

What is the Kingdom of God?

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Preachers and Bible teachers frequently use the term, “Kingdom of God,” in various ways. Therefore, it must be assumed the term has a variety of meanings to expositors and interpreters. Notwithstanding, we are left with a looming question, “What does the term really mean?” In this brief article, I hope to highlight the most accurate interpretations by leading scholars, focusing on the four gospels. Although the term is also mentioned by Paul the Apostle and John in the Revelation, it is beyond the scope of this article to elucidate on all major points.

The term “Kingdom of God” occurs four times in Matthew, fourteen times in Mark, thirty-two times in Luke and twice in John. Notice there is reluctance on the behalf of the evangelist Matthew to use the term because of his Jewish audience. Matthew’s reluctance may be explained by the fact that Hebrews were forbidden to use any references to God or say His name. It is agreed that Mark addresses his gospel to the Romans, Luke to the gentiles, John to the universal church and Matthew to the Jews.

Introduction: The “Kingdom of God” (Mk. 1:14) is to be equated with the Kingdom of Christ (Luke 22:30; John 18:36) and the Kingdom of Heaven (Mt. 13:11). All three terms have essentially the same meaning.

First, the term “Kingdom of God” is the reign (or rule) of God. This means God’s divine authority has been established (I Cor.15: 24-28) at some point in time. It refers to the past, present and future reign of God.

Second, God’s Kingdom is oppositional to Satan. Christ is the Redeemer of mankind, delivering us from the grip of evil. Our entrance into the Kingdom of God testifies that we are delivered from the powers of darkness (Col. 1:13).

Third, God’s Kingdom is actively advancing and invading Satan’s kingdom. Matthew speaks of this phenomenon in Chap. 11:12; this passage is frequently misunderstood by most Christians because of its dual meaning. *From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it* (NIV-Mt. 11:12). This statement is found after Christ speaks of the sacrifices of John the Baptist and of other godly men. Here, the term “forcefully advancing” is better rendered (or more accurately translated) as “actively advancing.” And the term “forceful men,” doesn’t mean that Christians should be violent as expressed in the King James Version. It means the Kingdom of God has always advanced in the past and shall continue to advance in the present and future. The term “forceful men” - or “violent men” is considered by most imminent scholars to be a reference to aggressive people who want to stop the Kingdom of God from advancing.

Fourth, God’s Kingdom is supernatural. The words, acts and miracles of Christ proved He was God. And the parable of the seed in Mark chapter 4 brings out this dynamic truth.

Fifth, God’s Kingdom is a mystery. There were many mysteries in the Old Testament that were revealed and explained by Christ during His earthly ministry. When Christ came on the scene this meant “God had come.” And His purpose was to destroy the works of Satan, bringing forgiveness (Mk 2:5), deliverance to the captives and righteousness (Mt. 5:22). The Kingdom of Christ (or God) was present and advancing during His times as leaven hidden in the dough, but not as an advancing Kingdom that would immediately destroy the Roman invaders.

Sixth, God’s Kingdom brings redemption. When Jesus delivered his sermon on the Mountain (Mt. 5-7), He essentially was saying that the Kingdom of God had arrived, and there was a present and future reign for His kingdom.

Seventh, God's Kingdom has been revealed in stages. The consummation of the age is a highly debated topic, but we know God's will and revelation is instant (present) and progressive (future). The Gospels give us a glimpse of God's redemptive role at the return of Christ and His judgment (Mt. 25: 31-46).

Eighth, God's Kingdom is consummated and revealed in Revelation 19. When Christ returns, He will bind the Devil and throw him into the bottomless pit. The first resurrection occurs and the resurrected saints share in Christ's rule for a thousand years.

Ninth, God's Kingdom is the present realm and is a spiritual realm. The redeemed of Lord have already been redeemed and delivered from darkness (Col. 1:13).

Tenth, God's Kingdom is not the reign of the church. While it is true the early apostles preached the Kingdom of God (Acts 8:12) is coming, the church is not the kingdom of God. Yet on the other hand, the two should not be separated. God established the church for the fellowship of believers and for the building up of the Kingdom of Christ (or God). The Kingdom of God was offered to Israel (Mt. 10: 5-6), but because of Christ's rejection by the Jewish nation, it was taken away and given to believing Gentiles (Mt. 21:43). Israel could not accept the message they would enter the kingdom and experience salvation through faith in Christ. They could not lay aside their rules, regulations and the Law.

Eleventh, God's Kingdom works through the church. The disciples preached about the Kingdom of God (Mt. 10:7-8; Luke 10:9,17). And through their supernatural exploits, the proof of God's authority was manifest, the church was given the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, and the message of God was finally revealed to God's people.

Twelfth, God's Kingdom brings blessings. The Keys to the Kingdom are to be given to God's people. The Gospel of the Kingdom will bind and loose mankind from sin. Deliverance from sin is proof that God's kingdom has arrived. Once the Gospel is heralded (preached) throughout the world, Christ will return (Mt. 24:14) and reveal His glory.

Lastly, in the final analysis it must be assumed that the "Kingdom of God" is past, present and future.