

#61 “The Kingdom of God”

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In John 3:3 Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." There is only one way into the kingdom of God and that is by repenting of sin and turning to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We must be born of water (repentance and the idea of the washing away of sin) and of the Spirit, being changed from the inside out and indwelt by God Himself (John 3:5). This is important because, according to the Scripture, there are only two kingdoms, and they are in opposition to one another. There is the kingdom of darkness, Satan's domain, and there is the kingdom of light, Christ's domain. Ephesians 5:8 explains that we are either children of darkness or children of light. The only way to get freed from slavery to the devil and from being part of his evil empire is to repent and be redeemed by the forgiveness that can be found only through Christ. Christ came to earth, entered this sinful world over which Satan is prince (Ephesians 2:2), died at the hands of sinful man, and made a way for them to be freed. He faced the devil head on and won by obeying His Father in heaven and laying down His life. He rose again to prove His victory and to begin the process of subjecting all things to Himself (1 Corinthians 15:28). All authority is His (Matthew 28:19-20), and He sits in heaven at God's right hand as One with all power. Satan has been defeated, and his time is short. He will work hard to deceive the world and create havoc, persecuting Christians, until Christ comes and destroys the wicked on earth. The wicked's ultimate destruction will be when their spirits are thrust into the lake of fire. Christ will rule a peaceful millennial kingdom, and He will bring in the new heaven and new earth over which He will be King. True world peace will finally be had, but it will only be because the One with all authority makes it to be so.

In Luke 13:18-21 we read, "So He was saying, 'What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree, and THE BIRDS OF THE AIR NESTED IN ITS BRANCHES.' And again He said, 'To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.'" When Christ first came, He proclaimed that the kingdom of God was at hand, that is, it was imminent and in their very midst. He began proclaiming how people could be saved, forgiven, redeemed, and brought into right relationship with the Father. Yet there was still mystery about what the kingdom exactly was, so He told these two parables. The first was about the mustard seed, a tiny little garden seed, which grows into a large bush, big enough that the birds can build nests in it. The kingdom of God is also like leaven, He said, in that just a little bit of yeast enables an entire lump of dough to rise. The kingdom of God is a behind-the-scenes spiritual reality about what is ultimately true about the state of each person's soul. The Lord builds His church, and some come to Christ here and some there. It is really supernatural, marvelous, and awesome how the kingdom continues to advance, even despite persecution. It is not an advancement

through military strength or through simple fleshly influence and leadership, but it is an advancement and progression which God enables to occur as hearts are reborn to love Christ and be freed from sin. This happens as the Word of God goes forth and as the gospel message is proclaimed. A little Bible verse is shared, and lo and behold, a child comes to know Christ and share Christ with others as he grows older. A tract is left at a certain opportune moment, and God convicts the reader of sin such that the kingdom again advances. We don't always see the kingdom move, but God is always working. The issue is that we need to keep planting seeds. If the gospel is the mustard seed, then we need to start sowing it. If it is yeast, we need to keep pouring it out into the world.

Mark 4:26-29 says, "And He was saying, 'The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows--how, he himself does not know. The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.'" Our job as disciples of Christ is to sow the seed and cast it where we can. We don't even have to know how the seeds grow; we only need to trust God that He gives the growth. God is ultimately in charge of making the soil receptive; our calling is to preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:2) and teach the full counsel of God (Matthew 28:19-20). Time will pass, and God can make the seed sprout and grow, eventually even yielding a crop. What kind of harvest might we have at the end of our time on earth? Have we invested in the kingdom? Do our lives indicate kingdom priorities, or are we caught up with making our own selfish, temporal earthly kingdoms? Galatians 6:7 says that we will reap according to how we sow. There can be no crop to harvest if there were never seeds sown. We must sow seeds, trust God to use them and to bless His Word, and keep persevering in faithfulness.

The kingdom is a spiritual reality. Its growth happens behind the scenes, as God calls men and women to Himself and enables them to grow. The great part is that we get to participate in the work of sowing the seeds. Others might water them, but God gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). May we concern ourselves with faithfully sowing the seeds of the gospel and the Word of God, trusting God to do with it as He wills. If we do so, the kingdom will advance and grow, and the ultimate needs of the hearts of mankind will be met. There is no other eternal kingdom than Christ's, and there is no other way to enter it than through faith in the gospel. May its proclamation be our mission, focus, and commitment.