

THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS

“Jesus answered: *‘Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.”*” – **John 18:36**



- Jesus gave this answer to Pontius Pilate as an explanation of why the Kingdom Jesus spoke of was no threat to the Roman kingdom. This answer also provides us with a great starting point from which to unfold the true nature of the Kingdom of the Heavens. For sometimes, the easiest ways to comprehend a thing is to spend time contemplating its antithesis. The antithesis of the Kingdom of the Heavens is the Kingdom of the Earth, also referred to as the Kingdom of Man or the Kingdom of the World.
- The Kingdom of Man is the world of mankind, including all of its material creatures and creations, all of its knowledge and philosophies, and all of its earthly attitudes and desires. It came into existence with the creation of the first man. All of us begin life and live within this kingdom. We learn to engage our environment on terms that ensure the greatest likelihood of physical survival and potential for happiness. We learn that in the Kingdom of Man, we must have food, water and shelter and we develop various ways of meeting these needs – in both lawful and unlawful ways.
- In the Kingdom of Man, we accept the reality that the physical body will wear out and expire. And according to our earthly knowledge and philosophies, death is the end of the ride. However, in conflict with what we learn through our earthly sciences, we seem to have an inherent desire for immortality. Death, to a normal functioning mind, always comes too soon. In answer to this inexplicable desire, we create various methods for achieving “substituted” immortality through our children and through different forms of memorialization – genealogies, honours, awards, and memorial tombs. And in spite of all the medical advances in our Kingdom, life under this Kingdom unfaithfully comes to an end.



- While we must develop some type of civilization during our earthly sojourn, we live under this ever-present reality of our personal extinction. Thus, the “rules of engagement” always give priority to self-preservation. “*Do unto others before they do unto you.*” It is as Paul said, “*the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.*” (**Romans 8:22**)
- This is the reality most of mankind lives under. But let us now contrast the Kingdom of Man with the Kingdom of the Heavens.
- The Kingdom of the Heavens is the spiritual world in which the Father and his Christ reside, along with all superhuman creatures and creations, all higher knowledge and truth, and all superlative attitudes and desires. The Kingdom of the Heavens was not “established” with the advent of the Christ on earth. Since it is the world of the Father, it came into existence in the “beginning” when the “Word was:” “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.*” – **John 1:1-3**
- We do not begin life within the Kingdom of the Heavens, but we are ever invited to enter. And when we do, we learn to engage our environment on terms that ensure the greatest likelihood of eternal survival and potential for happiness. We learn that to enter the Kingdom of the Heavens, we must have two things:

FAITH SINCERITY – freedom from prejudice and preconception, an open-mind and a teachable spirit like an unspoiled child: “*Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.*” – **Matthew 18:3**

TRUTH HUNGER – the thirst for righteousness, and the acquirement of the motive to be like God and to find God: “*But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”* – **John 4:23-24**

“*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*” – **Matthew 5:6**

- And we learn ways to meet those needs through the life example and teaching of Jesus and the spirit of truth:

“*Jesus said to him: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”* – **John 14:6**

“*But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. “He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.”* – **John 16:13-14**

- In the Kingdom of the Heavens, we accept the reality that while the physical body will wear out and expire, we will be given a spiritual body that will live on. We know that death is not the end of the ride and that our inherent desire for actual immortality will be fulfilled:

“*So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*” – **1 Corinthians 15:42-44**

- In the Kingdom of the Heavens, we learn new “rules of engagement” that give priority to love of God and love of your fellowman. We are taught:

“*And he said to him, “You shall love the lord your god with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” “This is the great and foremost commandment. “The second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*” – **Matthew 22:37-39**

“*Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.*” – **Luke 6:31**

“*By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*” – **John 13:35**

- By contemplating this contrast, we gain a better appreciation of what the Kingdom of the Heavens truly is. In its most overarching context, the word “Kingdom” as it relates to God is more synonymous with the word “realm” than with the word “government.” However, it indeed does govern our behaviour because the laws of the Kingdom of the Heavens are written, not on tablets or law books, but in our hearts, as prophesied by Jeremiah:

“*But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”*” – **Jeremiah 31:33**

- We might liken entrance into the Kingdom of the Heavens to acceptance into a fraternity or an association, like an attorney who passes the State Bar or a doctor who acquires his medical license. From that point on, they are a part of their unique community and are subject to higher standards of behaviour.

- In the Kingdom of the Heavens, we relate to God as a loving Father. Thus, all those who enter become known as sons of God and consequently brothers to each other. We then have a personal experience of realizing higher qualities of spiritual living, while on earth, that are progressively translated to new and higher levels of divine certainty and eternal security.

- The Kingdom of the Heavens has a dual nature. It is both a present reality and a future goal. We comprehend the Kingdom of the Heavens is a present reality by Jesus’ words that “*the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” (**Matthew 4:17; 10:7; Luke 10:11**)

“*The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or, ‘There it is!’ For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.*” – **Luke 17:20-21**

- It is already here! You can enter it now. For those who elect to enter the Kingdom of the Heavens now, we gain profound peace of mind.

“*For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” – **Romans 8:38-39**

- But it is also a future goal in the sense that, within the Kingdom, we can more fully perfect God’s love and expand its influence. As a result, we experience the natural and inevitable outgrowth of the fruitage of the spirit – “*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*” (**Galatians 5:22-23**)

