

## Seek First The Kingdom Of God

Jesus said to His disciples, "I tell you, do not be anxious for your life, what you will eat, nor for your body, what you will wear. Life is worth more than food and the body is worth more than clothing. Ravens do not sow, they do not reap, they have no warehouse or barn and God feeds them. How much more valuable are you than birds! ... Lilies grow. They do not toil nor do they spin yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as beautifully as one of these. If God clothes the grass in the field, which today exists and tomorrow is burned, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith? ... Your Father knows you need these things. Seek first the Kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you. Do not be afraid for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (Luke 12:22 to 32).

For a Kingdom to exist there has to be a King. God is King of the whole earth (Psalm 47:2, 6, 7; 48:2). Jesus frequently spoke about the Kingdom of God which is the same as the Kingdom of Heaven and where God has His Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11) and is from where He rules the universe. 'God has established His throne in the heavens. His Kingdom rules over everything. Praise God you holy angels of His, who are mighty in strength, who fulfil His word, obeying the voice of His word. Praise God all you holy (angelic) armies of His, you servants of His who do His pleasure. Praise God all you works of His, in all places of His dominion. Praise God my soul!' (Psalm 103:19 to 22). God is the ultimate Ruler of His Kingdom. He is our Sovereign King and we are subject to Him. He does not have to obey us, we must obey Him just as the holy angels obey Him. God always has the final say. The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven are both way above earth and were brought to earth when Jesus came the first time. 'Jesus came to Galilee preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God' (Mark 1:14). 'Jesus was baptised (by full immersion) and went up directly from the water. Behold, the heavens were opened to Him. The Spirit of God descended as a dove and landed on Him' (Matthew 3:16). Jesus said, "Repent! For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). A short time later Jesus said the Kingdom of God had come upon the earth (Matthew 12:28). It came to earth when Jesus was baptised and the heavens (plural) were opened.

When Jesus was preaching He interchanged the words, Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven constantly. In the Lord's Prayer He brings to humanity the knowledge of the Kingdom of God and His will that is being done in heaven by obedient holy angels just as His will is being done on earth by His obedient disciples. "Our Father, Who is in heaven, holy is Your name, Your Kingdom will come, Your Will, will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one. For Your's is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen" (Matthew 6:9 to 13; Luke 11:2 to 4). The focus of Jesus was always the Kingdom of God and the values of God's Kingdom, which are holiness, righteousness, God's mercy and other positive aspects of Kingdom living. Jesus spoke about the way the Kingdom of God should operate and the rules of God's Kingdom within His own authority. Our God and King is always righteous and merciful but is also a God of righteous judgement. 'The Lord is our Judge and our lawgiver. He is our King. He will save us' (Isaiah 33:22). Jesus spoke so many times about the Kingdom of God and of Heaven, after He was resurrected many Jewish people expected Him to deliver them from the oppression of the Roman rulers like Moses had delivered the Children of Israel from the Egyptians but it was not the right time for Jesus to become our King – not yet. 'When they came together they asked Him, "Lord, are You now restoring the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus answered, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has set within His own authority"' (Acts 1:6 & 7).

When Jesus referred to the Kingdom, was He talking about now or the future? The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven are past tense, present tense and future tense. This has led to some confusion. The Kingdom of God was always there, is there now and will forever be there. The Bible speaks of the Kingdom or God's throne from the point of view of history or past tense. 'Your throne is established from long ago. You are from everlasting' (Psalm 93:2). The following verse is future tense and present tense. 'Your throne God is forever and ever (future tense). You (presently) rule Your Kingdom with a sceptre of equity' (Psalm 45:6), meaning He rules with fairness and impartiality. The New Testament speaks of the Kingdom as present tense or at the time when Jesus was on earth. Jesus healed the sick and delivered the oppressed and He said to people who were with Him, "The Kingdom of God has come to you" (Luke 11:20). The Lord's Prayer merges Jesus' present (when He was on earth) with our future. Our Father is certainly in heaven and He owns the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever into the future. The one thousand year reign of Jesus has not happened yet so that is our future. That is when God's Will, will truly be done all over the earth in the future, just as it is currently being done in heaven.

Jesus regards the Kingdom of God as being highly valuable. What He was referring to is our salvation should be considered highly valuable to us and Jesus came to give us salvation, if we choose to accept it. There are only two kingdoms; the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. If we reject the Kingdom of God while we are on earth, after death the soul will end up forever in the kingdom of darkness and in torment.

Jesus inferred we should give up everything to attain the treasure and pearl of great price of eternal life just as He gave up His life and everything He had so we can attain eternal life through His blood sacrifice. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid. In his joy he sold all he had to buy that field. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who is a merchant seeking fine pearls, who having found one pearl of great price he sold all he had and bought the pearl" (Matthew 13:44 to 46). The Kingdom of God has been increasing since Jesus came. The Jewish people, the people of the Kingdom, were devout but only increased as babies were born to increase their population. Since Jesus came and founded Christianity, the Kingdom has grown by many millions and Jesus expressed this in His parables. "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, which is smaller than all seeds but when it is grown it is greater than all the herbs and becomes a tree, so the birds of the air come and lodge in its branches. The Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast, which a woman mixed in three measures of meal until it was all leavened" (Matthew 13:31 to 33). Leaven or yeast causes the dough to rise and expand.

Throughout the Bible there is a theme of provision running through like threads for those people who seek the Kingdom of God first as we read in the opening verses. This can be summed up by saying, "Trust God, share what you have and do not worry. God will provide." 'Lord, You visit the earth and water it. You greatly enrich it. The river of God is full of water. You provide them grain for so You have ordained it' (Psalm 65:9). We must seek God for everything we need and not depend our earthly wealth. Jesus said, "You cannot serve both God and money," and "How hard it is for those who trust in wealth and riches to enter the Kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:24; Mark 10:24). 'Tell those who are wealthy in this present world, they should not be proud nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of (earthly) riches but on the living God Who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. Tell them they must do good so they might be rich in good works and they should be ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come and so they may lay hold of eternal life' (1 Timothy 6:17 to 19).

All genuine born-again believers are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven and we have the assurance of knowing God is on the throne. 'Our citizenship is in heaven from where we also wait for our Saviour, the Lord Jesus' (Philippians 3:20). 'You have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to innumerable multitudes of holy angels to the general assembly and assembly of the Firstborn (Jesus) who are enrolled in heaven to God the Judge of all ... Therefore, receiving a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace through which we serve God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire' (Hebrews 12:22 & 23, 28 & 29). 'Give thanks to the Father Who made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of God's holy people in Light, Who delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love in Whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins, Who is the image of the invisible God and the Firstborn of all creation' (Colossians 1:12 to 15). 'The seventh angel blew his shofar and there were mighty voices in heaven shouting, "The dominion (kingdom, sovereignty, rule) of the world has now come into the possession of the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Anointed One (the Messiah) and He will reign forever and ever, for the eternities of the eternities!' (Revelation 11:15). When we genuinely seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, our salvation will be given to us. 'Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you' (Matthew 6:33).

Amen and God bless you.

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