

Mark 1:14-15
The Kingdom of God- Part 1

It is absolutely essential that followers of Jesus understand what the Kingdom of God truly is. Throughout history, earthly kingdoms and rulers have claimed divine authority, presenting themselves as the ultimate hope for humanity and, in doing so, confusing and misleading many who might otherwise come to faith. Consider the Roman Empire. During Jesus' day, it was common for emperors to be regarded as divine and worthy of worship. Augustus Caesar, the predecessor of Tiberius (the emperor during Jesus' earthly ministry), was declared a god after his death. As his adopted son and successor, Tiberius was known as the "Son of the Divine Augustus." He was also given titles such as Lord, Savior, and Benefactor of the world. To many Roman citizens, the Empire appeared invincible—the kingdom destined to rule forever. Against this backdrop, Jesus came proclaiming a very different kingdom and it was a direct challenge to every earthly power that required from its citizens ultimate allegiance. This helps explain why the early church suffered so greatly under Roman rule. Christians boldly confessed that Jesus—not Caesar—is Lord of all. Their loyalty belonged to the Kingdom that would outlast Rome and every empire that followed. For many within the Jewish community, the Kingdom of God was understood through the lens of God's covenant with Israel and the promises concerning the Messiah. They anticipated a conquering Messiah who would overthrow Israel's oppressors, restore the nation to prominence, and establish an earthly kingdom that would endure forever. In their minds, the Kingdom of God was closely tied to the political liberation and national exaltation of Israel. Yet both Rome and many within

Israel misunderstood the nature of God's Kingdom. And if we are honest, we often misunderstand it as well. Even here in the United States, we can confuse the Kingdom of God with the fortunes of a nation. Perhaps we, in America, do one of the greatest disservices to the gospel when we equate God's Kingdom with any earthly country. In God we trust. Do we? I do not say this out of disdain for my country. Quite the opposite. Having traveled extensively throughout the world, I am grateful to call America home. In many respects, I believe it is a remarkable nation. Yet, like Rome before it, America possesses immense power, influence, wealth, military strength, and cultural reach. In that sense, I believe it bears great resemblance to a modern-day empire or kingdom. This comparison serves to remind us that no earthly nation—however powerful, prosperous, or influential—is synonymous with the Kingdom of God. Which brings us to the crucial question: What is the Kingdom of God? "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news'". If we are to understand Jesus' message, we must first clear away some common misconceptions. To that end, let us begin with three things the Kingdom of God is not.

First, the Kingdom of God is not a place we, humans, build. Too often, we mistake our kingdoms for God's Kingdom. There isn't a kingdom built by man that has stood the test of time or will. They all eventually fall. The Kingdom of God is not that which is built by man's hands. It is not that constituted by military might. And unlike the kingdoms of this world, it is not established and ruled by kings, dictators, dignitaries or the elite. The Kingdom of God is the work of God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is its architect. As such, the Kingdom

of God is marked by servanthood, joy, peace, righteousness; all things Godly.

Matt 20:20-27 “²⁰Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something.²¹ And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.” ²²Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.” ²³He said to them, “You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.” ²⁴And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. ²⁵But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, ²⁸even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” **ESV**

John 3:5 “Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” **ESV**

Romans 14:17-18 “¹⁷God’s kingdom isn’t about eating food and drinking but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸Whoever serves Christ this way pleases God and gets human approval. ¹⁹So let’s strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up.” **CEB**

Second, the Kingdom of God is not negotiable. The Kingdom of God is exclusively grounded in the gospel of Jesus the Christ. It is not grounded upon our individual passions or convictions. Neither will it

be hijacked by the latest movement or cultural agenda, regardless of how good it may seem to us. The Kingdom of God has as its logo but one symbol, the cross, and one message, which constitutes its explicit platform, Jesus crucified and resurrected. Its primary concern is the souls of sinners. In particular, bringing them out of darkness into the marvelous light through faith in Jesus, who is the King of the Kingdom of God. The King by which every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess is Lord, whether you want to or not. Hear me! We can do so now in surrender with the expectation of God's grace and forgiveness or do so upon his return by force with the expectation of his eternal judgement. Have your passions, even your convictions, but don't make them the primary issue of the Kingdom of God.

Mark 2:16-17 ¹⁶“But when the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked his disciples, “Why does he eat with such scum?”¹⁷ When Jesus heard this, he told them, “Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.” **NLT**

Phil 2:9-11 ⁹“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” **NKJV**

1 Cor 4:20 “For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.” **ESV**

Third, the Kingdom of God is not yet here, in its entirety. If nothing I've said has helped us understand what the Kingdom of God truly is, my hope is this last movement will. We, that is the church, is a foretaste of the Kingdom life to come, but only a foretaste. **By**

foretaste I mean through the church we receive a glimpse of Kingdom life, which is life lived under the rule God of through faith in Jesus the Christ. The church is not the Kingdom of God, but it is comprised of those who will inhabit God's Kingdom because of faith in His Son. Disciples, seeking to show a lost and dying world the love of God revealed in Jesus in clear tangible and audible ways. When the church is faithful it shows forth the coming Kingdom, and since the church is a foretaste and as close as we will get to the Kingdom of God in this life, we know it cannot be found amongst all creation anywhere else. So, why are we so easily led astray from the place where the Kingdom has drawn near? That place being Christ's Church, the gathered community of believers. Listen. The Kingdom of God is 'already' in that Christ has come and the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon believers and at the same time it is 'not yet' for its fullness comes with Christ's return. The question is, will we be counted among the citizens of that coming Kingdom?

Luke 17:20-21 ²⁰ Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, ²¹ nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." **ESV**

Matt 27:27-29 ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." **ESV**

Matt 25:32-34 ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but

the goats on the left. ³⁴Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. " **ESV**
In closing, among all that I have said it's just as important that we understand the Kingdom of God is not a kingdom you earn or work your way into. There isn't but one way into this Kingdom. Repentance and belief in the gospel. More these two in parts 2 and 3 of the Kingdom of God. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**