for us, that they should not be made perfect without us.” (Heb. 11:39,40)

Was God unjust in withholding the promise of heaven from those faithful ones who were “were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection... were stoned... sawn asunder... tempted... slain with the sword: being destitute, afflicted, tormented,” (Heb. 11:35-38) simply because they lived before Jesus came as the atonement for sin?

Certainly not! "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, his [man's] maker: Ask me of things to come. Concerning my children, and concerning the work of my hands, ... I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts have I commanded."... "Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord, and there is none else." (Isa. 45:11,12,18, *American Standard Version*)

"What is man, that you keep him in mind? what is the son of man, that you take him into account? You made him a little lower than the angels; you gave him a crown of glory and honour, and made him ruler over all the works of your hands: You put all things under his feet. (Gen.1:27,28) For in making man the ruler over all things, God did not put anything outside his authority, though we do not see everything under him now [because of sin--Gen. 3:17-19] But we see Him who was made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, crowned with glory and honour, because he let himself be put to death so that by the grace of God he might undergo death for **all** men. (Heb. 2:5-9 *Good News Bible*, Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor.15:22; Phil. 2:8; Psa.8:4; 144:3)

God so loved his human creation that he was willing to give his own beloved Son to be the atoning sacrifice for mankind, (John 3:16,17) so it is in keeping with the nature of God to have provided for all of Adam's race. Psalm 115:16 says, "The heavens are the LORD's heavens, but the **earth** he has given to the children of man."

Thus the inheritance of mankind is the earth just as Jesus' prayer indicated. But one might argue, the earth is polluted, ravaged by wars, spoiled. But God has declared, "He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. 'Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!'" (Psa. 46:9,10, *ESV*)

"Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool:" (Isa. 66:1) "I will make the place of my feet glorious." (Isa 60:13) "Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee." (Jer. 32:17)



The Prophet Isaiah painted several beautiful word pictures of the promised Kingdom: "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing... They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God... Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the

wilderness, and streams in the desert.... And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness ...It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray. No lion shall be there (1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 20:2,3), nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it ...but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD (1 Tim. 2:6) shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isaiah 35 *English Standard Version*)



"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." (Isa. 11:6)

Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay – not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete. Rev. 21:4 It is this portion that God has elected to give to the human race.

Herein lies the whole story of the Bible. From paradise lost in Genesis 3 to paradise restored in Revelation 21 & 22. From mankind falling under the bondage of sin and death, to his recovery and restoration to everlasting life in God's glorious kingdom.

Please send me the **FREE** booklet:

The Kingdom of God

Mail your request to:
 Detroit Bible Students Ecclesia
 PO Box 51
 Southfield, MI 48037-0051

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

