

3. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Purpose

This Bible study shows the power in prophesy, the continuity of the Old and New Testaments, and the excitement of finding the kingdom of God on earth.

Introduction

One of the most central themes in Jesus' teaching was the kingdom of God. Many people enthusiastically followed Jesus because they had been waiting for the kingdom for years!

Daniel 2:26-45

- » Nebuchadnezzar was king in Babylon during the sixth century B.C. and Daniel was a Jewish prophet that lived in captivity there. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that haunted him and he came to Daniel.
- » **v:28 God has shown the king what will happen in the days to come** - God is revealing to Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar (and us) when His kingdom would come and what it would be like.

DANIEL 2	STATUE	KINGDOM	PERIOD	DESCRIPTION
v:32, 37-38	Gold	Babylon	626-539 B.C.	King Nebuchadnezzar
v:32, 39a	Silver	Medo-Persian	539-332 B.C.	inferior kingdom (to Babylon)
v:32, 39b	Bronze	Greek	332-63 B.C.	rule over whole earth
v:33, 40-43	Iron & clay	Roman	63 B.C.-476 A.D.	partly strong, partly brittle, divided
v:34-35, 44-45	Rock	God's	Eternal	Would come during the Roman empire. Smashed other kingdoms, huge mountain, filled the whole earth, never be destroyed.

- » **v:39 After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours** - In 539 B.C. the Persian army took Babylon without a fight by diverting the water coming into Babylon from upstream. The soldiers marched under the walls through the empty water canals.
- » **v:39b Next, a third kingdom will rule over the whole earth** - In 332 B.C., Alexander the Great from Greece conquered Persia. He expanded his kingdom "over the whole earth." As he conquered foreign nations, he brought Greek culture, language, and religion.¹
 - This prepared the known world to speak a common language, Greek.
- » **v:40 Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong and divided** - The Roman empire was powerful but often in conflict from within. Comprised of both Romans and Jews, there was constant tension both ethnically and politically.

¹ This process of bringing Greek influences became known as Hellenization.

- » v:44 **In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom** - This prophecy tells us that in the time of the Roman Empire, God's Kingdom would be established on earth.
- » v:44b **The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed...it will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.**
 - This is the promise the Jews were waiting to see fulfilled.
 - Finding this kingdom and being part of it would bring eternal life!

WHEN DID THE KINGDOM OF GOD COME?

We have already seen that the kingdom would come during the Roman empire.²

- » Jesus was born during the Roman Empire under the reign of Herod, king of Judah (Luke 1:5).
- » Jesus preached that the kingdom of God had come near (Mt 3:1-2).

Luke 17:20-21

- » **Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come** - The religious leaders of Jesus' day were busy looking for the kingdom's coming. How did Jesus respond?
- » **The kingdom of God is in your midst³** - The kingdom was in their presence.

Like an army invading another country the Kingdom arrived in waves.

- » Wave 1 - Jesus begins his ministry (Mt 4:17)
- » Wave 2 - The Church is established (Acts 2)
- » Wave 3 - The Church expands its influence to the Gentile (Non Jewish world) (Act 10)

WHO IS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

Matthew 7:21-23

- » **Not everyone who says to me, 'LORD, LORD'** - Being religious does not mean we are part of God's kingdom.
- » **Only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven** - God's kingdom contains those people who wholeheartedly follow God's will.

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

- » The kingdom of God is where God rules and reigns.
- » The people that are part of God's kingdom have chosen to subject themselves to his LORDSHIP.

² The Roman empire was founded in 27 B.C.

³ The 1984 NIV translates this "within you" which does not make sense in context. Jesus is not telling his opponents, the Pharisees, that the kingdom was within them. The 2011 NIV translates it "in your midst." The HCSB translates it "among you." The ESV translates it "in the midst" of you.

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

Q: How should we feel about this news?

Matthew 13:44-46

» The kingdom of God is a treasure. The kingdom of God is like a fine pearl.

Luke 9:57-62 Not everyone Jesus called to discipleship was willing to prioritise it.

» When we find it, we should be willing to give up everything we have to enter it!

Q: What will be the greatest challenges for you to give up to enter the kingdom?

Q: Are you excited and willing to make the necessary sacrifices?

Matthew 6:31-34

» **Do not worry** - When we consider making radical steps of sacrifice for the kingdom, we can feel fearful. God tells us that we should not worry.

» **Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness** - God expects us to seek his kingdom and righteousness first and he will take care of us.

HOW DO WE SEEK THE KINGDOM OF GOD FIRST?

We desire above all else to enter, participate in and spread the news about God's reign on earth.

Let's see what this looked like in the first century...

Acts 2:42-47

» **Devoted themselves to the teaching** - We should aggressively pursue learning the Bible.

» **Devoted themselves to the fellowship** - We should meet with fellow believers constantly (see [v:46](#)) for Bible study, church services, and relationship time.

» **All the believers were together and had everything in common** - Our lives and cultures will blend into more of a "kingdom culture." We now have a common purpose.

» **The LORD added to their number** - This news must spread to those around us!

Q: What changes do you need to make in your life to seek the kingdom first?

Q: Are you ready to prioritise church services, Bible studies, and spiritual fellowship?

CONCLUSION

The Jews waited for six centuries for the kingdom of God.

Jesus opened the door for us to be able to enter the kingdom.

We should be willing to give up everything to enter the kingdom of God.

Seeking God's kingdom should be the top priority in our lives!