

# The Kingdom of God

## **Introduction**

Most Christians have heard the phrase “kingdom of God” before. However, from my experience, there is quite a bit of confusion about *what* that kingdom actually is.

For example, many Christians believe that the kingdom of God is actually *heaven*. Some other Christians think that the kingdom is actually “the church”; or that it is something that exists “in a person’s heart”.

As it turns out, Scripture has *quite a bit* to say, about what the kingdom of God really is. So, this document will discuss the information that Scripture gives us, in order to provide an accurate definition for the “kingdom of God”.

## **What Does the Word “Gospel” Mean?**

To begin with, in order to understand this document, it is important to define what the word “gospel” means. The modern English word *gospel* is derived from the Old English word *godspel*, which means “good news”. The word *godspel*, in turn, is a translation of the Greek word *euangelion*, which also means “good news”, or “good message”. So, the literal definition of the word “gospel” is *good news*.

As a result, when the word “gospel” appears in Scripture, it refers to “good news”. So, that raises the question – what is the good news that Scripture is talking about, when it uses the term *gospel*?

## **What Did Jesus Preach About?**

Most Christians are familiar with Jesus’ actions – i.e., what he did while he was on the earth. In other words, most Christians know that Jesus performed miracles, and that he died for our sins.

However, from my experience, most Christians are *not* very familiar with Jesus’ words – that is, what he said while he was on the earth.

So, here is a question for all of you: What was Jesus’ primary message – that is, what was the main *subject* that Jesus preached about?

Some Christians believe that Jesus’ primary message was about him dying for our sins; i.e., about his death and resurrection. Some other Christians say that Jesus’ primary message was about following God’s commands; i.e., about living a moral life.

Jesus did speak about the above subjects, of course. However, were either of those topics his primary message? In other words, were either of those subjects the message that God sent him to proclaim?

Let’s take a look in scripture, to see if we can discover what Jesus’ *primary* message was. (Note that there are many *more* verses similar to the ones below.) Unless otherwise indicated, all verses are taken from the New American Standard Bible.

**Mark 1:14-15:**

<sup>4</sup>Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

**Luke 4:43:**

<sup>43</sup>But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for **I was sent for this purpose**."

**Luke 8:1:**

<sup>1</sup>Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God.

**Matthew 9:35:**

<sup>35</sup>Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming **the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

The above verses look pretty clear – the primary message that Jesus preached was: the kingdom of God. In fact, the very reason why God sent Jesus was to preach about the kingdom – and that message about the kingdom is called the gospel! As mentioned in the last section, the word “gospel” means *good news*. So, the “good news” that Jesus preached about was: the *kingdom of God*.

**What Did the Apostles Preach About?**

Some Christians believe that the apostles – especially Paul – preached a completely *different* message than Jesus did. In other words, some Christians assert that the apostles’ message has absolutely *no relation whatsoever* to Jesus’ message. So, let’s take a look at what the apostles preached about:

**Acts 8:12 (Philip):**

<sup>12</sup>But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God **and** the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.

**Acts 19:8 (Paul):**

<sup>8</sup>And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

**Acts 20:25 (Paul):**

<sup>25</sup>"And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.

**Acts 28:30-31 (Paul):**

<sup>30</sup>And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, <sup>31</sup>preaching the kingdom of God **and** teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

As we can see, the apostles kept on preaching about the kingdom of God – *just like Jesus did!* The only difference is that the apostles added information about Jesus to their overall message.

**The Christian Gospel Message**

As we have seen previously, the message Jesus preached is called the *gospel of the kingdom* – and of course, the word gospel means “good news”. So, Jesus preached good news about the kingdom of God.

The apostles *continued* preaching about the kingdom of God – and they *added* information about Jesus to their message. So, it appears that there are two separate “pieces” of good news, which are part of the apostles’ message:

- The kingdom of God;
- The death and resurrection of Jesus – which allows us to enter the kingdom of God.

However, from my experience, most Christian churches only focus on one of the above items – the death and resurrection of Jesus. In other words, most churches hardly ever talk about the kingdom of God. As a result, most Christians are only receiving one half of the Christian gospel message!

I believe it is important for Christians to understand the entire gospel message. So, in this presentation, I want to focus on the *other* “half” of the good news – the kingdom of God.

