

Kingdom Come

Preface

*“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*¹ These rich and familiar phrases from the Lord’s Prayer reveal the importance of God’s Kingdom, both in us personally and on the earth. The concept of God’s Kingdom is so central to God’s plan for humanity that Jesus spoke more about the Kingdom of God than anything else.²

While the Kingdom of God³ is never explicitly defined by Jesus, or anyone else in the New Testament, we know it is a Kingdom that is both here and now and will be experienced fully in eternity. Jesus primarily described the Kingdom using parables—stories and illustrations that connected familiar life experiences with spiritual truth. Parables give Jesus’ followers ways to remember what He taught.

We, as Christ-followers, belong to His Kingdom. In this study, we will unpack the meaning of Jesus’ Kingdom parables found in the Gospel of Matthew so we can begin to understand what they mean for us today as citizens of the Kingdom of God. As we do this, may God’s Kingdom come and God’s will be done in us, as it is in heaven.

¹ NIV. The Lord’s Prayer is found in **Matthew 6:9–13**.

² Treat, Jeremy R. *Seek First: How the Kingdom of God Changes Everything*. Zondervan, 2019. 13

³ In the book of Matthew the Kingdom of God is most often referred to as the Kingdom of Heaven. There is no distinction between these two phrases. Youngblood, Ronald F. *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. HarperCollins Christian Pub, 2014. 618

BACKGROUND

God's Kingdom in Scripture

At the beginning of time, God created the world under His Kingship and rule, but we humans were separated from Him when His perfect Kingdom on earth was broken through sin.¹ Yet, throughout the rest of the Old Testament, God walked with His people as they waited for the one who would restore the Kingdom—the Messianic King.

The Kingdom concept was first explicitly mentioned in Exodus,² when God began establishing the Israelites as His people and revealing how He would restore His Kingdom on earth. However, the Israelites struggled to follow and obey God as their King, asking instead for a human king. God gave them what they asked for.³

Over the many centuries recorded in the Old Testament, the Israelites never successfully established a fully God-centered Kingdom; in fact, they failed over and over again. However, despite the sin, rebellion and exile⁴ of the Israelites, they still hoped for the restoration of God's earthly Kingdom. At the time of Christ, the Jewish people thought God would surely overturn the corrupt Roman Empire and establish His Kingdom. Much to their surprise, they were wrong.

The Kingdom of God is unlike any earthly empire or nation, past, present or future. It doesn't make sense by earthly kingdom standards. *"One day the Pharisees asked Jesus, 'When will the Kingdom of God come?' Jesus replied, 'The Kingdom of God can't be detected by visible signs. You won't be able to say, "Here it is!" or "It's over there!" For the Kingdom of God is already among you.'"*⁵ In other words, *"The Kingdom of God [does not have] geographical boundaries. Instead, it begins with the work of God's Spirit in people's lives and in relationships."*⁶

¹ **Genesis 1–3**

² *"Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation." Exodus 19:5–6*

³ The elders of Israel said to the prophet Samuel: *"Look," they told him, "you are now old, and your sons are not like you. Give us a king to judge us like all the other nations have." Samuel was displeased with their request and went to the Lord for guidance. "Do everything they say to you," the Lord replied, "for they are rejecting me, not you. They don't want me to be their king any longer."* **1 Samuel 8:5–7**

⁴ First to Assyria in 722 BC (**2 Kings 17**), then to Babylon in 589 BC (**2 Kings 24**).

⁵ **Luke 17:21**

⁶ *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 1724

Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew

Matthew had two primary goals in writing his Gospel: 1) to prove that Jesus was the Jews' long-awaited Messiah, which is why he quoted several Old Testament Messianic prophecies,⁷ and 2) to explain God's Kingdom. Interestingly, Matthew used the phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" 33 times in his Gospel, but that phrase is never used in Mark, Luke or John. Rather, "Kingdom of God" is used more than 50 times in the other Gospels.

