

## May 3, 2020 James Gallaher The Kingdom of God

Let's look at how to define the Kingdom of God from the Word of God and from the one who created it. Jesus focused on it in those last forty days on Earth but to begin, we go back to the beginning of creation. The original intent of creation was to extend God's Kingdom beyond Heaven. God's residence is in Heaven. God comes and creates Earth and places authority of the Earth onto mankind.

**Genesis 2:15** *Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. Verse 19* *Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.*

Mankind is an extension of the Kingdom of God, created in the likeness of God, with God's nature. In the Garden, Adam had a perfect relationship with God – no separation. But then sin came and the communication line was broken and it took away the clarity of the Kingdom of God. We live in the same broken connection today when it comes to our understanding of godly things.

The Old Testament thus becomes a shadow of what the Kingdom of God is. Shadows don't allow us to see the full details and then we tend to fill in the shadows with our own details – just like the religious leaders did when Jesus came. For 1000's of years, religious leaders had been defining the shadow – creating their own version of the Kingdom of God. Then when Jesus came, He didn't fit their definition of Messiah. They could not recognize the King of Kings in their midst because they focused on the shadow. Their Kingdom had become religion. Too often today we do the same with the church – declaring that the church is the answer. Yes, the church is God's bride – the intended way to disperse Jesus' message of salvation to the world. But the church is not The Kingdom of God. The church without the Kingdom of God is irrelevant and doesn't make sense. The Kingdom's original intent was to extend the Kingdom of Heaven onto this place - that Jesus would remain the King of the Kingdom.

**Matthew 4:17** *From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."* Jesus uses Himself and the Kingdom of Heaven interchangeably. Why? Because Jesus was the embodiment of the Kingdom of Heaven. They were not just interchangeable but also inseparable. Jesus was the fulfillment - the clear picture. But what the religious leaders of the time were looking for though was not matching what Jesus was offering. Even the disciples did not understand what the Kingdom was.

**Acts 1:6** *So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the Kingdom to Israel?"* The disciples didn't even understand after walking with the King and having a relationship with Him for 3 plus years. Their own preconceptions blinded them to the fact that the Kingdom had been with them all this time. Jesus was the embodiment of that Kingdom. It's not that the apostles were rejecting the Kingdom of God or that the church does, but it's more like they were making it small by their thinking. Have we reduced the Kingdom and its impact by defining it through our own doctrines and opinions rather than defining it through the person of Jesus Christ? Have we lessened the impact through our own preferences and arguments? Jesus' focus was not on religion but on the Kingdom of God. Jesus mentions the Kingdom of God 126 times. Everything we need to know regarding the Kingdom of God can be found by looking to the King – to the person of Jesus.

Does the church today offer a system, a religion, a loyalty to beliefs, a denomination? We unintentionally mute the church's impact by trying to control what was meant to be unleashed across this world.

Jesus picked people that don't make sense to us: Judas was a thief; James and John were disruptive and angry; the woman of Samaria had many husbands; the woman caught in adultery. Then what do we do with those who don't make sense to us? We withhold love and forgiveness because it doesn't make sense. What does that say about our view of the Kingdom of God? Are we making the Kingdom small because of our perspectives?

How do we begin to see the Kingdom with clarity? We begin where Christ began. **Matthew 6:9-13** *Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'*

Do we struggle to see ourselves in the Kingdom of God because of something in our own minds that we have created the Kingdom to be? Maybe the Kingdom in our minds doesn't have a place for you and me so we avoid a relationship with God. We also tend to withdraw from relationships with other Kingdom people. In our own hearts, we don't fit in that Kingdom. Be encouraged because Jesus doesn't define the Kingdom as we do. Jesus called the broken, the needy, the messed-up, the angry, the frustrated, the poor, the weak, and those who could not understand to be a part of the Kingdom of God. Are you lacking today?

**Matthew 6:33** *Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.* These things are the concerns of daily life and will be found when we seek His Kingdom. By doing God's will, we are provided everything that we need - our sustenance. The Kingdom is about submitting to a King and in that we find freedom.

Are you struggling with whether you belong? The offer today is not a religious institution but is the Kingdom of God that comes to offer peace. Receive peace with this prayer: ***Dear Lord Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God. I believe that on that cross You took my guilt, my sin, and my shame and You died for it. You faced hell for me, so I wouldn't have to. And You rose again to give me a place in Heaven, a purpose on Earth, and a relationship with Your Father. Today, Lord Jesus, I turn from my sins to be born again. And now, God is my father, Jesus is my Savior, The Holy Spirit is my helper. And Heaven is my home. Amen.***

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What is the Kingdom of God?

How has your view of the Kingdom of God changed? What is one of your shadow interpretations?

Do you struggle with belonging to the Kingdom of God? What can you do to change that struggle?