**Synonyms for the Kingdom**

Before we go into what the kingdom is, it is important to note that the kingdom of God is referred to by several *different* terms in scripture. In other words, there are several “synonyms” for the kingdom of God. Here are some of the most common synonyms:

The kingdom, itself, is known as the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Heaven, and the kingdom of his beloved Son.

Information *about* the kingdom is called the gospel of the kingdom, the gospel of God, the gospel of Christ, the word of the kingdom, the word of God, the word, and the seed.

## What is the Kingdom?

Since the kingdom of God is such an important part of the Christian gospel message, you may be wondering – *what*, exactly, is the kingdom?

An interesting point to note is that Jesus never explicitly *defined* what the kingdom is. That is, Jesus never said: “The exact definition of the kingdom of God is: *such and such*”.

Not only that, but no one ever *asked* Jesus to define the kingdom! In other words, no one ever said, “Say, rabbi, what is that “kingdom of God” that you keep talking about?”

There is a very good reason for both of the above points – it is because the kingdom of God is *already* described, in detail, in the Old Testament. As a result, Jewish people who lived in the 1<sup>st</sup> century were *already* very familiar with what the kingdom of God is! During the centuries since that time, though, knowledge about what the kingdom is has largely been *lost*.

The first point to note about the kingdom of God is that it is an actual kingdom – i.e., it is a government that is ruled by a king. There are many, *many* passages in the Old Testament which *explicitly* state that fact. Basically, the Old Testament tells us that the kingdom of God will be established in the future – and that God’s chosen Messiah will rule, as king, over that kingdom. Here are six of those passages:

### 2 Samuel 7:12-13:

<sup>12</sup>“When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.”

<sup>13</sup>“He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”

### Psalms 2:6-8:

<sup>6</sup>“But as for me, I have installed My King  
Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”

<sup>7</sup>“I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:  
He said to Me, ‘You are My Son,  
Today I have begotten You.’”

<sup>8</sup>“Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,  
And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.”

### Jeremiah 23:5:

<sup>5</sup>“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD,  
“When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch;  
And He will reign as king and act wisely  
And do justice and righteousness in the land.”

### Daniel 7:13-14:

<sup>13</sup>“I kept looking in the night visions,  
And behold, with the clouds of heaven  
One like a Son of Man was coming,

And He came up to the Ancient of Days  
And was presented before Him.  
<sup>14</sup>"And to Him was given dominion,  
Glory and a kingdom,  
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language  
Might serve Him  
His dominion is an everlasting dominion  
Which will not pass away;  
And His kingdom is one  
Which will not be destroyed.

#### **Isaiah 9:6-7:**

<sup>6</sup>For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;  
And the government will rest on His shoulders;  
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.  
<sup>7</sup>There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,  
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness  
From then on and forevermore  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

#### **Isaiah 42:1-4:**

<sup>1</sup>"Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;  
My chosen one in whom My soul delights  
I have put My Spirit upon Him;  
He will bring forth justice to the nations.  
<sup>2</sup>"He will not cry out or raise His voice,  
Nor make His voice heard in the street.  
<sup>3</sup>"A bruised reed He will not break  
And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish;  
He will faithfully bring forth justice.  
<sup>4</sup>"He will not be disheartened or crushed  
Until He has established justice in the earth;  
And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law."

### **Where will the Kingdom be Located?**

Now that we know what the kingdom is, the next question to ask is: where will the kingdom be located?  
That is, *where* will people live, when the kingdom is established? To start with, here are some  
descriptions of the kingdom:

#### **Zechariah 9:10:**

"The warriors bow shall be banished, and he shall proclaim peace to the nations. His dominion  
shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth."

### **Ezekiel 34:25-29:**

<sup>25</sup>"I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.

<sup>26</sup>"I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing.

<sup>27</sup>"Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be secure on their land. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them.

<sup>28</sup>"They will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely, and no one will make them afraid.

<sup>29</sup>"I will establish for them a renowned planting place, and they will not again be victims of famine in the land, and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore.

### **Isaiah 2:2-4:**

<sup>2</sup>Now it will come about that

In the last days

The mountain of the house of the LORD

Will be established as the chief of the mountains,

And will be raised above the hills;

And all the nations will stream to it.