Many Bible scholars believe Matthew used the "Kingdom of Heaven" phrase because he addressed his Gospel to his fellow Jews, and he didn't want to offend them. In that era, it was common practice for Jews not to speak or even write the word for God, "Yahweh," because His name was too holy. Perhaps that is why Matthew substituted "Heaven" for "God."⁸

Another possible explanation is this: Matthew wanted his readers to understand the nature of the Kingdom, and "Kingdom of Heaven" clearly differentiated it from a worldly kingdom that would overthrow Rome. Instead, the Kingdom of Heaven was (and is) a spiritual Kingdom. Jesus said to Pilate, *"My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world."*⁹ Matthew made it clear that God's earthly Kingdom would not happen until Christ's second coming.¹⁰

⁷ To fulfill Old Testament prophecies, Christ as the Messianic King had to be born of a virgin (**Matthew 1:23**) in Bethlehem (**2:6**), go into Egypt (**2:15**), reside in Nazareth (**2:23**), be announced by John the Baptist (**3:3**), minister significantly in Galilee (**4:15–16**), perform miracles of healing (**8:17**), be humble (**12:18–21**), speak in parables (**13:35**), offer Himself to Israel as the lowly king (**21:5**), be arrested (**26:55–56**), and be crucified (**27:35**). Gromacki, Robert G. *New Testament Survey*. Baker Academic, 2008. 72

⁸ Unlike the other Gospels, Matthew's was written primarily for a Jewish audience. God's name is never invoked casually by religious Jews, so Matthew avoided the problem by referring to the Kingdom of God as the Kingdom of Heaven. He used an explicit "God" when actually talking about God, but had no need to use that name when referring to the Kingdom. Both expressions mean the same thing, but one was more acceptable for Matthew's audience. Youngblood, Ronald F. *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. HarperCollins Christian Pub, 2014. 657, 732

"YHWH. This is not a word but is the four consonants standing for the ancient Hebrew name for God, commonly referred to as "Jehovah" or "Yahweh." The original Hebrew text was not vocalized. YHWH was considered too sacred to pronounce; so 'adonai' (my Lord) was substituted in reading." Tenney, Merrill C. *Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Dictionary*. Zondervan Publishing House, 1998. 905

⁹ **John 18:36**

¹⁰ **Matthew 25:31, 34**

Parables

“Parables are stories [that] compare something familiar to something unfamiliar, helping us understand spiritual truth by using everyday objects and relationships. Jesus’ parables compel listeners to discover truth, while at the same time concealing the truth from those too lazy or too stubborn to see it. To those who are honestly searching, the truth becomes clear.”¹¹

About This Study

One way to understand parables is to look at them through the lenses of Allegiance, Integration and Mission. The first three lessons will explore these concepts and then in each of the subsequent lessons, we will apply these concepts to the parable being studied. Each lesson will have three sections”



Welcome: This section will introduce you to the topic of the lesson and help you enter into the theme of the lesson by answering an opening question. It can be used personally and/or as an icebreaker during your group time.



Word: This section will help you engage with the biblical text. It includes questions to answer and discuss with your group. This is the section where the concepts of Allegiance, Integration and Mission are applied to the parable being studied.



Worship: After you have looked into God’s Word, this section will guide you into a time of worship. While traditionally worship involves singing, the expanded understanding of worship in this study also involves spending time showing love, adoration and praise to God in various ways. These lessons will provide a time for meaningful worship both personally and as a group.

Conversation Prompts: Starting spiritual conversations can seem overwhelming or even scary. Each week, at the end of the lesson, there will be a handful of conversation prompts that you could prayerfully consider using as you have everyday conversations with people throughout the week. These are intended to be simple and accessible questions that can help lead you into a spiritual conversation.

¹¹ *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 1568

Sermon Notes Page: These lessons follow along with the “Kingdom Come” sermon series at Salem Alliance Church. At the end of each lesson there is a blank page to write sermon notes if you choose. This allows you to further engage with the Scripture and topic.

Summary Page: At the end of the guide you will find a page with space to write a take-away from each lesson (pages 116–117). Hopefully adding to that page will help keep what Holy Spirit is teaching you fresh in your mind as you continue your journey with Him. This page works best if you write your take-away right after you do each lesson.