

## The Coming Kingdom

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Like justification by grace apart from works, the kingdom is a watershed issue. One's view of the kingdom governs multiple doctrinal issues. Here are some common options:

1. The kingdom refers to Heaven. This would be the majority opinion. Most Christians, when asked about the kingdom, would guess that this is the place Jesus is preparing for those who believe in Him, also known as "the Father's house."
2. The kingdom refers to the church. The remainder of Christians would think that "kingdom" and "church" are synonymous. We are now in the kingdom. We are kingdom citizens. We are building the kingdom.
3. The kingdom does not refer to any specific realm, empire, domain, or place of rule. Rather it is a term that should be understood in a spiritual or symbolic way that references believers' personal relationship to Jesus as we follow His leadership in our lives.

An uncommon view of the kingdom, one that is not even the dust on a scale, requires a two-fold prerequisite to biblical interpretation. First, one must believe that justification comes by God's grace through faith and not by works. Works play no part in one's justification or judicial standing before God. Second, one must pursue the biblical author's intended meaning; this is often referred to as authorial intent, or a normal approach to understanding literature. The goal is always, "What did the author intend?" not "What does it mean to me?"

These two prerequisites are solidly biblical. On the first one, God has always kept a small group of people who believe in grace, called a "remnant."

"Even so, then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise, grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise, work is no longer work." Romans 11:5-6

On the second, authorial intent is assumed throughout the biblical illustrations of interpretation: "This is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel," Acts 2:16, or Christ's use of Psalm 110 in Luke 20:41-44. David wrote a statement; what did he intend? A normal use of language should not be suspended simply because, in our recent years, existentialism has eroded the use of language.

The uncommon view of the kingdom that follows the above two prerequisites is this: The kingdom refers to the coming 1000-year reign of Christ which continues on into eternity. This reign begins when Christ returns (Rev. 19) and slaughters the Antichrist and the nations gathered at the end of the Tribulation to eradicate the Jews; He then establishes a global kingdom that requires all nations to submit to the Jews. It is easy to see why this is not a popular view today. Evangelicalism is largely antisemitic. It is believed that the curses landed on Israel and the blessings were passed on to Israel's replacement, namely the church. In order to come to this conclusion, the typical theologian teaches that the Hebrew prophets were incorrect in their writings and what they wrote should be spiritualized to mean something else. The Hebrew prophets, however, were 100% accurate with over 300 specific prophecies regarding Christ's first coming. Only one's superimposed theology would suggest that they shouldn't be trusted for Christ's second coming.

I invite you to follow along with me as we consider the biblical references to “the kingdom” in Acts through Revelation. The Gospels are also a good study, but the offer of the kingdom spoken of by the Hebrew prophets was rejected when the leaders of Israel rejected the King Jesus. What follows are the references without context, and my comments, where appropriate, are under the verses in red.

I am using the old 1901 ASV version (with some minor punctuation changes) because of its accuracy to the Greek.

Acts 1:3 (ASV)

<sup>3</sup>To whom he also showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God:

The coming kingdom was a major theme of Jesus after His resurrection. A delay in God’s program and the introduction of the church as an inserted, Gentile-dominated, multi-cultural entity required a major paradigm shift for Jewish believers.

Acts 1:6 (ASV)

<sup>6</sup>They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

The disciples were looking for the Hebrew prophets’ promised kingdom. Christ did not disagree with them, but told them the timing of the kingdom’s coming was not their concern.

Acts 8:12 (ASV)

<sup>12</sup>But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

It is normative to speak about the coming kingdom when doing evangelism, as demonstrated here by the evangelist Philip.

Acts 14:22 (ASV)

<sup>22</sup>confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.

Before the kingdom comes, believers will experience many tribulations. The conclusion of the first missionary journey ends with the recognition that churches are under Gentile domination, which equals trouble, but the kingdom is coming.

Acts 19:8 (ASV)

<sup>8</sup>And he entered into the synagogue, and spoke boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading *as to* the things concerning the kingdom of God.

A major theme for Paul during his two years at Corinth was the coming kingdom. There was great debate about this among the Jews.

Acts 20:25 (ASV)

<sup>25</sup>And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more.

Again, a major theme for Paul is the coming kingdom.

Acts 28:23 (ASV)

<sup>23</sup>And when they had appointed him a day, they came to him into his lodging in great number; to whom he expounded *the matter*, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning till evening.

The kingdom of which Paul is persuading them has its origin in the Old Testament. The church is not found in the Old Testament.

Acts 28:31 (ASV)

<sup>31</sup>preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him.

The ending of the Book of Acts should be the beginning of the practice of the church. Paul set an example for us to follow.

Romans 14:17 (ASV)

<sup>17</sup>for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Since the coming kingdom is full of righteousness, peace, and joy, and that is the kingdom to which we are headed, we should not grieve our fellow believers over insignificant issues.

1 Corinthians 4:20 (ASV)

<sup>20</sup>For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

As an Apostle who will rule one of the twelve tribes of Israel in the coming kingdom, Paul has power and authority that those in opposition to him do not have. He can exercise that authority, although he prefers to persuade them.

