

The Kingdom

Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.

1 Corinthians 15:24-28

When the kingdoms of the world domineer the Kingdom of God in every aspect of the seen world, how ought God’s people to respond? Do we withdraw from participating in the world? Do we combat the rulers of this age; and if so, how? What is the nature of our struggle? What is the Kingdom of God? More importantly, how do we hasten God’s rule in this world? God’s people long for the kingdoms of the world to merge into the Kingdom of God—for every wrong to be righted and for every hurt to be healed. We seek a perfect realm where life is just as it should be; and since that is never present, we look to a future world where goodness cancels out evil completely. This world is not the home of the soul for we continually to fill our souls with something lasting and good, but we never seem to find enough in this world to satisfy our hunger.

Jesus speaks to a thirsty people eager to see the coming of God’s kingdom. Crowds pressed against him hoping he is the long-awaited Messiah. Their anticipation swells to a near frenzy as crowds envelop him to initiate the return of Israel’s new golden age that will never end. While many look to political solutions to cure their ills, God has always viewed the answer to the human condition as a spiritual one. Jesus addresses more, serious matters: “What is God’s will? How do I stay in God’s will? How do I become a part of his kingdom—the one that endures forever?” In the Sermon on the Mount, he teaches us to pray that the kingdom of God will come to this realm as it is in heaven, that God’s will be done completely in our lives and in this world and that we become the salt and light changing the world into one that glorifies God rather than ignores and defies God. Consider the following quote:

“Sin is primarily religious and secondarily ethical. Man is God’s creature and his primary responsibility is towards God. The root of sin is found in his refusal to acknowledge in grateful dependence the gifts and the goodness of God (Romans 1:21), which are now imparted in Christ. Darkness is the assertion of independence rather than God-dependence.”¹

The kingdom, the world, the cosmos even humanity belongs to God—all of it, whatever it is and whomever it is, is his. He is life, the source of life and the creator of life. To defy him can have only one consequence—death. He wills and we will because he lets us. Whatever he wills is. Never miss the importance of this singular fact for its impact is eternal. He calls us to be like him—not for an ego trip but because he is perfection, and he designed us to be as he is. He always has been, always is and always will be. He opens his vast realm to us. People are not basically good—only God is good (Matthew 19:16-17). All goodness resides and emanates from him. God calls us to be true to the one who created us in his goodness. If we are out of God’s will, we place God in an awkward position. How can he bless us in our disobedience? Blessing us in wrongdoing makes him a fellow participant in evil. The kingdom of God is the extension of his rule in this world and in our lives. Who has the final say in your life? Is it God, or is it you? This is where we find out who truly is Lord of our lives. We craft false gods in our own image, to our own liking and for self-promotional upgrading. However, God forgives so we will forgive, and he extends grace so we will become gracious. When we learn to elevate those about us, this is when we become most like God (Romans 12). Mercy changes the recipient and transforms him from vengeful to merciful. God benefits us to benefit others so we point others to the God who gives so much and pours himself into us as we open our lives, hearts and minds to his will. He takes the sinful and the low-down to transform us into something beautiful, wondrous and good.

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¹ George Eldon Ladd, **The Gospel of the Kingdom**, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing: Grand Rapids, 1959), p. 31.