<sup>3</sup>And many peoples will come and say,

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,

To the house of the God of Jacob;

That He may teach us concerning His ways

And that we may walk in His paths."

For the law will go forth from Zion

And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

<sup>4</sup>And He will judge between the nations,

And will render decisions for many peoples;

And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks

Nation will not lift up sword against nation,

And never again will they learn war.

### **Isaiah 11:6-9:**

<sup>6</sup>And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,

And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,

And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;

And a little boy will lead them.

<sup>7</sup>Also the cow and the bear will graze,

Their young will lie down together,

And the lion will eat straw like the ox.

<sup>8</sup>The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,

And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.

<sup>9</sup>They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,

For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
As the waters cover the sea.

To get even more specific, the following verses explicitly address the question of *where* people will live, in the kingdom of God:

**Psalm 37:29:**

<sup>29</sup>The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever.

**Psalm 115:16:**

<sup>16</sup>The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given to man.

**Isaiah 65:9 (NAB):**

<sup>9</sup>From Jacob I will save offspring, from Judah, those who are to inherit my mountains; My chosen ones shall inherit the land, my servants shall dwell there.

**Matthew 5:5 (ESV):**

<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

**Revelation 5:10:**

<sup>10</sup>You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.

All of the verses that we have seen, on the last few pages, indicate that people will live on the earth – **not** in heaven – during the kingdom!

**Where will God and Jesus Be?**

There is another important item to note about where the kingdom will be located. Scripture indicates that both Jesus, and God *himself*, will live with us – on the earth – during the kingdom of God:

**Psalm 2:6:**

<sup>6</sup>But as for me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.

**Psalm 132:14:**

<sup>14</sup>Zion is my resting place forever; in her I will dwell, for I prefer her.

**Isaiah 24:23:**

<sup>23</sup>For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem.

**Micah 5:2 (ESV):**

<sup>2</sup>From you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel.

**Revelation 11:15 (ESV):**

<sup>15</sup>Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

**Revelation 21:2-3 (ESV):**

<sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will  dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

## **The Promise to Abraham**

God's promise to Abraham also shows us that people will live on the earth, during the kingdom. God made a very explicit promise to Abraham: He promised that Abraham would inherit the land of Canaan (modern day Palestine) – and that he and his descendants would own that land forever. That promise was then repeated to Abraham's son Isaac, to his grandson Jacob, and to his 12 great-grandsons:

**Genesis 13:14-15 (Abraham):**

<sup>14</sup>The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward;  
<sup>15</sup>for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever."

**Genesis 17:8 (Abraham):**

<sup>8</sup>"I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

**Genesis 26:3 (Isaac):**

<sup>3</sup>"Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham.

**Genesis 35:12 (Jacob):**

<sup>12</sup>"The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, And I will give the land to your descendants after you."

**Genesis 50:24 (12 sons of Jacob):**

<sup>24</sup>Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob."

As we can see from the verses above, God explicitly promised that Abraham would inherit the entire land of Canaan – and that he and his descendants would own that land forever.

However, scripture also tells us that Abraham did not inherit the land of Canaan while he was alive – he did not inherit even one square foot of it:

**Acts 7:4-5 (Stephen, speaking about Abraham):**

<sup>4</sup>"Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living.

<sup>5</sup>"But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and yet, even when he had no child, He promised that HE WOULD GIVE IT TO HIM AS A POSSESSION, AND TO HIS DESCENDANTS AFTER HIM.

From the above verse, we can see that God's promise to Abraham was *not* fulfilled, while Abraham was alive. So, the question now is, why didn't that promise get fulfilled? Did God *lie* to Abraham? I don't think so – since scripture tells us that God always keeps his promises. So, is there some other explanation?

Hebrews chapter 11 provides more information about God's promise to Abraham:

**Hebrews 11:8-9,13 (ESV):**

<sup>8</sup>By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup>By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.

<sup>13</sup>These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

The above passage tells us that Abraham actually lived in the land that God promised him – that is, Canaan – but he did not inherit that land while he was alive. It also indicates that God *will* fulfill that promise *in the future*. Basically, Abraham "saw the promise from afar" – which indicates that Abraham knew that he *would* inherit the promised land, in the *future*. So, overall, the promise to Abraham *agrees* with all of the other verses that we've seen – because that promise tells us that Abraham will live on the earth, during the kingdom of God!