1 Corinthians 6:9 (ASV)

<sup>9</sup>Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men,

This reference (and the following references through Ephesians 5:5) has a significant Greek construction (1 Corinthians 15:50 is an exception). "Kingdom" always has the definite article "the kingdom," except in these verses. The reader cannot tell that kingdom is without the article because English requires an article when something specific is referred to. Greek, however, has a definite use of the article by not including the article. Its absence signifies that the writer is stressing the quality of something. Paul is emphasizing that the coming kingdom is full of righteousness and not sin. He does this by omitting the article.

"Inheritance" as included in each of the following references is a reward. Colossians 3:24 indicates that faithful servants will receive the reward of their inheritance. Evil behavior will not be rewarded in the coming kingdom, only righteousness.

1 Corinthians 6:10 (ASV)

<sup>10</sup>nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 15:24 (ASV)

<sup>24</sup>Then *cometh* the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power.

The final enemy is death. At the conclusion of the 1000-year coming kingdom, Christ will give the kingdom back up to the Father in Heaven, death will become a thing of the past, and the kingdom comes down from Heaven to a new heaven and new earth. The Bible views the 1000-year kingdom as an eternal kingdom that has no end. It is relocated to Heaven, but it continues on into the universe (Revelation 21-22).

1 Corinthians 15:50 (ASV)

<sup>50</sup>Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

Galatians 5:21 (ASV)

<sup>21</sup>envyings, drunkenness, reveling, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Ephesians 5:5 (ASV)

<sup>5</sup>For this ye know of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Colossians 1:13 (ASV)

<sup>13</sup>who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; **The Greek here is better translated “unto” the kingdom. The translators got it right in Colossians 4:11, but not here. “Unto” is a directional proposition, i.e., “The man rode his horse unto the castle.”**

Colossians 4:11 (ASV)

<sup>11</sup>and Jesus that is called Justus, who are of the circumcision: these only *are my fellow-workers* unto the kingdom of God, men that have been a comfort unto me.

1 Thessalonians 2:12 (ASV)

<sup>12</sup>to the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory. **Again, God summons, calls, or invites us “unto” His kingdom. The coming kingdom will be glorious indeed.**

2 Thessalonians 1:5 (ASV)

<sup>5</sup>*which is* a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: **Believers suffer because they are contrary to the culture. Suffering is a seal of our endorsement that a new kingdom is coming where the true King will execute everlasting destruction (context of this verse).**

2 Timothy 4:1 (ASV)

<sup>4</sup>I charge *thee* in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: **The living will be judged at Christ’s appearing; the dead will be judged at the start of the coming kingdom (Daniel 12:1-2).**

2 Timothy 4:18 (ASV)

<sup>18</sup>The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen. **Paul’s last words include the anticipation of the coming kingdom.**

Hebrews 1:8 (ASV)

<sup>8</sup>but of the Son *he saith*, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; And the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of thy kingdom.” **Righteousness is an essential part of the coming kingdom...starting, of course, with the king.**

Hebrews 11:33 (ASV)

<sup>33</sup>who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, **Not a reference to the coming kingdom; also, no article in Greek.**

Hebrews 12:28 (ASV)

<sup>28</sup>Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: **Here, without the article, the reference focuses on another attribute of the coming kingdom. It is immovable, enduring, unshaken. No power on earth can rise against it.**

James 2:5 (ASV)

<sup>5</sup>Hearken, my beloved brethren; did not God choose them that are poor as to the world *to be* rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to them that love him? **Poverty can help believers to depend upon God. Vibrant faith and love for Jesus are rewarded in the coming kingdom.**

2 Peter 1:11 (ASV)

<sup>11</sup>for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

An “abundant” entrance means an entrance with rewards in store. The person doesn’t just arrive, she “makes an entrance!”.

Revelation 1:6 (ASV)

<sup>6</sup>and he made us *to be* a kingdom, *to be* priests unto his God and Father; to him *be* the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

“Kingdom” here should be translated “kings.” While we have been declared to be kings and priests, our service awaits our king who is coming with the clouds and the earth dwellers will mourn because of Him.

Revelation 1:9 (ASV)

<sup>9</sup>I John, your brother and partaker with you in tribulation and kingdom and patience *which are* in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

The Greek has the article. John partakes with his readers in the anticipation of the coming kingdom.

Revelation 11:15 (ASV)

<sup>15</sup>And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, “The kingdom of the world is become *the kingdom* of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

This is not a reference to the coming kingdom, but rather a statement that all the kingdoms of earth, at the end of the Tribulation, will be owned by God the Father and Jesus.

Revelation 12:10 (ASV)

<sup>10</sup>And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuses them before our God, day and night.

The casting out of Satan from Heaven means the kingdom is about to come!

Revelation 16:10 (ASV)

<sup>10</sup>And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

Not a reference to the coming kingdom.

Revelation 17:12 (ASV)

<sup>12</sup>And the ten horns that thou saw are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour.

Not a reference to the coming kingdom.

Revelation 17:17 (ASV)

<sup>17</sup>For God did put in their hearts to do his mind, and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished.

Not a reference to the coming kingdom.

What I’ve done in this usage study can also be done with the Gospels. When the biblical reader understands that the biblical references actually refer to our Savior’s coming kingdom, new and relevant applications are immediately received. Now we see why the Lord instructed us to pray, “Thy kingdom come;” even so, come Lord Jesus!