

Maturing Toward Wholeness in the Inner Life

Chapter Four

The Kingdom of God

Unseen Reality

- 1 – Jesus began his ministry the same way John the Baptist did. He announced that the kingdom of God was at hand—accessible like never before.
- 2 – Jesus used kingdom “of God” and “of heaven” interchangeably (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15). The kingdom was at hand because the King was at hand.
- 3 – We had turned from God’s rule and gone our own way. Now Jesus was inviting us to turn again—Repent!—and enter through him into the kingdom.
- 4 – The kingdom of God, or heaven, is the foundational theme integrating all Jesus’ teaching. The terms are found over 80 times in the Gospels.
- 5 – Major portions of Jesus’ teaching describe God’s kingdom, including the Sermon on the Mount, perhaps the most influential talk in history.
- 6 – “Blessed are those who mourn....” (Matthew 5:4) Was Jesus saying, “Go and mourn?” Or “Those who are mourning will receive comfort in God’s kingdom?”
- 7 – God’s kingdom is the sphere in which God’s rule is unopposed—where what God wants to happen happens without resistance or rebellion.
- 8 – There is another kingdom, in rebellion against God’s rule—a kingdom of spiritual darkness and limited power. God allows this for a time.
- 9 – To resist the kingdom of darkness in our own strength is presumptuous—dangerous. We come against it by invoking the power of Christ’s cross.
- 10 – God gave man dominion (rule) over creation. Man opened himself to the ruler of the darkness. Now the world lies in the grip of evil. (Romans 8:20)
- 11 – Christ came to destroy the devil’s work, save us from bondage to evil, and restore us to our original state—eternal life in God’s kingdom.
- 12 – God’s kingdom is eternal. Like God himself, it has always been and always will be. It existed before the material world and will outlast it.
- 13 – God’s kingdom is real. We sometimes say we must live in the “real world.” God’s kingdom is the “real world”—it is the ultimate reality.
- 14 – God’s kingdom is unseen. This should not surprise us. God is unseen. He created the material world but he is not part of it. God is Spirit.

15 – Though God’s kingdom is unseen, activity there produces tangible results. Jesus said to meet material needs, rely on the kingdom! (Matthew 6:25-34)

16 – Jesus

- called for repentance
- announced the kingdom’s availability
- revealed the kingdom’s presence by healing and casting out demons.

17 – We are not only to proclaim the kingdom (word) but also reveal the kingdom (act). Lives reformed in Christlikeness reveal the kingdom.

18 – The worldview today that dismisses Unseen Reality has ushered us into a great unreality. In our pride of life we grope in darkness.

19 – Jesus prayed. Spiritual fathers and mothers throughout Judeo-Christian millennia have prayed. Asking, relying on God, we access the kingdom.

20 – God’s kingdom is filled with his Presence. To accept God’s rule is to live in his Presence. To resist his rule is to turn from his Presence.

21 – Adam and Eve, listening to the voice from the darkness, decided in favor of self-rule. This choice separated them from God’s Presence.

22 – Jesus came

- to be the Way for mankind to re-enter God’s kingdom
- to teach us how to live there once we arrive.

He is the Door in.

23 – Self-rule renders us unable to live in sync with the ways of God’s kingdom. By the time we realize this, self-rule is rooted deeply within.

24 – Self-rule and self-reliance are two sides of the same coin. Relying on God may feel scary at first. Relying on self is what is truly scary.

25 – In his opening public statement Jesus gave the key to kingdom entry: “Repent!” (Matthew 4:17) Repent of what? Of self-rule and self-reliance!

26 – God’s rule is full of kindness, wisdom, goodness. He created us free to choose. He does not force his rule on us. He awaits our response.

27 – We are free to choose but we are not free to avoid the consequences of our choices. Jesus warned about unintended consequences of self-rule.

28 – God’s kingdom is shaped by God’s character. The ways of the kingdom are ways of holiness (absence of impurity) and love (absence of self).

29 – Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven to treasure hidden in a field. A man found it, sold all he had and bought the field. (Matthew 13:44) Smart man!

30 – Entering into and living in God’s kingdom will cost us our old life. This enables us to receive a new life—God’s eternal life. (Matthew 16:24-25)

31 – Jesus went to all the cities and villages

- teaching
- proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom
- healing every affliction.

(Matthew 9:35)

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