Remember: Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

## The Christian Hope

As we have seen, God made very specific promises to Abraham and his descendants, about inheriting land on the earth, in the future.

At this point, you may say: “Those promises are all well and good *for Abraham*; but what does that have to do with *me*?” After all, most Christians are not literal descendants of Abraham. Scripture has an answer to that question:

### Galatians 3:29 (NIV):

<sup>29</sup>If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

### Romans 4:16 (NIV):

<sup>6</sup>Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

The above verses tell us that if we “belong to Christ” – i.e., if we believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and if we follow him – then we will be co-heirs *with Abraham*! In other words, we will also inherit land during the kingdom – just like Abraham will!

## Summary of the Kingdom

From all of the material in this presentation, I will make the following three assertions about the kingdom:

1. The kingdom of God is the kingdom that Jesus will establish, on the earth, when he returns.
2. When Jesus returns, he will resurrect faithful believers. That is, he will bring those believers *back to life* – so that those believers will live forever with him, on the earth. As a result, God's promise to Abraham, about inheriting Canaan, will be fulfilled at that time.
3. During the kingdom, the earth will be restored to its original, paradise conditions. In other words, the earth will be restored to the conditions that existed during the Garden of Eden.

## Why Haven't I Heard This Before?

As mentioned previously, the kingdom of God is the *primary message* that Jesus preached. As a result, you may be wondering: **why** isn't the kingdom discussed more often? (From what I have seen, most Christian churches *very rarely* discuss the kingdom of God.)

Jesus gave us an indication about *why* the kingdom of God is not preached more frequently, in one of his parables – the parable of the sower. That parable is listed in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8.

**Luke 8:5-8 (ESV):**

<sup>5</sup> "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. <sup>6</sup>And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. <sup>7</sup>And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. <sup>8</sup>And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As he said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Jesus then explained what the parable of the sower meant. Here is his explanation for the seeds that were sown on the path:

**Matthew 13:18-19 (ESV):**

<sup>18</sup> "Hear then the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup>When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

**Luke 8:11-12 (ESV):**

<sup>11</sup> Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. <sup>12</sup>The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

Jesus' explanation of this parable is *extremely* important. Basically, Jesus tells us that the adversary doesn't want us to know about the kingdom – because that knowledge will lead us to salvation!

In other words, the reason why information about the kingdom is *not* very well known today, is because the adversary is actively trying to **prevent** that information from being known!

**Final Thoughts**

It may be that some of you are still not convinced that people will live on the earth, during the kingdom of God. If so, that is not very surprising – because after all, 99% of Christian churches believe that people go to heaven when they die.

So, there is one final thought that I would like to share with you, about where people will live during the kingdom. In order to discuss that item, we need to go back to the very beginning of the Bible – to the creation of Adam and Eve.

Here are three questions, about Adam and Eve – along with the answers to those questions:

Question: Where were Adam and Eve created?

Answer: In the Garden of Eden.

Question: Where was the Garden of Eden located?

Answer: On the earth.

Question: How long would Adam and Eve have lived, if they had not disobeyed God?

Answer: Forever.

The information on above tells us the following: If Adam and Eve had never sinned against God, then they would have lived forever, on the earth!

That indicates to me that God's entire *plan* for humans is that we should live forever, on a paradise earth. After all, if God intended for humans to live in heaven, then why didn't He create Adam and Eve in heaven in the *first place*? In other words, why did God bother with the Garden of Eden at all, if His plan for humans is that we should live in *heaven*?

I believe that God's original plan for Adam and Eve was that they would live forever, on the paradise earth that He created for them. However, Adam and Eve's disobedience caused sin – and death – to enter the entire world. As a result, human beings are currently mortal; and the earth is no longer in a paradise state. Basically, Adam and Eve's sin caused a temporary "delay" in God's plan for humans.

However, when Jesus returns, the earth will be restored to its original, paradise conditions. In addition, Jesus will resurrect faithful believers, and grant them everlasting life – so that believers will live forever, on the restored paradise earth.

In other words, when Jesus returns, he will restore God's plan for mankind. Hallelujah!

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All three of those men have published numerous books, documents, web pages, etc about the kingdom of God – so if you are interested in obtaining more detailed information about the kingdom, then I certainly recommend visiting their web sites!