

The topic of the Kingdom of God is important. Differences in understanding the kingdom has led to major divisions within the church and still affect today how Christians relate to the world around them. Believers are called to be diligent students of the Word of God to determine what God has said about His Kingdom. A proper study of the topic will be systematic and thorough, touching on related topics as well. One interpretation of one verse cannot be taken as the final word on the kingdom to which all other passages must be conformed. Context and the interrelation of Scripture needs attention. Such a challenge means that this can at best be only a very broad overview.

I. *The general nature of the kingdom of God*

The concept of a kingdom has three parts: there is the king or ruler, there are the subjects or realm, and there is the exercise of authority by that ruler over his realm. The kingdom of God is God's rule over His creation. But two aspects of God's rule over His creation require us to have a fuller definition.

1. One aspect of God's rule can be called the Universal Kingdom of God: It has existed from the beginning (Ps 10:16), is current (Ps. 29:10), includes everything (Ps. 103:19), is directly ruled by God (Ps. 59:13), who reigns in spite of the attitude of the subjects (Daniel 4:32).
2. The second aspect of the kingdom of God is that for which the disciples prayed: It has a beginning (Dan. 2:44), is yet future (Zech. 14:9), is centered in Jerusalem (Isa. 24:23), is ruled through a mediator (Psalm 2:4-9), and is based upon His covenant (Psalm 89:27-29).

The second aspect is called by some the Mediatorial Kingdom of God and is the focus of this message.

II. *The Mediatorial Kingdom of God in Biblical History*

1. *The development of the mediatorial kingdom in the Old Testament:* Hinted at from Adam through Abraham, clarified at the time of Moses who represented God to the people, developed fully in the monarchy as prophesied (Gen 17:5-7; 35:9, 11; Num 23, 24; Deut 17:14-17), and declined as was also prophesied (1 Sam 8:11-18). The glory of the Lord left the Temple as the kingdom came to an end. The necessary spiritual foundation was absent and the rulers were imperfect.
2. *The Old Testament prophecies concerning a coming kingdom:* In the midst of calling for repentance and warning of judgment because of their spiritual sickness (e.g., Isaiah 1:4ff), God promised a better, future kingdom (cf. Jer 33:22; Zech 14:7, 9). At the heart was the promise of a future, righteous King (e.g., Isaiah 9:6-7; Micah 5:2). Yet the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not revoked: a restoration of Israel (Zech 10:6; Jer 31:28), the return of a dispersed nation (Isa 11:12; Jer 31:10), a permanent return of the nation's former rights and privileges (e.g., Micah 4:7-8; Ezekiel 36:11; Isaiah 60:20-21).
3. *The fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy in Jesus the Messiah:* Jesus was proclaimed a king (Luke 1:31-33; Mat 2:2, 5-6). John announced that the kingdom was near and Jesus, too, who accepted the names and praise belonging to the coming king (Mat 21:9). His miracles established His identity as Messiah (Mat 11:2-6). When questioned of His kingship, He affirmed the same (Mat 26:64; 27:11).
4. *But Israel rejected its King* (Acts 3:13-15). The death of Jesus was according to God's plan (Acts 2:23; 3:18), so that He could have mercy on all (Rom 11:30-32). It is now clear that Gentiles can become saved without becoming Jews and both by believing in Christ are placed in Christ and Christ in them (Col 1:27; Eph 3:4-6). Both in Christ can receive the promises made to Abraham's seed (Galatians 3).
5. *Never-the-less God has not rejected Israel.* There is a remnant of believing Jews today and one day all Israel will be saved (Rom 11). An anticipated restoration of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6) is associated with the return of Jesus Christ Himself (Mat 25:31; Acts 1:6-11).
6. *Meanwhile Christ has established something new, His Church* (Mat 16:13-20) in which Jew and Gentile have been made one new man (Eph 2:11-22). The church began at Pentecost with the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13; Acts 1:4-5; 11:15-18) and is distinct from the future kingdom which will include Sabbath regulations, holy days, sacrifices, a separate priesthood and circumcision.

III. *Our relation to the (Mediatorial) Kingdom of God today*

Truths concerning the future kingdom (e.g., in Rev 20:1-6) do not mean that we have no relation to the Mediatorial Kingdom of God today.

1. *Participation in the kingdom:* believers are brought into the kingdom (Col 1:13-14) as citizens (Phil 3:20) having recognized their spiritual poverty (Mat 5:3) and accepted forgiveness in Christ. The new birth allows one to see or enter the kingdom (John 3:3-5).
2. *Anticipation for the King and His kingdom:* Jesus taught His followers to anticipate His return and the coming Kingdom (e.g., Mat 24-25).
3. *Faithfulness to the King:* Jesus wants faithful and wise citizen-servants (Mat 24:45-46) who will be rewarded (Mat 25:23).
4. *Preparation for persecution:* When the King is gone, righteous does not rule and persecution and hardship can be expected (Mat 5:10; 10; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim 3:12) though believers are called to so pray that we might have peace (1 Tim 2:1-2).

A perspective molded by this teaching will do good, though the world gets worse (2 Tim 3:1), because we should do good (Gal 6:10) and because we should imitate the compassion of the Lord. Biblically we should anticipate being persecuted for doing good. Like Paul and his team of "workers for the kingdom of God" (Col 4:11), we should preach the gospel (Rom 10:17) to gather citizens for the Kingdom.