

One more verse to look at —

*“That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.” (1 Thessalonians 2:12 KJV)*

We are called into God’s kingdom. He can not call us into something that is not yet there. The kingdom is the Church and the Scriptures tell us exactly how we are to enter into that kingdom.

*“Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.’” (John 3:5 NIV)*

*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” (Matt. 7:21 NIV)*

To be a citizen of God’s Kingdom, a member of the Body of Christ, it is absolutely essential that we be born of the water and of the Spirit (baptized) and that we obey and do the will of the Father to enter the eternal reward prepared for Christians.

Let’s go back now to that portion of the Lord’s prayer that says *“Thy kingdom come.”* We stated that as members of the Body of Christ we don’t generally recite those verses *as* a prayer since the Kingdom has already come. In the past couple of years however, we’ve heard it recited at the opening of assemblies of the saints. The reasoning is that it is indeed appropriate to use those particular words (*“thy kingdom come”*) *as* a prayer since not everyone is a part of God’s Kingdom and we should pray that *“His Kingdom will come to those who are not yet saved.”* While we should and do pray frequently for the salvation of souls, we disagree with the idea that Christians should use this prayer of Jesus for that purpose. Jesus’ prayer was a request for the establishment of the Church. That prayer was answered on Pentecost. The model prayer was certainly an example that we should use for our own prayers but it isn’t a prayer that should be recited over and over. It was a prayer appropriate to the needs of Jesus at that time. We may indeed have some of the *same* needs for which He prayed and of course, we should pray for those needs but requesting that the Kingdom come is not one of them. The Kingdom is here for us to enter into but it doesn’t come *to us*. We must *go to* the Kingdom by way of obedience to the Gospel. God will not impose the Kingdom on anyone. It’s up to us to repent and be baptized in order to become a member of that Kingdom. The Kingdom (the Church) isn’t going to move to *us*. Each individual must take their own steps essential to move *into* the Kingdom.

By definition, there are certain requirements necessary to constitute a kingdom whether it’s physical or spiritual. In the next issue we will discuss what those requirements are and go to the Bible to learn exactly how the Church meets each of those requirements.

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# DILIGENCE

*“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11*

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## The Kingdom

There are numerous references in the Scriptures referring to “kingdom” in an earthly, physical sense — as territories, lands or nations. Many examples of the use of “kingdom” in that particular sense can be found in the Old Testament. It is commonly accepted by the general public that the phrase “kingdom of heaven” refers to the place of eternal reward that is promised to those Christians who are faithful to the end. The Bible does refer to “heaven” as a place of eternal reward as well as the dwelling place of God (Colossians 1:5; Matthew 3:17; Matthew 5:12 & 16; Matthew 5:34 & 45; Acts 7:49; etc.). So using the word “kingdom” in either of these contexts is fairly straight forward and seldom misunderstood by Christians or even by the general public. But when we as Christians, tell someone that we don’t generally recite the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) *as* a prayer because the “Kingdom” has already come and it is therefore not appropriate to pray that it *will* come, even those who profess to be Christians sometimes seem confused and don’t understand the statement. So our aim in this issue is to look at the Scriptures which show that the Kingdom *has* come, the Kingdom is the Church, and the Kingdom was established on the day of Pentecost.

As we progress through these verses, it is interesting to note in each of them that during the time of John the Baptist and during the time Christ was on this earth, the “Kingdom” was referred to in the future tense — it was *going to* come but had not yet arrived. Then from the day of Pentecost forward in the Scriptures, the Kingdom is referred to in the past tense. In other words, it *had* arrived. The tense of verses referring to the Kingdom changes on the day of Pentecost — at Acts chapter 2. So again, during the time of John the Baptist and the time of Jesus on earth, the Kingdom is presented as being in the future but after Pentecost it is presented as being already in existence. Keep in mind of course, that there are some verses in the Scriptures that refer to “the kingdom of heaven” in reference to that eternal reward that we mentioned earlier — those verses of course are still presented in the future tense. We are considering *only* those verses that relate to the Church as the Kingdom. Now, let’s get started.

*“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 3:1-2 KJV)*

*“And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 10:7 KJV)*

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“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” (Mark 1:14-15 KJV)

“And (Jesus) said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.” (Mark 9:1 KJV)

All of these verses, in one way or another say that the Kingdom was very near. The last verse even says that some of those standing there at that very moment would still be alive when “the kingdom of God” would come with power.

Then came the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

“After His suffering, he showed himself to (the Apostles) and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while He was eating with them, He gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ So when they met together, they asked Him, ‘Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’” (Acts 1:3-8 NIV)

Just a side note here — the fact that the Apostles asked Jesus “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” demonstrates that they still did not understand that the Kingdom would be a *spiritual* Kingdom in a physical world. It would not be until the Holy Spirit came upon them — on the day of Pentecost — that they would begin to comprehend the task that was ahead of them.

So, as we’ve read, the Kingdom was near, it was at hand and it would come while some of those present were yet alive. It would also come “with power” and the Apostles “would receive power” All of these events were spoken of as being in the future — in the *near* future. That event referred to, happened on the day of Pentecost. The Kingdom *did* come on that day. It came with power and the Apostles received power. Jesus’ prayer to the Father that “*Thy kingdom come*” was answered on that day.

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:1-4 NIV)

Centuries earlier the prophet Joel had prophesied that these events would occur. When Peter stood up to preach the first sermon — the one that would establish the Kingdom on earth, he quoted the words of Joel. Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled on that day and during the early days of the Church that followed. Peter said:

“...**this is that** which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

Peter then went on and quoted Joel’s prophecy to his listeners —

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Acts 2:16-21 KJV)

It would take an entire article just to study the fulfillment of this prophesy, but since that’s not our focus at this time, we’ll not go into it. Just a couple of notes however — we believe “*last days*” refers to the end of the Mosaic Dispensation, just before the beginning of the Christian Age; “*the great and notable day of the Lord*” refers to the the day that the Church would be established; “*whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*” refers to those who would heed the call of the Gospel that would be preached from the day of Pentecost forward.

Now, let’s look at verses that mention the “Kingdom” *after* that “*great and notable day*” of Pentecost.

“For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Colossians 1:13-14 NASB)

Rescued — Transferred — e-d — past tense. It *had* occurred. The “*kingdom of His beloved Son*” was there! It was in existence then, for us to be transferred, translated (KJV) or brought (NIV) into it. The Kingdom had come. It came on the day of Pentecost when the Church was established. The Church is the Kingdom. It was *in existence at the time* Paul wrote these words to the Colossians. We also know that redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of our sins “transfers” us into the Body of Christ. The “*kingdom of His dear Son*” are other words for His Church.

Another Scripture —

“I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. (Revelation 1:9 NIV)

John was *in* the kingdom as He he wrote on the Island of Patmos. The kingdom had been established and John was part of it.